GUSTAV KLIMT & EGON SCHIELE:

Life and Death in the City of Paradoxes

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A thesis submitted to the Department of History
in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

Queen's University
Kingston, Ontario, Canada
November, 1999

ABSTRACT

Much of twentieth-century European art and culture has been influenced by the intellectual rethinking of the *fin-de-siècle*. As the ideas of Nietzsche and Freud came to the fore of intellectual debate, art and literature often reflected their irrational and unconscious impulse. Art and literature influenced by these developments flourished particularly in Vienna, given a special intensity by the city's cultural traditions and politics. What emerged in Vienna in 1900 has been called "a city of paradoxes" -- where vibrant cultural activity existed alongside cultural pessimism and nihilism. Politically, Austrian liberalism was in crisis, creating a disaffected intelligentsia who were neither a part of, nor apart from the nobility. Instead of liberalism, *Die Jungen (the young ones)* turned to aestheticism and ideas as a means of replacing their failed politics, and providing a sense of escape. This helped create a Viennese society that was alive with growth and innovation, while hiding an intense sense of insecurity and dislocation.

At the center of Viennese cultural developments were Gustav Klimt (1862-1918) and Egon Schiele (1890-1918). Although these two artists are often paired, many scholars argue that their work was very different. Klimt, leader of the Vienna Secession, painted with a refined and decorative style, while Schiele, associated with Expressionism, used broad brushstrokes, intense colour, and powerfully examined the subject's psyche. Eroticism was also a key component of each artist's work, but most argue that Klimt's erotic elements were sensual, and celebrated the female body's beauty, while Schiele's eroticism often bordered on pornography.

I will argue that, despite stylistic differences, the work of both artists embodied

paradoxical *fin-de-siècle* Vienna. Comparing several sets of paintings reveals that both artists created ambiguous images by depicting an equivocation of opposites, between life, love, pain, and death. This involves a rethinking of Klimt in particular, as his work is most often described as depicting only beauty and grace. However, running alongside this, is another, darker element -- the very decorative technique used by Klimt to create his beautiful images is also a facade often used to hide darker imagery of death and pain. This common use of paradox brings the work of both artists closer together.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In working toward the completion of my Masters thesis, I would like to thank first of all, my advisor, Prof. Harold Mah, for his guidance and constant assistance with research, writing, and revisions. I would also like to thank the Department of History at Queen's, especially Yvonne Place, for helping me keep on top of everything! On a personal note, I'd like to thank my friends and particularly my family, who have always encouraged me to pursue my goals.

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INTRODUCTION

While the Viennese painter Gustav Klimt (1862-1918) lay in a hospital after having suffered a stroke early in 1918, burglars broke into his apartment. One of the few things they left behind was an unfinished painting standing in Klimt's abandoned studio called *The Bride*, which, after Klimt's death on the sixth of February, 1918, shed considerable light on the technique of the master of Viennese Art-Nouveau. Alessandra Comini nicely describes this painting of a young girl, whose "knees were bent and the legs spread apart to expose a carefully detailed pubic area upon which the artist had leisurely begun to paint an overlay 'dress' of suggestive and symbolic ornamental shapes."[1] This discovery supposedly confirmed the erotic premise of Klimt's work, catching him in a "dirty old master technique," and revealing his "flagrant voyeurism."[2] However, in addition to this aspect of *The Bride*, Comini describes another, more disturbing element -- "Her face was averted in a profile turn to the

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[1] Alessandra Comini, *Gustav Klimt*, New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1975, p.5.
[2] Ibid, pp.5-6.

right, and a mufflerlike wrap at the throat seemed to separate the head from its glimmering white torso, creating a startling effect of mutilation."[3] Indeed, the woman in this painting, although incomplete, seems to be suffocating under the weight of the fabric overlay placed upon her body, and could as easily be dead as in a state of expectant ecstasy. (Figure 1)

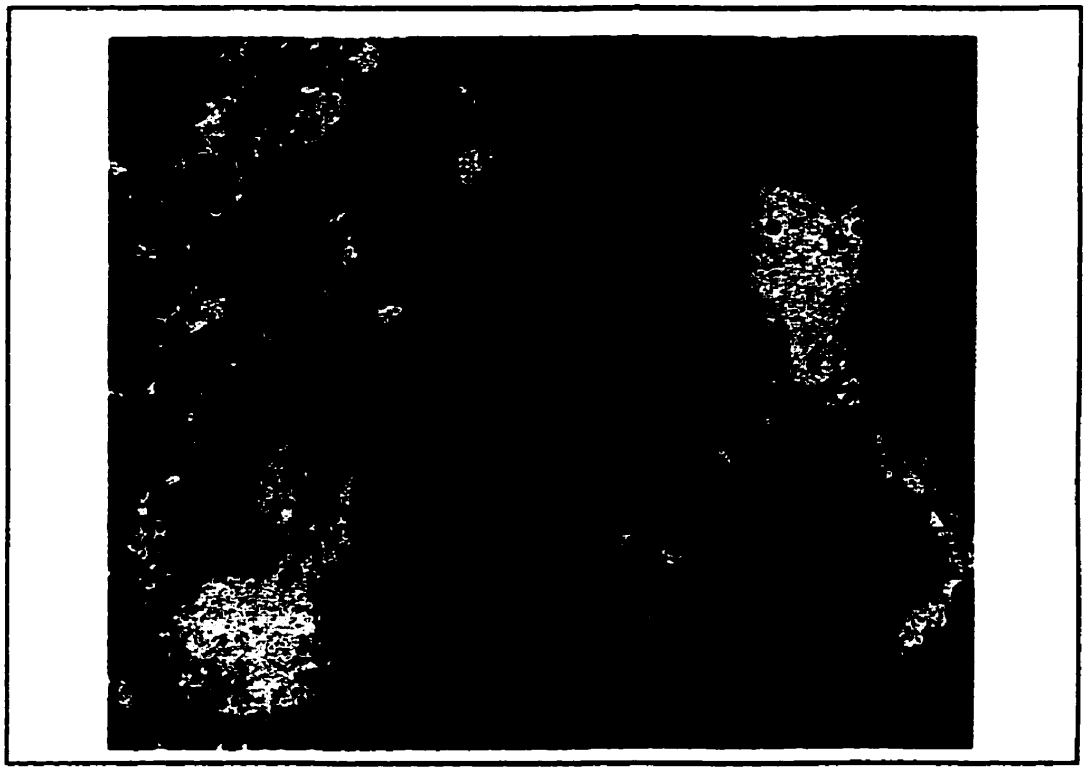

Figure 1: Gustav Klimt, *The Bride*, 1917-18, unfinished.

This paradoxical conflation of eroticism, life, and death is found throughout much of Klimt's work, but is an element often omitted from studies of his paintings. Instead, scholars have tended to argue that Klimt painted with an elaborate, decorative style, which created a highly polished and refined effect in his later paintings. Eroticism, they contend, is a key component of the artist's work, an eroticism that is sensual, and celebrates the female body's beauty and grace. For these reasons, art historians have been careful not to link Klimt's style

[3] Ibid, p.5.

with that of his younger contemporary, Egon Schiele (1890-1918), unless it has been to contrast their work. Schiele is largely associated with Expressionism, and scholars have stressed the difference of his broad brushstrokes, intense colour, and his powerful examination of the subject's soul. In addition, Schiele's eroticism is much more overt, raw, and often pornographic -- indeed, the intense erotic element of Schiele's work at one point in his career sent him to prison for twenty-four days for "immorality."[4] (Figure 2)

Figure 2: caricature of Schiele's work, "This is really filthy!" in unidentified newspaper, 1920's.

However, Klimt and Schiele share a simliarity that undercuts these stylistic and technical differences, and places the "graceful" works of Klimt in closer proximity to the "pornographic" paintings of Schiele. A closer examination of subject matter and theme shows that the paintings of both artists reveal elaborate paradoxes, images that often defy definitive description because they equivocally affirm opposites, of life and death, love and pain. Using paradox as an interpretive tool allows for a rethinking of Klimt in particular, as his work is most often described as only depicting beauty, grace, and sensual love. I will argue that

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[4] Alessandra Comini, *Schiele in Prison*, Greenwich: New York Graphic Society Ltd., 1973, p.18.

running alongside these impulses is another, darker element to Klimt's work -- that the very decorative technique he used to create his beautiful images operates also as a facade used to hide the haunting images of death and pain that lie underneath the surface, a process captured in the unfinished painting *The Bride*. In this way, I use a notion of paradox in several ways -- first, to argue a point contrary to received opinion; second, to establish that Klimt and Schiele created art that was often self-contradictory because it asserts contradictory themes; and third, to establish that these contradictory images create an equivocal and ambiguous body of work. Seen in this light, the work of Klimt takes on a new similarity to that of Schiele -- the former is merely covert where the latter is overt. Both artists capture this paradoxical tension in their paintings, and one element that expresses this particularly well is their representation of women, which can be examined through specific pairings of four or five paintings by each artist.

In *Compulsive Beauty*, first published in 1993, art historian Hal Foster discusses the Freudian concept of the "death drive," and applies it to his study of surrealism in order to show that darker images of pain and death, not "love and liberation," were at the heart of the movement.[5] He argues that these seemingly opposite impulses of life and death actually "serve one another," and are used interchangeably in surrealist art, so that "where sexual and destructive drives appear identical," there lies the achievement, and the undoing, of surrealist art.[6] I will argue that in a similar way, Gustav Klimt and Egon Schiele also engaged in these opposite themes, and by using them interchangeably, produced a complex body of paintings and drawings. This complexity was not lost on some of Klimt's contemporaries, for in the March 1898 issue of *Ver Sacrum*, the Secessionist periodical, Ricarda Huch identified this impulse in

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[5] Hal Foster, *Compulsive Beauty*, Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1997, esp. chapter 1.
[6] Ibid, p.11.

Klimt's work as *Zusammenhang* -- interconnection.[7] Although Klimt and Schiele were different in their method, their message regarding the complex paradox of life, love, and death was often the same. This common underlying interest in depicting darker images of pain and death was also often bound tightly -- interconnected -- to the erotic elements of their work, thus adding to the overall impression of paradox and equivocation. It is not the aim of this study to categorize the art of Klimt and Schiele as being solely consumed with an exploration of the "death drive," but rather, to emphasize that these impulses of pain and death form an important part of the overall paradoxical and ambiguous picture they created, especially with Klimt, who has so often been linked only to elegance and decorative beauty.

Of course, this paradoxical element in the work of these two artists must be rooted in the context of *fin-de-siècle* Vienna, from which they both came. Much of twentieth-century European art and culture has been influenced by the intellectual rethinking of the *fin-de-siècle*. As the ideas of Nietzsche and Freud came to the centre of intellectual debate, art and literature often reflected their concern with irrational and unconscious impulses. Art and literature influenced by these intellectual developments flourished particularly in Vienna, given a special intensity by the city's cultural traditions and politics, as they are described by Carl Schorske in *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*. What emerged in Vienna in 1900 was what Allan Janik and Stephen Toulmin have called "a city of paradoxes" -- where vibrant cultural activity and energy existed alongside cultural pessimism and nihilism. According to Schorske, Austrian liberalism was in a state of crisis, creating a disaffected intelligentsia who were neither a part of, nor apart from the nobility. Their revolution of 1848 had been largely defeated, and their constitutional regime came to be run by the aristocracy and imperial bureaucracy under the reign of Franz

[7] Ricarda Huch, "Symbolistik vor Hundert Jahren," *Ver Sacrum*, (March 1898), 1:3, pp.7-8 as mentioned in Alessandra Comini's *The Fantastic Art of Vienna*, New York: Ballantine Books, 1978, p.15. Comini notes that this term was originally associated with German Romanticism.

Joseph (1848-1916), whose empire possessed only an illusory sense of stability. Instead of liberalism then, *Die Jungen (The Young Ones)* turned to aestheticism and ideas as a means of replacing their failed politics, and providing a sense of escape. This feeling was only exacerbated by the work of Nietzsche and Freud, whose contemplation of the deepest, darkest recesses of modern society and the mind, led *Die Jungen* to the belief that the established foundations of enlightened rationalism and science were being destroyed.

Thus, on the surface of Viennese society lay a culture alive with growth and innovation, but under this existed an intense sense of insecurity, dislocation, and pessimism. In this way, Foucault's description of *fin-de-siècle* society as an exercise in the "pornography of the morbid" nicely captures this paradoxical and unsettling element, as well as the often zealous depiction of highly erotic subject matter in the arts.[8] It was in this "city of paradoxes" that Gustav Klimt and Egon Schiele grew to become accomplished artists and members of the Viennese intelligentsia, and I will argue that it is this sense of uncertainty, paradox, and equivocation that comes through in their art.

To establish the context of my analysis of Klimt and Schiele, there follows a chapter on the social, political, cultural, and intellectual background of *fin-de-siècle* Vienna. Following the work of Carl Schorske and other historians, I assess the paradoxical nature of Vienna on a political, social, and cultural level, including the considerable tensions that emerged along generational, sexual, and gender lines. In the second chapter, I will then examine the role of paradox and equivocation in Vienna's intellectual landscape, looking at Freud, Nietzsche, Otto Weininger, and Robert Musil, in order to discern how they informed, and were formed by, the "city of paradoxes." The final chapter first discusses how Klimt and Schiele were affected by

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[8] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality-Volume I:An Introduction*, Robert Hurley (trans.), New York: Vintage Books, 1990, p.54.

the forces outlined in chapters one and two, and then analyzes their writings and art through the lens of paradox and equivocation.

PART ONE:

VIENNA 1900 - A CITY OF PARADOXES

I. Paradoxes of Context: Politics, Culture, and Social Values

Vienna experienced incredible "intellectual phenomena" over a wide range of fields by the turn of the twentieth-century, but William J. McGrath warns against attributing it to "vague notions of a 'spirit of the time' or... ideas that were 'in the air.'"[1] As has been mentioned, *fin-de-siècle* Vienna was called a "city of paradoxes,"[2] and many historians discuss how it was concrete paradoxes that created a unique atmosphere which, in part, contributed to the explosion in everything from philosophy and psychology to art and literature, and which came to be embodied in the art of Gustav Klimt and Egon Schiele. These paradoxes were felt in virtually every level of society -- in politics, economics, culture, in social relationships between fathers and sons, men and women, and in attitudes towards sexuality and gender roles.

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[1] William J. McGrath, *Dionysian Art and Populist Politics in Austria*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974, p.3.

[2] This term is taken from the title of chapter 2 in Allan Janik & Stephen Toulmin's *Wittgenstein's Vienna*, New York: A Touchtone Book, 1973.

Historian Stephen Eric Bronner places this paradoxical Vienna into the context of the rest of Europe at the time:

> Vienna was a world capital in the years prior to World War I. But looking back it is somewhat difficult to understand quite why. The economic power of the city never rivaled that of London or New York; it lacked the dynamism of Berlin and the cultural heritage of Paris; and it was never exotic like Barcelona or Moscow. But Vienna was unique: it looked east and west at the same time; it wavered between cosmopolitanism and provincialism... its bohemian intelligentsia was as radical as any but also part of the cultural establishment; it was the city of joyful music and the most depressing if innovative literature; and it was both a reality and an image.[3]

Indeed, Vienna 1900 was both a reality and an image -- often, what existed on the surface was not what occurred underneath, and this was true in many situations.

