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# KLEE AND WORRINGER: ELECTIVE AFFINITIES IN AN AESTHETIC PARTNERSHIP

by

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

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September, 1988

Montreal, Quebec, Canada

ISBN 0-315-63723-4

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## ABSTRACT

It is the purpose of this thesis to examine the development of the concepts of abstraction and formalism in the art theory of Paul Klee and their consequent effect on his artistic production. The major impetus suggested for this development are the writings of Wilhelm Worringer, although the aesthetics of the Munich avant garde must also be credited. I have traced the evolution of Klee's thought through an examination of his diaries, letters and other documents of the period. It is clear that a demonstrable change occurs in Klee's concept of art as a result of his exposure to Worringer and the Blaue Reiter. This evolution is visible in his creative production.

## RESUME

Le but de cette thèse est d'examiner l'évolution, dans l'oeuvre théorique de Paul Klee, des concepts d'abstraction et de formalisme, et de leur influence sur son oeuvre artistique. Nous suggerèrons, comme source première de cette influence, les écrits de Wilhelm Worringer, sans toutefois oublier l'apport de l'avant garde Munichoise. Afin de tracer l'évolution des théories de Klee nous avons puisé dans son journal, sa correspondance et certaines archives de l'époque. Car il est clair qu'un changement net survient dans les concepts artistiques de Klee dés ses premiers contacts avec Worringer et le Blaue Reiter. Ce changement est visible dans sa peinture.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Mr. Brian Grosskurth for his support and encouragement. His knowledge and guidance at the early stages of my project, was invaluable.

In addition, I am grateful for the timely assistance of Professor Mark Cheetham, who made many helpful suggestions.

For her tireless help in the final presentation of my thesis I must give credit to Sharon Lees.

Finally I would like to thank my family and friends for their continual support.

# LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

## INTRODUCTION

A large part of the research on Paul Klee has dealt with the work of his middle and later years beginning around 1916, acknowledged as the first full expressions of creative ability. The work done prior to his association with the Blaue Reiter group in 1912, including the well known Inventions series and the illustrations for Voltaire's Candide, has received comparatively little systematic attention. This is due, undoubtedly, to the thematic and compositional complexity of Klee's later oeuvre, which makes it a more attractive subject than the less accomplished efforts of Klee's youth.

A similar paucity of information exists when examining possible contemporary theoretical sources for Klee's artistic evolution. The somewhat esoteric nature of Klee's iconography and the sheer volume of works that he produced has tended to limit the consideration of external theoretical influences on him. The attention given to his diaries, for example, has been somewhat superficial.

In my thesis I will attempt to illustrate a variety of correspondences between the development of Klee's aesthetic thought and ideas current in the artistic milieu of the period. I will focus primarily on the writings of Wilhelm Worringer,

whose works influenced strongly the development of German Expressionism in general. An examination of Klee's diaries demonstrates the evolution of the concepts of abstraction and its implications, a formalist view that would shape Klee's thinking on art for the rest of his life. There is evidence that the impetus for these changes was external, coming from Worringer and the nascent Expressionist movement.

There is no single source that addresses this issue directly. The most complete view of Klee's early work is Charles Haxthausen's Paul Klee: The Formative Years. Although Haxthausen's treatment of Klee's stylistic development is exhaustive, he does not focus directly on changes in Klee's theoretical views. He considers instead Klee's relationships with other artists such as Alfred Kubin and Wassily Kandinsky as sources for new ideas. Yet his overall view supports the conventional picture of Klee as insulated from the climate of Expressionist aesthetics that surrounded him in Munich. Although he possessed great independence, it is my contention that Klee was more responsive to the intellectual climate than is frequently assumed.

One of the few art historians to devote great attention to a link between Klee and Worringer is Christian Geelhaar. In Paul Klee and the Bauhaus, Geelhaar suggests that Worringer influenced Klee's anti-positivist view of the nature of art and that Klee accepted Worringer's principle that art was a product of the spirit with no descriptive function or obligation. According to Geelhaar, Klee accepted that the

simplicity and purity of abstraction provided an artist with a means for examining the relationships that underlay all living things. Art was to be completely autonomous, and while it possessed many parallels to nature, it was truly devoid of any connection to it.

Although all of Geelhaar's conclusions are supported by an examination of Klee's writings of the time, his analysis lacks the comprehensive quality of Haxthausen's work. Many of my observations are derived from Paul Klee and the Bauhaus; I will attempt, however, to locate my analysis in the context of Klee's early development, using his diaries and letters.

The influence of Wilhelm Worringer upon the German Expressionist movement, particularly the Blauer Reiter group, has been the topic of much discussion by art historians.[1] As the author of theoretical treatises such as Abstraction and Empathy, published in Munich in 1908, and Form in Gothic of 1910, as well as many popular articles in journals of the day, Worringer seemed to isolate and define issues of form and content in contemporary German art.

The consideration of Worringer's influence on Paul Klee is somewhat more problematic. Many important monographs on Klee suggest at least a limited connection between the two but rarely discuss the relationship in detail.[2] The general view of Klee as an independent talent, often quite removed from pervading theoretical currents, is borne out by an examination of his diaries that span his association with nascent South German Expressionism. There is, as well, an essential circumspection in Klee's discussion of himself and his work that contributes to his

opacity. He is usually most reticent about issues that are central to any historical judgement.

These conditions notwithstanding, there is a persuasive body of evidence which suggests that much of Worringer's aesthetic theory was read and assimilated by Klee. This thesis will attempt to establish that Klee found in Worringer's writings a catalyst for his stylistic developments between 1908 and 1911, culminating in illustrations for Voltaire's Candide.

As the premiere polemicist of the German Expressionist movement, Wilhelm Worringer has been credited with providing the first theoretical basis for non-objective art.[3] The implications of this discovery, so important for the course of twentieth-century modernism, were not immediately evident to its author. Abstraction and Empathy, later hailed as a seminal treatise by many of the most important artists of the period, was not a mature work but his doctoral dissertation. Worringer expressed his initial surprise at the enthusiastic reception and development of his ideas in the preface to a much later edition of Abstraction and Empathy. There was a "conjunction quite unsuspected by myself, of my personal disposition for certain problems with the fact that a whole period was disposed for a radical reorientation of its standards of aesthetic value."[4]

The longevity of the view of that Worringer was a conduit for the spirit of the time is borne out by a passage from Herbert Read's Art and Alienation:

> Worringer in 1908 had intuitively discerned the nature of revolution in art that was about

> to break out in Europe. He gave theoretical formulation to ideas that were already in the air. [5]

To the modern student of turn-of-the-century aesthetic theory, Worringer's works contain one particularly surprising aspect. Both Abstraction and Empathy and Form in Gothic span the art of previous centuries and even millenia, but they contain only a brief and somewhat oblique consideration of contemporary art. Worringer accomplished this by establishing a formula or paradigm that could be employed for any work of art regardless of its origin.

A student of philosophy, particularly of Schopenhauer, Worringer postulated a theory that was, at its essence, an analysis of the psychology of artistic creation and perception.[6] He did not originate these concepts but built upon the work of contemporary and earlier writers, particularly Alois Riegl and Theodore Lipps. Indeed one of Worringer's express purposes was to provide a dialectal forum for the two while rejecting much of the body of their arguments.

While many recent discussions of Worringer attempt to downplay his influence or discredit him completely, they concentrate upon a number of (perhaps deliberate) misinterpretations of Lipps' theory in particular. Worringer's value lies not in the seamless mechanics of his arguments, but in the framework he provided for German Expressionism. It is impossible to ignore the essential elements of his influence on the Blaue Reiter group. Abstraction and Empathy first established the general conceptual polarity between realism or naturalism (the term he preferred) and

abstraction. He did not simply limit, but utterly denied the mimetic function of art. He substituted the complex view of an artwork as the inevitable outcome of the expression of man's immutable inner self. An artist was not free to choose a particular style, technique or subject matter, since these were decreed by his spiritual, intellectual and ethnic heritage. But it was the triumph of formalism implied in Worringer's theory (although never really stated as an explicit purpose) that was of most significance for German Expressionism. It was in the technique and style of an artwork that its true content and significance lay. He reversed the traditional model of formal elements as the vehicle for content; true content lay, as it had done since the origin of man's artistic impulse, in the choice and use of the formal means themselves. It is my purpose to trace the influence of these ideas on both the art theory and the art of Paul Klee.

## Notes

1. A recent example may be found in Donald Gordon, Expressionism: Art and Idea, (New York: Yale University Press, 1987.) Gordon discusses Worringer's influence on the Brucke and their concept of transcendentalism.

2. The most complete discussion of the influence of Worringer on Klee can be found in Christian Geelhaar, Paul Klee and the Bauhaus, New York, 1973.

3. D. Valliers, Abstract Art New York, 1970, 14

4. W. Worringer, Abstraction and Empathy, New York, 1963, vii - xiii

5. H. Read, Art and Alienation, New York, 1967, 127

6. A further discussion of Schopenhauer's theoretical influence on art may be found in Mark Cheetham, "Mystical Memories: Gauguin's Neoplatonism and Abstraction in Late Nineteenth Century French Painting", Art Journal, vol. 46, vol/Spring 1987.

## CHAPTER I

## The Aesthetic Theory of Wilhelm Worringer

It is necessary, before considering the importance of Worringer's theory to Klee and the Expressionist movement, to examine the development of his ideas in Abstraction and Empathy and Form in Gothic. An emphasis will naturally be placed on those elements which were most directly influential to the German Expressionists.

Abstraction and Empathy was published in Munich by R. Piper and Co. in September of 1908. Significantly, this same company would also undertake the publication of the Blaue Reiter almanac in 1912. Many of the precepts of Worringer's book were available to the German artistic community in an advance review by the poet Paul Ernst in August of 1908. A small number of private copies of the book had been in circulation about a year earlier.

The argument in Abstraction and Empathy proceeds through a systematic presentation of a number of related principles. They function, as a totality, to destroy the belief in the classical ideal which had informed art historical evaluation

for centuries.

Worringer's opening declaration is that art "as an autonomous organism stands beside nature on equal terms and, in its deepest and innermost essence devoid of any connection with it, in so far as by nature is understood the visible surface of things."[1] This removes from art any responsibility for the depiction of ideal and naturalistic forms. The very concept of a beautiful object as an absolute is inherently fallacious as beauty is culturally relative, dependent upon the subjective values of the viewer. Yet if the relation of art to nature is shown not to exist and art is placed alongside natural phenomena as an independent product of a creative impulse, then a new formula for analysing and judging this impulse is needed:

> This presupposition includes within it the inference that the specific laws of art have, in principle, nothing to do with the aesthetics of natural beauty. It is therefore not a matter, for example, of analysing the conditions under which the representation of this landscape becomes a work of art. 2

Worringer finds the beginning of his answer in the aesthetic system of Lipps. In the concept of empathy Lipps expands the laws of aesthetic enjoyment from their traditional source, the art object, into the response of the viewer as well. An individual, upon viewing a work of art, identifies in it desirable qualities of his own being and existence, energy and activity and is in return gratified by this empathetic contact. Lipps describes this process with the axiom "Aesthetic enjoyment is objectified self-enjoyment."[3]

To this principle Worringer adds the opposite and complementary concept of abstraction. Empathy, although useful

in assessing the splendour of the Parthenon friezes, falters in the contemplation of Byzantine mosaics or Egyptian sculpture. When empathetic involvement is blocked, the resulting assessment is one of ugliness; therefore a more enlightened view must observe that a different psychic process is taking place. If the aesthetic of empathy finds value in that which affirms the principles of organic vitality, abstraction must identify somehow with the inorganic and lifeless.

Abstraction, visible in many traditions since man's primitive beginnings, had to derive from a denial or suppression of the empathetic instinct. Confronted with the terrors of an external world that he cannot comprehend or control, the primitive artist is unable to engage in a sympathetic relationship with the world. In the face of this hostile, changing environment, primitive man seeks tranquillity in art. As he possesses no confidence or trust in organic forms, he achieves mastery over the world by isolating its basic forms into concrete immutable shape. Abstraction therefore maintains only a secondary relationship to nature, as man strips the world of inessential, anecdotal elements in response to his psychic unrest. The result is stylistic regularity and uniformity:

> A causal connection must therefore exist between primitive culture and the highest, purest art form. And the further preposition must be stated: The less mankind has succeeded by virtue of its spiritual cognition of entering into a relation of friendly confidence with the appearances of the outside world, the more forceful is the dynamic that leads to the striving after this highest abstract beauty. 4

This initial, primitive stage of abstraction involves a fearful, instinctual response, devoid of rational consideration.

Worringer envisions a second abstract phase, characterized as Oriental, which rejects the world of natural appearances not out of fear but out of contempt for the mundane and transitory. Possessed of a more rarefied intellect, the Oriental artist seeks an essential reality that transcends the organic. Worringer quotes from Schopenhauer:

> This visible world in which we are is the work of Maya brought forth by magic, a transitory and in itself insubstantial semblance, comparable to the optical illusion and dream of which it is equally false and equally true to say that it is, as that it is not. 5

While the first stage of abstraction stands at the beginning of man's artistic practice, the latter is attained at the apex of cultural sophistication. The primary formal quality they both possess is a suppression of pictorial space. It was spatial relations that located an object in its universe and determined its link to reality. Its material essence would necessarily be denied in this state of relativity so that freedom from spatial realism was the first technical attribute of any manifestation of abstraction.

With the establishment of these dual principles, Worringer effectively limits artistic analysis to the exercise of either abstraction or empathy. They are theoretically exclusive of each other; an art work cannot combine naturalistic and abstract tendencies. Similarly, where one process is not visible and the object cannot be placed within the analytical model, it is simply declared beyond the realm of aesthetic consideration.

Worringer then proceeds with a more practical application of his ideas, foreshadowing those developed fully in Form

in Gothic. In an argument that was of immense importance for the proponents of German Expressionism, he isolates the essential difference between Northern and Mediterranean art. Mediterranean (he uses the term Cis-Alpine, meaning primarily art of the French and Italian traditions) communicates with the viewer through its subject matter, thereby sullying the purity of its formal relationships with literary content:

> The essence of Cis-Alpine art consists precisely in the fact that it is incapable of expressing what it has to say with purely formal means, but that it degrades these means to bearers of a literary content... 6

This observation is of paramount importance, since by asserting the preeminence of formal elements at the expense of the subjects expressed by these elements, Worringer challenged the major preconceptions of contemporary German art theory and practice. The context of this development will be discussed further.

Worringer then elucidates the term "style" as the direct outcome of the principle of abstraction. As was stated previously, the process of empathy finds its true expression in its naturalistic depiction. The spiritual and intellectual penetration of basic forms found in the process of abstraction results in the development of parallel phenonemon of style. This abstracting process achieved further meaning because of a basic law that linked all elements of the universe. There exists "the most profound inner connection of all living things" so "that geometrical form is also the morphological law of crystalline - inorganic matter."[7] He suggests a sympathy with an evolutionary view that postulates a continuance of knowledge or

memory of this basic principle in the human psyche. This memory is disturbed by deviation or progression from any essential form. This restlessness is subsequently quieted by the visual attainment of geometric principles in artificial form as the artist escapes the world in abstraction.

Worringer, in this seemingly minor expansion of his earlier arguments, provided a theoretical foundation for the relationship of art to nature that was to mirror Klee's own view of the function of art. This penetrating vision, capable of seeing the fundamental, essential processes of creation, unhampered by thematic content, is allied inexorably with abstraction and is communicated exclusively by formal means. Worringer's vision of abstraction is not the solipsistic play of pictorial elements; it departs from the art for art's sake of the nineteenth century. It has as its ethos the communication of the transcendental, "To transcendentalism of religion there always corresponds a transcendentalism of art, for which we lack the organ of understanding..." 8

These basic tenets outlined in the first two chapters, designated the Theoretical Section of Abstraction and Empathy, are then refined and clarified through practical application in the so-called Practical Section. It is, however, in the summary contained in the Appendix that Worringer examines the far-reaching implications of his theory.

