The Creation of Expressionism: Kurt Pinthus the Glaneur and Menschheitsdämmerung

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THE CREATION OF EXPRESSIONISM:
KURT PINTHUS THE GLANEUR AND MENSCHHEITSDÄMMERUNG
by
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B.A., Portland State University, 2015

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The Creation of Expressionism: Kurt Pinthus the Glaneur and Menschheitsdämmerung
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has been approved for the Department of Germanic and Slavic Languages and Literatures

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Date__________________

The final copy of this thesis has been examined by the signatories, and we find that both the content and the form meet acceptable presentation standards of scholarly work in the above mentioned discipline.
Doveri, Giovanni Angelo (M.A., German Studies)
The Creation of Expressionism: Kurt Pinthus the Glaneur and Menschheitsdämmerung
Thesis directed by Assistant Professor Arne Höcker

ABSTRACT

Kurt Pinthus’ 1919 anthology, *Menschheitsdämmerung: Symphonie jüngster Dichtung*, was a foundational turning point in the creation of Expressionism. The collection pushed the boundaries of the genre of the anthology into an aesthetic dimension, by which Pinthus straddles the role of both artist and literary critic. The first part of the thesis will situate lyrical Expressionism both in the philosophic traditions, which it inherits, and with the overall project of Modernism. Secondly, *Menschheitsdämmerung* acts as a metapoem of Expressionism. It is the figure of the Glaneur, who straddles the position between art and literary criticism to produce a literary epoch through a metapoem. Lastly, this thesis will examine the multiple revisions and republications of *Menschheitsdämmerung* to demonstrate Pinthus’ changing roles through time.
Acknowledgments

This thesis is an accumulation of many conversations not only with my committee members, but also with fellow students, courses taken within and outside of the department, and my colloquium, where I first read a section of my thesis. The conversations in these environments have given me insights on how to think about the matter discussed in my thesis from multiple points of views across several disciplines. They have challenged me to answer questions of paradoxes, logical mistakes, and/or further explanations of my statements. Ultimately, however, this thesis is a product of a conversation with my committee members directly following my comprehensive exams. I would like to thank Dr. Davide Stimilli for his insight into the time period and his course Ruins of Modernity, which was fundamental to the methodology and theory found within the thesis. I would like to thank Dr. Lauren Stone for her amazing insights into theory, which contains unlimited breadth. With the utmost respect and gratitude, I would like to thank my thesis advisor and chair of my committee, Dr. Arne Höcker. Without his guidance and knowledge, this thesis would not be possible. Dr. Höcker provide invaluable insight to the writings of Gottfried Benn, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Klaus Theweleit, which lead me to a better understanding of problems of Modernity, the poetic process, and the concept of der neue Mensch.
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Introduction

“Er war ein Wanderer wie wir.
Und Blumen, Sterne, Gott und Tier,
Der Menschen Glück, der Menschen Not,
Sind das unendliche Brevier,
Aus dem wir singen bis zum Tod.”

*Menschheitsdämmerung* was not the first anthology Kurt Pinthus compiled and published. In 1912, Pinthus published the anthology *Neuer Leipziger Parnass*, which contained poetry from four expressionist poets: Elsa Asenijeff, Ulrich Steindorff, Walter Hasenclever—whose poems will also appear in *Menschheitsdämmerung*—, and Kurt Pinthus. As the title of the collection suggests, this small anthology of four poets circled around the literary scene of Leipzig in the early 1910s, where both Hasenclever and Pinthus attended the University of Leipzig. There are fundamental differences between Pinthus’ two anthologies. The first deals namely with form. *Neuer Leipziger Parnass* had a traditional form compared to symphonic arrangement in *Menschheitsdämmerung*; in his fist anthology, Pinthus arranged the poems alphabetically by the author. The second difference is in the content. *Neuer Leipziger Parnass* contains twenty-eight poems, a small collection in comparison to the two hundred seventy-five poems found within *Menschheitsdämmerung*. Pinthus’ first foray into anthologies could never hope to define and document a literary epoch due to its limited scope.

*Neuer Leipziger Parnass* did not leave a lasting impact on the studies of lyrical Expressionism. Pinthus’ first anthology was too regional and only had one printing of a hundred fifty copies. However, the collection displays the only published poems by Kurt Pinthus and

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2 In the research corpus of lyrical Expressionism, the only reference to *Neuer Leipziger Parnass* is found at the end of Horst Denkler’s *Gedichte der „Menschheitsdämmerung“* in the section titled “Andere Lyrikanthologien des Expressionismus”: Horst Denkler, *Gedichte der „Menschheitsdämmerung“* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1971), 271.
shortly thereafter, “[er] beschließt nach eigener Aussage, die Dichtkunst an den Nagel zu hängen.”³ Pinthus’ own poem, “Franziskanische Wanderung,” explains his position within and around the literary epoch of Expressionism, that of a fellow wanderer. Pinthus’ position oscillates between poet and critic. Neuer Leipziger Parnass demonstrates Pinthus’ literary aspiration, but also simultaneously that of a critic. Here, Pinthus acts both as the poet and the editor. However, having not made it as a poet in his own right, Pinthus—after receiving his PhD in 1910⁴—soon became a reader at the Kurt Wolff Verlag and later the Ernst Rowohlt Verlag. The job brought Pinthus close to many expressionist poets, many who would later appear in his anthology Menschheitsdämmerung. Unlike the Neuer Leipziger Parnass, Menschheitsdämmerung has not faded away into obscurity, but rather has become one of—if not the only—mainstay of German lyrical Expressionism.

There is thus an aspect in Menschheitsdämmerung, which Pinthus could not create through Neuer Leipziger Parnass. The form of Menschheitsdämmerung reproduces lyrical Expressionism from both an internal and external point of view. Form and the concern of form are thus the central reasons for the success of Menschheitsdämmerung,⁵ which lead it to be a bestseller for the Ernst Rowohlt Verlag.⁶ The artistic undertakings of Pinthus results in an

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⁴ Pinthus received his PhD in 1910 with a dissertation covering the works of Levin Schücking: Kurt Pinthus, Die Romane Levin Schücking: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte und Technik des Romans (Leipzig, R. Voigtländers Verlag, 1910).
⁶ Kurt Pinthus notes, “Denn das Buch, von dem man es am wenigsten erwartet hatte, war in Rowohls zweitem Verlag sein erster Bestseller geworden.” Within the first three years, the Ernst Rowohlt Verlag sold twenty thousand copies of Menschheitsdämmerung: Horst Denkler, Gedichte der „Menschheitsdämmerung“, xx.
anthology that gives a round and horizontal view of a literary epoch—to use Pinthus’ own words. In this thesis, I posit that Kurt Pinthus produces and later documents lyrical Expressionism by compiling *Menschheitsdämmerung* into a symphonic form from a position between artist and critic, the position of the Glaneur. The first chapter will situate Expressionism as a Modernist art movement reacting to Modernity. It will demonstrate common themes found in Expressionism and Modernism, such as the problem of form. After situating the art movement, the second chapter will propose and define a new figure—the Glaneur—and his relationship to the artistic anthology. It is in this chapter, in which I advocate for *Menschheitsdämmerung* to be read as the Metapoem of Expressionism. Lastly, the third chapter will demonstrate the change in Pinthus’ tone in the later 1922 and 1959 editions of the work. By examining these changes, it will become clear that Pinthus switches from being a Glaneur to being a documenter.
Chapter 1: Form in Crisis: Expressionism as a Modernist Art Movement

The title of the anthology, *Menschheitsdämmerung*, already expresses a key element in the discussion of form both within Expressionism and in Modernism overall. *Menschheitsdämmerung* represents the dissolution of one day—the fading of its form—only to be reborn at the dusk of a new day. The imagery expressed through the title draws parallels with Friedrich Nietzsche’s book *Geburt der Tragödie*, wherein he develops his ideas of the Apollonian and Dionysian principles. Modernism marks the shift between the Apollonian and Dionysian principles in the arts; it is this shift that manifests itself in a crisis of form.

Richard T. Gray notes that “[n]o single thinker had a greater influence on the artists of the Expressionist generation than did Friedrich Nietzsche.” However, it would be better to expand this statement to all of Modernism and the aesthetic projects of the Modernists. The Apollonian and Dionysian principles, expressed in the works of Modernism, reflect this influence. Nietzsche recognizes on one hand the connection of the Apollonian with plastic arts and on the other hand the connection of the Dionysian with music. The key element, however, is the static, formed nature of the Apollonian in contrast to the destructive, yet creative nature of the Dionysian.