Carl Schorske argues that at the root of these paradoxes was a "highly compacted political and social development" in Vienna.[4] The political landscape of Vienna by the end of the nineteenth century revolved mostly around the unique nature of liberalism, which began "later than elsewhere in western Europe, [and] entered earlier than elsewhere into deep crisis."[5] Like many other European nations, Austrian liberalism had its "heroic age" in its struggle against the aristocracy and absolutism.[6] However, unlike those European nations, Austrian liberals were largely defeated in their revolution of 1848, and their constitutional regime was run largely by the aristocracy and the imperial bureaucracy under the reign of Emperor Francis Joseph I (1848-1916), who came to the throne as a result of these upheavals. His reign, which lasted sixty-eight years, carefully followed the spirit of his family predecessors despite his apparent dedication to liberal policies. These policies became "...revolutionary-seeming means toward consistently reactionary ends," and are perhaps best typified by his introduction of universal manhood suffrage in 1907 in order to keep control over his Army from forces in

[3] Stephen Eric Bronner, *Vienna: The World of Yesterday, 1889-1914*, Stephen Eric Bronner and F. Peter Wagner (eds.), New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1997, p. vii.
[4] Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture*, New York: Vintage Books, 1981, p.xxvi.
[5] Ibid, p.xxvi.
[6] Ibid, p.5.

Hungary who wanted to create a separate Hungarian army.[7] Despite Francis Joseph's attempts to maintain a stability within the Empire, this stability was mostly "illusory" -- behind the formalism of his policies, there existed "nothing but vacuousness and chaos."[8] In reality, his control over the numerous nationalities that composed the Empire was failing, and his disregard for the incredible housing shortage in Vienna was creating terrible unrest among citizens.[9] This sense of illusory stability was at the heart of all that was aristocratic Austria in the *fin-de-siècle*, and is summarized by Allan Janik and Stephen Toulmin:

> The sensuous worldly splendour and glory apparent on its [Austria's] surface were, at a deeper level, the very same things that were its misery. The stability of its society, with its delight in pomp and circumstance, was one expression of a petrified formality which was barely capable of disguising the cultural chaos that lay beneath it. On closer scrutiny, all its surface glories turned to their opposite; this is the fundamental truth about all aspects of life in the Dual Monarchy.[10]

Austrian liberalism then, was a part of this paradoxical aristocratic regime, and while liberals believed they espoused values of reason and law, they were constantly confronted by "an older aristocratic culture of feeling and grace," which they could never truly be a part of in any real way.[11] Schorske argues that the Austrian bourgeoisie was different from its French and English counterparts because "...it did not succeed either in destroying or in fully fusing with the aristocracy," which made it "...dependent upon and deeply loyal to the emperor as a remote but necessary father-protector."[12] They felt largely like "outsiders," and pursued a more "open road" toward inclusion through culture, as a way of trying to assimilate with the nobility of Austria.[13] This unique blend of liberal reason and law with noble values of

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[7] Janik&Toulmin, *Wittgenstein's Vienna*, p.38.
[8] Ibid, p.38,40.
[9] Ibid, p.241.
[10] Ibid, p.37.
[11] Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*, p.7.
[12] Ibid, p.7.
[13] Ibid, p.7.

aestheticism created a "most unstable compound" in *fin-de-siècle* culture,[14] and a liberalism that was anxious and "stillborn" as a real political movement.[15] Its small political base was quickly challenged in the 1890's by the rapid rise of mass political movements, which threatened its already weak position.

The members of this disaffected Viennese liberalism were young, and suffered a rift from the "Old Liberals," composed largely of their fathers' generation; they took on various names to convey this new-found sense of independence and difference from the traditions in which they had been raised -- *Die Jungen (The Young Ones)* and *Jung-Wien (Young Vienna)*.[16] Their differences with tradition revolved largely around the questions of Austrian patriotism and German nationalism -- the older, "classical" liberals, placed the former in highest regard, while their sons, *Die Jungen*, came to view themselves as having "...come into the world as a German...".[17] During the 1870's and 1880's, this rift became deeper, and when the economy crashed in 1873, the "Old Liberals" were blamed. Thus, Schorske contends that these, and other forces, "converged...to produce a deep crisis of confidence in liberalism before it had had the chance to stabilize...".[18] This crisis only added to the extreme sense of dislocation felt by *Die Jungen*, as they realized that not only were they alienated from the aristocracy, but that they did not agree with the traditional liberal values of their fathers -- they felt that the "naive faith" of the older generation was at once "admirable and anachronistic."[19] The historian William McGrath mentions how Max Gruber (1853-1927), who belonged to this group of disaffected Austrian intellects, described his dislocation from the secure world of his parents in this way --

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[14]Ibid, p.7.
[15]Janik&Toulmin, *Wittgenstein's Vienna*, p.48.
[16]Carl Schorske, *Thinking with History: Explorations in the Passage to Modernism*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998, pp. 142-145.
[17]Ibid, p.144.
[18]Ibid, p.143.
[19]Ibid, p.148.

"I had eaten of the tree of knowledge. There was no return."[20] He, and others from his class and generation increasingly came to believe that "the existing economic order, loaded with incurable faults, deserves to be completely destroyed."[21]

All of these things blended together to create a unique mix of values. In these troubled political times, many disaffected Viennese youths came to abandon the political sphere altogether, and instead, became enthralled with art, music, and most of all, aesthetics. The younger generation of Viennese men (and sometimes women) came to view aesthetics and art as an "avenue of escape," an alternative to the "Business is Business" attitude of their fathers.[22] Art became a way of life, and formed the center of many lives. This intellectual and artisan class within Vienna developed differently from its counterparts in other major western European cities, which operated separately from one another. In Vienna, the intelligentsia was a "tightly knit group" of artists, musicians, and writers, who met regularly at the cafés, and did not see the need for specialization -- indeed, they were an interdependent group, perhaps best personified by their love of the *feuilleton*, the literary or cultural essay, which formed a large part of their discussions.[23] Of course, one of the key inspirations for this turn toward art were the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche, whose discussions regarding the primacy of the "life of art" led many to believe that in art lay the only truth of existence. This, combined with the introspective research of Sigmund Freud, led *Jung-Wien* into a world of illusions, disguised as the one true reality.

The café became the centre of this aesthetic lifestyle, as was the case elsewhere in Europe at the *fin-de-siècle*. Along with being the intellectual hub of discussion and debate, the

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[20]Max Gruber, "Mitteilungen," p.1038, in McGrath's *Dionysian Art and Populist Politics in Austria*, p.27.
[21]Ibid, pp.22-23.
[22]Janik & Toulmin, *Wittgenstein's Vienna*, p.48,45.
[23]Ibid, p.18,45.

Viennese café acted as a second home for many, especially during a time when housing was at a high premium, a factor which will be discussed further below. Thus, the café came to serve as "...an ideal home where one could receive comfort, where one did not have to be ashamed, where one could surmount one's frustration and despair, and where one could find a social way of life and perhaps even a bit of financial support."[24] One regular defined the experience of the café as providing "mother-womb feelings...".[25] Thus, the café became a surrogate home for Viennese aesthetes, who felt that while sitting among other men with similar values and ideals, they could feel like they belonged to a culture, despite the fact that the political realm had forgotten about them. The frustration that went along with this realization and *Jung Wien's* paradoxical love-hate for Vienna is captured by Hermann Bahr (1863-1934), a key Viennese dramatist and frequenter of the café:

> No, one can no longer live in Vienna. Away! Here there are not a dozen men who perceive half-way in a European manner. And behind them is just nothing, chaos. But then Klimt paints a new picture, Roller does *Tristan* or *Fidelio* in a novel way, Mahler conducts, Mildenburg sings. And then I say to myself : Yet nowhere else could I live as in Vienna, really the life I wish.[26]

Carl Schorske describes how *Jung-Wien* possessed a uniquely "modern" view, not in the sense that they were forward thinking, but in that they believed themselves to be completely detached from history. Indeed, to young Viennese intellects modernity meant "the slipping or sliding away of the world."[27] With Austrian society in political disarray, *Jung-Wien* grew nihilistic, impotent, "socially functionless," and "existentially disengaged" from their ability to contribute purposefully to society -- the purpose was no longer evident.[28] Thus, joined to a

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[24] Fritz Hackert, "Cafés, Feuilletons, and Cabarets in Vienna 1900," in *Vienna: The World of Yesterday, 1889-1914*, pp.21-22.
[25] Ibid, p.22.
[26] Hermann Bahr, *Neue Rundschau*, 16 (1905), 162, as mentioned in William Johnston's *The Austrian Mind: An Intellectual and Social History 1848-1938*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972, p.126.
[27] Schorske, *Thinking with History*, p.146.
[28] Ibid, p.146.

love of aesthetics was an underlying sense of apathy and exhaustion at the thought of being truly "modern," which left the young intellects of Vienna's cafés cast adrift. Schorske puts it this way -- "The seismographic consciousness of the *fin-de-siècle* character was assailed now by the forces of instinct within, now by the inchoate powers of the world without."[29] This veneration of aestheticism, then, existed alongside the understanding that it was also a device needed to bring solace to a group severed from its country, its fathers, and its past.

There were some contemporaries who saw this politics of aestheticism as merely a form of self-conscious escapism, one that essentially amounted to "a narcissistic pseudo-solution to the problem."[30] Notable among this group was satirist Karl Kraus (1874-1936), whose publication *Die Fackel (The Torch)* aimed to illuminate what he felt to be the ills of Austrian society. More of an ethicist than an aesthete, Kraus aimed to "...rescue *Geist* (mind) and ethics from the sensuousness and the aestheticism with which, in his view, his own generation was corrupting them."[31] Indeed, Kraus had a strong dislike for aesthetic artists of the Secession, such as Gustav Klimt, and supported the younger Expressionist artists, such as Egon Schiele and Oskar Kokoschka, who he believed threw off the facade of aestheticism and replaced it with an "unmediated...raw and febrile existential truth."[32] Kraus also disapproved of the cultural essay, or *feuilleton*, dismissing it as further aesthetic nonsense -- "To write a *feuilleton* is to curl locks on a bald pate; but the public likes these curls better than a lion's mane of thought."[33] Thus, there did exist a strong voice in *fin-de-siècle* Vienna against the veneration of aestheticism that took hold of many *Jung-Wien*; but this dissent did not seem to

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[29]Ibid, p.146.
[30]Janik & Toulmin, *Wittgenstein's Vienna*, p.66.
[31]Schorske, *Thinking with History*, p.135.
[32]Ibid, p.136.
[33]Karl Kraus, *Beim Wort genommen*, Munich: Kösel, 1955, p.191, as cited in Harry Zohn's "Karl Kraus and *Die Fackel*," *Vienna: The World of Yesterday, 1889-1914*, p.175.

matter to the aesthetes, who often knew themselves of the escapism involved, but who did not care.

In addition to the deep aesthetic values that permeated Viennese society, there was another "orphan" of failed liberalism -- the rise of mass anti-liberal political movements.[34] These movements were headed by "defectors" from liberalism; men who believed that the traditional Viennese liberal was blinded by his devotion to aestheticism, and unable to come to terms with the grim realities of life in Vienna at the turn of the century. Men like Viktor Adler, who organized Austrian Social Democracy, and Karl Lueger, who introduced Christian Socialism, all began as disaffected liberals, who tried to unite the remaining mass of Viennese society and address their concerns. Like many European cities at this time, Vienna was facing serious problems caused by urban growth and industrialization, which were largely being ignored from above. The list of poor economic conditions is long, perhaps the worst of which was the grave housing shortage. By 1910 there were only 5,734 single-family homes, housing only 1.2 percent of the total Viennese population.[35] This meant that shared housing and deplorable conditions were the norm, as was being homeless and having to find shelter in caves, railway embankments, and in one case, trees in the park.[36] This housing shortage was coupled with deplorable working conditions and long hours for the industrial workers of the city. Egon Schiele's painting *Dead City*, completed in 1911, captures this feeling of desolation and crowded urban decay. (Figure 3)

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[34]Janik&Toulmin, *Wittgenstein's Vienna*, p.48.
[35]Ibid, pp.50-51.
[36]Ibid, pp.50-51.

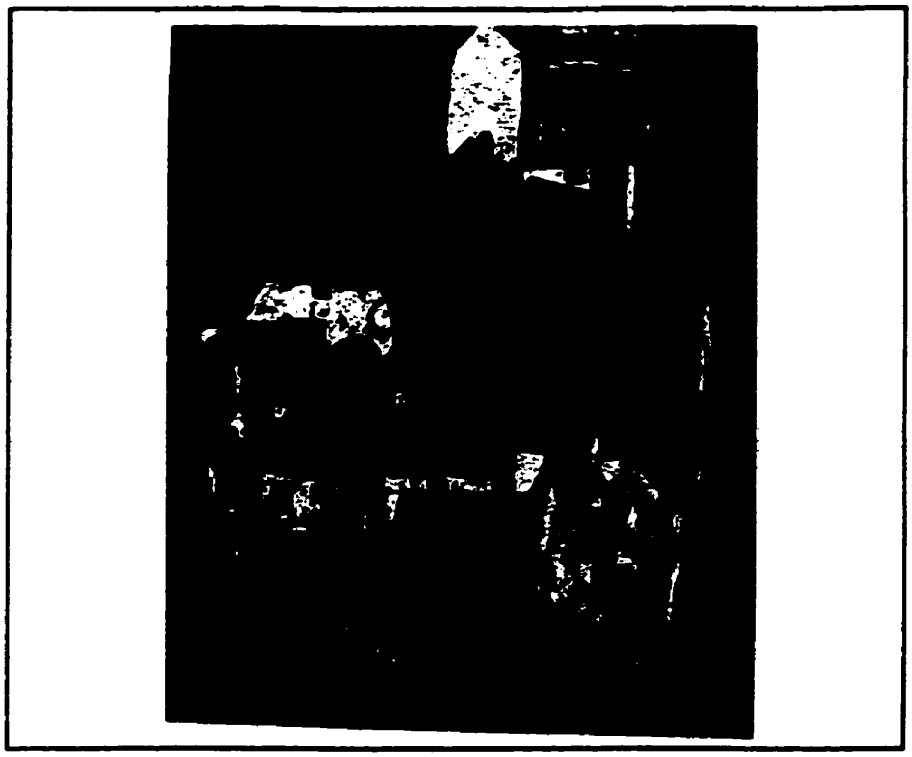

Figure 3: Egon Schiele, *Dead City*, 1911.