The most significant advance toward enlightenment was the abandonment of the preconceived bias toward the European - classical conception. To accept that classicism was merely a single point on a vast continuum of artistic development meant

the acceptance of all psychic presuppositions that underlay all artistic endeavour. The knowledge that "what seems to us to-day a strange and extreme distortion is not the fault of insufficient ability but the consequence of differently directed volition"[9] precludes ill-founded judgements of artistic merit. The myopia of the teleological view of art history with classicism at its zenith will be amended by the knowledge that the creators of supposedly inferior styles "could do no otherwise because they willed no otherwise. This insight must precede all attempts at a psychology of style."[10]

It is useful at this point to summarize the theoretical precepts presented in Abstraction and Empathy that exerted such a great influence upon German Expressionism. It is also necessary to acknowledge a stricture in asserting Worringer's influence. While it can be safely assumed from contemporary evidence that Worringer's role in popularizing his ideas was significant, it is incorrect to claim that he originated all of these ideas.[11] Abstraction and Empathy, to express it perhaps too briefly, codified a tendency toward abstraction that had been evident for decades. Worringer, in essence, provided a persuasive philosophical framework for the existing theoretical concerns of the avant garde of the day. The conceptual polarity of abstraction and realism, for example, was of paramount importance. This bias is visible for decades throughout the twentieth century as the evolution of art is viewed by many critics, as the inexorable movement toward the purity of total geometric abstraction. Implied in this duality

was the superior nature of abstraction which had removed itself from the mundane world of appearances. Formalism was imbued with an inherently rigourous moral tone derived from the absence of the pollution of content. Abstraction and Empathy provided the means of communicating the spiritual that coincided with the exhaustion of conventional thematic concerns and the general disgust of young creative German artists with the shallowness of popular art.

Of similar importance was Worringer's enlightened proclamation of cultural relativity. The legitimisation of even primitive artistic impulses would provide an immeasurable increase in the potential sources for thematic and formal inspiration. A significant inference of this principle was the inevitability of artistic volition. A true artist created not to please an external, artificial conception of style but in response to inner psychic motivations. To acknowledge the whims of popular taste was necessarily a false act.

A somewhat more nebulous correspondance concerns the very nature and importance of art in general. Worringer's analysis did not simply discredit the primacy of the representational function of art but asserted art's active participation in man's investigation of the universe he inhabits. Art now served as a refuge from the horrors of the world or a celebration of the wonder of it. It expressed not only the traditional concerns of ideology or mythology but manifested the complex psychological and spiritual character of the individual and society that produced it. Within its pictorial elements was a microcosm of man's relationship to the world that surrounded him.

A little over two years after the publication of Abstraction and Empathy, Worringer followed with the equally influential Form in Gothic. The success of this work can be partly attributed to the fact that it seemed to speak directly to the German artists of the day. Building upon the duality of naturalism and abstraction of his earlier work, Worringer developed further the related polarity of Mediterranean and Northern art. This principle of the historical continuity of an ethnic will to form combined with the inherent gravitation of a particular group toward a certain technique and style were among his most important assertions.

In Form in Gothic, Worringer does not argue for an equal consideration of Gothic architecture, but declares its expression supreme over Greek art, as the latter created a more sensuous effect while Gothic architecture transcended the materiality of its constructive elements. Gothic architecture occupied, as a result, a higher spiritual plane. Worringer took great care to contrast building, which was concerned with mundane practical aspects, and architecture, which was a true creative expression of the spirit "extracting from dead materials an expression corresponding to a definite a priori will".[12] Therefore, Gothic art was esteemed, not for its structural functionalism, but for its expressive capacity:

> Distressed by actuality, debarred from naturalness it aspires to a world above the actual, above the sensuousness. It uses the tumult of these sensations to lift itself out of itself. It is only in intoxication that it experiences the thrill of eternity. It is the exalted hysteria which is above all else that is the distinguishing mark of the Gothic phenomenon. 13

The consequence of downplaying the significance of the material nature of architecture was to declare the preeminence of its spiritual nature and expression. Yet this expression was not unique to Gothic art. Worringer saw it as the final flowering of a linear spirit that had informed Northern art for centuries. It could be traced back to the Hallstadt and La Tene periods, through the abstract intertwining fantasies of the Nordic conquerors. This "ceaseless melody of northern line" would attain its greatest expression in High Gothic cathedrals. Despite the traditional attribution of the Gothic style to the tradition of French art, there was in fact, Worringer asserted, nothing of the French spirit in Gothic architecture, as it was at its essence entirely Northern. The French expression of the Gothic was always infused with classicism and sensualism:

> While Gothic architecture presents a picture of the de-materialization of stone, and is full of spiritual expression unrestrained by stone and sense, early Northern ornament presents the picture of a de-metricization of line for the satifaction of the same needs of spiritual expression. 14

This inescapable Northern will to form was visible in the Gothic origins of Durer's prints and in the expressive attenuation of Grünewald's figures. More importantly, it could be traced to the art of contemporary Germany. Worringer postulated a dichotomy between Gothic scholasticism and spirituality. While the former saw its realization in the rational structure of the cathedral, the latter was embodied in the magnificent stained glass cycles within these cathedrals. In turn the duality had been carried through to his own era. The constructive tendencies of French modernism , typified by

Cézanne, corresponded to the scholastic principle, while Van Gogh represented the spiritual element.[15] By accepting and assimilating the spiritual tendencies of the Northern artistic volition, the modern generation of Expressionists could hope to emulate the expressive capacity of their forebears.

> The essence of this specific expression of the line is, that it does not represent sensuous , organic values, but values of a non-sensuous, that is to say, a spiritual kind. It does not express organic activity of will, but a psychical, spiritual activity of will, far removed from any connection or conformity with the complexes of organic sensation. 16

Northern man was a creature of much greater complexity than his Mediterranean counterpart. He was burdened with a tendency in the Gothic period toward the "weird and fantastic." Prevented from finding repose in the serene and sensuous "human organic being," he continued his restless quest that culminates in his ultimate discovery of the transcendental.

Form in Gothic served to complete many ideas begun in Abstraction and Empathy . Pictorial elements possessed a new independence, and linear expression was supreme above all. Not only did German artists possess an ethnic right to the Northern "will to form"; it was virtually prescribed. It was the path toward enlightenment, but in its inevitability this revelation was already partly attained:

> Common to all is an urge to activity, which, being bound to no one object, loses itself, as a result, in infinity. In the ornament and in the early life of fantasy, we can only discern chaos; in Gothic architecture and scholasticism, this crude chaos has grown into artful and refined chaos. The will to form remains the same throughout the entire development. 17

The attraction that Form in Gothic possessed for contemporary German artists must have been considerable; "Northern man knows nothing of repose; his entire power of configuration concentrates itself on the representation of uncontrolled boundless agitation."[18] They were to become keepers of a tradition that was both centuries old yet completely innovative as the forms changed and only the spirit remained constant. No revival of interest in the Gothic came about because a medieval style was true only to its own temporal context. But like Gothic man their inherent tendency was linear; as Klee was quoted in 1911, German artists are "born draughtsmen even when we are painters."[19] It is in fostering this idea that Worringer's primary influence lies.

After asserting the innovative nature of Worringer's writings it is necessary to observe that the two issues that comprised the main focus of his work - the primacy of abstraction and power of linear expression - had actually been topics of avant-garde critical debate for almost a decade in Munich. The many practitioners of Jugendstil had written extensively on the implications of this new decorative style that was without recognizable subject. There seemed, even before the end of the nineteenth century, to be a shared perception of the importance of this new development. In both Paris and Munich in the late 1890's the phenomemon of "abstract works of art" were subjects of some currency.[20] In 1897 the architect August Endell wrote that culture was at the "beginning of a totally new art, an art with forms, that mean nothing...".[21] This art would convey no literal

content but would serve to evoke the emotions of the viewer by moving "our souls so deeply, so strongly, as before only music has been able to do with tones."[22]

If the concept of abstraction was receiving a degree of attention, the popularity of the line as an independent formal element verged on mania. The voluptuous organic forms prevalent in all Jugendstil design inspired both critics and artists to almost ecstatic speculation about the power and dynamism of the line. The Belgian Art Nouveau artist Henry Van de Velde constructed an elaborate theory of the emotive potential of linear expression, asserting that line functioned as a sort of mediator of creative energy between artist and viewer. He endowed the line, above all pictorial elements, with a sort of primal vitality:

> The line is a force which is active like all elemental forces; several lines brought in opposing relation to one another have the same effect as several opposing elemental forces. This truth is decisive, it is the basis of the new ornament... 23

The very existence of the cult of the line and the growing awareness of the abstract potential of art could call into question the importance of Worringer as a "revolutionary" influence on German Expressionist painting. This objection is answered in part by the somewhat practical observation that the Blaue Reiter artists perceived his ideas as original regardless of their possibly derivative nature. Yet a more important answer lies in the argument that Worringer did not simply summarize one or two decades of rumination on the nature of contemporary art but altered this discussion in very specific and significant

ways.

Worringer's primary accomplishment, apart from the rather attractive empirical and scientific flavour of Abstraction and Empathy, was to transform the abstraction of the Jugendstil era from the guiding principle of interior design into the creative destiny of Northern Europe. The Art Nouveau equation of abstraction and decoration, along with its attachment to the decorative arts in general, seemed to have ensured that its polemics would remain somewhat mundane and unfocused. After all, abstract ornament had been featured on decorative objects since the origin of mankind. Although Jugendstil did have a vaguely socialistic moral component due to its origins in the Arts and Crafts movement, it was not until Worringer linked abstraction with the quest for spiritual and intellectual purity that European artists would be galvanized by the concept of non-objective art. The creation of abstract art had evolved from a celebration of the dynamism of flourishing organic forms to a quest for the essential and transcendental. Non-representational art came into existence before it possessed a philosophical framework. Worringer, in Abstraction and Empathy, helped to provide this intellectual foundation.

## Notes

1. Wilhelm Worringer, Abstraction and Empathy. (New York: International Universities Press, 1963), 3.

2. Ibid., 3 - 4.

3. Ibid., 5.

4. Ibid., 17.

5. Ibid., 18.

6. Ibid., 31.

7. Ibid., 35.

8. Ibid., 132.

9. Ibid., 124.

10. Ibid., 124.

11. For example, the Munich periodical Decorative Kunst had advocated a growing formalism as early as 1898.

12. Peter Selz, German Expressionist Painting. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), 13.

13. Wilhelm Worringer, Form in Gothic. (London: Alec Tiranti, 1957), 79.

14. Ibid., 45.

15. Peter Selz, German Expressionist Painting. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), 13.

16. Wilhelm Worringer, Form in Gothic, 44.

17. Ibid., 180.

18. Ibid., 83 -84.

19. Werner Haftmann, The Mind and Work of Paul Klee. (London: Faber and Faber, 1954), 62.

20. Peg Weiss, Kandinsky in Munich: The Formative Jugendstil Years. (Princeton:Princeton University Press, 1979), 26.

21. Ibid., 26.

22. Ibid., 26.

23. Peter Selz, German Expressionist Painting, 55.

## CHAPTER II

## MUNICH AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF EXPRESSIONISM

In order to assess the impact of Worringer's writings upon German Expressionism and Paul Klee, it is useful to describe the artistic milieu of Munich in the first decade of the twentieth century. The dissatisfaction of the era's most creative individuals with the stultifying academic tradition and the conservatism of both critical judgement and public taste led to a general receptiveness for the provocative ideas of *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*. Even those movements, like the multiple Secessions, which professed a spirit of artistic originality, would rapidly accede to their least innovative members.[1]

Munich had had, for centuries, a tradition as a major centre of cultural production. In the nineteenth century under the ambitious patronage of Ludwig I and his son Maximillian II, the Gothic and Baroque core of the city was transformed first by vast neoclassical avenues and then by medievalized designs. The most vital influence for turn-of-the-century Munich painters, that of Jugendstil, reached its apex in the late 1890's.[2] A logical outgrowth of the strong Arts and Crafts tradition of the Bavarian

capital, the sensuous organic linearity of Jugendstil revitalized every aspect of German fine and decorative art from architecture to interior design. The movement had an ethical corollary which saw as its goal the general enlightenment of the bourgeoisie through the intrinsic morality of its inspired forms.[3]

This flourishing artistic production mirrored a broader cultural revitalization. A series of new illustrated journals such as Jugend and Simplicimuss propagated a liberal political view, satirizing the Kaiser and Catholic Church officials through witty and often scandalous cartoons. These periodicals would continue to function in the Expressionist era, accompanied by the more radical Die Aktion and Der Sturm, founded by Herwarth Walden, advocating a renewed political and aesthetic sensibility. This phenomenon would have the twofold effect of first rejuvenating German graphic art production and then fixing its status as a tool of ridicule and caricature, not of serious expression.[4] The print, the most prevalent example of linear art, had a long tradition, due to its comparative cheapness and reproducibilty, in the dissemination of popular knowledge. The general restriction of graphic art to the mundane world of humour is an important point to consider in the reception of Worringer's ideas, as he would provide a theoretical structure that demonstrated, not the simple equality, but the superiority of line over other pictorial elements.

By 1901, when Klee left Bern for Munich, the Bavarian city achieved a position second only to that of Paris as the natural destination of a young artist seeking training and opportunity.

It was favoured more by those of German origin. The district of Schwabing corresponded to the Montmartre as the centre of bohemian life. A salon system, similar to the French model, regulated artistic production.

One can see the many divergent artistic currents by contrasting one of the most successful and esteemed artists of the day, Franz von Stück (who was to teach both Kandinsky and Klee) , with the concerns of the pre-Expressionist avant garde typified by the Phalanx group. Although only slightly older than Kandinsky, Stück had garnered virtually every available cultural honour by his early thirties As a consistent winner of annual Glaspalast exhibitions and founder of the Munich Secession, he became president of the Munich academy and was ultimately knighted.[5] Gaining a position in his atelier was an enviable achievement. Stück was a practioner of a kind of Symbolism with connections to German Romanticism that avoided all stylistic innovations of French Symbolism, such as the expressive aware-of colour, in favour of a highly literary naturalism. His subjects were distinctly fin-de-siecle in flavour, often morbid and erotic or allegories of great complexity. Typical of Stück is The Sin of 1895, his most famous painting, which features a female nude who gazes suggestively at the viewer and is identified as the primary origin of evil. Its conception and style are essentially conventional; the figure is rendered through traditional means, although the decorative play of surface texture suggests a Jugendstil influence.[6] Comprehension of the subject occurs mainly through knowledge of its iconographic

heritage.