Nietzsche further highlights the connection of the Apollonian with dreams, while the Dionysian is related to intoxication. The Apollonian dreams is always connected to a reference to the external world of forms. Nietzsche will describe the dream as “a mere appearance of mere appearance.” Additionally, the Apollonian in fact is only concerned with giving form; the

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9 Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 45.
Apollonian “keep[s] in mind that measured restraint, that freedom from the wilder emotions, that calm of the sculptor god.”\(^\text{10}\) Apollonian artistic creation is that of mimesis. On the other hand, the Dionysian dissolves the world in intoxication. It is not appearance of appearance, but rather appearance of being. It is not a reference to the external world, but rather the outpouring of the inner emotions of man. Dionysian artistic creation is that of epigenesis; the artist forms his being into art. It is in the Dionysian principle for Nietzsche, by which man may overcome his alienation from man and nature:

> “Under the charm of the Dionysian not only is the union between man and man reaffirmed, but nature which has become alienated, hostile, or subjugated, celebrates once more her reconciliation with her lost son, man.”\(^\text{11}\)

The focus on the Dionysian in Modernity is the goal to overcome alienation. However, to overcome alienation following the Dionysian principle means destruction of the current forms of society and more important, destruction of the current definition of the individual. The Modernist art movements overwhelmingly represent the Dionysian principle. These movements advocated for the destruction of the prevailing forms found in earlier times, such as in Realism or Romanticism. Limits, boundaries, and even the individual represent forms, which the Modernists sought to dissolve and eventual to reform. For Pinthus, it is during the \textit{Menschheitsdämmerung} that the old form of humanity would be dissolved and reformed into \textit{der neue Mensch}.

This emphasis on the Dionysian principle will also lead to a love of destructive creation. It is only though the destructive moment, by which the new can come to be. It is no wonder then, that many artist from both the Central and Allied Powers would readily volunteer for WWI. In fact, of the twenty-three poets found in \textit{Menschheitsdämmerung}, five of them died within the

\(^{10}\) Nietzsche, \textit{The Birth of Tragedy}, 35.
\(^{11}\) Nietzsche, \textit{The Birth of Tragedy}, 37.
first two years of the war. Of the other twenty-three, fourteen—including Pinthus—participated in the war, many of them as Kriegsfreiwilligen. For the Expressionists and other Modernists, the war did not represent a fight between nations but rather a spiritual war that aimed at the creation of something new. As Steffen Bruendel notes:


This cultural war was not between nations, but an effort to destroy an old culture and remake a new one. The cultural war was fought to overcome alienation. The poets, artist and authors, who volunteered for the war, sought a refuge from the alienating factors of bourgeois life. However, it is in the war that these Kriegsfreiwilligen sought to remake society in their image, out of their own images. The Expressionist proponents of the war saw the battlefield as a place where der neue Mensch would arise and overcome alienation. However, this possibility for a renewal of humanity was not limited to the Expressionists. Ernst Jünger expresses the renewal of humanity through war in his novella Stahlgewitter, his philosophical work Die Arbeiter, and essay Über den Schmerz. As Thomas Anz notes:

Ernst Jünger konzipierte den ›Neuen Menschen‹ später als heroischen Kämpfer, als Typus des kaltblütigen Krieges, der über den Tod und noch über das größte Grauen apokalyptischer Katastrophen erhaben ist.

In his essay, Über den Schmerz, Jünger lays out his vision of renewal of humanity. Disenchanted with the shelter life of the bourgeois individual, Jünger posits the future of humanity as types:

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12 Alfred Lichtenstein, Ernst Wilhelm Lotz, Ernst Stadler, August Stramm, and Georg Trakl—albeit by his own hand—all died during the war. Kurt Pinthus, Menschheitsdämmerung: Ein Dokument des Expressionismus (Berlin: Ernst Rowohlt Verlag, 2016), 356, 362–36.
14 Thomas Anz, Literatur des Expressionismus (Stuttgart: Verlag J.B. Metzler, 2010), 46.
“Henceforth, all measures are designed to master pain, not to avoid it.” It is in war, where man learns to confront and master pain. However, Jünger’s post-humanist vision is in stark contradiction to the humanistic vision shared by most Expressionists. Nevertheless, the renewal of humanity would deliver man from alienation.

The form of this new world would not be imposed on the Expressionist, but would rather come from within. The destructive aspect of the Dionysian is at always at the same time a creative aspect. Rather than following traditional forms, these poets followed the beats of their own internal drums. It is the music from within, “aus dem Geiste der Musik,” that leads the Expressionists and Modernists in their creative activity. Form will thus not be based on the Apollonian plastic arts, but rather this crisis is resolved in the adoption of the Dionysian music to give form. No longer is the form of art dictate by a representation of external example as in the Apollonian principle, but rather artistic now flows out of artist like music. As Walter H. Sokel notes:

Music replaced sculpture as the primary art of the West. Free composition of functional, self-sufficient universes replaced the imitation of the natural forms as the primary purpose and consideration of all the arts [...] In literature it meant that the framework of poem, drama, or narrative would no longer have to be consistent with any external standard; the images in a poem would no longer have to follow a plausible and logically coherent sequence [...] The adoption of these principles of musical composition by the other arts is probably the single most dominant characteristic of all of modernism.

As the Symphonie jüngster Dichtung, Menschheitsdämmerung becomes a prime representation of the Sokel’s quote. Pinthus adopts the form of music, the form of a symphony, to represent a literary epoch out of its own material, i.e., the poems of the twenty-three poets. Furthermore, if poetry is no longer bound by an external world, but rather comes out of the imagination and

images of the poet, then the form of a humanity is not bound by external standards and is free to come up with new ideas for humanity.

1.1: Form als Wollust

Questions of form have been central to the definition and theories of Expressionism, from Wassily Kandinsky’s writings on the form of Expressionist painting to the music theories of Arnold Schönberg. The concern of form, however, is not only limited to the art and music of the epoch, but also manifests itself in the theories of lyrical Expressionism. Paul Hatvani writes, “[d]ie Form wird beim Expressionismus zum Inhalt: sie macht einen bedeutungsvollen Schritt über sich selbst hinaus.” For Kurt Heynicke, “[d]ie Bewegung des Alls fängt der Geist auf und gestaltet sie sichtbar durch den Ausdruck der Kraft.” Oswald Herzog remarks, “Expressionismus ist Ausdruck des Geistigen durch Form.” Finally, Herwarth Walden writes, “Form ist die äußere Gestaltung der Gesichte als Ausdruck ihres inneren Lebens.” Each of these quotes about Expressionism are similar, insofar as they all present form coming from within, whether that be from the poet’s spirit or vision. Such statements reflect the Dionysian aspect of Modernism. The form of Expressionism is not dictate from an external example, but rather an expression of the internal.

Form even becomes a theme of Expressionist poetry. The obvious and must cited example of this phenomenon is Ernst Stadler’s “Form als Wollust”:

Form will mich verschnüren und verengen,  
Doch ich will mein Sein in alle Weiten drängen –

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21 Pinthus, Menschheitsdämmerung, 312.
Stadler expresses the tension between external and internal form. The form of the self desires to spread out, while the external form seeks to contain and bind. The poem expresses feeling of being trapped by an external form, whether that be poetic form or perhaps the form of the individual in modernity. Both Robert P. Newton in *Form in the Menschheitsdämmerung* and Wolfgang Paulsen in “Form and Content in German Expressionist Literature,” note of a perceived contradiction of Stadler’s statements with the form of the poem. Despite expressing the desire to break away from constraining form, Stadler wrote his poem in formulative verse of iambic pentameter with an AABB rhyming pattern.

However, at the same time, Stadler is speaking about more than poetic form, but rather the form of the individual. Stadler’s and the Expressionists’ desire “[ihre] Sein in alle Weite [zu] drängen,” advocates for a new form of the individual. Newton notes this phenomenon as a “more general idea of form, the one emotionally rejected, encompasses social convention, the restraints of ‘individuality’ and established character, perhaps even the conscious control and formation of life and art.” Form as a restrain of the individual and the desire to dissolve this restrictive form become a central project of the Expressionist. However, at the same time, the poetic form is called into question. With the reformation of humanity, poetic form is opened to be reformed as well. Despite the seemingly contradictory nature found in Stadler’s poem, Stadler points to two distinct phenomena of form within Expressionism: the form of the poem and the form of the individual.

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24 Richard P. Newton, *Form in the Menschheitsdämmerung*, 17.
1.2 The Poetics of Expressionism

To call lyrical Expressionism formless would be foolhardy. However, to say that there is a form that could be called Expressionist would be equally so. Lyrical Expressionism runs the gamut of poetics. The traditional verse of Alfred Lichtenstein stands in stark contradiction to free verse of August Stramm, whose poetics is based on lines of one to three words. However, at the same time it would be careless to say that Stramm represents a dissolution of form, while Lichtenstein represents a traditional poetics. Even though Lichtenstein uses a traditional form in his poetry, Lichtenstein is playing with an internal form through his—to borrow Robert P. Newton’s terminology—visionary poetry. Thus, a comparison of Lichtenstein’s “Die Dämmerung” with Stramm’s “Untreu” will demonstrate two different dissolutions of form found both within Expressionism and Menschheitsdämmerung.