This terrible economic crisis also had its paradoxical element, too, in the development of the *Ringstrasse* by Emperor Francis Joseph I, which was an attempt to transform the face of Vienna with a "vast complex of public buildings and private dwellings... occupying a broad belt of land separating the old inner city from its suburbs."[37] This architectural facelift was essentially, as Schorske points out, "controlled by the professional and the well-to-do for whose accommodation and glorification it was...designed."[38] Francis Joseph commissioned the construction of a "new" Vienna between the years 1858-1888, which included an immense tree-lined boulevard surrounding the inner city, a new Imperial Palace, two new museums, a new Reichstag building, as well as a new Imperial Opera House and Theatre.[39] The art historian Frank Whitford points out that the paradox between the grandeur of the Ringstrasse

[37]Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*, p.24.
[38]Ibid, p.26.
[39]Janik and Toulmin, *Wittgenstein's Vienna*, p.41.

coupled with the economic squalor evident everywhere else in Vienna was not lost on contemporaries like architect Alfred Loos; he compared the *Ringstrasse* in his essay "The Potemkinian City" to the cloth and cardboard villages erected in the Crimea by Field Marshal Potemkin to impress Catherine the Great with the fine living conditions of the peasants -- "When I walk along the Ring, I always get the feeling that a modern Potemkin has wanted to create the impression in the visitor to Vienna that he has arrived in a city inhabited exclusively by the nobility."[40] The Ringstrasse, although heralded as the pinnacle of Vienna's "cosmopolitan consciousness," also revealed the Emperor's attempt to cover the deplorable living conditions in Vienna with a facade of glory and wealth.[41]

In addition to their avoidance of the economic realities of Vienna, the aristocracy also avoided the issue of nationality within the country. Indeed, Austria was a nation composed of eleven different ethnic groups, with extensive histories and "labyrinthine interrelations."[42] This conflict of nationalities made the Empire increasingly difficult to govern, and the Reichstag was rife with fractious debate which often turned into "fist fights and flying inkwells."[43] While Francis Joseph "faithfully and tenaciously respected his commitment to Hungary," he was unwilling to accede to the demand for recognition by Czechs and Southern Slavs, as this was a threat to his perceived divine role ordained by God to govern the Empire.[44] As a result of these divisions, alienation was predominant among many citizens of Austria, which included the intense dislocation felt by the Jewish population living within the Empire -- many did not feel that they belonged. This was best exemplified in the debate over the very name of Austria, which was derisively called Kakania, or "Excrementia," by Robert Musil, a contemporary writer.

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[40]Frank Whitford, *Klimt*, London: Thames&Hudson Ltd., 1990, p.31.
[41]Janik and Toulmin, *Wittgenstein's Vienna*, p.41.
[42]Janik&Toulmin, *Wittgenstein's Vienna*, p.38.
[43]Ibid, p.39.
[44]Ibid, p.40.

Janik & Toulmin describe how the name "combines two senses on different levels. On the surface, it is a coinage from the initials K.K., standing for Imperial-Royal... but to anyone familiar with German nursery language, it carries also the secondary sense of... "Shitland."[45] This is an interesting nickname for a paradoxical Empire dubbed the "realm without a name," and housing a large population who increasingly felt itself to be without an identity.[46]

Thus, there were many forces within Vienna at the turn of the century which led to its paradoxical existence. In political, economic, and national spheres, the young generation of Vienna felt themselves to be alienated, and often their attempts to reconcile this alienation with their culture of aestheticism failed to provide a strong sense of security and belonging. However, this did not prevent *Jung-Wien* from enjoying all that the life of an aesthete had to offer. Vienna 1900 had an incredible breadth of cultural figures, whose achievements left *Jung-Wien* with a feeling of happiness, despite their role as a sensory balm for the disaffected intelligentsia. Literature, poetry, music, art, and philosophy were all areas touched by this paradoxical Vienna, and became central to the cultural developments of the time. All of these forces are what could be labeled external -- they represent some of the tangible ways in which Vienna at the *fin-de-siècle* was a city of paradoxes. There were also other forces, equally paradoxical, that lay within the Viennese. These were internal forces, and involved social issues such as relationships between men and women, attitudes toward sexuality, and personal opinions and proclivities regarding often morbid issues. These forces also played a key role in the paradoxical city that was Vienna at the turn of the century.

One interesting Viennese penchant, and particularly well suited to this discussion of paradoxical Vienna, is what William Johnston describes as a unique Viennese fascination with

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[45]Ibid, p.13.
[46]Ibid, p.39.

death. There was the belief that "Austrians cultivated a Baroque vision of death as the fulfillment of life," dating back to Mozart's composition of the *Requiem* mass on his deathbed.[47] Johnston also argues that an active "cult of the dead" was popular among royals and citizens alike, which entailed "intimate veneration" of the body through the Viennese custom of conducting elaborate funerals in the attempt to have a "beautiful corpse."[48] Johnston believes this to be another symptom of Viennese aestheticism, which often resulted in "indifference to the living."[49] This fascination with death also entered the medical realm with the practice of "therapeutic nihilism," in which physicians were more interested in diagnosis than in the treatment of their patients; often the results of postmortem autopsies were the reward to be sought, not the saving of a life.[50] Death was also seen as a way to escape the troubles and uncertainties of this world, which were becoming increasingly difficult to unravel as the philosophies of Nietzsche and Freud became an integral part of intellectual life in Vienna. This escapism, and the idea of death as "refuge," accounts in part, according to Johnston, for the high rate of suicide among Viennese intellectuals.[51]

Alessandra Comini also focuses on this paradoxical attitude toward death by arguing that it was not only seen as a way out, but was also often bound up with attitudes toward sexuality and eroticism -- "Death and sexuality: these two forces continued to propel both the imaginary and the real life of Vienna."[52] Indeed, it is exactly this paradoxical attitude toward death and sexuality that reveals itself in the art of Gustav Klimt and Egon Schiele, and was often used interchangeably. There have been several studies in recent years on the issue of

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[47]William Johnston, *The Austrian Mind*, p.165.
[48]Ibid, p.166.
[49]Ibid, p.167.
[50]Ibid, p.168.
[51]Ibid, pp.174-180.
[52]Alessandra Comini, *The Fantastic Art of Vienna*, p.16.

sexual attitudes at the *fin-de-siècle*, most of which point to the uncertainty and crisis felt by many people. This was certainly no different for the Viennese, and their unique interest in death only added to the ambiguities surrounding their sexual mores. Suzanne R. Stewart's study *Sublime Surrender* (1998), focuses on the growing interest in masochism among males at the turn of the century, while Elaine Showalter addresses the crises of sexual attitudes across Europe at the time in her study *Sexual Anarchy* (1990). These attitudes toward sexuality had a strong link to gender relations at the time, and is an appropriate place to begin in order to unravel the paradoxes of sexuality in *fin-de-siècle* Vienna.

Part of the uncertainty among men regarding sexuality revolved around the changing role of women in *fin-de-siècle* society. The long standing belief in the female as ultimately a natural and sexual being had led to a "madonna-whore dichotomy" within society at the time -- women were seen either as wives and mothers or as prostitutes; there was no other option.[53] Even early feminists in Austria, although they wrote and argued for the development of women, hinged their belief system upon these existing cultural values.[54] Indeed, although there was a suffrage movement in the early twentieth-century, middle class womens' movements in Austria still emphasized "gender difference," and "...continued to advocate femininity as a panacea for all ills, instead of focusing on political structures and the question of political power."[55] "Feminine" qualities of nurturing and concern for social harmony and justice were strongly pointed to as key reasons for advocating a woman's entrance into the political sphere, both as voters and as elected officials, as these values were believed by many early feminists to be

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[53]Karin J. Jušek, "The Limits of Female Desire: The Contributions of Austrian Feminists to Sexual Debate in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna,"in *Austrian Women in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, David F. Good et al. (eds.), Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1996, p.31.
[54]Ibid, p.31.
[55]Birgitta Bader-Zaar, "Women in Austrian Politics, 1890-1934: Goals and Visions," in *Austrian Women*, p.85.

strongly lacking in the existing political structures. Seen within the context of their time period, however, women like Rosa Mayreder (1848-1912) and Irma von Troll-Brostyáni (1858-1938) were important forces in challenging, perhaps not the system itself, but the injustices within this system of cultural values; on 18 December 1918, Austrian women over twenty were given the franchise .[56]

The impact of these movements had a connection to the emergence of a new kind of woman at the *fin-de-siècle*, one who did not see marriage as her only option. She was called the "Odd Woman" by newspapers and editorials, and caused a great deal of concern among men at the time. Showalter discusses the fact that the number of Odd Women -- women who "could not marry" -- was on the rise in the late nineteenth-century, and was causing an "unwholesome social state," according to a contemporary English journalist William R. Greg.[57] Showalter describes how the Odd Woman "was the one left over, the uneven number, the spinster who could not find a husband to pair off with her."[58] What was most troubling about the Odd Woman, however, was the fact that she represented a new demographic within *fin-de-siècle* society, one that defined unmarried women as a new political and sexual group, not defined by their relationship to men. The popular image of this woman was often conflated out of negative terms, combining "elements of the lesbian, the angular spinster, and the hysterical feminist."[59] Thus, despite this new group of women emerging within society, the paradigm was such that they continued to be marginalized by organized society, led mainly by men, who defined them as undesirable and defective.

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[56]Jušek's chapter discusses the achievements of these early Austrian feminists, as does Harriet Anderson's study *Utopian Feminism: Women's Movements in fin-de-siècle Vienna*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992.

[57]Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin-de-Siècle*, New York: Viking Penguin, 1990, p.19.

[58]Ibid, p.19.

[59]Ibid, p.23.

Increasingly however, there was another kind of woman emerging alongside the Odd Woman -- this was the "New Woman."[60] She was different from her odd sister in the sense that she vocally announced her disdain for the institution of marriage -- "Unlike the odd woman, celibate, sexually repressed, and easily pitied or patronized as the flotsam and jetsam of the matrimonial tide, the sexually independent New Woman criticized society's insistence on marriage as woman's only option for a fulfilling life."[61] This woman was university educated and sexually independent, a combination that made her feared in many spheres. As she became more common in Europe and in North America, medicine and science warned that this new ambitious breed of woman would lead to "sickness, freakishness, sterility, and racial degeneration," and society came to view her as hysterical and nervous.[62]

Thus, these advances by women in *fin-de-siècle* Europe, including Vienna, created fear among men which, in part, contributed to a serious crisis of masculinity at the turn of the century. This crisis was not solely based on a "battle *between* the sexes," but more accurately, on a "battle *within* the sexes," creating a situation where men felt just as confused and uncertain about the shifting boundaries of gender.[63] Indeed, at the *fin de siècle* there was a considerable amount of ambiguity surrounding sexuality, and just as women were adopting traditional male roles, men too were experimenting with female identities -- as one historian describes it, "Men became women. Women became men."[64] The terms "feminism" and "homosexuality" were used during this period for the first time, and while women were attempting to enter the

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[60]Ibid, p.38.
[61]Ibid, p.38.
[62]Ibid, pp.39-40.
[63]Ibid, p.9.
[64]Karl Miller, *Doubles: Studies in Literary History*, London: Oxford University Press, 1987, p.97 as cited in Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy*, p.3.

"masculine" spheres of political and social equality, so too, were men entering a traditionally "feminine" sphere of aesthetic appreciation. Showalter defines this male identity crisis:

> Gender crisis affected men as well as women, and the fantasies of a pitched battle for sexual supremacy typical of the period often concealed deeper uncertainties and contradictions on both sides. It is important to keep in mind that masculinity is no more natural, transparent, and unproblematic than "femininity." It, too, is a socially constructed role, defined within particular cultural and historical circumstances, and the *fin-de-siècle* also marked a crisis of identity for men.[65]

One of the clearest examples of this male identity crisis was the "dandy," a term used in nineteenth-century Vienna to describe the type of male who frequented the cafés, contributed to the *feuilletons*, and venerated aestheticism. Marked by their exquisite dress and attention to refined appearance, self-proclaimed dandies believed themselves to be living the life of art, and attempted to distance themselves from the working bourgeoisie by mastering an "elegant and playful style of life."[66] Mark Anderson, in his study of Franz Kafka, argues that underneath Kafka's attitudes towards transcendence and simplicity, lay a paradoxical love of fashion, and an attention to personal aesthetics, which he believes Kafka tried to "repress," in an attempt to distance himself from his own origins in the world of *fin-de-siècle* ornament.[67] The dandy, then, was perhaps one of the best examples of paradoxical Vienna at the turn of the century -- he was an intense contradiction:

> Not to stand out and yet to speak with one's material self; to disappear into an ever more refined elegance and yet preserve the ability to speak, to convince, even to surprise and shock -- within these contradictory parameters moves a phenomenon that has sometimes been interpreted as the last glimmer of aristocratic Europe, sometimes as the beginning of modernity.[68]

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[65] Ibid, p.8.
[66] Hackert, "Cafés, Feuilletons, and Cabarets in Vienna 1900," in *Vienna: The World of Yesterday, 1889-1914*, p.25.
[67] Mark M. Anderson, *Kafka's Clothes: Ornament and Aestheticism in the Habsburg Fin-de-Siècle*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992, p.7.
[68] Ibid, p.217.

The dandy seemed to look forward and backward at the same time. He also seemed to be caught in a sexuality crisis according to some -- dandies were often seen as "nerve-sick and fancy-sick feminine souls caught in the bodies of males...".[69] According to these same people, it was precisely because of these "feminine souls" that *fin-de-siècle* society was "simply perverse...put[ting] lust and voluptuousness in the place of ideals...flavour[ing] cruelty and horror with sensual pleasure...".[70]

Thus, femininity was often blamed for the strange merging of pain, death, and sexual pleasure in *fin-de-siècle* Vienna, and while some men used this to fuel their misogyny, others feared women, and still others were in awe and even emulated them. This shows the paradoxical nature of the crisis of masculinity -- for some men it manifested itself as an embracing of dandy-ism; for others, it became a hostile attack on "feminine," hedonistic values, as being the cause for all that had become sick and diseased in the decadent world of the *fin-de-siècle*. Adding an additional layer, Showalter also describes a unique strain of "male feminism" existing at the *fin-de-siècle*, which did not manifest itself as a strong commitment to the rights of women, but as a rebellion against various traditions of the patriarchal order which many men believed kept *them* victim to traditional practices like inheritance and primogeniture.[71] She believes this paradoxical crisis to be at the "heart" of *fin-de-siècle* culture -- "Indeed, strongly anti-patriarchal sentiments could also coexist comfortably with misogyny, homophobia, and racism."[72]

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[69] Benedetto Croce, *History of Europe in the Nineteenth Century*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1934, p.46, as cited in Suzanne R. Stewart's study *Sublime Surrender: Male Masochism at the Fin-de-Siècle*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998, p.19.
[70] Ibid, p.19.
[71] Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy*, p.11.
[72] Ibid, p.11.