Against this background of academicism, exemplified as well by artists such as Arnold Böcklin, was a conscious spirit of change and revitalization. Kandinsky was a tireless agitator for a renewed aesthetic. Thoroughly imbued with the ethos of Jugendstil, the concept of the synthesis of all arts, and possessed of a profound awareness of the multitude of artistic currents present in Munich, he founded the Phalanx group in May 1901. The Phalanx exhibitions and Kandinsky's work of the period embraced all forms of art and design, interior decoration, jewelry and textiles, exploiting their abstract potential. The very name suggests a combative posture, confirmed in an explanation by the Phalanx member that the group was to do "battle" against reaction and obscurantism.[7] This intention was not unjustified, as a review in the October issue of Kunst für Alle of the first exhibition dismissed the work of the contributors as "much too much under the sign of caricature and the hypermodern".[8] The poster for the first group exhibition, designed by Kandinsky in 1901, betrays the Jungendstil origins of the artist. The decorative, organic forms depict two soldiers ready to battle the aesthetic ennui of Munich. Worringer himself characterized the atmosphere vividly. Writing in Kunst und Kunstler in 1909, he described an atmosphere of "saturation, the same crystal-palace ambience, the same marketable works."[9]

This state of public and critical reaction, which was at best indifferent and at worst hostile, would continue for several years. It was unacceptable for two major reasons, the first

being the obvious fact that only very rare individuals can live entirely without public recognition and acclaim. The second reason is more significant; it is related to the philosophical and ideological preoccupations of the Munich avant garde exemplified by Kandinsky. Though their discourse was recondite and intellectual, their programme had the specifically anti-elitist goal of the spiritual integration of all the arts into a renewed and meaningful force.[10] Without wider application their experimentation and discovery would be irrelevant. This almost evangelical view is clear in the first proclamation issued by the Neue Kunstler Vereinigung in January of 1909:

> We take it that in addition to receiving ideas and impressions from the outside world, that is Nature, the artist is continually accumulating the experiences of an inner world and is searching for artistic forms that will express the relationship between each and every one of these experiences- forms which must be freed from all subsidiary roles so as to give vigorous expression to what is essential which is briefly, the aspiration toward artistic synthesis.[11]

The Neue Kunstler Vereinigung, in many aspects a predecessor of the Blaue Reiter, was founded by artists blacklisted by the Munich Secession after transgressing against its convention prohibiting any exhibitions with a Secession group of another city.[12] Like the Blaue Reiter the NKV was not homogeneous in style; made up of such disparate artists as Kandinsky, Alexey von Jawlensky and Alfred Kubin, it shared an opposition to the stagnation of the Munich cultural establishment.

The first NKV exhibition opened at Thanhauser's gallery in the winter of 1909 to an almost violent response of public and critical abuse. Exhibition-goers actually spat at the paintings and critics countered with accusations of extreme pretension and

facileness;[13] a reviewer in Die Kunst suggested the show had been staged as a "carnival hoax". Kandinsky, many years later, would express the perception of isolation shared by the group: "We were amazed that in all of Munich, `the city of art´, not a single person, with the exception of (Hugo) Tschudi, had a kind word to say to us."[14]

The next step, led by Kandinsky, toward a new spiritual endeavour, resulting in a lyrical mysticism, was taken by Kandinsky, Marc and Munter with their departure from the NKV. Exhibiting together for the first time on December 18, 1912, they adopted the name der Blaue Reiter to give evidence of the symbolic importance of colour, its "musicality", which would become part of the group´s creed and of Marc´s somewhat romantic love of horse imagery.[15]

The group who initially, due to its limited membership, had a somewhat striking stylistic unity, had as its goal the depiction, or more accurately, the penetration of an essential reality that underlay the world of the mundane. This would be accomplished by the liberation of colour from its connection to naturalistic appearance, a belief that would develop for Marc and Kandinsky into an explicit colour symbolism. In essence the Blaue Reiter desired a remedy for the stultifying state of German art. They found their answer in a multitude of fresh influences. The 141 illustrations of the Blaue Reiter almanac run the gamut from children´s drawings, Gothic sculpture, African figures and masks to Oriental paintings and prints. In keeping with Worringer´s thesis, they were presented in the spirit of cultural relativism,

as Kandinsky would describe two decades later in 1933:

> My idea was then to show, for instance, that the difference between "official art" and ethnographic art had no raison d'etre; that the pernicious custom of not seeing the internal organic root of art under the varying exterior forms ought to end - at the universal door of human behaviour. Likewise the differences among children's art, "amateur" art and academically trained art: the force of expression and a common principle prevailed over the slight differences between finished and "unfinished" form. 16

Klee, at the time of his association with the Blaue Reiter, was a relatively unproven talent, sure of his ability and direction, but with comparatively few important works behind him.[17] Klee had met Macke in 1911, Kandinsky somewhat later in the same year and Franz Marc in 1912. Although his ideas concerning the nature of art paralleled those of Kandinsky, his tenure with the Blaue Reiter would be as a junior associate.[18] Only one work by Klee, a small drawing, The Stonecutters, was chosen to represent him in the Blaue Reiter almanac.[19] As Kandinsky would say of him in 1936:

> I admire Klee very much and consider him one of today's greatest painters, but in the far off time when I was doing Der Blaue Reiter, Klee was at the beginning of his development. Nevertheless I very much liked the little drawing which he was doing then, and I reproduced one of these drawings in Der Blaue Reiter. This was the full extent of his participation in the book. 20

It is not difficult, given the frequently reactionary climate of Munich, to explain the eager reception of Worringer's Abstraction and Empathy. Writing under the aegis, not of contemporary polemics but of art historical and philosophical enquiry, Worringer provided a theoretical structure for the manifest concerns of the Munich avant garde. By 1907 it was clear

that the ideals of Jugendstil had failed to effect a profound change in the lives of the Bavarian bourgeoisie. A visible strengthening of the extremely conservative elements of the Munich political structure corresponded to the shift toward academicism and sentimentality.[21]

Worringer was quickly hailed as the primary apologist of the avant garde. He is credited with the first public attribution of the term Expressionism to the growing German movement.[22] His meeting with Kandinsky in 1908 established an important connection to the painters who would become the Blaue Reiter. This social contact cannot be underestimated in a consideration of Worringer's influence. Will Grohmann, the biographer of Klee and Kandinsky, lists Worringer as an important subject of discussion as the friendship of the two artists grew.[23]

Much of the theorizing of the Schwabing artistic community can be seen as the result of vigourous exchanges between close friends. A strong sense of unity, most likely the result of critical and public hostility, can be felt in the documents, letters and reminiscences of the time. By 1911, Franz Marc, writing in the periodical Pan, described Abstraction and Empathy as an attempt to create a basis for a new style which "deserves general esteem". It was a treatise "in which a severely historic intellect put down a train of thought which might readily cause discomfort to the frightened opponents of the modern movement."[24]

In this statement Marc summarized the success of Worringer's writing as a weapon in the confrontation of critical abuse. The primary accusations leveled against the proto-Expressionists were essentially ones of utter pretentiousness and the total

absence of any artistic merit. Their forays into abstraction; the use of flattened space and expressive colour, were viewed, not without justification, as a dangerous assault upon the conventional view of the nature of art.[25]

Worringer's theories mirrored and informed the very center of the new Expressionist aesthetic. His conception of the inevitability of artistic volition and the continuity of the Northern spiritual linear tradition could be merged to declare the Blaue Reiter as the harbingers of a new transcendental abstraction. This sense of a coming enlightenment, with, it is implied, the Blaue Reiter as a guiding force, permeates Expressionist polemics. Kandinsky stated this clearly in Über die Formfrage of 1912: "These characteristics of a great spiritual epoch (which was prophesied and which makes itself known today in one of the first beginning stages) can be seen in contemporary art."[26] His two proposals for a truly meaningful artistic creation are:

1. The breaking up of the soulless life of the nineteenth century, that is, the falling down of the material supports which were thought to be the only firm ones, the decay and dissolution of the individual parts.

2. The building up of the psychic spiritual life of the twentieth century which we are now experiencing and which embodies itself even now in strange, expressive and definite forms. 27

He concludes with the prescription that "only through freedom can that which is coming be received."[28]

It must be remembered that the Blaue Reiter differed from their contemporary art movements such as the Italian Futurists and the multitude of Dada groups in one aspect that is germane to

this discussion. The Expressionists did not share the revolutionary nihilism, the desire for the destruction of tradition, that seemed de rigueur in the avant garde. The Futurists' cry to tear down the museums could have been answered by Franz Marc's aphorism of 1914: "Traditions are lovely things - to create traditions that is, not to live off them".[29] The Expressionists, partly through Worringer, could view themselves as the only legitimate successors to the artists of past epochs. The crass sentimentality beloved of the Munich art critics was the final, meaningless flourish of a spent aesthetic. The Blaue Reiter were to become the new tradition.

Even a cursory examination of the writings of Kandinsky and Marc of the Blaue Reiter period reveals the Expressionist debt to Worringer. Über die Formfrage and Über das Geistige in der Kunst repeat and develop further virtually every theoretical proposition of Worringer. For example, Kandinsky echoes the challenge contained in Abstraction and Empathy to the chauvinism and ignorance of art critics and art historians who assert a set of external and supposedly objective criteria for the judgement of art, rules that are in actuality, culturally relative:

> The practical result: one may never believe a theoretician (art historian and so forth) when he asserts that he has discovered some objective mistake in the work. And: the only thing which the theoretician can justifiably assert is that he has until now, not yet become familiar with this or that use of the means... The ideal art critic, then would not be the critic who would seek to discover the mistake, abberations, ignorance, "plagarisms", and so forth, but the one who would seek to feel how this or that form has an inner effect and would then impart expressively his whole experience to the public. 30

Style as the product of internal psychic necessity, a principle not originated but expanded by Worringer is, taken for granted by Kandinsky, when he states that each "artist's own means of expression (that is, form) is the best since it most appropriately embodies that which he feels compelled to proclaim".[31] A logical effect of this view is that "form is the outer expression of the inner content".[32] Worringer's view of the revelatory nature of art, of its purpose as a vehicle of the spirit, is confirmed and developed by the Blaue Reiter.

Franz Marc, in an excerpt from "Briefe, Aufzeichnunger und Aphorismes ", offered a model of the evolution of art from naturalism to modern transcendental abstraction that might have been extracted from Abstraction and Empathy:

> Natural law has been the vehicle of art. Today we are replacing this law with the problem of religiosity. The art of our epoch will undoubtedly show profound analogies with the arts of long past primitive times... 33

Worringer's implication of contemporary art's kinship with primitive abstraction of distant epochs is also echoed by Marc:

> The thought that people once before, a long time ago, like alter egos, loved abstractions as we do now. Many an object hidden away in our own museums of anthropology looks at us with strangely disturbing eyes. What made them possible? The productions of a sheer will to abstraction. 34

If Worringer can be said to have inspired and confirmed much Expressionist thought, this assumption was shared by his contemporaries. In a lecture in 1924 in Vienna, Hans Tietze referred to the movement as "having characteristics which became

familiar to us through Worringer's book."[35] There is also evidence that Worringer participated fully in the social life of the Blaue Reiter. There is an informal design by August Macke dating from 1912 for a room in the Worringer household.[36] The benchmark symbol of the movement, the horse and rider, occupies a central position in the composition of the mural. Over a decade after the publication of Abstraction and Empathy Worringer contributed an article, "Kritishe Gedanken zur Neuen Kunst", to the Expressionist journal Genius. He first summarized the significance of the movement in the context of European art. He then declared the movement finished.

## Notes

1. K. Lankheit, ed., The Blaue Reiter Almanac. (New York: The Viking Press), 1964, 11.

2. Peg Weiss, Kandinsky in Munich: The Formative Jungendstil Years. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 19.

3. Ibid., 7 - 8.

4. For a thorough consideration of importance of periodical illustration to Expressionism, see, Orrel Reed Jr. ed., German Expressionist Art. (Los Angeles: Frederick S. Wright Gallery, 1977.)

5. Barry Herbert, German Expressionism. (London: Jupiter Books, 1982), 101- 102.

6. Peter Selz, German Expressionist Painting. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), 31.

7. Barry Herbert, Expressionism, 103

8. Peg Weiss, Kandinsky in Munich: The Formative Jungendstil Years, 40.

9. Klaus Lankheit, Almanac, 11.

10. Recent writings such as Helen Boorman, "Rethinking the Expressionist Era". The Oxford Art Journal, (vol. 9, no.2, 1986), 3 - 16, contradict this view somewhat, allying the Blaue Reiter, despite their radical aesthetics, with conservative political elements in Munich society.

11. Barry Herbert, Expressionism, 129.

12. Ibid., 128.

13. Ibid., 129.

14. Klaus Lankheit , Almanac, 12 - 13.

15. Years later Kandinsky recalled the naming of the group: "We invented the name Blaue Reiter whilst sitting around a coffee table in the Marc's garden at Dinseldorf... We both loved blue, Marc liked horses, and I liked riders, so the name came of its own accord..." Barry Herbert, German Expressionism. (London: Jupiter Books, 1983), 154.

16. Peter Selz, Expressionist Painting, 220.

17. Klee's association with the Blaue Reiter began at the time of their second exhibition beginning in March, 1912.

18. Ibid., 218.

19. The small ink and wash of 1910 was a tonal image typical of Klee's pre-Expressionist work of the period.

20. Peter Selz, Expressionist Painting, 218 -219.

21. Peg Weiss, Kandinsky in Munich, (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 1982), 24.

22. Although the precise evolution of the term Expressionism is a somewhat contentious issue, Bernard Myers credits Worringer with the first application of the term to German painting. Bernard Myers, Expressionism. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1963), 40.

23. Will Grohmann, Paul Klee. (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1954), 53.

24. Peter Selz, Expressionist Painting, 9.

25. Ibid., 196.

26. Klaus Lankheit, Almanac, 186.

27. Ibid., 186 - 187.

28. Ibid., 187.

29. Herschel Chipp (ed.) Theories of Modern Art. (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1968), 180.

30.
Klaus Lankheit, Almanac, 170 - 172.

31.
Herschel Chipp (ed.) , Modern Art, 157.

32.
Ibid., 180.

33.
Ibid., 181.

34.
Peter Selz, Expressionist Painting, 9.

35.
Peg Weiss, Kandinsky in Munich, 18.

36.
Peter Selz, Expressionist Painting, 328.

CHAPTER III

## THE INFLUENCE OF WORRINGER ON THE THEORETICAL DEVELOPMENT OF PAUL KLEE

The polemical, almost evangelical nature of Kandinsky's treatises of the Expressionist era makes the task of tracing Worringer's influence comparatively straightforward. The writings of Paul Klee in the years surrounding the Blaue Reiter period do not, however, leave a similar impression. A younger artist of an independent character, his diaries and letters illuminate a more personal and constant struggle with contemporary ideas of subject matter, style and the nature of art in general. Klee would achieve the confidence of a true polemicist only in the pedagogical writings related to his teaching at the Bauhaus in the 1920's.

The diaries, which span the years 1898 to 1918, function not as statements of mature theory but as pragmatic solutions to artistic problems, such as the influence of Impressionism and the question of literary content in pictorial art. They are most definitely, in the initial years, the writings of a gifted student seeking a meaningful direction, overwhelmed by the options available to him and the achievements of the past. They

are ended by Klee upon his discharge from the German army.

Klee's diaries present a few impediments to rigourous analysis. Although at first they appear as detailed repositories of information, it is soon evident that Klee's view on many subjects must be distilled from a wealth of personal, ironic and often contradictory observations. It is important to remember that the diaries do not survive in their completely original form but were reworked with large sections rewritten by Klee in 1902 and 1911. This state of "textual impurity" holds an unexpected bonus for those seeking signs of Worringer's influence, as many of the obviously revised passages appear to have been reworked from a more definite proto-Expressionist viewpoint.

It is necessary here to mention the difficulty , if not impossibility, of determining the limit of Worringer's influence and the beginning of that of the Blaue Reiter members. The question of Kandinsky's impact on Klee in this period is the subject of much conflicting debate. Some writers assert a great stylistic relationship between the two, others suggest only a vague theoretical connection.[1] Although an examination of this question is beyond the scope of this discussion, it is possible that many of Worringer's ideas were mediated through the magnetic figure of Kandinsky or Klee's close friend Franz Marc. Yet the first suggestions of Worringer's influence predate, by at least three years, Klee's first encounter with either artist.

The difficulty in determining a single stylistic or theoretical model for Klee is due to the fact that the vagaries

of emotion and opinion present in his writings are also apparent in his pictorial work of the time. Drawing, the medium Klee favoured in this period, was particularly amenable to wide and frequent experimentation. Ideas could be developed quickly and then abandoned. The result is a vast heterogeneous display of many styles and influences that cannot be forced into a single continuous movement or development.