Lichtenstein’s “Die Dämmerung” follows in the footsteps of Jakob van Hoddis’ “Weltende.” As Newton notes that both poems are “visionary” in style and were published in 1911; furthermore, while Pfemfert considered van Hoddis’ to be the inventor of this visionary-poem, it is Lichtenstein who perfects and masters the style. Although “Weltende” and “Die Dämmerung,” are composed of quatrains with regular meters, the internal form of the works dissolve a traditional form. As the name visionary poem suggests, “Die Dämmerung” consists of a series of visions or images. A fat boy plays with a pound; A gray clown is putting on his boots. The string of visions approach an almost ironic, absurd theme. Paulsen gives a possible reading of the poem as a string of impressions—impressions, however, that differ from those of Impressionists, by appearing arbitrary and incoherent, the reflections of a very subjective, but also ironically detached mind. Furthermore, “Die Dämmerung” plays with and dissolves

25 Richard P. Newton, Form in the Menschheitsdämmerung, 143.
26 Paulsen, Form and Content in German Expressionist Literature,” 156.
traditional language in every sentence. The wind has been caught in a tree; A baby carriage screams and dogs swear. Illusions then is perhaps not the best description of the hallucinatory visions presented in the poem.

If we continue the reading of “Die Dämmerung,” as a Landschaftsgedicht as Paulsen suggests in his essay, “Alfred Lichtenstein • Die Dämmerung,” it carries with it a critique of the urban landscape, in which most Expressionists found themselves in. Lichtenstein is demonstrating the barrage of urban stimuli. Although referring to van Hoddis’ “Weltende,” Francis Michael Sharp remarks:

By stringing separate and distinct poetic images one after the other in consecutive lines, the poets attempted to convey in the structure of their poems the simultaneity of the barrage of perceptions. They are the snapshots of a moment of ostensibly unconnected events.28

The form of these visionary poems reflects the random Erlebnisse of modernity. As Walter Benjamin notes in his essays “The Storyteller” and “On Some Motifs in Baudelaire,” modernity has deprived the subject from forming Erfahrungen and the urban life has produced only a string of Erlebnisse.29 In addition to the critique of the city, there is also an aspect of alienation arising from modernity present in the poem. Poetry is no longer able to transfer lasting Erfahrungen, and thus Lichtenstein and the other visionary-poets of Expressionism are only able to transmit the Erlebnisse of the city through their poetry. The internal form of Lichtenstein’s poem cannot be a vessel to transmit these Erfahrungen and are instead made up of images of poet roaming the city at dusk. The critiques found in the poem address a problem of the form of the individual, which Lichtenstein tries to overcome.

In contrast to Lichtenstein’s poem, August Stramm’s poem “Untreu” at first glance is not traditional. The content of the poem is ageless; the poem expresses the emotions of infidelity. Although the poem is not as extreme in form as some of his poems found in Menschheitsdämmerung, e.g., “Allmacht” or “Wunder,” Stramm’s Telegrammstil laconically expresses these feelings through precise and carefully chosen language.30 Stramm’s writings represent the painful communication through language made complicated due to the alienation of the poet in Modernity. Moreover, language and poetry are not spontaneous outburst. Despite Klaus Weissenberger’s statement, that “[a]ll of Stramm’s poems center upon the relationship between man and woman, the ‘I’ and the ‘You,’ and make readers part of this process of semantic ‘rebirth,’”31 the process of semantic rebirth into a lyrical form is an arduous process of artistic work. Perhaps Gottfried Benn states it best when he describes the epigenesis of a poem:

[D]a ist eine Heidelandschaft oder ein Sonnenuntergang, und da steht ein junger Mann oder ein Fräulein, hat eine melancholische Stimmung, und nun entsteht ein Gedicht. Nein, so entsteht kein Gedicht. Ein Gedicht entsteht überhaupt sehr selten — ein Gedicht wird gemacht. Wenn Sie vom Gereimten das Stimmungsmäßige abziehen, was dann übrigbleibt, wenn dann noch etwas übrigbleibt, das ist dann vielleicht ein Gedicht.32

Stramm’s poetry, while simplistic to the eye, is stylistically and formalistically complex. The poem does not suddenly appear but is made. It is a process of epigenesis, wherein the poem and all its content is formed out of Stramm the Poet. Although his poetry might revolve around a dichotomy of ‘I’ and ‘You,’ the play of language involved with the semantic “rebirth” is then a solely a product of the poet and not external factors or forms. According to Weissenberger,

30 Stramm was meticulous with every word in his poems, and H. Stefan Schultz notes, “Stramm was writing every poem thirty, fifty, a hundred times. His letters testify to his minute deliberation over every word”: H. Stefan Schultz, “German Expressionism,” Chicago Review 13.1 (1951): 14.
Stramm poetry focuses on Ezra Pound’s three times of poetry: melopœia, phanopœia, and logopœia.\(^{33}\)

Pound defines melopœia is poetry, “wherein the words are charged, over and above their plain meaning, with some musical property, which directs the bearing or trend of that meaning.”\(^{34}\) Stramm’s poem “Untreu” demonstrates melopœia in the assonance so readily found in the first line: “Dein Lächeln weint in meiner Brust.”\(^{35}\) The repetition of the /ei/ produces in the first line gives the poem a musical quality, which is countered by the consonance of /t/ and /d/ in the sixth line: “Hastet polternd Worte drauf.”\(^{36}\) This produces an euphony, even if one cannot understand Stramm’s poem. Pound’s second kind of poetry is phanopœia, “which is a casting of images upon the visual imagination.”\(^{37}\) Stramm’s poem puts forth images of crumbling hands and the flapping hem of the dress. The last kind of poetry for Pound is logopœia, “which employs words not only for their direct meaning, but it takes count in a special way of habits of usage, of the context we expect to find the word, its usual concomitants, of its known acceptances, and of its ironical play.”\(^{38}\) For Pound, logopœia is untranslatable. It is the strange syntax at the beginning of “Untreu.” A smile cannot cry into a chest; the language is unexpected and produces an oxymoronic effect. “Untreu” pushes the limits of melopœia, phanopœia, and logopœia through the short, brisk lines.

Form in Stramm’s poetry is dissolve into simple lines perhaps in opposition to the visionary-poems of Lichtenstein and van Hoddis. Again, the issue of \textit{Erfahrung} in contrast to \textit{Erlebnis} arises. “Untreu” transfers the \textit{Erfahrung} of infidelity; the reader is able to understand

\(^{33}\) Weissenberger, “Rituals of Activism in Expressionist Poetry,” 213.
\(^{35}\) Pinthus, \textit{Menschheitsdämmerung}, 61.
\(^{36}\) Pinthus, \textit{Menschheitsdämmerung}, 61.
the feeling of the lyrical voice, which is denied in visionary-poems. In his analysis of “Untreu,” Christoph Hering remarks:

Für eine Lyrik, die die Ausdrucksmöglichkeiten der Sprache bis an die Grenze ihrer Wirkung vorantreibt, wird die traditionelle Vorstellung von den äußeren Aufbauformen eines Gedichts bedeutungslos. Deswegen erreicht Stramm seine Ziele eigentlich nur dort, wo in der Komposition von Einzelzeilen eine neue Art, die Welt zu sehen, ausschließlich durch die Handhabung sprachlichen Materials Gestalt gewinnt.  

Through its disjointed form, Stramm’s poem is able to transfer an Erfahrung, while the visionary-poem are stuck representing lines of Erlebnisse. However, the possibility to express Erfahrungen comes only through arduous work. Both the form of the Telegrammstil and visionary-poems then point to a problem of expression between subjects. The Telegrammstil is only possible through hundreds of rewrites, while the visionary-poems are trapped in giving the reader simple images or even hallucinations. This sense of alienation expressed in the form of the poems, will lead to calls in Expressionism for the rise of a new type of humanity, ein neuer Mensch.

1.3 The Manifestation of der neue Mensch

A dawn of a new humanity, Menschheitsdämmerung, quickly draws parallels with Nietzsche’s Götzen-Dämmerung, or Twilight of the Idols. Nietzsche is concerned with the origins of morality, and whether it comes from the individual or from an external source. Nietzsche laid out the project of Götzen-Dämmerung as “a revaluation of all values.” The transition between the Götzen-Dämmerung and the Menschheitsdämmerung coincides with the a future transvaluation of values and thus also morality. Nietzsche’s influence on the

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Expressionists cannot be stressed enough. Parallel to their hatred of imposing external form, the Expressionist sought to form of their values from within.

The Expressionist sought for the creation of a new form of humanity, *der neue Mensch*. This dissolution of the current form of humanity, in favor of a new one, aligns itself with Nietzsche’s *Also Sprach Zarathustra*. It is no wonder then, that together with Goethe’s *Faust* and the Bible, Nietzsche’s work was brought to the war front overwhelmingly by soldiers.\(^{41}\) The soldiers, who saw the war as a way to destroy and reform humanity, found inspiration in the words of Nietzsche.