A large part of the fear felt by some men toward women revolved around her sexuality. Many historians discuss the recurring image of the "sexually voracious femme fatale" in much of the art at the turn of the century, including that of Klimt and Schiele.[73] While this component was certainly evident, it seems clear that it was part of an overall image of paradox; thus while depicting a sexual predator, Klimt and Schiele were also depicting a sleeping maiden, an excited lover, and a dead corpse. Nevetheless, this image of the *femme fatale* is an important component of the context of the city of paradoxes that was Vienna, and should be addressed.

There were many ways in which this fear of women manifested itself. Unlike Elaine Showalter, Bram Dijkstra argues that gender relations at the time were truly a "war on woman," encouraged by what was believed to be woman's "'inherently perverse' unwillingness to conform."[74] One of the strongest and easiest arguments to be made by men regarding the "evil" nature of women was the prostitute. The end of the nineteenth century saw the "massive spread of prostitution in urban centers. During no period, before or since, was the sight of prostitutes so common, so much taken for granted."[75] Prostitution as a problem was recognized later in Austria than elsewhere in Europe, but had been noticed officially in 1873, when about two thousand prostitutes were registered on the occasion of the World's Fair.[76] Its role in Vienna, where men married later in life, was key. Prostitution often provided the only "sexual outlet" for the young Viennese bourgeois, and created a paradox all its own -- it was "simultaneously immoral and a social necessity, illegal and protected by the police...".[77]

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[73]Ibid, p.10.
[74]Bram Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siècle Culture*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986, p.vii.
[75]Ibid, p.355.
[76]Karin J. Jušek, "The Limits of Female Desire," in *Austrian Women*, pp.22-23.
[77]Janik and Toulmin, *Wittgenstein's Vienna*, p.70.

While the church and the political sphere, dominated by men, believed prostitution to be the sign of a weaker female moral character, feminists began to address the situation as a social and economic problem.[78] The well-known feminist Rosa Mayreder called for "the economic and social emancipation of the female sex as a significant and necessary means for improving the prevailing conditions [of prostitution]."[79] Despite these arguments, prostitution still held the immoral stamp of the weak yet manipulative woman. To be sure, there were male prostitutes who catered to male homosexuals in Vienna, often because of their inability to conduct normal relationships in public, and who were considered by some to be "an indispensable part of the male homosexual life...".[80] However, female prostitution was much more institutionalized in Vienna 1900, and was often the target for male aggression. Dijkstra cites a contemporary writer, Bernard Talmey, who argued in 1904 that "one should realize that not a few choose this lifestyle to satisfy their nymphomaniac desires."[81] Dijkstra concludes that:

> Prostitution having thus conveniently been made the sole responsibility of the prostitute, it was easy for the middle-class male to see himself as the helpless victim of these tempting sirens and vampires of the streets, these lusty creatures of the working class...[82]

This belief that the male was a hapless dupe marks an interesting paradox in the attitude toward the prostitute -- she was perceived to be acting out her purely sexual and primal nature, a nature that obviously made her inferior to the man, yet she was capable of luring men into her trap, of forcing them to act against their own "best interests." She was thus a figure to be pitied, hated, feared, and desired at the same time. The prostitute also marked the ultimate "commodification of the human body," which made her a kind of "metacharacter of modernity"

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[78] Karin J. Jušek, "The Limits of Female Desire," in *Austrian Women*, p.23.
[79] Ibid, p.23.
[80] Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy*, p.111.
[81] Bernard S. Talmey, *Women: A Treatise on the Normal and Pathological Emotions of Feminine Love*, 1904, p.115, as cited in Dijkstra's *Idols of Perversity*, p.356.
[82] Dijkstra, p.357.

according to Stewart, as she embodied industrial capitalism.[83] Of course, the marked difference here was that she peddled immoral wares.

The prostitute was not the only type of woman to be feared during the *fin-de-siècle*. In addition to the Odd Woman and the New Woman, there was also the "Cruel Woman."[84] This female was the ultimate *femme fatale* on the surface. Like the prostitute, she possessed true sexual power, which she wielded over men; but unlike the prostitute, the Cruel Woman believed herself to be in complete control of the man. She was often depicted by artists and writers as being closely connected to her primal nature as predator -- as an animal, such as a snake or cat, a bird, or as some sort of strange hybrid, such as the sphinx.[85] Indeed, Klimt used these motifs in many of his paintings of women. These images all aimed to highlight the evil and powerful side of the Cruel Woman, who was ultimately a dominatrix. This power was part of the growing interest in male masochism at the turn of the century, and is the subject of Suzanne Stewart's study *Sublime Surrender*.

Stewart argues that the crisis of masculinity, discussed above, is best personified in the male masochist of the *fin-de-siècle*, as not only does he emphasize the crisis of male identity but becomes a "positive valorization of that crisis whereby crisis itself becomes a constitutive feature of that same masculinity."[86] Thus, masochism embraces this male crisis and becomes its best feature. In this way, masochism also represents an important paradox in Vienna at the turn of the century -- it reveals not only that the male identity was in a state of crisis, but how this crisis *became* the new identity. Stewart argues that the male masochist purposefully marginalized himself; he was viewed and viewed himself "as always already wounded or

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[83]Stewart, *Sublime Surrender*, pp.54-55.
[84]Ibid, p.13.
[85]Ibid, p.165, also the subject of Dijkstra's *Idols of Perversity*, especially chapters VII-XI.
[86]Stewart, *Sublime Surrender*, p.13.

fragmented, subjected and enslaved to modern civilization by [his] own desires, which, of necessity, remained *unfulfilled*."[87] He put himself at the feet of the Cruel Woman, the dominatrix, and enjoyed being her victim. However, Stewart concludes that this marginalization was really a reassertion of control by men at the *fin-de-siècle* -- the marginal had simply become the new norm: "masochism...became the site by and through which masculinity was not only redefined but again made hegemonic."[88] It was always the man who gave the sexual power to the woman, who *allowed* her to have control over him. In this way, the man was both master and servant. The Cruel Woman became "'the sublime object': she functioned both as moral agent and as demonic figure"[89] -- "she always remained an object represented, never the creator of representation."[90] Thus, in the name of passion, the male masochist relinquished his power to the Cruel Woman; but this was always done on his command, and in this way, he ultimately maintained control over her. However, this is not to say that the masochist had control over the situation -- indeed, this scenario required him to play a "double position":

> ...he must be the victim, the sacrifice or object of the contract, and yet he must always remain its originator as fully autonomous subject. In other words, the masochist must always be in the position of witnessing his own victimization.[91]

This leads to the eventual undoing of the masochist -- the control he exerts is contrived and imaginary in the end, as traversing the paradoxical road of master and servant eventually leads nowhere.

In addition to defining a paradox in gender and sexual relations, masochism also represents a key paradox of sex and pain. Mentioned above briefly, this notion was one of the

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[87] Ibid, p.13.
[88] Ibid, p.9.
[89] Ibid, pp.9-10.
[90] Ibid, p.171.
[91] Ibid, p.178.

key components of Freud's psychoanalytic theory, and will be discussed more fully in the next chapter. However, it is important to note here that this equivocation between pleasure and pain was believed by many to be the ultimate "mystery" of sexuality. Stewart emphasizes the argument that sexuality "is not that which is constitutive of the self...but the moment of its undoing. The mystery of sexuality lies in its inherent violence and cruelty...".[92] This is evident in masochism, as it is founded on the belief that pleasure and pain can be achieved at once. The paradox is heightened, however, by the notion that these impulses cannot be achieved, only postponed, because the object of this desire is created by the "prohibitive language of violence and pain...and elevates that object into what is unattainable."[93] Thus, the masochist creates a desire for pleasure and pain simultaneously, which he can never really achieve. Instead, he turns to this very postponement for his fulfillment.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to examine some of the ambiguities and paradoxes that existed in Vienna at the turn of the century -- indeed, it appears that there were very few areas in Vienna 1900 that were *not* a paradox. In the external world, political, economic, and national insecurity created a disaffected group of Viennese intellects, who turned to aestheticism and the life of art to assuage their fears. On an internal level, personal relationships between fathers and sons, and men and women, were also in a state of crisis. As women made advances within society, men attempted to understand and become reconciled to this change in gender and sexual roles. This reconciliation manifested itself in many ways -- as

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[92]Ibid, p.6.
[93]Ibid, p.6.

fear and hate of the Odd Woman, the New Woman, and the prostitute, and the creation of the Cruel Woman, who would dominate and submit to the man at the same time. Simultaneously, men experienced their own identity crisis, often emulating these very women they feared, through the development of the dandy. All of this was also bound up with a unique Viennese fascination with death. These factors all played a part in developing a Viennese intelligentsia that was aware of the escapism and the facade of their aestheticism, and the chaos that lay beneath. Life, love, and death came to be seen as interchangeable in the minds of Viennese intellectuals. But, as will be seen with the art of Klimt and Schiele, the way this interconnection manifested itself was rarely as a beautiful and peaceful understanding of the mysterious workings of the world; rather, it appeared as a tortured, confused, and ambiguous exploration of the body and soul.

II. Paradoxes in Modernist Thought: Nietzsche, Freud, and the Viennese

By the end of the nineteenth century, fundamental notions of liberal humanism which had taken root in many political and social structures throughout Europe, were under attack, an attack felt nowhere perhaps as strongly as in Vienna. Carl Schorske points out that, "Vienna in the *fin-de-siècle*, with its acutely felt tremors of social and political disintegration, proved one of the most fertile breeding grounds of our century's a-historical culture."[1] As discussed in Chapter I, Vienna experienced a serious crisis of liberal values in both political and social spheres, which helped create a paradoxical city at the turn of the century. As fundamental ideas of liberalism were challenged, a "cultural transformation" took place, one that was felt in many areas of intellectual society -- in philosophy, art, music, and literature. All of this amounted to an emerging "modernism," or as Schorske has called it, a "reshuffling of the self."[2]. A large component of this reshuffling concerned a turn toward aesthetic values -- a renewed

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[1] Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*, p. xviii.
[2] Ibid, p.xviii.

interest in art and culture. Partly as a response to, and growing out of these new values, came the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) and the work of Sigmund Freud (1856-1939). Both of these men contributed to the paradoxical ferment that occurred in *fin-de-siècle* Vienna, and helped create the unique cultural landscape that affected the artistic careers of Gustav Klimt and Egon Schiele.

Nietzsche's ideas have become almost an archetype for modernism, and although he was German, his notions of the irrational were read and studied by literate middle classes throughout Europe, including Vienna, by the late nineteenth century.[3] In his study *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany*, historian Steven Aschheim discusses the strength and breadth of Nietzsche's impact due to the scope and often contradictory nature of his ideas:

> The Nietzschean impulse became a potent protean force precisely because it was diffuse and not organized. It required no formal commitment and possessed no authorized dogma. Its capacity to selectively influence and be reconstructed by various ideological and political constructs facilitated entry into an astonishing range of institutions.[4]

Aschheim mentions that Nietzsche's work, because of its versatility, even proliferated beyond the limits of the intelligentsia, often reaching portions of Germany's working class.[5] His ideas came to Austria and Vienna as early as the 1870's, through such groups as the Pernerstorfer Circle -- a political movement that embraced Nietzschean values and included key members of *Jung Wien*, Gustav Mahler and Viktor Adler. McGrath studies this Circle in his work *Dionysian Art and Populist Politics in Austria*, and notes that Nietzsche's early works such as the *Birth of Tragedy*, played a large role in giving a voice to their feelings of alienation and cultural neglect.[6] Thus, Nietzsche's ideas became an intrinsic component of *fin-de-siècle* life in Vienna, as in

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[3] Steven E. Aschheim, *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany 1890-1990*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992,pp.17-20.
[4] Ibid, pp. 14-15.
[5] Ibid, p.19.
[6] McGrath, *Dionysian Art and Populist Politics in Austria*, p.54.

Germany, and affected much of the intellectual and creative energy being formulated at the time.

While Nietzsche challenged the validity of rationalism and science at the turn of the century, and emphasized the importance of myth, art, and the irrational, Sigmund Freud was also urging Austria to turn inward, and gave primacy to the role of fantasy, dreams, the unconscious, and instincts in the lives of men and women. These developments, along with the work of other intellects of the time, like Austrian writers Robert Musil and Otto Weininger, turned the spotlight onto the paradoxical and ambivalent attitudes of the *fin-de-siècle*. Viennese society, then, was being reevaluated, and new values, which had a great impact on *Jung Wien*, seemed to drive people further from their liberal past, and closer to lives of art. Understanding some of the elements in the writings of these individuals reveals the intellectual underpinnings of Vienna's paradoxical and modernist nature, as well as shedding light onto another segment of Viennese society at the turn of the century.

The tenets of the liberal humanist tradition, which came to be challenged, received one formulation by British philosopher John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) in his work *On Liberty*, first published in 1859.[7] For Mill, and for most European liberals at the time, man was a rational, essentially good individual, who used his experiences, opinion, and ability to discuss in order to express himself and to assist in the progress of his world. This society, although hinged on the individual, also moved in a linear, dialectical fashion, towards a higher and constantly evolving truth. The individual and his society were believed to be connected by the laws of mutual respect, freedom, and liberty, with society taking full responsibility over the education and improvement of each generation. It was essentially these notions which were challenged and refuted by modernist scholars towards the end of the nineteenth century.

[7] John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, New York: Prometheus Books, 1986.

Friedrich Nietzsche stood at the fore of this challenge, describing the growing sense of "cultural malaise" that stemmed, in part, from the decline of these liberal values, and offering an "alternative set of cultural values" to remedy the situation.[8] William McGrath describes how "Nietzsche believed that Kant and Schopenhauer had taken the first steps in exposing the weaknesses of contemporary culture... Kant had shown the limits of reason and logic while Schopenhauer had exposed the hollowness of optimism."[9] Thus, Nietzsche came to embrace a set of ideals that he believed had been sacrificed at the expense of faith in progress and scientific rationalism -- ideals of art, culture, and instinctual living. Walter Kaufmann notes that Nietzsche "was probably Germany's greatest prose stylist as well as one of the most profound and influential modern philosophers," but carefully points out that he was not immediately heralded as such.[10] His writings at first created a controversial stir among academics, many of whom did not see the innovative quality of Nietzsche's ideas.[11] Nevertheless, his work was to influence the intellectual communities of Germany and Vienna, finding its way into the lives of *Jung Wien*, including Klimt and Schiele.