Paul Klee's tenure with the Blaue Reiter seems to have introduced fairly few original ideas into his oeuvre. It would not, for example, have the immediate catalytic effect of his Tunisian trip of 1914. It did, however, confirm many nascent ideas that were to inform his work for the rest of his life. Of paramount importance was the postulation of the anti-positivist, spiritual nature of modern art, of its function as a revelatory not imitative process. Klee accepted, without reservation, this principle, which was expounded by the Expressionists and supported by Worringer. Klee's famous statement from the Jena lecture of 1924, "art does not render the visible but makes visible", has its origins in the thinking of Worringer and the Blaue Reiter.[2]

In order to explore fully the consequences of Worringer's writings on Paul Klee, we must examine the chronological development of the ideas discussed in his diary entries beginning in 1902. The one specific reference by Klee to Worringer occurred in 1911 in a letter to his wife . This seemingly damning phenomenon of the absence of concrete connections would be serious if the artist in question were not Paul Klee. Consider, for example, the similar paucity of

contemporary diary references to Kandinsky as an individual and an artist, to the philosophy of the Blaue Reiter movement and its paintings. A well-known instance described Kandinsky's creation of non-objective painting with the somewhat elusive assessment of "very curious" and nothing more. Paul Klee did consider art and ideas in his diaries, most often his own art and ideas, and although the impetus was often external, it was rarely identified.

Worringer and the ideas he generated in Munich answered questions that were unique to Paul Klee, problems that were not shared by the other Blaue Reiter members. Klee, although convinced of his desire to be a painter, did not possess the same virulent discontent with the sterility of popular and academic art of the day, most likely because he could not envision a fully developed alternative. In the first period of Worringer's influence, which spans the period before and after 1908 until 1911, Klee's struggle with his directionlessness was fundamental and continuous. He did not possess a single clear attachment to any popular style, technique or school. Unlike Kandinsky, he had no affinity to Jugendstil, yet his technical limitations precluded the undertaking of any classical Symbolist subjects. Yet in 1908 he defined his painting as a process of abstraction and a quest for the essential. His perception of his work, not the work itself, undergoes a significant change.

In 1902 Klee returned to the provincial Swiss atmosphere of his Bern family home after about a year of academic study in Munich and travel in Germany. In Munich he had found a

place in the atelier of Franz Stück, coincidentally at the same time as Kandinsky, yet there is no mention of their meeting.[3] His artistic efforts of the time show promise but only moderate achievement and are restricted to the mundane subject matter of art classes: still lifes, nudes and figure studies. While recognizing the necessity of a thorough training, he bristled under the tedium of his routine and the mediocrity of its results. Virtually since his first drawings, completed at age four, Klee was at heart a miniaturist. Almost all of his student production reveals a consistent economy of means and a nervous linear energy that precluded large-scale works.

Klee's third diary, commencing in June 1902, begins with the illumination of several themes that can be traced through the length of his development. He stated, " a strict review of my situation as a creative artist doesn't yield very encouraging results. I don't know why, but I continue nonetheless to be hopeful."[4] This theme of confidence in a revelation to come is echoed again and appears like an individual mirror of a similar sentiment expressed across Europe, that of a period of approaching enlightenment which was as yet unattained.

He directed himself purposefully but in isolation "along a spiritual path: with every step more solitary."[5] Klee's urge toward spiritual development as a precursor to artistic maturity,as opposed to the simple mastery of technique, is evident from this early date:

> The main thing now is not to paint precociously, but to be or at least, to become an individual. The art of mastering life is the prerequisite for all further forms of expression, whether they are paintings, sculptures, tragedies or musical com-

> positions. Not only to master life in practice, but to shape it meaningfully within me... A Welt-anschauung will yield the clearest path. [6]

The cornerstone of Worringer's aesthetic paradigm, that art is a function of the spirit, is clearly hinted at by Klee several years before the publication of Abstraction and Empathy.

Klee also stressed the importance of historical tradition in art, an almost paralysing recognition of the weight of past achievement, he wrote, "I have seen a piece of living history. The Forum and the Vatican spoke to me."[7] Compared to the glory of the ancients his own efforts appeared even more trivial, but he perceived no alternative to them, "I must go along with it, if only for a little way. Farewell elves, moon fairy, star dust."[8]

A short time later the issue became even more acute. As he put it, "the thought of having to live in an epigonic age is almost unbearable.In Italy I was almost helplessly under the sway of this thought."[9] Klee clearly viewed the aesthetics of the contemporary art establishment as mediocre and anachronistic. He accepted the necessity of a renewed conception of art before possessing a true vision of this renewal. Worringer, in his theory of the necessity of artistic volition and his general influence on nascent Expressionism, would answer this early concern of Klee.

A more private aspect of Klee's struggle is evident in this period. His engagement to a young Munich pianist, Lily Stumpf, seemed in a precarious state due to the objections of her father, a middle-class doctor. The father's disappointment in his daughter's choice of an unknown artist with little prospect of

commercial success can be inferred through a multitude of wry comments, such as, "things are less moderate in Munich. Meddlesome fathers hardly belong among the pleasant things in life."[10] Klee described a similar difficulty when he admits, with some irony, undergoing unwanted academic training to answer enquiries from judgemental relatives.[11]

This tension between Klee's aspirations and the apparently oblivious ignorance found in his middle-class environment very probably contributed to his longstanding desire to satirize the bourgeoisie. Klee mocked the pretension of art patrons: "And what about us art idiots. Are we complete non-entities. Artists live off us, who buy their books and paintings."[12] This contempt would be manifest throughout the coming years as the taste and the opinions of the bourgeoisie of Bern and Munich would ensure Klee's obscurity. This attitude was evident in Klee's opinion of artists popular with the middle class. Boecklin, a particular favorite, was " bearable", but "his fantasy roams too far."[13]

These nascent conflicts about the nature of art and Klee's choice of style and subject matter mirror the concerns of many avant-garde artists of the time. On a formal level Klee indulged in a variety of experiments that confirmed his natural tendency as a graphic artist who favoured a linear style and small-scale subjects. He described one day choosing a " very small formal motif " and " trying to execute it economically, not in several stages, of course, but in a single act, armed with a pencil." He continued in the same entry: "I begin to execute forms as if I knew nothing about painting. For I have discovered a very small, undisputed personal possession: a particular sort of three-

dimensional representation on a flat surface."[14]

For years Klee would struggle with the apparent contradiction of the direction of his ability and his desire to create meaningful art. This was due largely to the view that the traditional vehicle for serious themes had been large-scale oil-painting. Graphic art was a category of a more secondary and ephemeral kind restricted to less important subjects particularly journal illustration. It is this issue that Worringer's ideas would address directly. It is therefore useful to examine further the growing tension between Klee's creative ambitions and his constant dissatisfaction with his art and then focus on the influence that Worringer would exert.

Although Klee's ambition toward spiritual expression was intense, his nature tended often toward misanthropy. A good example can be found in his description of Sunday afternoons in Bern where " these poor people are so ugly for the most part they are hateful rather than pitiable."[15] Although this instance is somewhat extreme, it is generally true that Klee's interest in humanity was of an objective not empathetic kind. This removed and ironic sensibility, combined with Klee's linear tendency, found a natural outlet in satire and caricature. His first major work, the series of ten etchings known as the Inventions, undertaken in 1903, belongs to this genre.

This series of imaginative constructions, some with vague suggestions of mythological origins, sought to illuminate the ignobility of the human condition. Despite Klee's almost

ceaseless work and multiple revisions, he rarely expressed any unqualified satisfaction with them. He described The Prophet of May or June 1904 as a " weird production, more for the curiosity seeker."[16] A potential subject, a rubberlike creature attacked by arrows, is finally rejected as " too anecdotal ".[17]

The series had an inauspicious beginning. In September of 1903, Klee described a state of total disconsolation, saying, "all is empty around me, cold and waste, nasty and cursed."[18] His mood improved during his work on the etching, Two Men Meet Each Believing the Other to be of Higher Rank. (fig. 1) His work proceeded slowly, but he was at last reasonably pleased with the results. Yet he was unsure of the meaning and purpose of his newly created series, so that he asked, "what will become of this kind of thing ?"[19]

Klee's statement that he rejected subject matter as too anecdotal involves a significant choice of words, for satire and caricature, more than most other examples of pictorial art, refer far beyond themselves to the worlds of political and social relationships for their meaning. This observation betrays Klee's early awareness of the issue of the relationship of content to form. And, more significantly, it betrays his rather instinctive unease at the preponderance of narrative in his work. This is confirmed in a letter to Lily, written in 1906, concerning the Inventions series and isolating their essential flaw: " Nobody will notice but the flaw in my etchings is that, although pictorially conceived, they can be epigrammatically explained. They are a combination of pure painting and pure drawing.."[20] This observation mirrors precisely Worringer's

explanation of the incompatibility of formal purity and narrative content in 1908, as is evident in the following passage:

> The essence of Cis-Alpine art consists precisely in the fact that it is incapable of expressing what it has to say with purely formal means but that it degrades these means to bearers of a literary content that lies outside the aesthetic effect. 21

It not only illuminates shared concerns but illustrates Klee's obvious predisposition to the ideas in Abstraction and Empathy which would address the problem directly.

Another element of satire, a humourous aspect, also seemed to worry Klee somewhat. In consequence, he sought to separate satire from the mundane and illuminate its broader philosophical implications: "Satire must not be a kind of superfluous ill will, but ill will from a higher point of view." [22] It was an expression of " hatred against the bogged down vileness of average man against the possible heights that humanity might attain." [23]

He provided, in his own diary, lengthy explanations of these etchings, by a variety of eclectic classical allusions relating them to the comedies of Aristophanes and the writings of Ovid, Heine and Gogol. He speculated that " there exists a kind of laughter which is worthy to be ranked with the higher emotions and is infinitely different from the twitching of a mean merrymaker ." [24] Klee's urge to provide an eclectic and cultural pedigree for his work, to demonstrate that it was an insightful comment on the degraded nature of human condition, hints at a concern that they might lack this very profundity. Except for this series, Klee would never display a similar

exegetical tendency toward his own subject matter.

Upon completion of the series, Klee reflected upon the prints and found them wanting. Although they represented an accomplishment, something begun and finished, their limitations were visible:

> In my eyes the engravings lie before me like a completed Opus one, or more exactly behind me. For they are already curious to me like some chronicle taken from my life. I now ought to prove this to others, not to myself by doing something. I have very definite feelings, but have yet transformed them into art. 25

While Klee's view of his own progress is documented carefully in the diaries, his early conception of general artistic questions of the day is somewhat more vague. His early and presumably self-imposed insularity from contemporary art is well known. The best known example is Klee's visit to Paris with fellow painter Louis Moilliet in 1905. Although he recorded a multitude of observations on Leonardo and on the Impressionists, he apparently remained unaware of the Fauves. Significantly, he seemed to find the neo-Baroque Romanticism of Delacroix inaccessible. Klee recorded no opinion of the art of the Secessions, of the Phalanx group or the NKV; there is even a question if he was aware of them at all at this time.

Until about 1908 Klee articulated his creative options as a choice between the conventional naturalism of academic painting and the freer spontaneity of Impressionism. He envisioned a "dry theoretical compromise between strict and impressionistic painting."[26] Although there are references to abstraction as early as 1902, they are found in passages that have definitely been revised years later. Impressionism, accessible to Klee in

its original French form and its German variants, was not meant as a designation of a particular style, that associated with French painting of the second half of the nineteenth century. Klee saw Impressionism as a specific approach to a subject, one that contrasted with the laborious and studied method of conventional painting. In practice it was true to its name, as the artist's immediate and spontaneous impression of the subject was captured. This technique was still closely connected to the material world as it implies, indeed demands, the study of a physical model. And finally the emotional veracity of the finished work determined its success."The fragmentariness which is typical of so many Impressionist works is a consequence of their fidelity to inspiration. Where it ends the work must stop too."[27] He emphasized the creative process as the definitive explanation of Impressionism," the subject itself is certainly dead. What counts is impressions before the subject."[28]

Yet in practice in this period, Klee simply bypassed this theoretical duality of Impressionism and academicism. His first serious works, the Inventions, were based only generally on his anatomical studies and, it is hardly necessary to say, had no specific model. Stylistically they had no affinity to popular art, and their subject matter had no connection to Impressionism.[29] In his imaginative linear fantasies Klee foreshadowed, with no express intention , his development toward abstraction. He would abandon the the literary anecdotalism of the series in favour of a more gentle ironic tone, but the poetic linearity and

his creation of a fantastic transcendental reality would remain.

This evolution was partly the result of the natural maturation of Klee's taste and intellect. Yet there are suggestions of other processes at work. Klee conceived, in these early years, of the artistic process as beginning with the poetic conception of a subject, meaning an external, almost literary idea of subject matter.[30] The artist would then transfer this idea to a pictorial image. His nagging dissatisfaction with the Inventions was due to his view that this process led to a lack of true integration of form and subject, that his images possessed a literary quality that caused them to be perceived narratively, not aesthetically. Worringer, in Abstraction and Empathy, would address this issue directly, and more importantly, discuss its solution. If Paul Klee encountered Abstraction and Empathy at the date of its publication, he could not have failed to view it as a mirror of his own concerns.

Klee returned to Munich in the autumn of 1907 and was married to Lily Stumpf. His marriage and the birth of his son Felix in 1908 instilled new confidence but increased his preoccupation with domestic affairs, particularly financial stability. He discussed his virtually unnoticed participation in the 1906 Munich Secession exhibition, where he was generally ignored or discouraged by those whose support he had sought.[31] His constant, introspective examination of aesthetic questions also lessened with his new resposibility. Discussion of his work assumed the form of descriptions of technical experiments. In June 1907 he said: " I am obsessed with tonality. I squint convulsively (if only some teacher had advised me to do

this.)"[32] Three months later he discussed working en plein air with " charcoal sometimes touched up with colour. On a misty autumn morning I spread the large sheets of Ingres paper out on the gravel in the garden..."[33]

The entries of 1908 provide a strong contrast in tone and content to those of the two preceding years. Undoubtedly the cultural life and atmosphere of Munich provided greater stimulation than life in Bern. Once Klee had settled into the routine of family duties, he was again ready to consider issues pertaining to his work.An examination of the diaries of this year suggests a burgeoning interest in the polemics of contemporary art. This interest was most likely fostered by his position as a foreign art correspondent for the Swiss journal Die Alpen for which he contributed a well-known review of the first German showing of Cubism. He remarked on the continuing limitation of his technical aptitude, particularly of his colouristic ability, but even his doubts contain a germ of hope: " Sometimes colour harmonies take hold of me, but then I am not ready to hold them fast, I am not equipped."[34]

Klee's discussion of Van Gogh in 1908 is very revealing: " Van Gogh is congenial to me, "Vincent" in his letters. Perhaps nature does have something."[35] It is important because Van Gogh had become a sort of proto-Expressionist password at this time. An ascription to the cult of Van Gogh in 1908 would indicate the formation of a particular mentality. It betrays an interest in the ascendency of formalism, of the aesthetics of line and of the function of art as a direct

transcription of the spirit. Klee traced Van Gogh's tragic end to an imbalance of emotional fervour and great talent. This interest was shared by a large segment of the German population. More than any painter of pre-war Germany, Van Gogh was the archetype of the " peintre maudit ".[36] A visionary genius, ignored by bourgeois society, whose psychic frailty could not endure the magnitude of his emotion, he seemed a harbinger and symbol of a renewed spirit and sensibility and assumed significance as an exemplar for the Expressionist generation.[37]

Although there had been an annual Van Gogh exhibition in Germany since 1901, his formal influence on the Blaue Reiter is difficult to trace. There is, for example, some suggestion of the Dutch artist's style in Kandinsky's landscapes of Murnau of 1908,[38] but overall Fauvism seems to have held greater sway. This is not true, however, of the Brücke, who counted Van Gogh among their multitude of influences.[39] It was more likely his letters, published at regular intervals in Germany after 1904, that captured public imagination.[40] This suggests that it was the romantic example provided by Van Gogh's life, more than any image he created, that provided inspiration.