In order to break away from the false idols, the Expressionists had to break away from their fathers. Their fathers still lived in the traditional social structures washed asunder by the industrialization of life in Germany. For the Expressionists, revolt from their parental generation was the only way out. This father-son conflict plays itself over and over again in a seemingly *Ewige Wiederkunft* in Expressionist literature, e.g., Walter Hasenclever’s play *Der Sohn* or Franz Werfel’s “Vater und Sohn.” Werfel’s poem demonstrates the hostility between generations:

\begin{verbatim}
Und der Sohn harrt, daß der Alte sterbe
Und der Greis verhöhnt mich jauchzend: Erbe!
Daß der Orkus wiederhallt.
Und schon kliirrt in unseren wilden Händen
Jener Waffen — kaum noch abzuwenden —
Höllische Gewalt.\(^{42}\)
\end{verbatim}

The violent moment, which erupts between the generations, is fixed towards overcoming false notions of life and to overcome the alienation inherent in modernity. Thus the apocalyptic moment found within WWI was not to be feared, but rather relished. Before the world and humanity could be reborn, the existing would must perish. The coming of *der neue Mensch*  

\[\text{\footnotesize\(^{41}\) Steven Aschheim, } \textit{The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany, 1890–1990} \text{ (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 135.} \]
\[\text{\footnotesize\(^{42}\) Pinthus, } \textit{Menschheitsdämmerung}, 281. \]
would always be preceded by *das Weltende*. It is no wonder then that the apocalypse becomes a major motif in Expressionism. However, the apocalypse is not met with dread, but rather hopeful longer for utopia. The apocalypse is meant to free humanity from the form of bourgeois individuality and its restraints. The apocalypse promises to return when “[b]eing and destiny, adventure and accomplishment, life and essence are […] identical concepts.” Art, but more specifically for the Expressionist, lyricism will bridge these gaps. It is in art, which Kasimir Edschmid rightfully notes, where the bourgeois life will be torn asunder:


Man will not be defined by their position in life or their careers. Man will be defined by being man. Duty and morality will not be imposed on the figure of *der neue Mensch*, but rather *der neue Mensch* will create their own out of themselves in a typical *Übermensch* fashion. The *Menschheitsdämmerung* then does not represent just dusk for humanity, but rather their rebirth freed from the restrictions of their parents’ generation, freed from the restrictions of society, and freed from alienation.

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Chapter 2:  *Menschheitsdämmerung* as an Expressionist Symphony

The anthology is a genre with two thousand years of history. Pinthus claims, the oldest known anthology is the Anthologia Palatina, or Greek Anthology, which was the compiled in the 80 BCE by Meleager of Gadara.\(^\text{45}\) Pinthus’s statement is only partially true. Meleager composed the *Garland* during this time period, “a lost collection of about eight hundred Greek epigrams, a long-lived and flexible form of poetry.”\(^\text{46}\) However, Meleager did refer the Garland, στέφανος, as anthology and assigned a flower or another plant to each poet.\(^\text{47}\) Meleager collected Greek poems from forty-seven poets and gave them a particular form. Meleager’s Garland would become one part of the Anthologia Palatina. With the advancement of universities and education systems in Europe, anthologies became a useful pedagogical tool. Christopher M. Kuipers refers to anthologies “as a *literary storage and communication form*: a textbook, (now) a digital archive, (once) a commonplace book, (perhaps still) the poems one has memorized.”\(^\text{48}\) Furthermore, Maggie B. Gale notes that anthologies have “a cultural and pedagogical objective in mind.”\(^\text{49}\) Anthologies were used to give examples of exemplary poems and poetics, so that they could be mimicked. However, *Menschheitsdämmerung* was not meant to be a text book, nor a pedagogical tool, and Pinthus reminds the reader in the original 1920 foreword: “dies Buch hat nicht den pädagogischen Ehrgeiz, Musterbeispiel guter Poesie zu bieten.”\(^\text{50}\) *Menschheitsdämmerung* represents a further development in the genre of anthology.

David Hopkins recognizes the use of anthologies and their necessity in and out of the classroom in his essay “On Anthologies.” Yet Hopkins recognizes other aspects of anthologies,

\(^{50}\) Pinthus, *Menschheitsdämmerung*, 22.
namely, “the ways that anthology-making and anthology-using relate to our larger assumptions
and practices as students and teachers of literature.”51 Hopkins is concerned with how
anthologies represent certain subject matters. For Hopkins, there exists four types of anthologies:

[C]omprehensive collections attempting ‘representative’ coverage of the whole field; ‘period’
anthologies offering ‘representative’ coverage of a particular century, reign, or historical
movement; formal and generic collections focused on a particular category of poem […];
and ‘critical’ anthologies, which offered, explicitly and avowedly, a particular interpretative or
re-interpretative view of a particular theme, period, or genre.52

Anthologies can only be academic tools in the view of Hopkins, who concludes the work with
his ideas of the most beneficial anthology—beneficial only in an academic sense. Hopkins never
goes on to recognize the aesthetics of the genre. Anthologies in both Kuipers’, Gale’s, and
Hopkins’ views are only unartistic, academic anthologies. There is yet another type of anthology,
which Hopkins overlooks, that being the artistic anthology. While one could easily subsume
Menschheitsdämmerung under the guise of a period anthology, it would be better to label
Pinthus’ work as an artistic anthology. Menschheitsdämmerung undeniably seeks to cover a
literary epoch, yet at the same time, Menschheitsdämmerung is an artistic project modelled after
a symphony. As already noted, Sokel saw the replacement of sculpture by music as the biggest
difference in modern art. Pinthus exemplifies this shift through his literary symphony. Rather
than following a preexisting example of an anthology, Pinthus pushes the boundaries of the
genre of anthology. Therefore, Amy Devitt’s quote, “[g]reat authors have often been admired for
their ‘breaking’ of generic conventions, thereby expanding the literary universe,”53 could and
should be applied to Pinthus. Menschheitsdämmerung breaks with the traditional form of the

53 Amy J. Devitt, “Integrating Rhetorical and Literary Theories of Genre,” in College English 62.6 (2000):
705.
genre—which other contemporary anthologies follow, e.g., Kurt Hiller’s *der Kondor*—and pushed the anthology into an aesthetic dimension. *Menschheitsdämmerung* can only document the literary epoch through the medium of the epoch itself, through poetry.

2.1 The Glaneur and the Artistic Anthology

Kurt Pinthus is not an anthologist, moreover Pinthus begins *Menschheitsdämmerung* with the declaration, “[d]er Herausgeber dieses Buch ist ein Gegner von Anthologien; — deshalb gibt er diese Sammlung heraus.” Even in his 1964 article, “Die Anthologisten: Ihr seltsam tragisches Schicksal,” Pinthus never refers to himself as an anthologist, but rather as a *Verfasser*. Pinthus’ refusal to refer to himself as an anthologist but rather always only as an editor or author is key to understanding his artistic project. Pinthus is a Glaneur, a position between critic and artist. It is from this position that the Glaneur creates artistic anthologies.

To understand the connection between the Glaneur and the artistic anthology, an analysis of the term anthology is necessary. Hopkins notes that:

> The Greek origin of the word ‘anthologise’ is *anthologain*, which means ‘to collect flowers’. [...] “Collecting flowers’ implies assembling objects of intrinsic beauty [...] The first image was invoked in the florilegia of the Middle Ages and Renaissance: collections of classical and vernacular material marshalled for private meditation, and as models for literary composition.

As already noted, Hopkins is only describing unartistic anthologies, which were meant to be utilized as pedagogical tools. However, his definition gives key insights to the whole genre of anthology. Artistic anthologies assemble objects of not necessarily beauty, but artistic merit. It

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56 Pinthus will, however, refer to *Menschheitsdämmerung* as an anthology, yet at the same time, he will refer to Kurt Hiller, Johannes R. Becher, and René Schikele due to their works *Der Kondor*, *Tränen des Vaterlandes*, and *Das Vermächtnis* respectively: Pinthus, “Die Anthologisten,” 86.

would, therefore, be disingenuous to call the Expressionist poems found within *Menschheitsdämmerung* as beautiful. Gottfried Benn’s poem, “Mann und Frau gehn durch die Krebsbaracke,” gives images which could not be described in such a manner:

Komm, hebe ruhig diese Decke auf.
Sieh, dieser Klumpen Fett und Faule Säfte
das war einst irgendeinem Mann groß
und hier auch Rasch und Heimat. —

Komm, sieh auf diese Narbe an der Brust.
Fühlst du den Rosenkranz von weichen Knoten?
Fühl ruhig hin. Das Fleisch ist weich und schmerzt nicht. —

The reader of the poem is confronted with the imagery from the cancer ward: clumps of fat, putrid fluids, and scars. Intrinsic beauty is of no consideration in the artistic anthology. What is of merit is their poetics. Furthermore, the poems collected in *Menschheitsdämmerung* are not “models for literary compositions.” As mentioned above, Pinthus’ artistic anthology was not to be used as a pedagogical tool, but rather to capture the “Intensität und Radikalismus des Gefühls, der Gesinnung, der Ausdrucks, der Form.” Yet the intensity and radicalism described by Pinthus, is not only those of the Expressionists found in the collection, but simultaneously his own. Like any other artistic creation, the artistic anthology exists only for itself. *Menschheitsdämmerung* is the product of Pinthus’ emotions; it is “Sammlung der Erschütterung und Leidenschaften, Sammlung von Sehnsucht, Glück und Qual einer Epoche — unserer Epoche” — seiner Epoche. It is artistry:

Artistik ist der Versuch der Kunst, innerhalb des allgemeinen Verfalls der Inhalte zu erleben und aus diesem Erlebnis einen neuen Stil zu bilden, es ist der Versuch gegen den allgemeinen Nihilismus der Werte eine neue Transzendenz zu setzen: die Transzendenz der schöpferischen Lust.