Many of Nietzsche's fundamental ideas regarding his understanding of the modern world were written in two of his earliest works, *The Birth of Tragedy*, first published in 1872, and *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life*, first published in 1874. Where the liberal tradition embraced rationality, linear and progressive time and space, and the connection between man and society, Nietzsche emphasized the opposite impulses -- the irrationality of man, the dense and illusory nature of time and space, and the alienation of man from his society. Nietzsche was highly critical, often scathing, of the liberal tradition -- the

[8] McGrath, *Dionysian Art and Populist Politics*, p.54.
[9] Ibid, p.58.
[10] Walter Kaufmann, "Translator's Introduction," *The Birth of Tragedy and The Case of Wagner*, Friedrich Nietzsche, New York: Vintage Books, 1967, pp.3-5.
[11] Ibid, pp.4-9.

historian was a "spoiled idler in the garden of knowledge," the liberal individual was a "presumptuous...little worm...," and there could be no mistaking his opinion in the statement, "Overproud European of the nineteenth century, you are mad!"[12] Behind these passages however, lay a powerful argument, one which discussed the limits of liberalism for the modern man, and called for man to embrace the artistic and instinctual side of himself and his world, which had long been forgotten under the guise of liberal humanism. Indeed, he outlined the irreverence of modern man towards the liberal tradition -- "...the modern spirit...along with its other good qualities, is known to be somewhat miserly and a bungler when it comes to the noble virtue of liberality."[13] Nietzsche's call for a new system of life and thought to replace this defunct liberalism was clear. It was not, however, a purely optimistic endeavour. As has been mentioned, to be "modern" at the *fin-de-siècle* meant to be separated from the past, to be dedicated to building a new way of living -- these things created a strong sense of alienation and dislocation among the intellects of Vienna, which has also been discussed. These sentiments were present in much of Nietzsche's work, creating a paradoxical body of thought that at once embraced art as life, yet discussed a society which was becoming increasingly nihilistic and uncertain.

One of the strongest challenges to the liberal tradition was Nietzsche's belief in the importance of the irrational to modern man. Nietzsche believed that discounting the importance of instinct and impulse to man was to dishonour life itself. The emphasis placed upon rationality by liberal humanism was perhaps best exemplified by the power of science -- Nietzsche claimed that a life ruled by scientific knowledge was "much less *life*," and would be

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[12]Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life*, trans. Peter Preuss, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company Inc., 1980, p.7, 55, 50.
[13]Ibid, p.45.

better served by "instincts...".[14] It is important to note here that to Nietzsche, humanity was an organic force, and to attempt to rationalize it in any way, was to kill it. Nietzsche's opinion of history underlined this notion -- "...everything that has life...ceases to live when it has been dissected completely and lives painfully and becomes sick once one begins to practice historical dissection on it."[15] Evident here was an understanding of the life force as a single, unified entity. He continued to say that in order for life to thrive, an element of the irrational must be present -- "every living thing needs to be surrounded by an atmosphere, a mysterious circle of mist: if one robs it of this veil...then one should not wonder about its rapidly becoming withered, hard, and barren;"[16] and elsewhere: "...every people, and every man, who wants to become *ripe* needs such an enveloping madness...".[17] Here then, Nietzsche called for people to replace their trust in rationality with a belief in forces usually marked as signs of depravity -- irrationality, instincts, madness, and "mystery." These were to Nietzsche, the elements that marked us as essentially human, and were important to true living.

Perhaps the greatest argument for the power of the irrational, however, came from *The Birth of Tragedy*, where Nietzsche outlined his famous "*Apollinian* and *Dionysian* duality."[18] These terms were borrowed from the Greeks, and referred to the art deities Apollo, represented best by sculpture, and Dionysius, exemplified by music.[19] Nietzsche claimed that the Apollinian represented the "beautiful illusion of the dream worlds," which breeds "delight" and protects people from their "wilder emotions" through "measured restraint."[20] Despite the happiness

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[14]Ibid, p.41.
[15]Ibid, p.40.
[16]Ibid, p.40.
[17]Ibid, p.41.
[18]Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy and The Case of Wagner*, Walter Kaufmann, (trans.), New York: Vintage Books, 1967, p.33.
[19]Ibid, p.33.
[20]Ibid, pp.34-35.

and "calm" that results from the Apollinian, Nietzsche stressed that it was "mere appearance."[21] It acts as a "veil of *maya* [illusion]" for the underlying Dionysian, described by him as "intoxicated reality."[22] These Dionysian impulses, exemplified by the Greek festivals of the same name, emphasize the deep, fundamentally irrational forces within humanity -- "In nearly every case these festivals centered in extravagant sexual licentiousness, whose waves overwhelmed all family life and its venerable traditions; the most savage natural instincts were unleashed, including even that horrible mixture of sensuality and cruelty which has always seemed to me to be the real 'witches' brew'."[23] This then, was at the root of what Nietzsche thought to be human, composed of primal instincts like sex and pain -- not the rationality of liberalism, which Nietzsche called "audacious."[24] Swept into a euphoric, intoxicated state by the power of the Greek dithyramb, or chant, man would achieve "oneness as the soul of the race and of nature."[25] This use of classical Greek references in Nietzsche also marks an important shift in *fin-de-siècle* thought and art, which embraced the mythic values of antiquity, and sought to reinterpret them in modern society. Indeed, early paintings by Gustav Klimt incorporated the Dionysian and other classical references, revealing some of the impact of Nietzsche's ideas about myth and art, to be discussed in greater detail in Part Two.

Despite the importance of unleashing the irrational in modern man, Nietzsche believed it would come at a price. Once the "annihilation of the veil of *maya*" was achieved, the realization of the basically barbarous instincts of humanity would be overwhelming.[26] Coinciding with a glimpse of the true state of man, which Nietzsche described as a "climax of

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[21] Ibid, p.34.
[22] Ibid, p.35,38.
[23] Ibid, p.39.
[24] Ibid, p.84.
[25] Ibid, p.40.
[26] Ibid, p.40.

joy," man would be thrown into despair -- "...there sounds a cry of horror or a yearning lamentation for an irretrievable loss."[27] The understanding that the irrational is by nature, formless, leaves man gazing into the "abyss," which paralyses him -- "knowledge kills action."[28] Nietzsche argued that "true knowledge, an insight into the horrible truth, outweighs any motive for action...in the Dionysian man."[29] Thus, unlike liberal values, which claimed that truth was an ever evolving process, progressing towards a better society, Nietzsche believed that truth was nothingness -- it was discernible, but formless, and eventually led to great despair. This marks another great paradox in Nietzsche's ideas -- learning the truth about man's nature was at once liberating and destructive, and eventually led to paralysis. Nietzsche believed that in order to avoid this and be able to live, humans must delude themselves with simple, recognizable things in life, which he associated with the Apollinian, or liberal humanist impulses described earlier. This Apollinian "mask" was necessary to "cure eyes damaged by gruesome night," and to bring man a state of "unendangered comfort."[30] However, this was understood to be strictly an "illusion."[31] In this way, Nietzsche believed the concept of world progress to be "ridiculous," and stressed the "vulgarity" of utilitarian creations.[32] Ultimately, his concept of human existence was one of self-deception and illusion, necessary to hide the irrational truth that lay underneath. These ideas would give expression to the crises of dislocation and ambivalence experienced by *Jung Wien* at the *fin de siècle*.

Along with understanding the everyday workings of society to be illusory, Nietzsche also stressed the dense and compressed nature of time, which contradicted the liberal notion

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[27] Ibid, p.40.
[28] Ibid, p.68,60.
[29] Ibid, p.60
[30] Ibid, p.67.
[31] Ibid, p.129.
[32] Nietzsche, *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life*, pp.54-55.

of progressive and linear time. Nietzsche described the liberal humanist view of time in the "historical man." This man believed that "...ever more light is shed on the meaning of existence in the course if its process," and that a belief in the future incited him "...to take courage and continue to engage in life...hop[ing] that things will turn out well...". [33] As a response to this linear view, Nietzsche upheld what he described as the "superhistorical man" -- one who "does not see salvation in the process," but for whom, rather, "the world is complete and achieves its end at every single moment."[34] The correct way to look at time, according to Nietzsche, was to see "the past and the present [as] one and the same."[35] Here, the power of the moment was important, and involved collapsing the present and past into one experience. This state created an "enveloping atmosphere in which alone life is generated," and in which humanity must utilize the moment in order to live.[36] Suddenly, with Nietzsche, the past was no longer relevant -- *Jung Wien* were truly "modern," and must learn to exist within the "atmosphere" of the moment. While this was on one hand, an optimistic call to live a life of action, to make the most of the present, it also ended in a profound sense of alienation.

At the heart of this alienation was the belief that the individual, who in the liberal tradition had been a source of power and happiness, was now consumed by a deep sense of remorse and pain for Nietzsche. With all that man had now learned -- his irrationality, the nothingness of truth, the need for illusions to instill comfort, and the compression of time -- he became profoundly aware of the "curse of individuation."[37] It is important to recognize that for Nietzsche, these individuals were not the average person, but were sources of artistic greatness, whether painters or composers, who understood the complexities of all that had

[33]Ibid, p.13.
[34]Ibid, p.13.
[35]Ibid, p.13.
[36]Ibid, p.11.
[37]Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, p.71.

been outlined. Thus, we see that for Nietzsche, individuation was a highly selective and disconnecting process, one that removed these "geniuses" from the "noisy dwarfs" composing the bulk of the society in which they lived -- they "no longer consider the masses at all but... constitute a kind of bridge across the wild stream of becoming."[38] This artistic genius was not responsible for the evolution of his society, and was free to do as he pleased. McGrath notes Nietzsche's belief in the "power" possessed by these great artistic forces:

> ...[Nietzsche] expected the regeneration of modern culture to come... [from] the musical tradition of Bach, Beethoven, and Wagner, [who] would reverse the process of degeneration by awakening the Dionysian spirit in the modern world. He thought that German music could restore the forces responsible for the greatness of ancient Greek culture...[39]

Thus, Nietzsche stressed the importance of the life of art and encouraged the veneration of aesthetics, art, and music, as the only way to truly live and be happy. These values were spread into Viennese society and affected certain members of its intelligentsia, who were, as has already been discussed, searching for ways to justify their distancing from politics and the liberal tradition.

In the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche, there was a growing sense of the need for deliberate and artistic living, which existed alongside a profound pessimism and feeling of futility about the fate of modern man. Notions of science, logic, and reason, along with the progressive and optimistic values of the liberal tradition, came under attack in Nietzsche's emphasis on the Dionysian impulses within society. Modern man came to question his surroundings, and began looking beneath the "veil of maya" in order to discern the "truth" about life. The answers that Nietzsche provided were enlightening and disheartening at the same time, creating feelings of alienation and uncertainty among Viennese intellectuals. Joy was

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[38] Nietzsche, *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life*, p.53.
[39] McGrath, *Dionysian Art and Populist Politics*, p.58.

mixed with horror, and understanding the truth was mixed with apathy at realizing the consequences attached. Nietzsche provided an important framework for understanding modern society, one where opposite impulses existed alongside each other, and where trying to find the point where they could be reconciled became an increasingly difficult task. All of this had a great impact on the paradoxical manner in which *Jung Wien* viewed their lives and surroundings, and would come to be expressed in the paintings of Gustav Klimt and Egon Schiele.

While Nietzsche shook the foundations of the liberal tradition in order to understand the malaise of modern society, another writer would change the perspective from outward searching to inward introspection in an attempt to understand society at the *fin de siècle*. With the advent of the writings of the Viennese Sigmund Freud, "...the search for and understanding of the ills that plague mankind tended to be translated from the public and sociological domain to the private and psychological one."[40] This marked a second major shift in the way society perceived itself. Not only was modern man living a life of Apollinian illusions, and trying to control the Dionysian impulses within, but now Freud provided tools to be used in the excavation of this unchartered realm of understanding -- through psychoanalysis and knowledge of the unconscious. This level of introspection would also have an impact on the artistic careers of Klimt and Schiele.

William McGrath describes Freud's ideas of the unconscious as a "discovery" rather than as a theory or invention, arguing that "his work represents a fundamentally important advance in the understanding of human nature," which has been of the "greatest significance to twentieth-century culture."[41] Indeed, Freud's conception of the unconscious and the general

[40] Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*, p.xxiv.
[41] William McGrath, *Freud's Discovery of Psychoanalysis: The Politics of Hysteria*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986, p.15.

workings of the psyche were unprecedented within the medical world. Entering the Medical Faculty at Vienna in 1873, Freud would eventually switch his specialty from physiology to a general practice with a stress on neurology, and in 1885, became a docent in neuropathology. Franz Brentano, a professor of Freud's at medical school, had a strong impact on his students' understanding of mental processes in his emphasis on the duality of physicality and psychology.[42] In this light, McGrath mentions a passage from Brentano's most important study, *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, published in 1874 -- "All the data of our consciousness are divided into two great classes -- the class of physical and the class of mental phenomena."[43] Freud came to believe that the mental workings of the mind could be subjected to the same scientific and medical approach as that used on the physical body, and after finishing his formal education, he had the opportunity to study in Paris under Jean-Martin Charcot in 1885, a leading researcher on hysteria. This focus on hysteria provided Freud an area upon which he could apply Brentano's theory of the duality of mental life, and this combination of studies "ultimately led him to his greatest discoveries."[44]

William Johnston points to another source of inspiration for Freud's work on the unconscious, that of Vienna itself, stating that "secretiveness blanketed public life, prompting a search for latent meanings behind every event."[45] It does seem that Freud, like many others mentioned already, felt an ambivalence, both love and hatred, toward *fin-de-siècle* Vienna, as can be seen in a letter Johnston includes, written by Freud to an admirer in 1918 -- "Like you I feel an unrestrained affection for Vienna and Austria, although perhaps unlike you, I know her

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[42]Ibid, p.17.
[43]Franz Brentano, *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, trans. A.C. Rancurello et al, New York: Humanities Press, 1977, p.77 as cited in McGrath's *Freud's Discovery of Psychoanalysis*, p.114.
[44]Ibid, p.151.
[45]William Johnston, *The Austrian Mind*, p.239.

abysses."[46] Although it is certain that the environment of the city of paradoxes that was Vienna at the *fin-de-siècle* contributed in many ways to the development of Freud and his ideas, it is difficult to assess whether the nature of Vienna itself was directly responsible for Freud's psychological findings. Important for this study is to understand the content of some of these writings and ideas, and see how they contributed to the fabric of Viennese society at the turn of the century.

These ideas were vast and intricate, and incorporated several attributes previously seen in the works of Nietzsche, namely a focus on the contradictory impulses working in modern man. Where Nietzsche described the dual Apollinian and the Dionysian forces, Freud discussed the Ego and the Id within the human mind. In a pattern similar to Nietzsche, Freud's ego represented the rational, conscious portion of the human mind, while the id represented the underlying passions and often irrational wishes of the psyche. This concept was introduced in 1919, a year after both Klimt and Schiele died, and expanded upon Freud's earlier work on the primacy of dreams and the unconscious. In an interesting way, Schorske parallels these twin impulses with Freud's impressions of England and France:

> England was good order, morality, and liberal rationality, appealing to Freud as a possible refuge from social inequalities and professional frustrations of Austria. Paris was the very opposite: a city of danger, of the questionable, of the irrational. Freud accepted, but richly elaborated, the stereotype of Paris as wanton, the female temptress; he approached it in a spirit of adventure at once thrilling and terrifying.[47]

Schorske also mentions Freud's attention to the Greek goddess Athena, who had been seen as the protector of rational order, but who came to be embraced by Freud, and also by the Secessionists and Klimt, as a symbol of reconciliation between the paradoxical forces of the Ego and the Id, the rational and the irrational, as well as between male and female:

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[46]Sigmund Freud, as cited in Johnston, *The Austrian Mind*, p.238.
[47]Schorske, *Thinking with History*, p.197.