The main promulgator of Van Gogh's image in Germany was Julius Meier-Graefe. A prolific and popular art critic, Meier-Graefe published, in 1899, the first German consideration of Van Gogh in his collection of essays, Beitrage zu eine modernen Aesthetik.[41] He declared Van Gogh a phenomenon that was simultaneously beyond cultural evaluation yet supremely modern in his development of Impressionism. An intriguing aspect of his argument lay in his assessment of the technical merits of of Van

Gogh's style. Van Gogh was significant because he adapted and transcended the painterly, decorative nature of Impressionism with an " essential linear treatment."[42] This inarguably formalist sentiment of the invigorating effect of a linear aesthetic betrays Meier-Graefe's early interest in Jugendstil theory. It also demonstrates the early and widely -shared conviction in the enlightening force of linear treatment. But it would be Wilhelm Worringer who would provide a thorough development of this conviction in Form in Gothic.

Although it is probable that Klee knew of Meier-Graefe's writings on Van Gogh, as he displayed detailed knowledge of the critics' thoughts on other subjects,Klee's early reference to Van Gogh is more in keeping with the public vision of the artist's tragic character. Yet Klee's observation,"perhaps nature does have something after all,"[43] suggests the formation of an aesthetic viewpoint in which Worringer would play a significant role. Klee's models of traditional and Impressionistic painting both treat nature with relative degrees of materialism as both seek to render the subject from life, although the latter filters its vision through the artist's temperament. Van Gogh's forms are derived from nature but function as expressive elements of internal impulses.

The year 1908 saw the publication of Abstraction and Empathy, and a thorough search could not find a more appropriate artist than Van Gogh to illustrate many of Worringer's precepts of the abstract artist. Van Gogh, it was generally believed, used his landscapes and portraits to convey his inner turmoil and

escape the psychic distress of the world around him. His forms were manipulated and abstracted through the violent use of hatched brushstrokes and bold outlines to function as vehicles of inner necessity. Although Klee's first reference to Van Gogh was too early to have been shaped by Worringer, it suggests a general climate of acceptance for Worringer's ideas.

The cult of Van Gogh and the proliferation of avant-garde movements in 1908 indicates a condition of receptiveness for the ideas of Abstraction and Empathy. The image of a variety of disparate creative ideas in search of a definitive theory is not inappropriate. This view is supported by the very circumstances of the publication of Worringer's thesis. In his own preface, Worringer describes how the cultural elite of Munich, "the city of 5,000 painters", demanded vociferously that the publishers R. Piper and Co. release the book into general circulation after early capsule reviews were printed in Kunst und Kunstler, so that Abstraction and Empathy was published in answer to public insistence.[44] Both this initial response and the longevity of the book support the argument that Worringer's ideas were disseminated rapidly yet were considered important enough to remain as topics of some currency for two more decades.

The watershed of this new artistic conception can be seen in Klee's diary entry of March 1908. The structure and tense of the passage suggest a revision after a significant length of time. The revised sections of the diary are most often identifiable by this particular tone, which suggests the reconsideration of events in retrospect. Untouched sections are generally written in present tenses. Most of the 1908 diary seems to have been

rewritten. The exact date of this revision is of course unavailable; whether it was undertaken in the same year or in the major rewriting of 1911 is unknown. Here Klee discussed the glass picture The Balcony, a domestic street scene painted from his kitchen; his description of his creative process is very revealing. He says:

> I had already seen the picture a couple of days earlier, from my kitchen balcony, naturally, which was my only way of getting out. I was able to free myself from all that is accidental in this slice of nature both in the drawing and in the tonality, and rendered only this typical through carefully planned, formal genesis. Have I really come out of the jungle now? 45

Klee's choice of terminology must be the result of some familiarity with Worringer's aesthetic model. The process of abstraction, of liberating pictorial form from the vagaries of nature and depicting only its concrete essence, is a concept without antecedent or genesis in the diaries. It appears for the first time here in 1908 with no hint of earlier development. Klee's very use of the term "accidental" in this context, his express intention of reducing his image from nature in order to attain a purer conception, indicates a direct origin in the precepts of abstraction outlined in Abstraction and Empathy. His perception that abstraction was the tool of his own liberation is essential. The relationship of art to the external world that can be inferred from this principle, that natural phenonema depicted in microcosm elucidate larger truths and principles, can describe much of Klee's art from this period until the end of his life. A single pictorial model was not

important for its specific detail but for its connection to the world, and the artist's function was to illuminate the connection around it. Nature, for Klee, beginning in this year, would become not an end in itself but a path to that end. This concept was clearly formulated by Worringer at exactly this time, as is evident in this passage form Abstraction and Empathy:

> Their most powerful urge was, so to speak, to wrest the object of the external world out of its natural context, out of the unending flux of being, to purify it of all its dependence upon life, i.e. of everything about it that was arbitrary, to render it necessary and irrefragable to approximate it to its absolute value. 46

It is crucial to observe a significant expansion of the location of meaning in the work of art. What, precisely, separated The Balcony from the work immediately preceeding it or from the earlier Inventions? The subject reveals no particular test of the imagination, and was like a multitude of other landscape views that Klee produced in this period. Klee identified it himself as the creative process undertaken, not the finished image. The value of The Balcony does not lie in any external iconographic attribution, his subject matter is almost incidental, but in the concious abstraction that the artist has employed. The Balcony, with its intentionally conventional subject matter, bridges the gap between Klee's Impressionist exercises of this time and his later imaginative linear constructions. Prior to the diary entry of 1908, Impressionism had been the empirical search for immediacy and spontaneity. By allowing the formal structure to dominate, Klee provided the framework for the pre-eminence of abstraction.

Influences of Abstraction and Empathy can be found throughout Klee's diary of this period. Worringer's important thesis of the necessity of artistic volition, that style was an inevitable function of an individual's spiritual and psychological heritage, was echoed by Klee. A diary entry of 1908 reads: "He has found his style, when he cannot do otherwise ie. cannot do something else. The way to style: gnothi s'auton (know thyself)."[47] His burgeoning assurance of the inherent direction of his ability, his tendency toward linear abstracted images, ends or at least lessens Klee's ongoing stylistic vacillation in search of some popular acceptance. "The line. My lines of 1906/07 were my most personal possession."[48] Yet he knows that he is far from any genuine realization of his ambitions, as he wrote evocatively in the summer of 1908:

> There are days that resemble a battle that reeks of blood. Now it is the depth of night but not for me, for the others, for the dullards who do not sense the battle. 49

It is clear, however, that much of the answer lay in abstraction, that by 1908 the expressive potential of naturalistic representation was entirely exhausted and that in the distortion of nature lay a "bridge between inside and outside".[50] Once again, in terms that must be more than coincidentally reminiscent of Worringer's writings, Klee praised the merits of the reduction of pictorial elements in order to achieve the essence of an image. He wrote: "One wants to say more than nature and one makes the impossible mistake of wanting to say it with more means instead of fewer."[51] Soon Worringer's principle, that of art as both a vehicle and consequence of the

spirit, are firmly entrenched: "Heighten the lighting process psychologically in place; heighten where the spirit needs it, not where nature sets up its highlights."[52]

It is intriguing that Paul Klee, working in comparative isolation, displayed a growing disillusionment with the empty traditions of academic art, a feeling common to the rest of the avant garde, such as the NKV. He clearly identified his own artistic development as a step toward a new enlightenment. In a passage that has been suggested as a direct reference to Abstraction and Empathy[53], Klee says, "and instead of books and hollow oaths, that is, instead of official lies, I cherish a wakening, living word. Naturally people who can bear it are needed."[54] Although a precise connection to Worringer is not demonstrable, Klee refers undoubtedly to the undercurrent of change in the artistic climate of Munich, of which Worringer was an undisputed catalyst.

Klee's diary of 1908 ends with three significant conclusions. The first involves the antithetical relationship of naturalism and linear abstraction; he says: "A work of art goes beyond naturalism the instant line enters in as an independent pictorial element."[55] The formulation confirmed his original direction toward the world of the imagination, and for the moment lessened his ambition in the realm of colour. The second conclusion involves the nature of the creative process itself. Having no mimetic function at all, his art would now become the vehicle of the emotions and the spirit. Yet this function would be bound indirectly to nature. It is important to note that the

logical conclusion of Worringer's abstraction does not lie in totally non-objective art; for him the very term "abstraction" implies abstracting from "something". In this passage Klee speaks of the end of his "frustration resulting from isolation" which has brought about this new vision.[56] Typically, Klee does not clarify the causes of the end of his insularity. It is possible to speculate that he experienced an invigoration, similar to that of Kandinsky and later Marc, as a result of Worringer's ideas.

Finally, Klee focuses on the growing primacy of formalism. He begins to suggest that much of the meaning of his work is to be found in its structure and not in its subject matter: "The form occupies the foreground of our interest. It is the object of our efforts... But it would be wrong to conclude from this that the contents that it embraces are secondary."[57] In these cumulative observations of 1908, it is evident that Klee had arrived at many of the most significant precepts of Abstraction and Empathy. Together they indicate a vast distance from the aesthetic concerns of only a few years earlier.

The next significant connection to Worringer can be found in the diary of 1909. It concerns the subject of primitivism and contemporary art. Klee, like most artists connected to German Expressionism, is associated with an awareness and absorption of primitive influences, ranging from genuine tribal artifacts of Africa and Oceania and the folk art of Breton and Russian peasants to the art of children.[58] The primitivism of the other Blaue Reiter painters differed slightly from that of Klee. They sought

to emulate the spontaneity and proximity to truth that they perceived in art untouched by academic training.[59] As August Macke wrote in Die Masken of 1912:

> To understand the speech of forms is to be nearer the secret to live. To create forms is to live. Are not children creators who build directly from the secret of their perceptions, rather than the imitators of Greek form? 60

The formal connection of the Blaue Reiter to primitive art was largely restricted to the colourism and flattened forms of medieval and folk art, and in general was not as strong as the African inspiration of the Brucke. In the case of Klee the concept of primitivism was even more tendentious. It is clear in this early stage of his work that he views his relationship to primitvism as one of analogy, not direct influence. He writes: "If my works sometimes produce a primitive impression, this primitiveness is explained by my discipline, which consists in reducing everything to a few steps. It is no more than economy; that is, the ultimate professional awareness. Which is to say, the opposite of real primitiveness..."[61] Klee's laborious devotion to art made him balk at the suggestion of any creative shortcut.

This statement suggests a certain early impatience with explanations of his work, but more importantly, it exhibits great affinity with Worringer's connection of primitive and contemporary art. The artistic volition of primitive man, one of fear and distress, that produced abstract tendencies was not to be duplicated by the modern artist. Although the reduction to essential forms would be similar, it would now result from

disdain and rejection of the physical world and a need to express ideas of a more transcendental cast. These two states of mind are already well documented in Klee's diary. Therefore, the process was identical but the motivation was not. No dialogue between primitive and contemporary art would necessarily exist. Once again, Klee's timely duplication of a fundamental principle of Abstraction and Empathy is evident in his denial of anything other than a visual similarity to primitivism.

Although this view would become modified during Klee's association with the Blaue Reiter [62], this statement suggests a familiarity with currents of aesthetic thought, one that belies the picture of isolation suggested by the diaries. Regarded objectively, there is little that has changed in Klee's situation from 1906; he expressed no complete satisfaction with his art and any prospect of commercial success appeared distant, as his work was rejected by no less an authority than Meier-Graefe.[63] Yet his ambition appeared strengthened and his confidence unshakeable. Reflecting on the prospect of becoming thirty years old, he wrote:

> This scares me a little. 'You've had your time, your dreams, your fantasies. What really matters now is to do what you can. Realism and no affected high fantasies hence forth!' But the vagabond will remain incurable, that's sure! [64]

He began to form plans to illustrate Voltaire's Candide, which was to become his first fully realized mature work. With its "exquisitely spare and exact expression",[65] Candide possessed qualities that he himself aspired to. Klee's earlier evocation of a "wakening living word", a voice of anti-traditionalism,

suggests an external source for at least a part of his vigorous optimism. Perhaps he referred to the general climate of restless innovation apparent in Munich of which Klee must have been aware at this time.

Throughout 1910, Klee was almost totally preoccupied with technical experiments as he attempted to enlarge his stylistic repertoire. His abandonment of the physical model was virtually complete, yet he was still concerned with his colouristic limitations. As Klee said in 1908: "to adapt oneself to the contents of the paintbox is more important than nature and its study. I must someday be able to improvise freely on the chromatic keyboard of the rows of watercolour cups".[66]

His ambition still lay in the depiction of the external world, but he sought to capture its essence, not its multiplicity of detail; goals, it is worth noting again, that would have seemed very familiar to Wilhelm Worringer. One such experiment involved the use of a magnifying glass through which the subject would be dissolved into its component masses of colour and all distracting individual elements would simply be blurred.[67] It would, in addition, have the effect of completely dissolving the spatial relationship of the subject. Space, it must be remembered, was singled out by Worringer as the primary enemy of abstraction. These experiments had the added effect of allowing Klee to integrate his drawing and colour. Such was Klee's belief in his "fundamental graphic talent",[68] that even in these early forays into colour he attempted the problematic integration of drawing and painting. His conviction in the "cultivation of means in

their pure state"[69] is also obvious in the fact that Klee did not feel the necessity of even mentioning the subject matter of his work any longer.

The year 1911 provides the majority of evidence for the influence of Worringer on Klee. There is a certain symmetry in this influence that is worth ncting. In 1908, the first examples of a strong affinity between Klee and Worringer can be observed, and that was, of course, the year of the publication of Abstraction and Empathy. Likewise 1911, the second year of strong influence, saw the popularization of Form in Gothic. Once again Klee praised the "liberties of graphic simplification". Yet the tone and language he employed in this discussion have undergone a significant change. Although he had long accepted his capacity for linear treatment as his artistic fate, he now clearly began to regard it in a celebratory fashion. Instead of perceiving it as poor substitute for painterly ability, it became slowly , in his own mind, his real strength: "Now I again need the contour, that it gather and capture the impressions which are fluttering around. Let it be the spirit ruling over nature".[70] The proximity of this sentiment to Worringer's precept of the transcendental nature of line is too close to be coincidental. For Klee, line became an envigorating and dominating force of an almost independent nature. The very attribution of singular ability to individual pictorial elements is in itself indicative of Worringer's influence.

This position is somewhat unexpected, as events in the spring of 1911 confirm that it is precisely Klee's nature as a

graphic artist "of extreme modern tendency"[71] that is an impediment to larger success and recognition. He was rejected and discouraged by two important gallery owners, Thannhauser and Brackl, on precisely these grounds. Although his growing friendship with a more established artist, the Austrian Alfred Kubin, seemed to lessen Klee's difficulties somewhat, genuine acceptance must have seemed a distant prospect.