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61 Benn, *Probleme der Lyrik*, 12.
In the wake of Modernity, Pinthus develops and creates a new form of anthology, the artistic anthology. *Menschheitsdämmerung* is the outcome the creative pleasure of the Glaneur. Like a poem, the artistic anthology does not just appear, it is made. Unable to speak for himself, Pinthus uses the twenty-three lyrical voices as his own. *Menschheitsdämmerung* is only orientated towards its creator, the Glaneur.

The name Glaneur is of course in jocular tribute to Walter Benjamin’s own Flâneur. Although playful in the coinage, the two figures find similarities with one another. The Flâneur finds his home in the arcades, which Benjamin describes as a place “between a street and an intérieur.”  

62 The Flâneur is the man of the crowd but unlike the common pedestrian forced into the crowd, the Flâneur “demanded elbow room and was unwilling to forgo the life of a gentleman of leisure.”  

63 In his essays, Benjamin makes it clear that flânerie has faded from the society. Gone are the days of strolling around in the gaslight. The man of the crowd finds himself “brutally shock[ed] with the spectacle of entire cities suddenly being illuminated by electric light.”  

64 It is in this new electrically illuminated city, in which the figure of the Glaneur emerges. The Glaneur is not found in the arcades, but rather the archives. Pinthus poured over the published and unpublished works of the Expressionists in his creation of *Menschheitsdämmerung*. Furthermore, the Glaneur is found between two positions: the artist and the critic. His artistic ambitions oscillate between the poles of artistic creation and critical discourse. *Menschheitsdämmerung* both gives a critical reading of the Expressionists and produces an Opus


64 Benjamin, “The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire,” 82.
Magnus of the Expressionist generation. Finally, the Glaneur is the man of the crowds of poems. Retreating from the violent street of overwhelming stimuli, the Glaneur finds refuge in poetry. However, much like the Flâneur, the Glaneur demands elbowroom. Through his own forces, the Glaneur opens a position for himself, room for him to write and critique. However, these are only some aspects of the Glaneur, who is intrinsically intertwined with the projected of the artistic anthology.

To further understand the position of the Glaneur and the artistic anthology, we must examine the relationship inherent between the anthology and the gleaner. Although these two terms might seem unrelated, their relationship in the German language is quite close. The anthology is a *Blütenlese*, while the gleaner is an *Ährenleser*; one is a collection of flowers, the other is a collector of ears of cereal crops. Both the *Blütenlese* and the *Ähreleser* entail the collection of botanical material. However, the material collected by the *Ährenleser* is not like a beautiful flower but a sampling of crops. The Glaneur is an *Ährenleser* who gather poems from a particular literary epoch and forms them into an artistic creation. Pinthus gathered the exemplary poems of Expressionism and assembled them into his artistic anthology. It is important to note, however, that a Glaneur is not synonymous with a gleaner or *Ährenleser*. To call Pinthus a gleaner would suggest that he is only taking forgotten, discarded, or leftover Expressionist poems. Instead, the Glaneur is a reader. Although –*lese* and –*leser* are referring to the act of collection, the second component of each word could be referred to the act of reading. The Glaneur collects by reading. Pinthus collected the poems found within *Menschheitsdämmerung* through his time as a reader both at the Kurt Wolff Verlag and the Ernst Rowohlt Verlag in the 1910s. The material collected by the Glaneur is the material of his artistic project. Pinthus will collect the two hundred seventy-five poems from twenty-three poets and form them into
Menschheitsdämmerung. However, to give another example of a Glaneur, or better said a Glaneuse, Hannah Höch and her photomontage would fit the definition developed here. Her photomontages are made from collected photographs and formed into a new piece of art. Finally, the Glaneur is related to the figure of the Flâneur. Whereas the Benjaminian Flâneur leisurely strolls through the Parisian arcades collecting mental images of his urban surroundings, the Glaneur leisurely “strolls” through texts and collects literary works worth an aesthetic or poetic merit.

As already demonstrated through readings of Alfred Lichtensteins’s “Die Dämmerung” and August Stramm’s “Untreu,” there is an inherent critique of Modernity in the form of the poems. Menschheitsdämmerung gives a critical viewpoint of the literary epoch of Expressionism. Pinthus composes a metapoem of Expressionism. He studies and interprets literary Expressionism through the artistic anthology. By ordering the work in the model of a symphony, Pinthus displays his interpretation of lyrical Expressionism. He is able to give order to the literary epoch, which in turn give form to Expressionism, only by forming Menschheitsdämmerung into a metapoem. The artistic anthology is “the complete absorption of criticism in poetry.” Menschheitsdämmerung is a manifestation the final synthesis, the final Aufhebung, of artistry and criticism.

2.2 The Metapoem of Expressionism

To recall Gottfried Benn’s remarks form Probleme der Lyrik, a poem does not arise out of an idyll, nor from melancholy. It is made. Kurt Pinthus, however, describes how the idea of Menschheitsdämmerung came to him during the Spring of 1919:

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However, this is only a narrative, which Pinthus puts forward over fifty years after the first publishing of Menschheitsdämmerung. The collection wasn’t just a moment of genius in the forest, it was made over several months. It is during the summer of 1919, which Pinthus spent living in the “Gartenhaus” in Berlin, where be compiled Menschheitsdämmerung. Pinthus gathered the selected poems and glued them each one onto pieces of paper, which he would move around to find the perfect from for Menschheitsdämmerung. It was arduous work, and Pinthus describes the poetic process of the composition:

Da wurden Gedichte hin- und hergeschoben, übereinander, untereinander, ein paar Blätter weiter um fast jedes Gedicht wurde gekämpft, denn der ungeduldige Rowohlt wollte allzu oft ein Gedicht weglassen, das nicht sofort in die richtige Gruppe paßt.

Every poem has its position in the symphony; Pinthus composed the work through the voices of the twenty-three Expressionist poets. He used their voices to give form to a literary epoch, to make a Zeitanalyse, but more importantly to write the metapoem of Expressionism. As a metapoem, it both acts as its own autonomous work of art, but also it is a critical analysis of a literary epoch. Menschheitsdämmerung is the metapoem of Expressionism. It is the form of the metapoem, which is the poem, or as Gottfried Benn writes, “die Form ist ja das Gedicht […]

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Form ist der höchste Inhalt.”68 The form both informs the reader of the poetics of the generation, while also simultaneous makes a claim about those poetic forms found in the individual poems.

However, the scholarship into Menschheitsdämmerung often overlooks the collection as a unified whole, with a particular form. Horst Denkler’s Gedichte der „Menschheitsdämmerung“ only analyzes sixteen poems and treats each poem as an autonomous entity. Robert P. Newton’s Form in the Menschheitsdämmerung, never speaks of the form of the collection, but rather of the poetic forms of individual poems. The internal organization found within Menschheitsdämmerung is of no consideration for Denkler and Newton. The overall scholarship on Pinthus’ artistic anthology has treated the work only as a collection of individual poems and not as a unified work. In “Menschheitsdämmerung: The Aging of the Canon,” Francis Michael Sharp notes that this is against Pinthus’ artistic project:

With his intentions clearly aesthetic in nature, Pinthus sought to compose and orchestrate the metapoem of Expressionism, to dissolve the individuality of the 273 poems into a larger symphonic whole.69

However, Sharp falls back into talking about the poems individually and never how the poems interact together in their given form. Instead, he will analyze van Hoddis’ “Weltende,” Werfel’s “An den Leser,” and several poems by Trakl and Heym. However, scholarship should view Menschheitsdämmerung as a uniform whole with the form of a symphony.

As a symphony, Menschheitsdämmerung is meant to be a totality—whether that be possible in Modernity as diagnosed by Georg Lukács in The Theory of the Novel70—, and organize a literary epoch. Pinthus explains:

Man horche in die Dichtung unserer Zeit…, man horche quer durch, man blicke rund herum, … nicht vertikal, nicht nacheinander, sondern horizontal; man scheide nicht das

68 Benn, Probleme der Lyrik, 20.
It is a round view of the symphony; the reader is confronted simultaneously through the symphony, with the feelings and emotions, the fear and despair, the longings and desires of a generation. Pinthus’ symphony tries to recreate a rounded world, a homogenous world, wherein “the separation between man and world, between ‘I’ and ‘you’, cannot disturb its homogeneity.” Menschheitsdämmerung is a self-enclosed encapsulation of a homogenous generation, and Pinthus uses the form of the symphony to express this unity.