> ... Athena, as Freud would soon explain, was an androgynous goddess. In her rational cool and ascetic bisexuality Athena unifies the ethical civic spirit that had so attracted him to manly England, and the questionable feminine beauty and irrational religious power that had so stirred him in seductive Paris.[48]

With Freud, as with Nietzsche, there was an attempt to understand humanity in a new way -- to look for the underlying irrational and instinctual truths within modern man, and to attempt to find some point where these forces acting within man could be reconciled with the conscious, rational aspect of his character. The Athena example also highlights Freud's tendency, like Nietzsche's, to turn to antiquity and classical Greek figures as a way of interpreting and understanding the modern world. Athena will be mentioned again later in understanding how she was used in the ideology of the Secessionists and Gustav Klimt.

The extensive findings and research conducted by Freud throughout his career is too vast to summarize here, but some relevant theories can be discussed. First and foremost was Freud's understanding of the unconscious, which was laid out for the first time in detail in a paper presented at a conference of the Society for Psychical Research of London in 1912, entitled *A Note on the Unconscious in Psychoanalysis*. From the effects of "post-hypnotic suggestion" experiments, Freud insisted "upon the importance of the distinction between *conscious* and *unconscious*," stating that the only true meaning of "conscious" was that "of which we are aware."[49] Freud believed that there were a host of other feelings and ideas existing in our mental world, of which we were *not* aware, despite their being very active. This was the unconscious which, to Freud, "...designates not only latent ideas in general, but especially ideas with a certain dynamic character, ideas keeping apart from consciousness in spite of their

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[48]Ibid, p.203.

[49]Sigmund Freud,"A Note on the Unconscious in Psychoanalysis," in *On Metapsychology: The Theory of Psychoanalysis*, The Pelican Freud Library Volume 11, Angela Richards (ed.), Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1984, pp.50-51.

intensity and activity."[50] Thus, Freud was suggesting something new and highly speculative -- that there existed in people, an entire set of emotions, opinions, and feelings which were, in most cases, completely unknown to them. He did believe that there could be a certain amount of interaction between the two mental states, but argued that that was often difficult:

> It is by no means impossible for the product of unconscious activity to pierce into consciousness, but a certain amount of exertion is needed for this task. When we try to do it in ourselves, we become aware of a distinct feeling of *repulsion* [*Abwehr* or "defense"] which must be overcome, and when we produce it in a patient we get the most unquestionable signs of what we call his *resistance* to it.[51]

This resistance and repulsion toward unconscious ideas was "provoked by the tendencies embodied in their contents."[52] The human mind desired to keep disagreeable thoughts from the conscious knowledge of the subject, and Freud believed that this process occurred not only in neurotics, but in all people. This was unsettling information indeed, for people were being told that in addition to not understanding the Dionysian truths about modern man, they also did not fully understand their own personalities, opinions, and feelings. However, Freud did assert that understanding the internal and unconscious mental state was possible, and was in fact, easier to achieve than understanding the ills of modern society -- "...The correction of internal perception will turn out not to offer such great difficulties as the correction of external perception...internal objects are less unknowable than the external world."[53] Here, then, we see the inward turning of Freud's work, and the notion that the mental world was somewhat of a refuge for the increasing demands of *fin-de-siècle* society.

Closely connected to the theory of the unconscious was Freud's understanding of the

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[50]Ibid, p.53.
[51]Ibid, p.54.
[52]Ibid, p.55.
[53]Freud, "The Unconscious," *On Metapsychology*, p.173.

ego and the id, briefly mentioned above, and which he outlined formally in his book, *The Ego and the Id*, published in 1923. Freud initially pointed out that:

> ...in each individual there is a coherent organization of mental processes; and we call this his ego. It is to this ego that consciousness is attached; the ego controls the approaches to motility -- that is, to the discharge of excitations into the external world; it is the mental agency which supervises all its own constituent processes...[54]

However, Freud also noted in his patients that upon moving towards a repressed emotion in analysis, they were often conscious of feeling uncomfortable but had no idea why. From this Freud deduced that it was the ego that was responsible for repressing and censoring certain undesirable feelings among his patients' consciousness, which was something unexpected -- "Since...there can be no question but that this resistance emanates from this ego and belongs to it, we find ourselves in an unforeseen situation. We have come upon something in the ego itself which is also unconscious, which behaves exactly like the repressed...".[55] From this, Freud modified his understanding of the ego to be part of a larger, instinctual mental force, the id: "We shall now look upon an individual as a psychical id, unknown and unconscious, upon whose surface rests the ego...".[56] The ego was still to represent "reason and common sense," and was still to perform the function of directing and guiding the passionate id toward controlling its instincts. But, with Freud's distinction, the ego remained closely connected to the irrational forces within the human mind, and was often paradoxically part of its workings.[57]

Once Freud had understood the twin mental states coexisting within man, he spent much of his career trying to assess how the instinctual fabric of the id affected the human mind and its functioning. He came to examine many neurotic tendencies within man, and rooted his justification for their existence in the unconscious, all of which had an impact on *fin-de-siècle*

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[54] Freud, "The Ego and the Id," *On Metapsychology*, p.355.
[55] Ibid, pp.355-356.
[56] Ibid, p.362.
[57] Ibid, pp.363-364.

Vienna. In truth, most medical professionals disagreed with Freud's ideas, and Carl Schorske points out that Freud, "in his critical years, worked in obscurity and [was] virtually alone...".[58] Still others from the intellectual community, like satirist Karl Kraus, believed Freud to be as damaging to modern Vienna as was aestheticism: "Psychoanalysis is the mental illness for which it claims to be a cure."[59] Nevertheless, his ideas would be embraced by Gustav Klimt and the Secessionist movement, and would profoundly alter the understanding of the mind and humanity.

Many of Freud's discoveries about neuroses dealt with paradoxes, which make them particularly useful for this study. The id had been associated with the "pleasure principle" -- the instinctual part of the mind which acted solely upon the basis of avoiding pain and seeking pleasurable experiences. Freud came to challenge this long-held conviction in his essay *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, first published in 1919. Here, and later in *The Ego and the Id*, Freud emphasized self-destructive forces which propelled the id and the unconscious, and which were at odds with the life-seeking forces of the ego.[60] He labelled these two forces the *life instinct* and the *death instinct*, and argued that the latter was often strong enough to act "independently of the pleasure principle."[61] Freud's understanding of the unconscious' ability to repress undesirable memories, impulses, and instinctual behaviour was connected to this independence of the death instinct, which he believed often led the subject to experience unwanted effects, namely, traumas, and sometimes the compulsion to repeat traumatic experiences.[62] Freud believed that the death instinct was very strong within the human mind, as was dealt with in different ways:

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[58]Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*, p.208.
[59]Kraus, *Nachts*, 1918, in William Johnston's *The Austrian Mind*, p.250.
[60]Johnston, *The Austrian Mind*, p.247.
[61]Freud, "Beyond the Pleasure Principle," *On Metapsychology*, pp.336-338.
[62]Ibid, p.304.

> The dangerous death instincts are dealt with in the individual in various ways: in part they are rendered harmless by being fused with erotic components, in part they are diverted towards the external world in the form of aggression, while to a large part they undoubtedly continue their internal work unhindered.[63]

Thus, the death instinct was often closely bound up with those instincts of life and sexuality, creating a paradoxical, and often ambivalent understanding of both. Freud discussed that the aim of both instincts was to "re-establish a state of things that was disturbed by the emergence of life" -- the sexual instinct did this by attempting to "preserve and complicate" life, and the death instinct did this by attempting to "lead organic life back into the inanimate state...".[64] From this Freud argued that:

> The emergence of life would thus be the cause of the continuance of life and also at the same time of striving towards death; and life itself would be a conflict and compromise between these two trends...the problem of the goal and purpose of life would be answered *dualistically*.[65]

Stated simply, Freud believed that life and death, even though apparent opposites, were parts of the same force, both informing and compelling life. He was not clear on exactly how these two classes of instincts were "fused, blended, and alloyed with each other," but he made no mistake about his belief that this fusion happened "regularly and very extensively."[66] Freud applied this paradoxical linking of opposing forces to other impulses as well, like sexual pleasure and pain, and love and hate, stating that "clinical observations" showed that love is regularly accompanied with feelings of hate, and that often "hate changes into love and love into hate...if...one of them actually turns into the other -- then clearly the ground is cut away from under a distinction so fundamental as that between erotic instincts and death instincts...". Thus, in a variety of areas, Freud was attempting to locate the point where opposing forces

[63]Freud, "The Ego and the Id," *On Metapsychology*, p.395.
[64]Ibid, pp.380-381.
[65]Ibid, p.381.
[66]Ibid, p.381.

converged into a single entity, and by doing so, created a new way of looking at life, sexuality, and death, as well as love and hate -- one that acknowledged the ambivalence and uncertainty evident at the *fin-de-siècle*. Things were no longer easily defined as opposites, but were now seen as perpetually intertwined. It is the contention of this study that it is this impulse which was often depicted in the paintings of Klimt and Schiele.

In addition to understanding the truth about the ambivalence and paradox of human instincts, Freud's extensive scholarship shed light onto the world of fantasy and dreams, which were believed to be windows into the workings of the unconscious. Freud argued that through an analysis of dreams and wishes, one's unconscious desires, one's id, could be revealed to him. He also believed that dreams could reveal insecurities, repressed thoughts and emotions, and draw out traumatic experiences from one's past. It somehow seems fitting that in a world fraught with the allure of the Dionysian and the illusions of the Apollinian, dreams and fantastical images would be held up as the key to unlocking the true secrets of the human experience. Indeed, William McGrath and Carl Schorske each note that the power of fantasy became so strong at the *fin-de-siècle* that it became associated with the world of politics -- creating what McGrath terms a "psychic polity," and what Schorske refers to as "politics of phantasy."[67]

Freud's ideas regarding dreams and their value were written in the *Interpretation of Dreams*, first published in 1900, and considered one of Freud's greatest achievements. According to Freud, "every dream has a meaning, though a hidden one ...dreams are designed to take the place of some other process of thought, ...we have only to undo the substitution correctly in order to arrive at this hidden meaning."[68] Freud felt that dreams were rational

[67] McGrath, *Freud's Discovery of Psychoanalysis*, p.230; Schorske. *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*, p.134.
[68] Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, James Strachey (trans.), The Penguin Freud Library, Volume 4, London: Penguin Books, 1991, p.169.

thought processes which could be used to tell people many things about themselves, if only they could be interpreted accurately. He believed that, "The dream-work is not simply more careless, more irrational, more forgetful and more incomplete than waking thought; it is completely different...," and should be subjected to clinical observations in order to understand its meaning.[69] Above all, dreams were to be approached through "scientific procedure" according to Freud, and he was determined to create such a system.[70] Most of his approach consisted, however, not in a seriously stringent formula, but rather, in having the patient simply sit with Freud, and speak his or her mind freely -- this free association to certain topics or subjects would allow the subject to "...notice and report whatever comes into his head and not be misled, for instance, into repressing an idea because it strikes him as unimportant or irrelevant...".[71] Freud believed that this free expression of seemingly meaningless ideas would prepare the patient for dream analysis by removing his or her mental censors and self-criticism. Unlike other dream analysts, who used a decoding method to give dreams a definitive definition and meaning, Freud argued that "the piece of content may conceal a different meaning when it occurs in various people or in various contexts."[72] Thus, Freud emphasized the individuality of dream-work, and believed that each patient's unique circumstances should be incorporated into the dream analysis. This was a new departure from the traditional work of the medical doctors of Freud's time, and made his work suspicious and potentially untrustworthy.

Of course, what has brought fame and attention to Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams* was his use of his own dreams to test out his theories. Through an outlining and subsequent analysis of several of his dreams, Freud concluded some major findings regarding the nature of

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[69]Ibid, p.650.
[70]Ibid, p.174.
[71]Ibid, p.175.
[72]Ibid, p.179.

dream-work. One of his conclusions was that dreams were a fulfillment of wishes, presenting the dreamer with the opportunity to live out some desired initiative, plan, or fantasy.[73] However, Freud sought to dig deeper than this -- he felt that many strange and often contradictory things occurred in dreams, making their interpretation more difficult to ascertain. Freud deduced that dreams had a *manifest* and a *latent* content, and that there were several ways in which the mind often altered the latent dream content, in order to make it more palatable or buried from view.[74] This latent content often held the true meaning of one's dreams, and it was this content that Freud sought to understand, through labelling the various distortions made to the dream-work. There are too many to give great attention to here, but some of the major alterations to dreams included *condensation*, a process of compressing a sometimes vast amount of latent content into a brief episode of dream sequence; *displacement*, where the truth of the dream was hidden by appearing inconsequential or insignificant; and *overdetermination*, where images bring themselves into many parts of the dream.[75] These, and other forms of distortion were responsible for repressing certain desires, wishes, or fears, which could be troubling to the conscious mind.

Freud described the nature of these repressed wishes in great detail, many of which were of a sexual nature, for Freud surmised that "the majority of the dreams of adults deal with sexual material and give expression to erotic wishes."[76] Some of these included dreams of a homosexual or bisexual nature, a love or sexual longing for one's mother, which he termed the Oedipus complex, a fear among men of castration, and various manifestations of male and female genitalia and the womb. These things were all believed to be of a troubling nature to

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[73]Ibid, p.200.
[74]Ibid, p.215.
[75]Ibid, pp.383-414.
[76]Ibid, p.520.

the dreamer, and thus, had to be repressed through various dream distortions. Through psychoanalysis and dream interpretation, however, some of these repressed wishes could be brought to light.

In the end, Freud's extensive body of work brought attention to an area that was seemingly impossible to understand in any scientific way. Whether his results and findings were really the product of scientific inquiry is of little importance here. Of greater value is to understand how Freud, like Nietzsche, utilized powerful paradoxes in many of his theories -- through his interconnection of opposites like life and death, love and hate, and sexual pleasure and pain; his understanding of the human mind as being composed of coexisting and opposing impulses of the ego and id; and his belief that dreams and fantasies could be used to unlock not only the conscious desires of people, but also the repressed, sexual "deviances," that he believed we all possessed. Freud allowed intellects of the *fin de siècle* to feel that they too, could learn the workings of their inner, instinctual tendencies, to be accomplished through a realization that with humans, as with society at the turn of the century, good was often evil, rationality worked with irrationality, and life and death were two parts of the same impulse.

Although Nietzsche and Freud were undoubtedly two of the most influential philosophers at the *fin-de-siècle*, there were many other individuals in Vienna whose work embodied the themes of paradox, equivocation, and ambivalence, and who contributed to the intellectual landscape that influenced Klimt and Schiele. As a way of broadening the scope presented here, a few final words will be said of the writings of Robert Musil and Otto Weininger, who both contributed to the city of paradoxes.