The entries of 1911 contain one of the most revealing passages of all Klee's diaries. Evaluating the evolution of his work, he perceived a growing maturity and profundity, "something new seems to be happening to the stream: it is broadening into a lake"[72]. A stronger conviction began to develop in the example of Van Gogh, who, in 1909, had taken secondary place to Cezanne. Van Gogh "was able to reach deep, very deep into his own heart"[73]. Unlike Klee's previous consideration of Van Gogh, this one focused on a specifically formal element, the virtual apotheosis of the line in the work of the Dutch artist:

> It is particularly tempting to view Van Gogh in historical retrospect - how he came without a break from Impressionism and created novelty. His line is new and yet very old and happily not a purely European affair. It is more a question of reform than of revolution. The realization that there exists a line that benefits from Impressionism and at the same time conquers it has a truly electrifying effect on me. 'Progress possible in the line!' The possibility ripened in me of harmonizing my swarming scribbles with firmly restraining linear boundaries. And this will bear for me a further fruit: a line that eats and digests scribbles. Assimilation. 74

Klee's new characterization of his vision as a "self without blinkers"[75], changed largely through the revelatory properties of linear abstraction, has many parallels to Worringer's ideas in

Form in Gothic. The correspondences are numerous. For example, the essential timelessness of line and its historical continuity referred to by Klee, were two of Worringer's primary theses. Klee's use of the term "reform" as opposed to "revolution" is significant as it implies a sort of restoration to a true and meaningful aesthetic, a prospect that both Worringer and the Expressionists envisaged. The properties that Klee attributes to the line are revealing as well. It is an active and invigorating force, one that assimilates art forms of the past yet transcends them, endowing images with meaning.

Klee's knowledge of Worringer at this time is supported by firm evidence. In a letter to his wife, dated July 30th, 1911, he described a visit by an acquaintance of Worringer to his home. With typical brevity Klee outlined to Lily the basic tenets of Worringer's thought:

> Er findet auch den Privatdozenten Worringer hier, den mir Michel schon erwahnt hat, sehr beachtenswert. Der ist für die Distanz von Natur und Kunst, betrachtet Kunst ein Welt für sich, ist nicht der Meinung, dasz die Primitiven zu wenig gekonnt haben usw. 76

Once again, as one has come to expect, Klee refrained from a specific judgement of Worringer's viewpoint, yet the general sense of his comment suggests a state of mind tending toward approval. It must be remembered that when writing to his wife, Klee's consideration of aesthetic questions would have probably been briefer than in correspondence with another artist. The two ideas isolated in his letter, the abandonment of nature and the value of primitive influence, had had a long development in

Klee's thought. Their appearance in Klee's writings coincided exactly with their publication by Worringer, a fact of which Klee could not have been unaware. Klee's conscious rejection of nature, as the academics saw it, is well documented in the diaries of 1911, so that he, at the very least, would have felt some kinship on that account. Similarly the championing of primitivism would have been viewed at this time by Klee and his circle as evidence of an enlightened intellect. But Worringer not only held these opinions, but was largely responsible for formulating and propagating them for several years throughout Germany. Logic dictates that the true relationship was more thorough than the casual contact suggested by this letter.

Further evidence of this influence can be found in the revision of the entries of 1903. Nature is described as an unhealthy detour from the abstraction of his earliest efforts. It became a "useful crutch", but a barrier to true expression. The production of these years was inherently moribund as it was a capitulation to popular Impressionistic practice. Klee singled out 1911, the year of his linear revelation, as his breakthrough to his true style. Here Klee is reinterpreting his own history in terms that are too evocative of Worringer to be coincidental.

A friendly relationship with Worringer is also suggested in a letter to Klee from Kandinsky. Dating from the summer of 1914, it is a little late for the purposes of this argument, but it does document Worringer's lasting presence in the milieu of the Blaue Reiter. Kandinsky wrote to Klee of the dispersion of their mutual friends due to the impending war with characteristic

visionary optimism:

> There is a voice out of the future music of united humanity. What do you know about our friends? We visited the Marcs before our sudden departure from Murnau. They were in a gloomy mood. Where are the Helbigs? Amiets? Moilliets? Dr. Worringer? 77

It is somewhat unfortunate that Klee's association with the Blaue Reiter brings to a virtual end the introspective stylistic discussions of the diaries. Indeed the passage of 1911 concerning the linear potential of his art is about the last intimate consideration of his own work that he recorded. Certainly his life in the Expressionist milieu and his trip to Tunisia lessened his isolation and perhaps his need for constant self-examination as well, while his military experience in the German army left him with limited time. In 1912, Klee began to shift his formulation of aesthetic questions and maxims from his own work to that of other artists.

There are, however, echoes of Worringer's thought in the following years. These references suggest a deeper or at least different comprehension of those ideas than the examples already discussed. It is as though much of Klee's entire view of the world, and the individuals that inhabit it, had been coloured by Worringer's precepts. The most persuasive instance can be found in Klee's discussion of the premature death of his friend Franz Marc, killed in action in World War I. In the entry of Spring 1916, Klee illuminates the essential contrast between himself and his dead friend:

> He is more human , he loves more warmly , more demonstrative. He responds to animals as if they were human. He raises them to his level. He does not begin by dissolving himself, becoming merely a part of the

> whole, so as to place himself on the same level with plants and stone and animals... My fire is like that of the dead or of the unborn. No wonder that he found more love... What my art probably lacks, is a kind of passionate humanity. I don't love animals and every sort of creature with an earthly warmth... The earth idea gives way to the world idea. My love is distant and religious. 78

This passage could hardly be more evocative of Worringer's dichotomy of the empathetic and abstract spirit. Klee identified himself with the transcendental abstract mentality, removed from the world by his disdain for it. Marc, in contrast, was remarkable for his empathetic involvement with nature, for his humanism and objectification of himself into the world around him. While his use of this duality is not, in this instance, appropriate theoretically, Worringer's polemics have, almost a decade after their publication, become essential to Klee's discourse. They exist not on the superficial level of a theoretical trend, but as a paradigm for examining the world around him.

The final example is included last because it is not directly attributable to Klee, but exists in a reference in the correspondance of Franz Marc and August Macke. In a letter dated June 12, 1914, Marc wrote to Macke:

> Ich denke ziemlich wie Klee, dessen Meinung Du ja kennen gelernt haben wirst. Ich bin Deutscher und kann nur auf meinem eigenen Acker graben; was geht mich die peinture der Orphisten an? So schon wie die Franzosen, sagen wir...
> Wir Deutsche sind und bleiben die geborenen Graphiker, Illustratoren auch als Maler. (Worringer sagt das sehr hubsch in seiner Einleitung zur "Altdeutschen Buchillustration") 79

Allowing for a certain forcefulness of expression that is most likely the result of Marc's interpretation, the direct

implication of this passage is that this opinion is shared, and more importantly, expounded, by Paul Klee. It is a viewpoint derived directly from Worringer's Form in Gothic. This demonstrates that Klee has accepted the precept of inner neccesity and the inevitability of pictorial form given an artist's ethnic and spiritual heritage. It also suggests a body of opinion that rarely found a voice in his writings, so that the absence of a concrete view on a particular subject in his diaries or letters does not necessarily indicate a total absence of that belief in general. This view provided a theoretical foundation for almost all of Klee's later work which featured a stress on the linear structure of a composition even in the presence of the most brilliant colourism and diverse subject matter.

## Notes

1. For the most thorough consideration of the relationship of Kandinsky and Klee see, Beeke Sell Tower, Klee and Kandinsky in Munich and at the Bauhaus. (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1981).

2. This lecture would provide the basis for Klee's treatise On Modern Art.

3. Although Klee had been a neighbor of Kandinsky in the Schwabing district for some years, he was introduced to Kandinsky in the autumn of 1911.

4. Paul Klee, The Diaries of Paul Klee. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 118.

5. Ibid., 119.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid., 120.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid., 125.

10. Ibid., 121.

11. Ibid., 125.

12. Ibid., 141.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid., 124.

15. Ibid., 138.

16. Ibid., 152.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid., 144.

19. Ibid.

20. Will Grohmann, Paul Klee. (New York: Harry N. Abrams Inc., 1954), 45.

21. Wilhelm Worringer, Abstraction and Empathy. (New York: International Universities Press, 1963), 31.

22. Paul Klee .Diaries, 122.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid., 170.

25. Ibid., 187.

26. Ibid., 121.

27. Ibid., 172.

28. Ibid., 184.

29. Although the Inventions are sometimes linked stylistically to Jugendstil, the meticulous and angular technique would seem to have little connection to the organic and flowing forms of Art Nouveau.

30. Ibid., 141.

31. Ibid., 213.

32. Ibid., 214.

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid., 221.

35. Ibid., 220.

36. Caroline Zemel. The Formation of a Legend. (Ann Arbor: 1980), 106 - 107.

37. Ibid., 108 - 109.

38. Ibid., 108.

39. Peter Selz, German Expressionist Painting, 81 - 83.

40. Caroline Zemel, Van Gogh, 105.

41. Ibid., 115.

42. Ibid., 111.

43. Paul Klee, Diaries, 220.

44. Wilhelm Worringer, Abstraction and Empathy, x - xi.

45. Paul Klee, Diaries, 223.

46. Wilhelm Worringer, Abstraction and Empathy, 17.

47. Paul Klee, Diaries, 227.

48. Ibid., 228.

49. Ibid., 229.

50. Ibid., 228.

51. Ibid.

52. Ibid., 230.

53. Christian Geelhaar, Paul Klee and the Bauhaus. (New York: New York Graphic Society, 1973), 24.

54. Paul Klee, Diaries, 231.

55. Ibid., 232.

56. Ibid.

57. Ibid.

58.
For a complete discussion of the influence of the art of children on Klee, see O. K. Werckmeister, " The Issue of Childhood in the Art of Paul Klee," Arts Magazine. (vol. 52, no. 1 September 1977), 138 - 151.

59.
Robert Goldwater, Primitivism in Modern Art. (New York: Harvard University Press, 1986), 130 - 138.

60.
Klaus Lankheit, The Blaue Reiter Almanac, 85.

61.
Paul Klee, Diaries, 237.

62.
This opinion would be modified somewhat, probably because of the growing influence of the Blaue Reiter. Klee would later employ a multitude of varied primitive sources. A detailed examination of this issue may be found in James S. Pierce. Paul Klee and Primitive Art. (New York: Garland Inc , 1976).

63.
Paul Klee, Diaries, 240.

64.
Ibid.

65.
Ibid., 240.

66.
Ibid., 244.

67.
Ibid.

68.
Ibid.

69.
Ibid.

70. Ibid., 256.

71. Ibid., 257.

72. Ibid., 259.

73. Ibid.

74. Ibid., 260.

75. Ibid.

76. Felix Klee ed., Briefen an die Familie. (Cologne: DuMont Buch Verlag, 1979), 768. "He also found the lecturer Worringer who lives here whom Michael had mentioned to me very noteworthy. He believes in the distance between nature and art, looking at art as a world in itself, is not of the opinion that the primitives could do too little."(My translation)

77. Felix Klee, Paul Klee: His Life and Work in Documents. (New York: George Brazillier, 1962), 40.

78. P. Klee, Diaries, 344 - 345.

79. August Macke and F. Marc, Briefwechsel. (Cologne: M. Dumont Schauberg, 1964), 184. "I think similarly to Klee, whose opinion you will have become aware. I am German and can only till my own field, what is the painting of the Orphists to me? As beautiful as the French we say:
We are German and are born graphic artists, illustrators even when we are painters.( Worringer said this very

well in the preface for Altdeutschen Buchillustration).

(My translation)

## CHAPTER IV

## THE INFLUENCE OF WORRINGER ON THE ART OF PAUL KLEE

While Worringer's influence on Paul Klee's thinking about the nature and function of art is evident throughout much of his early development, it is more problematic to assert a direct causality between any theoretical source and Klee's work. Yet upon examination, there are precise correspondences between the stylistic formulations and revelations detailed in Klee's writings, and the growing maturity of his art. In turn, if these formative precepts find their origin in Worringer's thought, it is here that the link can be made. If Worringer confirmed Klee's direction toward anti-positivism, linearity and abstraction in his writings, he undoubtedly served a similar function for Klee's art.

To demonstrate this connection it is useful to employ the model of stylistic development provided by Klee himself in his retrospective analysis of 1911. He divided his work of this time into three stages; the earliest imaginative beginnings represented by the Inventions series, the rejection of the imagination of the naturalistic / Impressionistic period, and finally the re-acceptance of abstraction that culminated in his

association with the Blaue Reiter and the Candide etchings.[1]

The catalogue of Klee's 1906 exhibition includes ten Inventions, although the term "invention" appears on only seven of the etchings.[2] As early as 1901, he had written to his parents of his preference for etching as a medium with expressive potential.[3] The series was begun, with Klee working in the aptly named 'severe style', in the summer of 1903 with Woman and Beast (fig. 2), and ended with Menacing Head (fig. 3) of mid 1905.

A typical example of this style is found in the etching Virgin in a Tree (fig. 4) of 1903. Klee stated specifically that the image was intended as a critique of the social ideal of virginity.[4] Klee seems to play upon the traditional allegorical and moralizing possibilities of the figure of a female nude, indulging in almost scatalogical detail. Her years of denial have produced not a state of grace, but the most extreme decay. Her withered, elongated limbs are indistinguishable from the spikey forms of the tree. Her posture does not suggest an attitude of sadness or distress at her condition, rather her splayed legs and bent arm indicate a remaining conviction in her own allure, so that the woman is ridiculous as well as pitiable. This is due, as well, to a certain tension within the image; although there is the impression of an impending mortality in the dead forms of the branches and the figure's duplication of these shapes, her musculature, while bizarre, suggests a peculiar sort of menacing strength, and is not merely pathetic.

Another etching, Perseus or the Triumph of Wit Over Misfortune (fig. 5), exhibits the physiognomic interest displayed

by Klee at this time. The second title refers to the cunning employed by Perseus to gain victory over Medusa. Only the two heads of the characters, with Medusa in profile, serve to carry this theme. Klee's depiction of Perseus is somewhat unexpected, since he is not idealized here, but appears as a brutish, nearly deformed figure whose appearance belies the existence of wit. The head of the Medusa is rendered with an equally odd compression of facial features so that her nose seems turned upon itself. Indeed the similarity of the two heads suggests, on first impression, a three-quarter and side view of the same figure. Klee' discussion of the meaning of this etching is detailed:

> The action is depicted physiognomically in the features of Perseus, whose face enacts the deed. A laugh is mingled with the deep lines of pain and finally gains the upper hand. It reduces to absurdity the unmixed suffering of the Gorgon's head, added at the side. The face is without nobility - the skull shorn of its serpentine adornment except for one ludicrous remnant. 5

With the exhaustion of pictorial possibilities of the imaginative Invention series, Klee turned to nature and Impressionism for new subjects and experience. His invention of a new technique in 1905, drawing and painting on glass, encouraged this attention to naturalism. His attraction to this medium is never fully explained, although it did allow for a great deal of experimentation with tonality and the realm of pictorial masses and volumes. An attractive canvas from 1905, Garden Scene with Watering Can (fig. 6), is untypical in its picturesque detail. Its rather Fauvist colour (a movement of which Klee was unaware) and its sketchy pointillist technique

indicate an emulation of Impressionism.

Despite the attraction to naturalism in this period, most of Klee's work after 1908 can be seen as examples of the subtle but growing tendency toward abstraction. It is worth repeating here that Worringer merely confirmed existing tendencies in Klee's art, but that the development of several distinct devices of abstraction can be seen. In Furniture Caricature (fig. 7), of 1910, the interior view is, at first glance, reduced to the extremes of linearity while conveying, somewhat ironically, an abundance of domestic objects, such as clocks, vases, china figurines. While Klee has not suppressed space entirely, it is primarily the relationship of the objects, not traditional perspective, that provides the pictorial structure of the image. It is important to note that the pictorial means themselves, rather than any descriptive detail, carry the meaning of the drawing. In short, Klee illustrates the mundane clutter of his home-life in Munich through the nervous hatched outlines of objects on his sideboard, rather than the laboured duplication of the appearances of those objects. This hatching lends a somewhat ambiguous quality to the subject, as the undefined borders possess a rather disturbing, organic vitality. Although these phenomena were not entirely new, they were now appearing in more finished works where they had once been restricted to more informal sketches and drawings.