Just like a symphony, Menschheitsdämmerung is divided into four sections. Reflecting on the creation of the collection, Pinthus wrote in 1971:


Each symphonic movement encompasses and promotes various emotions, themes, and motifs common within Expressionism. Eckhard Philipp offers an interpretation of each meaning of the subtitles in combination with a historical perspective. “Sturz und Schrei” demonstrates the negative reaction of the poets to their surrounding and their transcendental homelessness. Lukács describes this transcendental homelessness arising from the rift between “the form-giving subject and the world of created forms.” There is an inherent chasm separating the subject from the world, which only grows larger due to Modernity. The turn or return to the subject or lyrical voice is found within the movement “Erweckung des Herzens,” which contains over a third of

71 Pinthus, Menschheitsdämmerung, 22.
72 Lukács, The Theory of the Novel, 32.
75 Lukács, The Theory of the Novel, 40–41.
the poems found in *Menschheitsdämmerung*. This section is followed by “Aufruf und Empörung,” which advocates for change and is closely related to notions of revolution. Pinthus ends his artistic anthology with the final movement, “Liebe den Menschen.” The last section ends in an appeal or maxim to love mankind. Furthermore, ever section of the symphony rhymes by ending with a poem by Franz Werfel. Curiously this was not an intended placement by Pinthus, and Sharp notes that Pinthus only came to realize this rhyming through a student.\(^76\) Furthermore, despite Pinthus’ claims that he arranges the poems due to their intensity of emotion, Christopher McClintick recognizes that “the anthology is characterized by a progressive or linear development that very closely resembles the now canonical parameters established for the expressionist lyric from about 1910–1918.”\(^77\) The arrangement of the poems follows a loose chronologic order; it is for this reason poems by Georg Heym are almost exclusively found within the first two sections of the symphony. On the other hand, the poems of Karl Otten—who only published his major work *Die Thronerhebung des Herzens* in 1918\(^78\)—are found only in the last two sections. Like any other poem, the metapoem of Expressionism exhibits rhyming patters due to the poems by Franz Werfel and has an internal logic to the form.

2.3 Polyphony as Form

The *Symphonie jüngster Dichtung* is made up of twenty-four voices, including Pinthus on the same level as the twenty-three poets found within *Menschheitsdämmerung*. The meaning of the two parts of symphony is “together” and sound.” A symphony is the coming together of multiple voice to produce music. The symphony is meant to be heard “zusammen, zugleich,

\(^76\) Sharp, “*Menschheitsdämmerung*: The Aging of the Canon,” 139–140.
\(^78\) Karl Otten, *Die Thronerhebung des Herzens* (Berlin: Verlag der Wochenschrift DIE AKTION, 1918).
simultan.”\textsuperscript{79} Every note, every poem is important in the overall work; moreover, how every poem is related, now they blend in texture with their surroundings creates the poetic form. The poems are united in their desire for humanity:

Die ausgewählten Gedichte diese etwa zwei Dutzend Dichter fügten sich schnell, beinahe von selbst, nach wenigen großen Motiven zu jener Symphonie zusammen, die ‘Menschheitsdämmerung’ genannt wurde. Alle Gedichte dieses Buches entquellen der Klage um die Menschheit, der Sehnsucht nach der Menschheit.\textsuperscript{80}

Pinthus attempts to dissolve the individual voices into the symphony, to form them into the metapoem aimed towards humanity. This dissolution produces a polyphonic texture throughout the work.

Polyphony literally means many voices. \textit{Menschheitsdämmerung} is a polyphonic symphony. The individual voices are dissolved into one voice, Pinthus’ voice. However, the polyphonic nature of the work oscillates between the autonomous voices and a unified voice. The totality, which Pinthus produces through \textit{Menschheitsdämmerung}, exists through this tension between heterogeneity and homogeneity. This tension often leads to readings of individual poems in \textit{Menschheitsdämmerung} and not the reading of the whole symphony. The tension nevertheless holds the work together. The voices are often harmonious with each other; however, the polyphonic texture produces dissonance as well. The ambiguity of the title alone, \textit{Menschheitsdämmerung}, expresses the tension between dawn and dusk. Pinthus warns the reader in the foreword not to only pay attention to the individual voices, but rather:

\begin{quote}
Man möge also nicht nur auf die einzelnen Instrumente und Stimmen des lyrischen Orchesters lauschen […] Sondern es kommt darauf an, aus den lärmenden Dissonanzen, den melodischen Harmonien, dem wuchtigen Schreiten der Akkorde, den gebrochensten Halb- und Vierteltönen — die Motive und Themen der wildesten wüstesten Zeit der Weltgeschichte herauszhören. Diese bewegenden Motive (zeugte sie ein inneres Geschenk aus uns heraus, oder ließ nur ein gleichgültiges Werden sie ungeheuer in uns erkling?) variieren sich je nach Wesen und Wollen der Dichter, rauschen empor zum zerspringenden
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{79} Pinthus, \textit{Menschheitsdämmerung}, 22.
\textsuperscript{80} Pinthus, \textit{Menschheitsdämmerung}, 25.
The Creation of Expressionism: Kurt Pinthus the Glaneur and *Menschheitsdämmerung*

Fortissimo oder schwinden hin im beglückenden Dolce. Das Andante des Zweifels der Empörung, und das Moderato des erwachenden, erweckten Herzens erlöst sich zum triumphalen Maestoso der menschenliebenden Menschheit.\(^1\)

The polyphonic texture gives form to dissonance; Pinthus strings poems together both harmoniously and disharmoniously. He develops motifs that run against one another. He gives a singular voice to the twenty-three poets, which often contradict or stand in tension with one another. However, out of these dissonances arises the unified voice of Expressionism.


> Tritt ein, der du verwandert bist und blind!  
> Wenn einst in Träumen laut war hohes Rufen  
> um Gott —: die Bäume sind zu ihm die Stufen.\(^3\)

Through this harmony of poems, Pinthus develops a motif of overcoming the alienation between man and nature. To be able to bridge this chasm and live in an integrated civilization, or to quote Lukács, to overcome “the rift between ‘inside’ and ‘outside, a sign of the essential difference between the self and the world.”\(^4\) However, this rift is not only between the self and the world, but there exists a “still menacing abyss between us and our own selves.”\(^5\) The Expressionists championed the overcoming of these rifts to bring humanity back to integrated civilizations, as

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\(^1\) Pinthus, *Menschheitsdämmerung*, 23.  
\(^2\) Pinthus, *Menschheitsdämmerung*, 156.  
\(^3\) Pinthus, *Menschheitsdämmerung*, 160.  
\(^5\) Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel*, 34.
the Greeks once lived. Nature and the appeal of returning to natural primitivism is thus an attempt to overcome alienation inherent in Modernity. A flight back to primitivism, back to the metaphysical Garden of Eden, is thus a promising aspect for many Expressionists and as Glenn Jordon notes: “German Expressionism was motivated by a powerful emotional desire to depict and escape the destructive forces of modern capitalist society. Its tragedy was a flight from the modern to the primitive.”

Der neue Mensch would overcome this divide between man and man, but more importantly between man and nature.

This string of poems, however, only demonstrates a harmony. Pinthus also uses dissonance to recreate the polyphony of emotions and voices during the Expressionist decade. Pinthus uses these dissonances to highlight moments of hope, of utopia, in the first movement of the symphony, “Sturz und Schrei.” An example of this phenomenon is found across the three poems: Heym’s “Der Gott der Stadt,” Becher’s “Berlin,” and Wolfenstein’s “Städter.” This progression of poems starts with Heym’s grim outlook on urban life in decay. Furthermore, Russell E. Brown notes, that “Heym commemorates not individual downfall and guilt, but the destruction of his whole modern corrupt “todesreife” society.” The imagery developed in “Der Gott der Stadt,” only ends with:

Er streckt ins Dunkel seine Fleischerfaust.
Er schüttelt sie. Ein Meer von Feuer jagt
Durch eine Straße. Und der Glutqualm braust
Und frißt sie auf, bis spät der Morgen tagt.

Although each quatrain of the poem acts as an independent vision, the poem still ends in the fatal encounter with the God of the City and its assumed eventual destruction at the hand of God,

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88 Pinthus, Menschheitsdämmerung, 42–43.
reminiscent to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. The apocalyptic end to Heym’s poem offers the reader no other outcome than destruction. Heym’s poems found within *Menschheitsdämmerung* are eschatological in nature, but without an aspect of redemption. However, Pinthus follows this poem with Johannes R. Becher’s “Berlin.” Becher’s poem will continue with the bleak views of urban existence:

Wir wohnen mit dem Monde in verlassener Klause,  
Der wandelt nieder auf der Firste schmalem Joche.  
Der Tage graue Gischt zu sternenen Küsten braust.  
Auf Winkeltreppe ward ein Mädchen wüst zerstochen.\(^8^9\)

The city is not only a dangerous space, but also it is also the realm of solitude and loneliness. However, Becher’s bleak imagery of the city turns to hope in the end. The eschatological moment that “Der Gott der Stadt,” fails to deliver is promised at the end of Becher’s poem:

Einst kommen wird der Tag!… Es rufet ihn der Dichter,  
Daß er aus Ursprungs Schächten schneller her euch reise!  
Des Feuers Geist ward der Geschlechter Totenrichter.  
Es zerren ihn herauf der Bettler Orgeln heiser.