The writer Robert Musil (1880-1942), whose works of literature include the vast *Man Without Qualities*, explored some of the paradoxical impulses discussed here. His fiction takes

place mostly in a European setting from 1900-1920, and deals with the ambiguities of familiar themes -- life and death, love and hate, sex and pain. Musil sought, as did Nietzsche and Freud, to find some point of unity between these opposing forces, and his characters are constantly working toward a perfect society and perfect relationships, but also realize that because they are human, this is inevitably impossible -- "Because they are caught in this web of being human, they cannot possibly reach a fixed ideal goal."[77] In the forward to a collection of *Selected Writings* by Musil, Joel Agee comments that "...[Musil] expended himself, throughout his adult life, in an effort to link the incommensurable worlds of the rational and the essentially unnamable...,"[78] and in the Introduction, editor Burton Pike states that, "Literature seemed to Musil to offer the only real hope of uniting intellect and feeling, social action and moral action, of putting together again the smashed...twentieth-century European culture."[79] Thus, with Musil there was also an urge to understand the paradoxical world of the *fin-de-siècle*, and to explore the boundary "...where subconscious thoughts become conscious ones."[80] He, like Nietzsche, de-emphasized linear progression in his stories, attempting instead to "..capture a situation the way people live it, as an ebbing and flowing which cannot be dissected rationally...".[81]

As a result of these aims, Musil's characters contemplate various paradoxes throughout his stories. In an early work, *Young Törless*, first published in 1906, the young boy Törless comes to discover "...the interchangeability of human destinies and the uncanny proximity, in each human soul, of good and evil, the sublime and the depraved...".[82] His obsession with

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[77]Burton Pike, "Introduction," *Robert Musil:Selected Writings*, The German Library: Volume 72, Burton Pike (ed.), New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1986, ppxvii-xviii.
[78]Joel Agee, "Foreword," *Robert Musil:Selected Writings*, p.x.
[79]Burton Pike, "Introduction," *Musil:Selected Writings*, pp.xv-xvi.
[80]Ibid, p.xviii.
[81]Ibid, p.xviii.
[82]Joel Agee, "Foreword," *Selected Writings*, p.ix.

another young student leads Törless through a myriad of confusing emotions, ending eventually with his expulsion from boarding school, due to an "extreme state of nervous tension."[83] On his way home with his mother, Törless contemplates that:

> He now knew how to distinguish between day and night; actually he had always known it, and it was only that a monstrous dream had flowed like a tide over those frontiers, blotting them out. He was ashamed of the perplexity he had been in. But still there was also the memory that it could be otherwise, that there were fine and easily effaced boundary-lines around each human being, that feverish dreams prowled around the soul, gnawing at the solid walls and tearing open weird alleys... He could not quite have explained this. But his inability to find words for it, this near-dumbness, was in itself delightful...[84]

This knowledge of the malleable borderline between good and evil thoughts and deeds strikes Törless as inexplicable, yet liberating all the same. Musil believed that this shifting boundary was not something truly evil, but something human -- "He [Musil] did not freeze...in nauseated horror on the edge of the abyss, but recognized its soundless depth as an inanimate part of his nature, and one as likely to be a source of delight as of terror."[85]

In a similar way, the character Homo in Musil's later work "Grigia," deals with the paradox of love and hate. First published in 1924 as part of *Three Women*, "Grigia" chronicles a man's experiences in a village community, away from his wife and son. Homo experiences these paradoxical emotions at various points throughout the story, as when he sits in a makeshift bar, listening to a woman's beautiful voice on a record; "Homo felt it was that naked voluptuousness which is distributed throughout all the things there are in cities, a lust no longer distinguishable from manslaughter...".[86] Elsewhere, in the forest, Homo experiences a sense of elation, but also, "In this feeling there was a residual dread of Nature. And one must not

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[83]Robert Musil, "Young Törless," *Selected Writings*, p.172.
[84]Ibid, p.174.
[85]Joel Agee, "Foreword," *Selected Writings*, p.x.
[86]Musil, "Grigia," *Five Women*, Eithne Wilkins & Ernst Kaiser (trans.), Boston: David R. Godine, Publisher, Inc., 1986, p.29.

believe that Nature is anything but highly unnatural: she is earthy, edgy, poisonous, and inhuman at all points where man does not impose his will upon her. Probably it was just this that fascinated him in the peasant woman...".[87] This recalls an idea mentioned earlier in Chapter I -- that of paralleling nature with dark and forbidden feelings, and connecting this with similar traits in women. Musil uses this elsewhere, in "The Lady from Portugal," which also forms part of *Three Women*. This story tells of the Portuguese wife of a nobleman, who is left at the castle for years at a time, while he battles with a rival family. When he returns home sick, she looks at him and laughs, saying, "... 'I shall have a hood made of pelt, and come by night and suck the blood from your veins.'"[88]

The sense of equivocation is strong in "Grigia," when Homo sees an old woman sitting on a step with a child upon her knee: "[she had a] bony face...like an Aztec's and who spent all her time sitting at her door, her black hair loose, hanging down below her shoulders, and with three healthy round-cheeked children around her...it was almost as though the healthiness of her children and the illness manifest in her face were impressions that always cancelled each other out."[89] This marks the heart of paradox, and ironically, accurately describes a painting of Schiele's, *Dead Mother*, completed in 1910, to be discussed in Part Two (see Figure 27). Of course, Musil's use of equivocation is greatest in his vast novel *The Man Without Qualities*, which succinctly captures the paradoxical mood of the *fin-de-siècle*:

> Out of the oil-smooth spirit of the last two decades of the nineteenth century, suddenly, throughout Europe, there rose a kindling fever. Nobody knew exactly what was on the way; nobody was able to say whether it was to be a new art, a New Man, a new morality or perhaps a re-shuffling of society. So everyone made of it what he liked...They were as different from each other as anything well could be, and the contradictions in their aims were unsurpassable. The Superman was adored, and the Subman was adored; health and the sun were worshipped, and the delicacy of consumptive girls was worshipped; people

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[87] Ibid, p.31.
[88] Ibid, p.57.
[89] Ibid, p.37.

> were enthusiastic hero-worshippers and enthusiastic adherers of the social creed of the Man in the Street; one had faith and was skeptical, one was naturalistic and precious, robust and morbid...[90]

This kind of equivocation was played with and explored throughout the literature of Robert Musil, and it is perhaps not surprising that in the Preface to *Five Women*, Frank Kermode mentions that Musil once wrote that he saw no reason why something could not be true and false at the same time.[91] Where Nietzsche and Freud dealt with this issue on a philosophical and psychological level, Musil attempted to understand this concept through literature and fictional writing.

A final example of paradoxical and equivocal thinking can be seen with the contributions of Otto Weininger, mainly in his work *Sex and Character*, first published in 1903. Weininger hoped that this study would demonstrate scientifically the nature of the sexes and how they interacted with each other. Making this study in an intellectual environment which had not yet seen the work of Freud, Weininger created a stir, in many senses of the word. He is most commonly known for his harsh opinions regarding the character of women, namely, that they are fundamentally sexual in their nature -- "The condition of sexual excitement is the supreme moment of a woman's life. The woman is devoted wholly to sexual matters, that is to say, to the spheres of begetting and of reproduction."[92] Despite these and other problems, which caused at least one strong written rebuttal, by the early feminist Rosa Mayreder entitled *A Survey of the Woman Problem*, published in 1913, Weininger's underlying notion of the composition of human sexuality was quite compelling for intellectuals of the time. Indeed,

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[90]Musil, *The Man Without Qualities*, Volume I, Eithne Wilkins & Ernst Kaiser (trans.), London: Pan Books Ltd., 1979, p.59.
[91]Frank Kermode, "Preface," *Five Women*, p.12.
[92]Otto Weininger, *Sex and Character*, Authorized Translation from the Sixth German Edition, London: William Heinemann, 1906, pp.88-89.

historian Allan Janik mentions that "...early reviews in Austria, Germany, and even New York were much more positive...than one might expect today. For example, one Viennese medical journal recommended *Sex and Character* enthusiastically to all doctors concerned with sexual matters on the basis of Weininger's complete mastery of the literature on sexual differentiation."[93]

Weininger sought to eliminate the strict distinction between men and women, not necessarily by advocating "equality" of gender as we would define it today, but by arguing that *male* and *female* were not people, but character types -- characteristics that *both* men and women possessed, in varying degrees. He turned to nature and science to defend this position:

> There are transitional forms between metals and non-metals, between chemical combinations and mixtures, between animals and plants... From the analogies I have given, the improbability may henceforth be taken for granted of finding in nature a sharp cleavage between all that is masculine on the one side and all that is feminine on the other...Matters are not so clear.[94]

Thus, Weininger believed that "...absolute sexual distinctions between all men on one side and all women on the other do not exist," making the traditional line between the sexes much more blurred.[95] He argued that, "Sexual differentiation, in fact, is never complete. All the peculiarities of the male sex may be present in the female in some form, however weakly developed; and so also the sexual characteristics of the woman persist in the man, although perhaps they are not so completely rudimentary."[96] What resulted was a theory which indicated that each man and each woman possessed varying proportions of male and female characteristics within their sexual composition. These characteristics were still defined, of course, by equating male characteristics with rationality and order, and female qualities with

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[93] Allan Janik, "Weininger's Vienna," in *Vienna: The World of Yesterday*, p.57.
[94] Weininger, *Sex and Character*, pp.2-3.
[95] Ibid, p.3.
[96] Ibid, p.5.

irrationality, but important for this study is to recognize that with Weininger's work, sexuality became a much more complex and ambiguous concept. Weininger opened the door for discussions on the equivocal composition of bisexuals and homosexuals, which he believed occurred because of different degrees of sexual differentiation within a particular man or woman. According to this theory, sexual attraction was "...about creating a complete male and a complete female between two people...." and depending on the levels of male and female characteristics between two people, this creation of a complete man and woman could occur between two men or two women. [97]

Weininger devised charts and tables to illustrate these "levels" of male and female attributes, and spent much of the study trying to understand how to gauge these levels within individuals. He argued, for example, that women who fight for emancipation must necessarily possess more male qualities – "...a woman's demand for emancipation and her qualification for it are in direct proportion to the amount of maleness in her."[98] The validity of ideas such as these are not at issue; what is important here is that Weininger's study eliminated a clean distinction between what it meant to be a man and a woman, putting in its place a hybrid mixture of male and female qualities within each person. No one was truly male or female, but both, and also, neither. Creating this paradoxical and ambiguous understanding of human sexuality certainly contributed to the overall sense of equivocation occurring at the *fin de siècle*.

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[97] Ibid, pp.29-30.
[98] Ibid, p.64.

Conclusion

By providing the intellectual background of some of the ideas circulating in Vienna at the time of Klimt and Schiele, it has been possible to show how deeply felt these notions of paradox and equivocation were at the *fin-de-siècle*. Nietzsche and Freud were certainly two of the most important contributors to the developments, but many others also joined in -- Robert Musil and Otto Weininger are but two of these individuals. Collectively they provide somewhat of a cross-section of disciplines -- philosophy and literature, as well as studies rooted in science -- in order to examine the ways in which the theme of paradox carried itself out in a variety of arenas. Ultimately, borders were collapsing between concepts that had once been seen as exclusive of one another -- life and death, male and female, rationality and irrationality, order and chaos. What was left behind was a blurred and uncertain collection of impulses which, combined with the tangible paradoxes evident in Viennese society at the time, left people exhilarated at the new ideas, but scared of the overall message being sent. Gustav Klimt and Egon Schiele were two of these people, and as they developed their unique artistic expressions at the start of the *fin-de-siècle*, the residue of this ambivalence and equivocation would find its way into the images they painted.

PART TWO:

PARADOXES IN MODERNIST ART · GUSTAV KLIMT & EGON SCHIELE

In 1907, after becoming frustrated by the artistic restrictions of the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts where he was studying, a young Egon Schiele took a portfolio of his drawings to Gustav Klimt. Alessandra Comini describes how Schiele went unannounced to the garden retreat of the "monk of modern art," thrust his work in front of Klimt, and asked, "'Do I have talent?'" -- to which Klimt replied, "'Much too much!'"[1] With these words of encouragement, Schiele began to explore his ability, eventually ending his Academy career, and moving into the company of Klimt and other prominent artists of the Secession. However, Schiele would become associated not with Secessionism, but, along with artists like Oskar Kokoschka, with Expressionism. This meeting in 1907 began a professional relationship between the two artists, with Klimt originally acting as mentor and guide to the younger Schiele, examining his work,

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[1] Quoted in Alessandra Comini, *Egon Schiele*, New York: George Braziller Inc., 1976, p.12.

helping with his finances, and inviting him to art exhibits. The first of such exhibits was in 1909 at the *International Kunstschau* in Vienna, where Schiele presented some early portraits. (Figure 4)

Figure 4: Schiele, *Portrait of the Painter Hans Massmann*, 1909.

Indeed, in these early pieces most viewers saw the influence of Klimt, especially in the use of line and ornament, but this would change quite quickly as Schiele began to develop his own unique style. The two remained an influence on each other however, and Peter Vergo notes an anecdote indicative of this -- "Schiele, who greatly envied Klimt's drawings, suggested an exchange, by which he meant that he would gladly give several of his own drawings for one by Klimt; Klimt's reaction, characteristically, was: 'Why on earth do you want to swap drawings with me? You draw better than I do!'"[2] Thus, these two men, although representative of

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[2] Fritz Karpfen (ed.), *Das Egon Schiele Buch*, Vienna, 1921, p.90, in Peter Vergo's *Art in Vienna 1898-1918: Klimt, Kokoschka, Schiele, and their Contemporaries*, London: Phaidon Press Limited, 1975, p.212.

different art movements, influenced each other and contributed to the artistic development of the other.

This chapter aims initially to examine this interconnection, as well as other important aspects of the lives of Klimt and Schiele, and to examine the evolution of their respective art movements -- Secessionism and Expressionism. Following this will be an examination of their styles of painting, both the differences and the underlying similarity of message -- a similarity that I will argue, captures the spirit of paradox and equivocation that has been shown here to be at the heart of *fin-de-siècle* life and culture in Vienna. Indeed, the artistic works of Klimt and Schiele, with their simultaneous treatment of life, love, pain, loss, and death, stand as a visual testimony to the blurring of boundaries and the crossing of lines that has been shown to be evident in almost every aspect of Viennese life at the *fin-de-siècle*.

Secessionism & Expressionism

There is no better metaphor of the dichotomy between the gay facade and underlying grim realities of *fin-de-siècle* Vienna than the Secessionist art movement. The Viennese witnessed incredible artistic innovations at the turn of the century, while hiding their deeper feelings of pessimism and nihilism. In a similar way, the Secessionists, especially Gustav Klimt, painted images that portrayed the elegance and beauty of the subject with colour and ornament, but often used this technique as a way of concealing the powerfully charged messages that lay beneath the decoration -- as in the unfinished painting *The Bride* (see Figure 1). Indeed, Secessionism, Austria's contribution to Art Nouveau, would come to embody the changing cultural landscape of Vienna, as it struggled with modernity.