It is ironic that Klee's first full expression of the complete integration of form and content, the goal that had proven so elusive, is found in his series of illustrations for Voltaire's Candide, such as the illustration from Chapter Nine

(fig. 8). It is ironic, in that, of all pictorial undertakings, the illustration of an external narrative would, by its nature, contradict a pre-eminence of form. It would be the first project of its kind for Klee. He would illustrate another literary work, Curt Corrinth's Potsdamer Platz of 1920, but from then on scrupulously avoided offers of a similar kind.[6] Klee's first encounter with Voltaire's novel had come in 1905 when he proclaimed it "a unique book". Candide, with its restrained style, alternation of humour and pessimism, and its abstracted depiction of the depths of human misery and degradation seems almost to have been written for Klee's illustrations. The absence of a multitude of physical description in Candide gave Klee a wide opportunity for expressive detail. He began the project seriously in the spring of 1911. Although some sources fix its beginning as early as 1906 or 1909, no evidence of these attempts is extant.[7]

This is an issue because of the style of the Candide illustrations, which is new within Klee's oeuvre. The twenty seven pen drawings that make up the series possess a spareness and stylization that verges on calligraphy. He has employed a literal reduction of means, suppressing physical detail until it is mere notation. For example, in the illustration for Chapter Nine "Il le perce d'outre en outre". gruesome death by sword is rendered here with a single needle-like movement. The background against which the drama unfolds is entirely blank and a few scratches serve to indicate both ground and sky. The sketchy, attenuated figures remain almost undifferentiated throughout the

series. The protagonist is visible only by a prominent nose and a pigtail.[8] Candide, although possessed of an "exquisite and spare style", is still a novel of thematic complexity. Klee has so reduced his pictorial means that a few figures are obliged to bear the weight of the entire narrative. The success of his illustrations is dependent on the directness of their expression. Klee is here testing the truth of his maxim, "for in art, everything is best said once and in the simplest way."

The origin or motive of Klee's new style evident in the Candide drawings has been the subject of much speculation. A growing vibrancy and abstraction had been visible in Klee's drawings for some time. Good examples from 1910 include Furniture Caricature and The Quarrymen, yet the pure distortion and attenuation of the illustration is unique. Carola Gideon-Welcker links Klee's new style to the fantastic insect drawings found in the work of the nineteenth-century Swiss illustrator Martin Disteli,[9] yet the absence of any thematic or stylistic connection between Disteli's work, Der Mann Von Welt and Voltaire's novel, makes this influence unlikely. Charles Haxbthausen suggests the somewhat more feasible explanation that the "newness" of the Candide illustrations results from both Klee's current technical experiments in figure distortion and the burden of creating an innovative style or approach for a somewhat imposing project.[10]

This experiment involved the creation of a conventional image on a pane of glass, fixing the pane between a sheet of paper and a light, and then tracing the distorted image on the paper. He recorded his invention of this practice in his diaries

just prior to beginning the Candide project in his discussion of the Hinterglassbilder. In addition to this technical stylization, Haxthausen suggests that Klee's innovative linearity was a function of his conceptual isolation of gesture as the primary vehicle for communication of literary text.[11] Klee's reduction of physical volume through a suppression of conventional modelling and perspective was a function of his conclusion that "the body is perceived first and foremost as a gesticulating entity".[12] In Haxthausen's words, the new figure style was the "appropriately expressive plastic form" for the experiences and attitudes of his characters.

While this is indeed true, a close reading of Klee's views at this time reveals no opinion on the expressive merits of gesture, yet Klee's focus on the primacy of pictorial form suggests that Haxthausen's conclusion is actually reversed. To phrase it simply, Klee did not choose an extreme linear treatment because of his attraction to gesture, but focused on gesture because of its linear possibilities. Klee viewed his line of this period as possessing an almost conscious, organic power. It was the pictorial form that would conquer the weakness and vacillation of his earlier styles. It is not unreasonable to assume that the Candide illustrations were, in fact, a celebration of and testament to Klee's confidence in the power of line. Klee obliges the lines of Candide to serve every compositional function, from the creation of space and form to, in the case of the drawing for Chapter Twenty-Two, the suggestion of light.[13]

Evidence of Klee's conception of the compositional process as beginning not with thematic or narrative purposes, but with pictorial concerns, is found in Klee's writings of this time. He viewed a work of art as an entity that dominated the content it was intended to express:

> Like a man, a picture too has a skeleton, muscles, skin. One can speak of a peculiar anatomy of pictures. A picture with a concrete object - a naked man - should be fashioned, not in accordance with human anatomy, but with pictorial anatomy. One constructs a framework of the material to be built. How far one goes beyond the framework is arbitrary: the framework itself can already produce an artistic effect, a deeper one than the surface alone. 14

In order to assess the true development of the Candide series, it is instructive to compare it to examples from the Invention series dated only six to eight years earlier. There are several correspondences between the two projects as they both possess varying degrees of literary content and seek to illustrate developed themes. They share a sense of the tragicomic, of the degradation of mankind through circumstance and his own folly. Yet the distance that Klee has travelled in a comparatively short time is evident through their juxtaposition.

A large degree of this change is the function of formal development. While both possess a strongly linear approach, the Candide drawings have been reduced to the nearly exclusive interplay of line. In Two Men Meet, Each Believing the Other to be of Higher Rank, the line exists to contain the form. While the linear aspect dominates, Klee attempted to render volume and space. The volumetric tendency of the series is visible in the

laboriously rendered physical structure of the crouching men and the three dimensional space. This contradicts the independence of his line. The relationship of the figures to the ground appears laboured and the space is conventional. Klee has taken great care to ensure unity within the symmetry, for example, the central placement of the rock is a standard convention for preventing the separation of the image into two halves. While Klee's control of the interplay between the two figures is masterful and the patterning of the composition sophisticated, the labour that is manifest in this image suggests the work of a brilliant student struggling with all elements of space, form and composition. This is not to underrate the degree of talent and virtuosity evident in this etching. For example, Klee reconciles the potential exclusion of the figures from the pictorial ground that surrounds them by opening the form of the right figure with the detail of the bent hand thus integrating the entire composition.

In contrast, in the Candide series, Klee's line no longer describes a volumetric form and has lost the quality of a contour. While there is a certain sense of depth in these drawings, the lines appear to sit on the surface of the picture plane. The rhythm appears less studied and more spontaneous. The line has become the form, it does not simply serve to define its boundaries. Even within the series there is a progressive flattening of space and abandonment of detail. This is visible in the drawing for Chapter Five, "Quelle peut-etre la raison suffisante de ce phenomene?" (fig. 9) compared to that of Chapter Thirteen, "Et ordonna au capitaine Candide d'aller faire la revue

de sa compagnie". The earlier drawing exhibits a clear perspectival relationship between its figures and the viewer; in the later drawing these relationships exist only on the picture plane. The example from Chapter Thirteen (fig. 10) possesses an immense freedom of expression and technique, the figure relationships are not rendered volumetrically, but through a series of complex surface tensions. The pair of arching figures contrasts with the compression of the columnar figures on the right, producing a rather kinetic effect by the repetition and interaction of moving forms.

A sort of artificial dialogue between the two series can be created by the contrast of two images, such as the The Two Men and the Candide illustration for Chapter Five. There is an intriguing similarity in Klee's compositional choices between the two works. They both attempt to deal with the problems presented by symmetry. In the etching, Klee created a symmetrical image rather easily by placing two similar figures on either side of the center of the page while in the drawing he has reversed the process, placing one figure in the center. This produces instant spatial ambiguity by dividing the composition which then must be reintegrated. He accomplishes this first with the repoussoir element and the figure on the left which draws the viewers gaze across the center thus closing the composition. There is also an implied harmonious relationship between every form within the composition as the elements of each half have an exact correspondent in the reciprocal portion of the drawing. Klee's creation and solution of his own formal challenges shows his

evolution from a clever, hard-working student to a young artist, confident of the means at his disposal.

An examination of the narrative development of the two series supports this progression. In the Inventions, Klee's virtual celebration of every single physical detail of his figures' degradation and decay suggests a self-concious talent. The extremism of the etchings, where every visual aspect of the image is duplicated then multiplied, makes their viewing a somewhat finite intellectual enterprise, as the effect is too strong, too obvious for relatively complex themes. Klee's concern with the lack of total integration of formal attributes and thematic content was perhaps not unfounded. The issue is essentially temporal; once the story of each etching has been sufficiently apprehended and then combined with the pictorial image, there is little room for contemplation. The formal elements do not communicate the content of each etching, they instead weigh it down.

In the Candide drawings, this separation no longer exists. This development is not simply a function of Klee's growing restraint and reduction of means. The difference between them is qualitative. The drawings possess such integration, it is as if form and content were conceived simultaneously and are inseparable; one is not perceived then added to the other. Or perhaps content was chosen for its relevance to a pictorial means which is already given and understood, ie. the acceptance of line. The Inventions are essentially a set of composite pieces usually beginning with a thematic idea. Klee is then presented with the problem of how to communicate it, and the image is arrived at

after some effort. In the Inventions, the desire to express every conceivable detail of physiognomy, structure and composition suggests a lack of conviction in the pictorial effect of his work . Essentially synthetic compositions result, using a pastiche of devices which are applied to the etchings, they are the work of an artist who has knowledge of, but no faith in, his intuitive ability. A synthesis of form and content, as is found in the Candide drawings, would be the logical outcome of no longer applying traditional solutions which induce an academic expression. This persistence of both this integration and the linear aspect of Klee's style is worth noting. Although the theoretical and conceptual complexity of Klee's art increases almost exponentially after about 1913, much of his later work has origins in the drawings for Candide.

Klee's stylistic development after the period of the Candide series was indeed rapid. His absorption of the influence of Cubism and his rather sudden mastery of colour around 1914 resulted in a temporary lessening of the linear structure of his work. By the end of the decade an integration of all these elements is visible. A good example of this is found in Warning of the Ships (fig. 11) of 1917. A combination of watercolour and drawing, it is interesting because it offers a vague suggestion of political commentary (given the painting's date and subject matter), a phenomenon of comparitive rarity in Klee's later work. Dating from the period of his army service, it is an ambiguous image of somewhat menacing bird-like creatures combined with a

seemingly random pattern of symbols and punctuation marks. The main colours of blue and yellow are restricted largely to the perimeters of the image except for two colour shapes that occupy symmetrical positions in the composition. A vestige of the influence of Cubism is evident in the faceting of some forms but the structural plasticity of the Cubists has been replaced by a layering of two separate surfaces; the dark rhythm of the surface forms and an evanescent linear network drawn beneath it.

Several formal and contentual themes are examined simultaneously; the grey bird creatures are stylized to resemble towering metallic tubes, perhaps periscopes in keeping with the naval subject, and a barely defined pattern of human and organic figures floats as if under the surface. On the bottom tier patches of pure yellow are distorted by the black notation of the ships while the crowded tumult of abstract machine forms is suggestive of the confusion of a marine battle. Once again Klee has employed irony to convey his theme as the cartoon-like appearance of the birds and the ethereal quality of the colour belies the seriousness of his subject. By introducing even a suggestion of humour into this context, he has magnified its menacing effect.

The complexity of The Warning of the Ships results directly from Klee's synthesis of pictorial elements. The linear structure and colourism function with a degree of independence and fuse only occasionally. A musical analogy is perhaps relevant. Klee's image could be described as polyphonic; possessing many voices that work both alternately and simultaneously. The linear underpinning, which could serve

almost as Klee's stylistic signature in this period, provides both structure and nuance to his painting.

An example, chosen somewhat arbitrarily, can be found in the oil on panel of 1929, Tree Nursery (fig. 12). Here Klee has organized his field as a banded mirror image of a spectral progression. Klee's colouristic incapacity had been overcome years earlier. He creates a complex rhythmic pattern of colour as the image divides into three warm and cool patterns with an interplay of natural colour order which again divides the picture into two halves. This arrangement has, perhaps, a correspondent in the structure of musical notation where a group of three notes, a triplet, is compressed into the conventional duration of two. Yet at the same time, Klee seems to deny the independence of his colour by imposing a minute grid-like linear structure, which is incised on the surface. Yet the interaction of the structure and background is similarly complex. The tiny linear figures possess relationships to each other and the coloured background. Klee's manipulation of these relationships is carefully ordered. There is an alternation in the compositional interplay between line and chromatic relationships. The top section contains lines within the colour strips which have a correlation to hue and value, culminating in the central green band of heavily incised lines. The second half plays upon the idea of a progressively growing entity, comprised of line against an ordered colouristic whole. The colour/line relationships in the top half move vertically, while in the lower half they move horizontally. Consequently, the painting can be

apprehended in several different directions.

It is clear that the formal integration of Tree Nursery supports the theme that it intends to convey. It is an image, one of many Klee did at the time, of the harmony of the natural world.[15] By combining elements of nature, pictorial relationships and, it is most likely, musical structure, Klee suggests a relationship of analogy between all three. The figures of the trees and people assume the structure of regular musical notation. Music has become a microcosm of nature, and the regularity they share has a further connection in the formal elements employed to depict them.

Almost all subjects, concerns or ideas contained within Klee's work are comprehended through an examination of the title, the pictorial relationships and the forms represented. Yet the more detailed these explanations become, the less satisfactory they appear, as the essential meaning of becomes even more nebulous. Will Grohman described this phenomenon eloquently, " Klee's works do not signify, they exist."

It is here that a line can be traced from a painting of 1929 to the influence of Wilhelm Worringer. Klee, prior to 1908, had two significant aesthetic problems; the first involved his incapacity to integrate his pictorial elements with the content he desired, and the second concerned the apparent gap between his innate linear capacity and his compositional aspirations. There is evidence of both circumstance and documentation that Klee found solutions to these issues in the writings of Worringer. Klee's gravitation toward linear abstraction, a development that coincided with Worringer's

advocacy of this course, confirmed the direction of his style for the remainder of his life. Even with his mastery of colour, Klee would often exploit the graphic potential of his canvas, balancing the inherently contradictory nature of these two elements. Klee's absorption of Worringer's thought is evident, quite literally, until the end of the artist's life. A passage written by Klee at the time of his first large one-man exhibition in 1920 shows a strong influence of Worringer's characterization of the transcendentalism of the abstract artist. Twenty years later it would become his epitaph:

> I am not at all graspable in this world. For I live as much with the dead as with the unborn. Somewhat closer to the heart of creation than usual. But far from close enough.
> Does warmth emanate from me? Coolness? Beyond all ardor there is nothing to discuss. I am most devout when I am furthest away. In this world sometimes a little malicious about the misfortunes of others. These are merely nuances. The priests just aren't devout enough to see it. Are they a bit offended these authorities on Scripture?16

## Notes

1. Paul Klee, The Diaries of Paul Klee. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 147.

2. Will Grohmann, Paul Klee. (New York: Harry N. Abrams Inc. 1954), 103.

3. Ibid., 102.

4. Paul Klee, Diaries, 144.

5. Ibid., 160 - 161.

6. Charles Haxthausen, Paul Klee: The Formative Years. (Geneva: Cosmopress, 1981), 343.

7. Both Will Grohmann and Werner Haftmann locate the origins of the Candide series as early as 1906 and 1909 respectively.

8. Charles Haxthausen, Paul Klee, 330.

9. Ibid., 332.

10. Ibid., 335.

11. Ibid., 332.

12. Ibid., 335.

13. Ibid., 332.

14. Paul Klee, Diaries, 213.

15. Klee's use of the world of plant life as a metaphor for creativity seems to have been particularly prevalent in the late 1920's and early 30's. A complete examination of this subject may be found in Richard Verdi. Klee and Nature (New York: Rizzoli, 1984).

16. Caroline Lachner (ed.), Paul Klee. (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1987), 66 - 67.

## CONCLUSION

While it can be safely assumed that no theoretical source ever exerted absolute influence on the art of Paul Klee, the timely correspondence between Worringer's writings and the evolution of Klee's thought argues that Worringer's ideas answered questions that had troubled Klee for years.