Einst kommen wird der Tag!… Die himmlischen Legionen,  
Sie wimmeln aus der Wolken Ritze mit Geschmetter.  
Es schlagen zu mit Knall der Häuser Särgebretter.  
Zerschmeißen euch. Es hallelujen Explosionen.\(^9^0\)

The poet as prophet announces the Final Judgement. What was denied in the preceding poem is prophesized by Becher. The Final Judgement will come and redeem those worthy to be redeemed. Yet the hope that is developed at the end of Becher’s poem is quickly swept away by the following poem by Alfred Wolfenstein. Unlike the two previous poems, Wolfenstein’s “Städter” does not even offer imagery of eschatology. Rather Pinthus will return the theme back to alienation and loneliness, which offers no chance of escape from the alienation produced in

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\(^{8^9}\) Pinthus, *Menschheitsdämmerung*, 44.  
\(^{9^0}\) Pinthus, *Menschheitsdämmerung*, 45.
Modernity. Wolfenstein will continue the theme of urban life. He describes modern urban phenomena, e.g., trams. However, Wolfenstein never offers the reader a way out of alienation:

Unsre Wände sind so dünn wie Haut,  
Daß ein jeder teilnimmt, wenn ich weine,  
Flüstern dringt hinüber wie Gegröhle:

Und wie stumm in abgeschlossner Höhle  
Unberührt und ungeschaut  
Steht doch jeder fern und fühlt: alleine.\(^{91}\)

Wolfenstein’s feeling of alienation continues to the end of the poem. He feels alone despite the close proximity to his fellow man. He is unable to communicate, yet everyone hears him weep. The utopian future that Becher proclaims is nowhere in Wolfenstein’s poem. The glimpse of a better world is quickly dismissed as Pinthus orders the poems.

The polyphonic texture of *Menschheitsdämmerung* allows Pinthus to develop these motifs and play motifs off each other. These harmonies and dissonances allow Pinthus to form a round vision of his generation. The poems are occurring simultaneously on a horizontal plane. Polyphony grants Pinthus the possibility to highlight these tensions within the literary movement. These voices remain independent, yet also dissolve into the symphony. Unlike Heym and Wolfenstein, Pinthus already prefigures an optimistic future through his own voice in the original prologue:

Denn jeder Augenblick wird, muß kommen, da aus Beethovens Symphonie, die uns den Rhythmus unserer Jugend gabe, im wildesten Chaos der tobenden Musik plötzlich die *vox humana* emporsteigt: Freunde, nicht diese Töne! Lasset uns andere anstimmen und freudenvollere.\(^{92}\)

Pinthus turns to music to guide us into utopia. Not these individual sounds, but the voice of humanity together will lead us forward. The symphony will lead us from the dusk of an old humanity, to the breaking of a new day. The symphony will overcome the alienation present in

\(^{91}\) Pinthus, *Menschheitsdämmerung*, 45.  
Modernity, for “[i]n song and dance man expresses himself as a member of a higher community.”

93 Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 37.
Chapter 3: The Documentation of Expressionism

The reverberations of Menschheitsdämmerung have been strengthened over time by its multiple replications. These replications have for the most part kept the original totality with little change. The first republication occurred in 1922 with an additional “Nachklang;” the second republication was released in 1959 with the now third foreword, “Nach 40 Jahren.” The second republication, now in its 37th print, also marks the shift between the subtitle. Menschheits-dämmerung is no longer the symphony, but rather it is “ein Dokument des Expressionismus.” However, the change between a symphony and a document can already be seen in the 1922 reprint. Jan Behrs sees the change in Pinthus’ voice only in the 1959 publication, wherein Pinthus shifts from being an artist to more of a literary critic or even philologist. However, the change occurs earlier for Pinthus. Already in 1922, Pinthus shifts from a Glaneur forming the literary movement of lyrical Expressionism to a documenter of a bygone epoch. Just as the Flâneur cannot survive or even exist outside of his natural habitat of the Parisian Arcades, the Glaneur to cannot survive outside of his literary epoch. The “end” of Expressionism also marks the end of Pinthus as the Glaneur. An examination of the tone and changes within Menschheitsdämmerung will show this shift between the Glaneur and the documenter.

3.1: Nachklang der Symphonie

The 1922 republication of Menschheitsdämmerung is often overlooked. In his essay, “Zwischen Subjekt und Objekt der Literaturwissenschaft: Kurt Pinthus als Zeitzeuge,” Jan Behrs makes no reference to the “Nachklang,” nor the reprint in 1922. Furthermore, neither Francis Michael Sharp, nor Christopher McClintick go in much detail about the 1922 version of

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Menschheitsdämmerung beyond a few sentences. It is, however, important to look more closely into the republication, for it marks a major shift in the relationship between Pinthus and his artistic anthology. The changes themselves are minor between the 1919 and 1922 editions. In addition to the new “Nachklang,” Pinthus made several revisions to the poems. However, these revisions were either corrections of mistakes or replacing poems with newer versions, as happened with Iwan Goll’s “Der Panamakanal.”

The largest change occurs with the additional foreword, or as Pinthus titled it “Nachklang.” It is in this short, three-page foreword, in which Pinthus states his intentions for the future of Menschheitsdämmerung:

Ich entschloß mich, das Werk unverändert zu lassen. Nicht nur, weil die Beurteiler aller Gesinnungen und Richtungen äußerten, daß der Hauptwert dieses Buches in seiner Einheitlichkeit, in seiner symphonischen Wirkung bestünde; nicht nur, weil man — was beabsichtigt war — fühlte, daß hier ein geschlossenes Dokument für das aufgewählte Gefühl und die dichterische Ausdrucksform einer zeitgenössischen Generation vorlag. Sondern, unsere Zeit und Dichtung kritisch betrachtend, muß ich einsehen, daß die Menschheitsdämmerung nicht nur ein geschlossenes Dokument dieser Epoche ist. Klar herausgesagt: es ist, nach Abschluß dieser lyrischen Symphonie nichts gedichtet worden, was zwingenderweise noch in sie hätte eingefügt werden müssen.95

Pinthus announces the death of Expressionism. No new works will be added to the symphony, because no Expressionist works have been written since the last triumphant note was played. Menschheitsdämmerung becomes a closed document of a literary epoch representing the “totality” of Expressionism. Sharp is of the opinion, that already in 1919 Pinthus considered Expressionism moribund or already spent.96 However, as many have pointed out, Pinthus only covers and sequentially documents the first generation of Expressionism, and neglects the second wave of Expressionism after the War.97 Pinthus’ “Nachklang” contextualizes Menschheits-

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95 Pinthus, Menschheitsdämmerung, 33.
dämmerung as the closing document of the epoch. It is “ein Zeugnis von tiefstem Leid und tiefstem Glück einer Generation, die fanatisch glaubte und glauben machen wollte, daß aus den Trümmern durch den Willen aller sofort das Paradies erblühen müsse.” The symphony collects and organizes not only the poems, but also the desires and despairs of a generation, thus producing a unity or an attempted totality of a literary movement.

However, the most interesting aspect of the “Nachklang” is not that Pinthus declares Menschheitsdämmerung to be a closed chapter, but rather that Pinthus has the perceived authority to announce that Expressionism is over. As already stated, Expressionism continued with a second generation. It is then ironic, when Pinthus writes, “[f]rühzeitig erstarb die Dichtung dieser Jugend.” However, it is more likely that Pinthus did not see the same intensity and radicalism of feelings in the poetry of the second generation. Nevertheless, as the Glaneur, Pinthus—not only as the literary critic but also the artist—is able to view the literary movement not only from the outside but also from within. This dual position inside and outside of Expressionism gave Pinthus a vantage point, from which he could make such a bold claim. It is a closed and completed literary movement, for Pinthus closes it from both within and outside.

3.2: Nach 40 Jahren

It is in a totality—albeit artificial—, in which not only Menschheitsdämmerung but also Expressionism existed for almost forty years. Approached by Rowohlt, Pinthus agreed on a new publication of his artistic anthology with minor additions. It is at this time, that Pinthus changed the subtitle to “ein Dokument des Expressionismus,” thus permanently shifting Pinthus’ relation to his own work. No longer the Glaneur, Pinthus enters the realm of pure documenter, finishing the process he started earlier with the second edition. Unlike before, Pinthus makes numerous

98 Pinthus, Menschheitsdämmerung, 34–35.
99 Pinthus, Menschheitsdämmerung, 34.
changes and additions. The most noticeable addition is the new foreword, “Nach 40 Jahren.” However, Pinthus successfully petitioned to have the original foreword and the “Nachklang” included in the new publication. Of the poems, Pinthus left them intact, yet as a documenter, Pinthus includes both versions of Goll’s “Der Panamakanal.” However, Pinthus brings this into the limelight in the new foreword: “Es ist also in dieser Gedichtsammlung kein Buchstabe (außer Druckfehlern) geändert worden. Kein einziges Gedicht wurde weggelassen.” The republication sought to keep every aspect of the original, whilst at the same time give further information to the lives of the Expressionist poets.

“Nach 40 Jahren” sets the stage for a new tone and activity for Pinthus. Well after the lifetime of both Expressionism and the Expressionists—only Karl Otten, Gottfried Benn, and Kurt Heynicke were alive at the time of publication—, Pinthus reflects on both Menschheitsdämmerung and Expressionism. According to Behrs, Pinthus’ anthology becomes a historical work with additions by a philologist. It is true that the additions provided by Pinthus resemble a contextualization provided or even guided by philology, but nevertheless the additions are mostly only in the biographical sections. Furthermore, as McClintick suggests, Pinthus’ collection had always been a historical document. However contra McClintick, the new publication was the first to be meant to be a historical document.

The manner, in which Pinthus approaches the new foreword, differs significantly from the original foreword. Pinthus’ language and compositions is reminiscent of a Literaturwissenschaftler. Pinthus reviews literature and quotes written about his literary epoch, he examines the reflections of some of the poets, and he situates Expressionism with other literary

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100 Pinthus, Menschheitsdämmerung, 10–11.
movements, e.g., Sturm und Drang and the Baroque. However, Pinthus spends several pages examining the relationship between the poets after each World War. The reactions to both events differ tremendously for Pinthus. However, Pinthus’ examination of the two time periods points out that those who lived through WWI wanted to destroy their current world to build a new one, while “[d]ie Überlebenden des zweiten Weltkrieges in Deutschland hatten offenbar nichts mehr zu zerstören; sie fand sich in einer zerstörten Welt.”

It is this in wake of destruction, in which Pinthus tries to create any sort of connection between pre- and post-Nazi Germany. Furthermore, McClintick notes that Pinthus must resituate Expressionism in Germany after the its condemnation by the National Socialists and by left-wing writers, e.g., Georg Lukács and Alfred Kurella. It is for this reason, Pinthus outlines the fate of the Expressionists found within Menschheitsdämmerung. By painting a picture of the ordeals many Expressionist went through during the Nazi Regime, Pinthus is quietly repositioning Expressionism between these two poles of Nazism and Stalinism. The detailed fates of the Expressionists move them both away from merely being bourgeois art form that lead directly to Nazism à al Lukács, but also away from the reading of Expressionism as Entartete Kunst, views of degeneracy and decadency by the National Socialists.

Pinthus’ major changes in the 1959 edition is not the addition of a foreword, but rather the expansion of biographical information found at the end of the collection. Pinthus was of the opinion, that the reader had the right to know “wo und wie haben sie gelebt, wann und wie sind sie gestorben, was haben sie veröffentlicht, vor 1920, nach 1920, nach 1933 und im Exil.” It is because of this right, Pinthus both kept and added to the existing biographies. Furthermore,

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103 Pinthus, Menschheitsdämmerung, 15.
105 Pinthus, Menschheitsdämmerung, 18.
Pinthus makes the distinction between his writings and the autobiographies clearly by use of italics. The three living poets, however, were asked to update their own autobiographies. It is interesting, that Pinthus believes that everyone deserves to know the life and writings of each author found within *Menschheitsdämmerung*, yet never in the three editions of the artistic anthology does Pinthus give his own biography.

3.3: The Twenty-Fourth Poet

*Menschheitsdämmerung* is not the work of twenty-three poets, but rather twenty-four. Pinthus ambitious project of the artistic anthology, the metapoem of Expressionism, marks him as being a poet as well. The twenty-four poets found within *Menschheitsdämmerung* represent the first new day of humanity. It is then odd, that there are only twenty-three biographies found at the end of the collection. As Pinthus recollected in 1971:


Even after Pinthus revised the autobiographies in the republication of *Menschheitsdämmerung*, he did not write an autobiography for himself. Without his own biography, the collection seems unfinished, as if the last hour of the day is missing. As the metapoet of Expressionism, it is only befitting if *Menschheitsdämmerung* ended with Pinthus’ biography, completing the collection:

Kurt Pinthus. Born on April 29\(^\text{th}\), 1886 in Erfurt as the son of Erfurter businessman. Like many of the Expressionist generation, Pinthus chose not to follow in his father’s footsteps and decided to study at various universities after receiving his Abitur in Erfurt. Pinthus went on to study Literature, Philosophy and History in Freiburg, Berlin, Geneva and finally received his PhD from

\(^{106}\) Pinthus, “Die Geschichte der Menschheitsdämmerung,” xvi.
the University of Leipzig in December 1910. It is in Leipzig, that Pinthus developed his close friendships with Walter Hasenclever, Ernst Toller, and Franz Werfel, who regularly met at “Wilhelms Weinstube,” a foundational meeting place for discussions of the Expressionist movement. It is during these foundational years, in which Pinthus formed lasting friendships with the first generation of Expressionist poets and began working in the genre of anthology. Pinthus published *Neuer Leipziger Parnass* in 1912, contain poetry from four local poets—including himself—and in 1913, but postdated 1914, Pinthus released *Das Kinobuch*, which was a collection of excerpts from Expressionists plays and screenplays. Furthermore, during this time Pinthus become a “literarischer Berater und Lektor” for Kurt Wolff and Ernst Rowohlt.

However, with the breakout of WWI, Pinthus served in the German Army. However, after the war, Pinthus—like other Expressionists, e.g., Ernst Toller—was involved in the Communist revolutions that spread across Germany. As Pinthus recalls:


With the foundation of the Weimar Republic, Pinthus quickly returned to work at the Ernst Rowohlt Verlag, where he began compiling his Magnus Opus, *Menschheitsdämmerung*. During the turbulent years of the Weimar Republic, Pinthus continued working for various publishing houses as a reader. Sadly, after the National Socialist *Machtergreifung* and the labeling of Expressionism as *Entartete Kunst*, Pinthus was banned from writing. This ban was lifted, however, after Pinthus met with his old friend from Leipzig, Hanns Johst, now the president of

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the *Reichsschrifttumskammer*. Nevertheless, Pinthus emigrated to New York in 1937 and only returned to Germany to collect his personal library of over eight thousand works. During his time in exile, Pinthus found employment at the New School for Social Research, the Library of Congress, and eventually at Columbia University. During this time, Pinthus met weekly with members of the Institute for Social Research and regularly met with Theodor W. Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, Max Horkheimer, and Leo Löwenthal. Despite finding employment in the States, Pinthus faced several financial problems regularly.

Pinthus did not return to Germany directly after the war, instead Pinthus received a permanent professorship at Columbia. Only in 1968 did Pinthus return to Germany permanently and settled in Marbach am Neckar. It is in Friedrich Schiller’s hometown, in which Pinthus passed away on July 11th, 1975 at the age of 89.

Pinthus was not the last Expressionist poet of *Menschheitsdämmerung* to die; Kurt Heynicke outlived him by ten years. Nevertheless, Pinthus is the last Expressionist poet. He completed lyrical Expressionism through the formation of *Menschheitsdämmerung* and now his biography completes the missing hour of the new day for humanity. It is the Glaneur who forms and finishes the totality of lyrical Expressionism.

Conclusion

_Menschheitsdämmerung_ is produced both from within and outside of Expressionism. It is a work of Expressionism that both is a document of Expressionism and in turn documents Expressionism. By situating Expressionism into the context of Modernism, the reader gains an inside in the inherent criticism of Modernity found in both Expressionism and Modernism. In fact, Klaus Theweleit’s description of Gottfried Benn’s poetry as “die Abtreibung der Moderne” can be seen throughout the whole epoch. The anti-modern strain and stark criticism of their time is not only found within the content of their poetry, both also in the form they utilize. The visionary-poems of van Hoddis and Lichtenstein speaks towards the lack of genuine experience, _Erfahrungen_, within modernity. Their poetry and the name of Pinthus’ anthology continue the hope for a renewal of mankind vis-à-vis the works of Friedrich Nietzsche.

Furthermore, Pinthus challenges the traditional boundaries of the anthology and reforms it into the artistic anthology. His position of the Glaneur is that of artist and critic. The formation of the artistic creation allows Pinthus to speak through the twenty-three lyrical voices, to speak through polyphony in order to make the metapoem of Expressionism. However, at the same time, Pinthus’ arrangement of the poems is critical in nature, by which he is able to highlight the harmony and dissonance of the hopes and desires but also despairs and pessimisms of the Expressionists. Already from the title, this dissonance is found through the ambiguity of the meaning of the name, dawn or dusk of humanity.

Lastly, _Menschheitsdämmerung_ has become the lasting documentation of the literary epoch. Its various republications have left the work intact with only minor revisions. Against Pinthus’ own wishes, his artistic anthology has become a standard tool of education, a pedagogical tool. However, the republications also mark a change between Pinthus as the
Glaneur to Pinthus as a documenter. Pinthus change in tone throughout the republications moves away from that of artistry and toward that of a Literaturwissenschaftler. In conclusion, Pinthus is the creator of lyrical Expressionism through Menschheitsdämmerung. It is then not the literary magazines nor the circles in Berlin, Vienna and Munich, which produces the concept of Expressionism, but rather this single collection of twenty-four poets—yes, Pinthus and the other twenty-three poets—which produces the final concept of Expressionism.
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