The first period of influence is visible around the time of Klee's "discovery" of the process of abstraction in 1908, an event which in his own words changed the way in which he viewed the process of creation. While a wholesale ascription to Worringer's treatise is never apparent (this would have been completely contrary to Klee's independent nature), the essence of Abstraction and Empathy can definitely be seen. Whether this influence came from a direct reading of Abstraction and Empathy or from popular knowledge of Worringer's precepts cannot be stated for certain. What is definite however, is that Worringer's elucidation of abstraction as a process of revelation and a quest for the essential will inform Klee's thinking about art for decades.

While other influences were undoubtedly present in this period as well; the example of Van Gogh, the painting of Cezanne, contemporary avant-garde painting in Munich, their presence also coincides with Klee's earlier years of stylistic vacillation and

uncertainty, a period where they effected little change. The correspondences in the writings of Worringer and Klee at this time are too striking to be coincidental.

The second important influence of Worringer is visible in his polemics of linear treatment. Klee's "linear revelation" of 1911 is communicated in language evocative of Worringer. The fact that the topic had received attention in Klee's diaries for years gives rise to an important question: " What exactly made Klee's linearity an issue in 1911?" Once again Worringer is the logical inspiration. Klee's acceptance of his own nature as a primarily graphic artist, and his subsequent exploration of the potential of this form, was the single most significant stylistic development for Klee in this period. It also provided the framework for his later development as a painter. Klee would seek to integrate pictorial elements in a way that was truly unique and complex, often resulting in the frequent attribution of musical analogies to his work.

Worringer's influence on Klee was twofold; first was the establishment of the conceptual basis for abstraction. Paul Klee, as his later writings would prove, was an artist for whom creation was (in part) an enterprise of the intellect, one that needed an established and explicit purpose beyond instinct and talent. Worringer's Abstraction and Empathy provided this basis. The second effect of Worringer was Klee's growing belief in the primacy and independence of pictorial elements. This too, would figure largely in Klee's later theoretical writings, such as the Pedagogical Sketchbooks.

Worringer's most significant contribution to Klee's thought lies in his confirmation that art, particularly abstract art, was a vehicle of the transcendental. As Will Grohmann wrote in his biography of Klee:

> He has been called the greatest realist of our time, and that describes him well, although his realism is concerned with the essence of things rather than with their surface appearance. Group his themes together and they encompass the universe, not only of the plentitude of things but the secrets of their birth and growth, the mystery of their innumerable sublunar and cosmic linkages.

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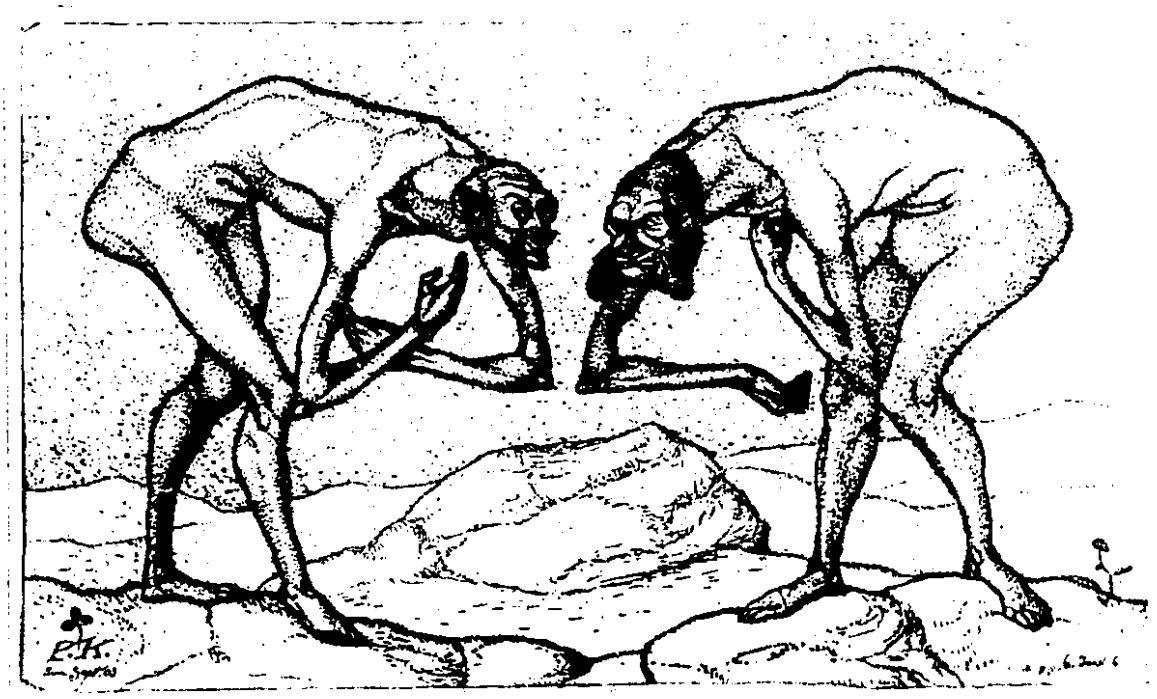

fig. 1
Klee
Two Men Meet Each Believing the Other
to be of Higher Rank, 1903

fig. 2
Klee
Woman and Beast, 1904

fig. 3
Klee
Menacing Head. 1905

fig. 4
Klee
Virgin in a Tree, 1903

fig. 5
Klee
Perseus, or the Triumph of Wit Over Misfortune, 1904

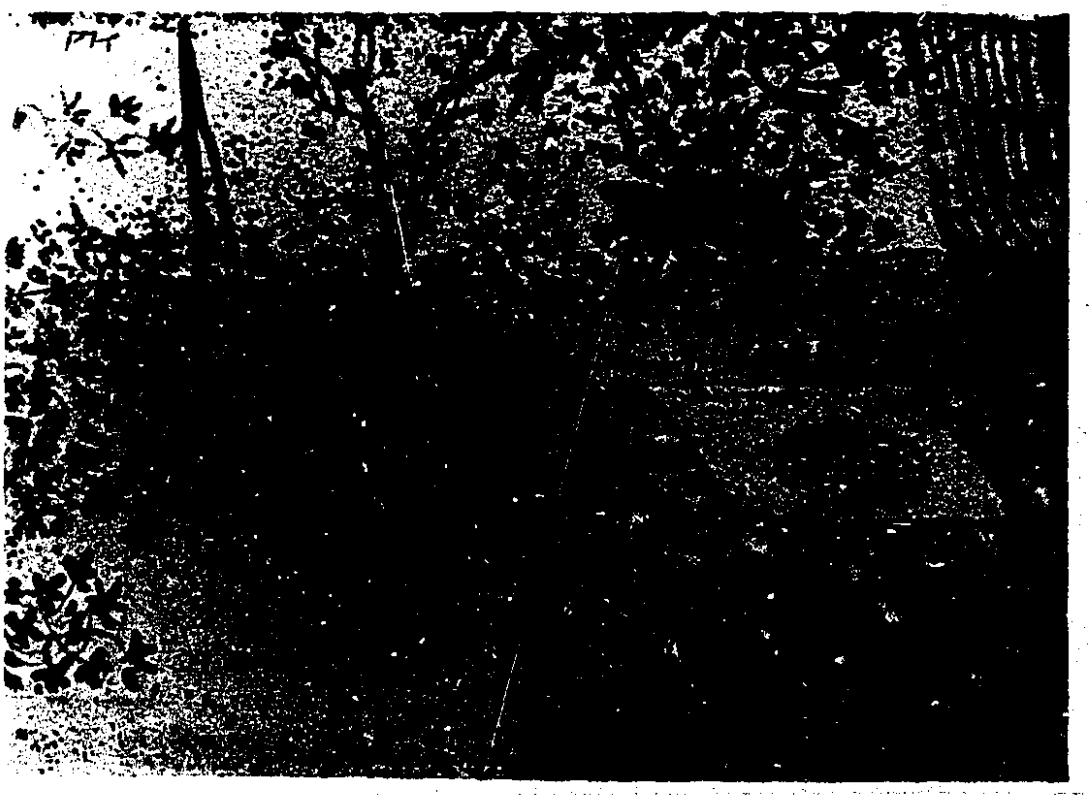

fig. 6
Klee
Garden Scene with Watering Cans, 1905

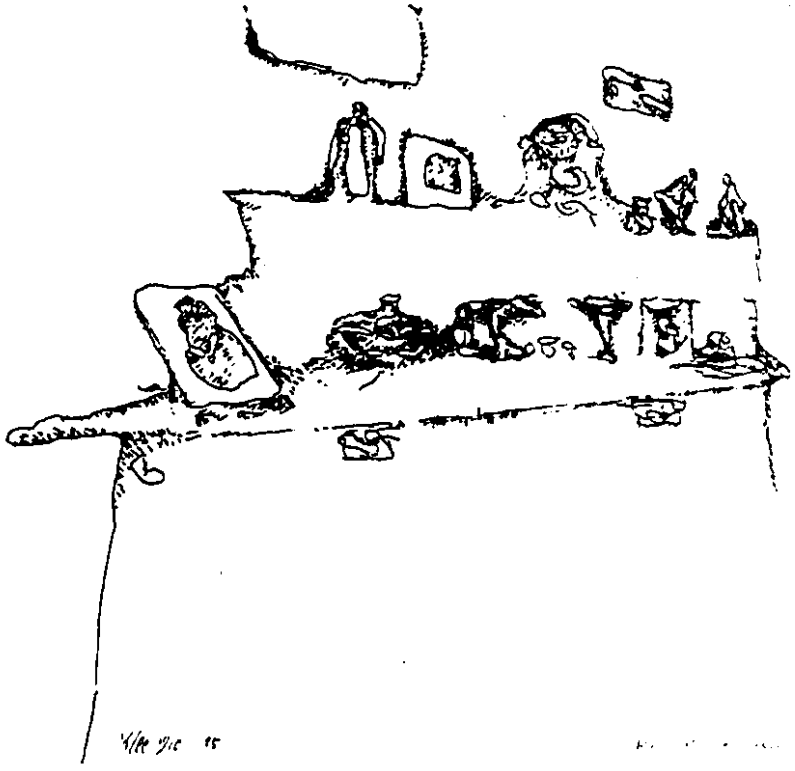

fig. 7
Klee
Furniture Caricature, 1910

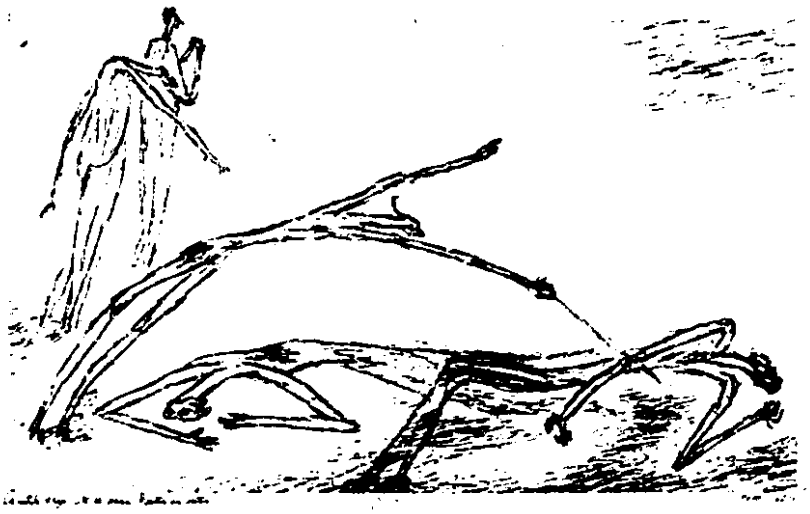

fig. 8
Klee
Candide, Chapter 9, 1911

fig. 9
Klee
Candide, Chapter 5, 1911

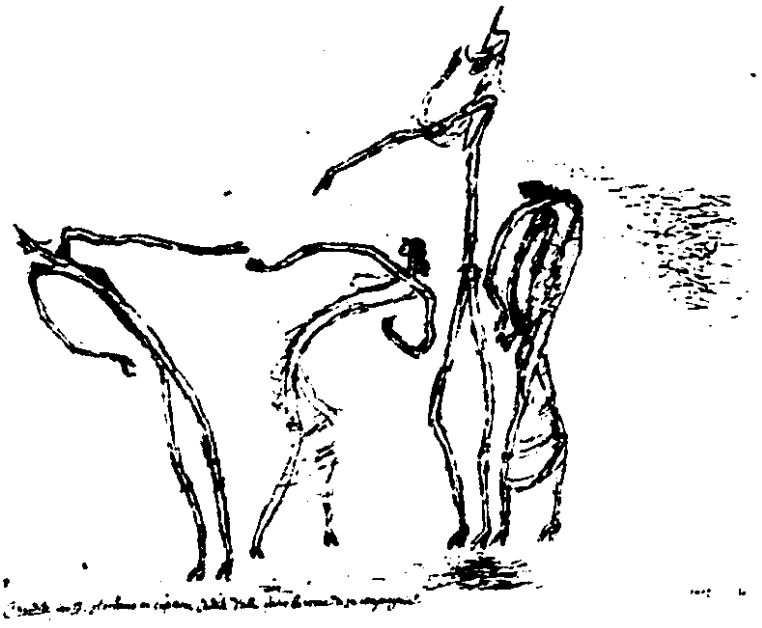

fig. 10
Klee
Candide, Chapter 13, 1912

fig. 11
Klee
Warning of the Ships, 1917

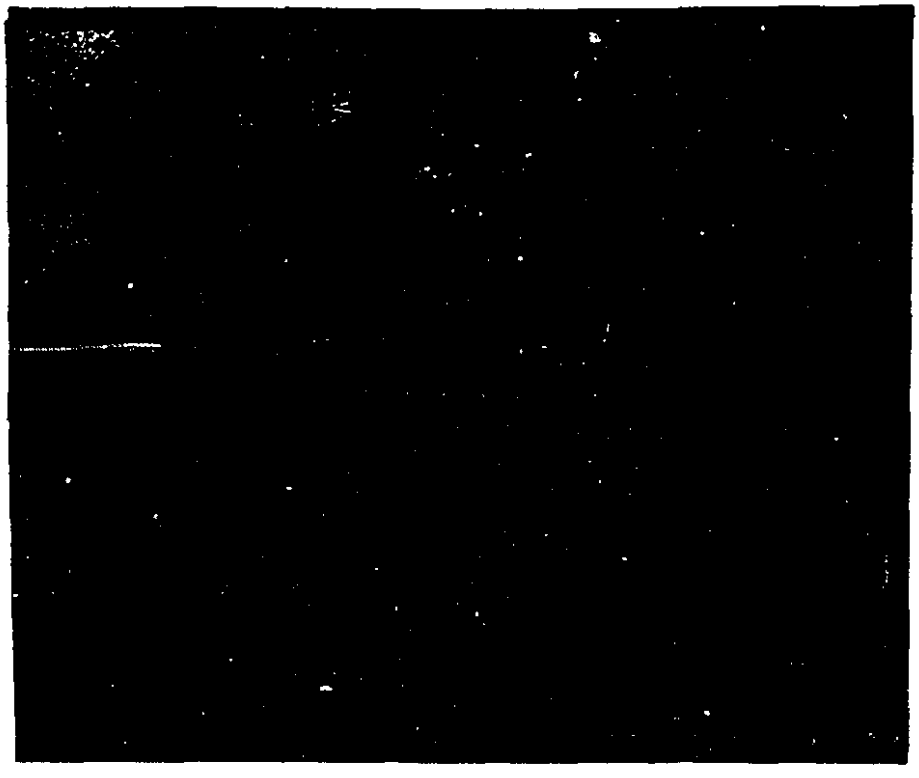

fig. 12
Klee
Tree Nursery, 1927