Robert Waissenberger notes that the Vienna *Jungendstil (style of youth)*, the style of the Secession, "...was born of a demand for a new kind of art. Throughout the centuries there had always been a style. Now, suddenly, strangely, there was not, and this void had to be filled...".[3] As conventional attitudes toward art and artistic expression were being challenged, Art Nouveau developed as a response, and became prominent throughout Western Europe. In Austria, this movement became known as Secessionism, and was at first most strongly opposed to *Lichtmalerei* or *plein-air* painting -- naturalism and realism -- preferring instead stylized art, or *Stilkunst*.[4]

In addition to style, however, the Secessionists, with Gustav Klimt as their leader, also sought to represent their changing society as it approached the new century. In this way, Carl Schorske comments that, "The Secession movement...manifested the confused quest for a new life-orientation in visual form."[5] The crisis of liberalism was a part of this quest, and as has been discussed, Klimt and other intellectuals of his class and generation sought to understand and reinterpret the meaning of the various crises that took hold of Austria and Vienna at the *fin-de-siècle* -- "...Klimt shared in a crisis of culture characterized by an ambiguous combination of collective oedipal revolt and narcissistic search for a new self."[6] As discussed in Chapter I, *Jung Wien* experienced extreme dislocation from their parents' generation, from the political sphere, and from society in general. As a result, Klimt and many others turned to a life of art, and attempted to address political and social concerns through the media of painting, sculpture, writing, and architecture. In addition to an "oedipal revolt" and an "identity quest," Schorske argues, the Secessionists believed that "art should provide for modern man asylum

[3] Robert Waissenberger, *Vienna Secession*, New York: Rizzoli International Publications Inc., 1977, pp.9-10.
[4] Ibid, p.23.
[5] Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*, p.209.
[6] Ibid, p.209.

from the pressure of modern life," and quotes contemporary architect Otto Wagner as stating that Secessionism aimed to "'show modern man his true face.'"[7] The exact nature of this true face was often unclear, which to the Secessionists, was the point -- man at the *fin-de-siècle* had shed his old ties to many secure institutions, and was searching for something new. One thing that remained important in the work produced by some of the Secessionists was the setting of some of the darker elements of *fin-de-siècle* Vienna to canvas, in order to force "modern" man to contemplate the isolation and insecurities felt by many. Elements of sexuality and perceptions of the female figured largely here as well. This darker side was, of course, depicted through a new veneration of style and decoration, which was the hallmark of the work of Klimt and his group.

Schorske understands this deeper level of the Secessionist, and specifically Klimt's, purpose as parallel to the work being done by Sigmund Freud at the *fin-de-siècle* -- "...Klimt illuminates so well the socio-cultural situation in which psychoanalysis also arose."[8] Although some historians argue that Klimt probably never read nor was directly influenced by the work of Sigmund Freud,[9] most are in agreement that Klimt and the Secessionists embodied the spirit of psychoanalysis, with its desire to probe and explore inner workings, while ironically covering them up with ornament and decoration. Alessandra Comini also mentions that "...in the culturally incestuous Vienna of coffeehouse gossip, Klimt was soon aware of the sexual fixation of the writings of...Freud," which would also become a strong theme in many of his paintings and drawings.[10] These erotic tendencies would be pushed to the limit and tested in a different way with the later work of Egon Schiele and the Expressionists, to be discussed below.

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[7] Ibid, p.217,215.
[8] Ibid, p.209.
[9] Waissenberger, *Vienna Secession*, p.71; Alessandra Comini, *Gustav Klimt*. London: Thames & Hudson Ltd., 1975, p. 13.
[10] Comini, *Gustav Klimt*, p.13.

The first meeting of the Secessionists was on June 21, 1897, where Klimt, architect Josef Hoffmann, and painter Carl Moll were made responsible for exhibitions.[11] They also agreed that they should have a periodical which would publish literary contributions as well as designs by members of the group. This publication was titled *Ver Sacrum (Sacred Spring)*, and the first edition was put out early in 1898. (Figure 5)

Figure 5: Klimt, *Head of Pallas Athene*, 1900.
Used on cover of *Ver Sacrum* in 1900.

With this periodical, the Secessionists hoped to educate others about their desire to reinterpret the classical styles with a new perspective and freedom. In this way, Schorske points out that the Secessionists chose Athena to "sponsor the liberation of the arts."[12] She had already been used by the Austrian Parliament as their symbol, as she was the "...wise virgin protectrix of the polis," but "now she [was] two-dimensional -- Klimt's new-found way of stating an abstraction."[13] Klimt's painting *Pallas Athena*, completed in 1898, shows this new version of Athena as a powerful force, but one who does not embody virginal femininity -- instead she holds another Secession symbol, *Nuda veritas*, in her hand. (Figure 6)

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[11] Ibid, p.30.
[12] Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*, p.215.
[13] Ibid, p.215.

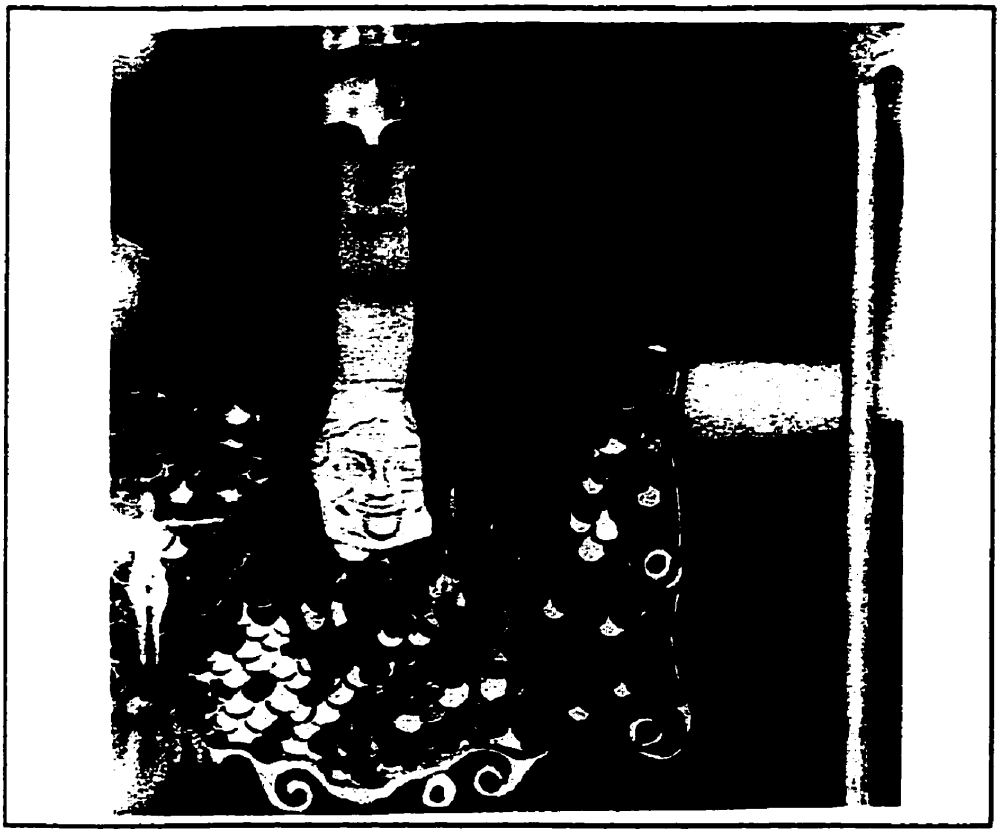

Figure 6: Klimt, *Pallas Athena*, 1898.

This small woman is highly sexual and eroticized, and adds a different message to the usually wise Athena -- "Klimt is distorting the ancient iconography in a truly subversive way: Athena, virgin goddess, is no longer the symbol of a national polis and of ordering wisdom, as she holds on her orb the sensual bearer of the mirror of modern man."[14] This mirror was used by the Secessionists to represent the lack of distinct identity at the *fin-de-siècle*, and with it, they hoped to show the Viennese that an easily understandable life was becoming increasingly difficult. Klimt's Athena revealed not only the aim of the Secessionists to reinterpret references from antiquity for their new uncertain world, but also the path Klimt's individual art would take, using, as did Freud, classical symbols "...to serve as a metaphorical bridge to the excavation of the instinctual...".[15] Freud's further use of Athena as representative of androgyny, as

[14]Ibid, p.222.
[15]Ibid, pp.222-223.

mentioned in Chapter 2, would also come to find its way into Klimt's work, to be discussed below.

Of course, the main focus of the Secessionists was to organize exhibits, in order not only to expose Viennese artists to the public, but also to introduce Vienna to various artists from all over Europe. Indeed, the Secession believed it was extremely important to maintain an international element to their exhibitions, and would include various artists in their exhibitions over the years, from Impressionists and Post-Impressionists like Monet, Rodin, Toulouse-Lautrec, Gauguin, and van Gogh,[16] to early avant-garde talent like Knopff, Ashbee, and Beardsley.[17] In a similar way, some artists from the Secession found success abroad, particularly Klimt, who received a distinction at the Paris Exposition Universelle in 1900. To display their exhibitions, the Secessionists constructed the House of the Secession through the summer of 1898, under the creative guidance of architect Joseph Maria Olbrich. Waissenberger mentions that while it was being built, several nicknames of disdain were awarded to its purpose -- some called it a "blast furnace" and others deemed it an "Assyrian lavatory."[18] Schorske notes that Olbrich's inspiration for the gallery was not the traditional palace, but a pagan temple, and quotes Olbrich's vision -- "'There would have to be walls white and gleaming, holy and chaste. [They would express] pure dignity, such as I felt...shudder through me as I stood alone before the unfinished sanctuary of Segesta.'"[19] The finished product did indeed have the look of a temple, in yet another reference to antiquity, but also resembled a mausoleum, with its solemn facades and stark whiteness. (Figure 7)

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[16]Waissenberger, *Vienna Secession*, p.47,69.
[17]Vergo, *Art in Vienna*, p.85.
[18]Wiassenberger, *Vienna Secession*, p.9.
[19]J.M. Olbrich, "Das Haus der Sezession," *Der Architekt*, V, January 1899, p.5, quoted in Schorske, p.217.

Figure 7: Josef Olbrich, House of the Secession, Photograph by Johanna Fiegl, 1898.

It seems appropriate that the equivocal and paradoxical style of Klimt would be housed in a structure that appeared new and innovative, and yet more like a tomb than a gallery. Over the entrance was the inscription, "To the age its art. To art its freedom," which proclaimed the aim of the Secessionists to revive and recreate Viennese art.[20] However, this too, seemed ambiguous -- like the empty mirror of modern man, the inscription gave freedom to art, which seemed to necessarily eliminate a sense of form and function. Thus, like many paradoxes evident in *fin-de-siècle* Vienna, the Secessionists embraced liberation and freedom from past artistic restraints, which also brought with it a sense of the unknown, and the unknowable:

> But none knew what concrete meaning they [the Secessionist aims] would hold. Cultural renewal and personal introspection, modern identity and asylum from modernity, truth and pleasure -- the components in the Secession manifestoes suggested many contradictory possibilities compatible in only one sense: their common rejection of the nineteenth century's certainties.[21]

This sense of contradiction and paradox was reminiscent of Nietzsche's similar rejection of nineteenth century values, choosing instead, to embrace irrationality and uncertainty as the

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[20]as mentioned in the introduction of *Secessionism and Austrian Graphic Art 1900-1920 : From the Collection of the Neue Galerie der Stadt Linz*, Peter Baum (ed.), Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service, 1990, p.9.

[21]Schorske ,p.219.

bearers of truth. This sense of paradox would find its way into the art of Klimt in particular, who was the leader and most successful member of the Secession, and whose career in particular, illuminated the equivocal aspect of *fin-de-siècle* Vienna.

Figure 8: Gustav Klimt.
Photograph by Moriz Nähr, 1917.
One of the last photographs of Klimt.

Gustav Klimt was born in 1862 in a small country suburb of Vienna by the name of Baumgarten, and was the oldest son of seven children. (Figure 8) It was through his father, who was a gold and silver engraver, that Gustav and his brother Ernst (1864-1892) became exposed to the world of art and creativity, and both were accepted to the recently formed *Kunstgewerbeschule* (Arts and Crafts School) in 1876, along with Gustav's friend Franz Matsch (1861-1942). There the Klimt brothers were introduced to Professor Ferdinand Laufberger, who, upon their move to the College of Painting at the School, hired the young men to share some of his commissioned work in theatres and spas. By their graduation in 1883, Gustav,

Ernst, and Franz were living and working in a studio together, and were receiving increasingly important commissions. They worked in a "Historicist style," and avoided personal execution so that any one of them could complete a job.[22] Their first significant job was to paint the ceiling and walls of the staircases in Vienna's new Burgtheater, for which they received the Golden Service Medal of the Supreme Imperial House in 1888. Gustav painted another panel for the theatre, this one depicting the auditorium as seen from the stage, and included the faces of many of Vienna's intelligentsia and aristocracy -- for this achievement, he was given the Imperial Prize. This led to other prestigious commissions, bringing the three into the Vienna artist's association, *Künstlerhausgenossenschaft*, as well as granting them a place among the famous painters of Vienna's Ringstrasse. In 1894, after Gustav's brother had died, Gustav and Franz were asked to prepare sketches for paintings in the Great Hall of Vienna University. The results of this job would mark the change in Klimt's artistic style from classical and historical to highly symbolic, and would cause a public controversy that would last most of Klimt's career.

Carl Schorske discusses Klimt's University panel controversy, and defines it as Klimt's moment of "crisis" :

> In the nineties, the very nature of reality became problematic for Klimt. He did not know whether to seek it in the physical or the metaphysical, in the flesh or in the spirit. These traditional categories were losing their clarity and independence. The crisis of the liberal ego came to focus on the indeterminacy of the boundaries between them. In Klimt's constantly shifting representations of space and substance -- from the naturalistically solid through the impressionistically fluid to the abstract and geometrically static -- we can see the groping for orientation in a world without secure coordinates.[23]

Although Klimt had already received the commission for the paintings at Vienna University, by the time they were executed (1898-1904), he was deeply involved in the Secession movement, and had come to search for a new "truth" in his paintings. Of the four paintings to be done,

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[22]Susanna Partsch, *Gustav Klimt: Painter of Women*, Munich: Prestel-Verlag, 1994, p.109.
[23]Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*, p.226.

Klimt was put in charge of three -- representing the faculties of Philosophy, Medicine, and Law -- and Klimt was told that the theme of these paintings should be that of "the triumph of light over darkness."[24] However, by the time the first painting, *Philosophy*, was presented in 1900, and *Medicine* a year later, it was clear that the Enlightenment tradition of conquering the evils of darkness through education and rationality was not depicted in Klimt's representations. (Figures 9 & 10)

In both paintings, the subjects occupy the sides of the canvas, as they float by in a state of exhaustion, pain, and apathy. Indeed, they form a kind of river of lost souls, floating aimlessly through a black void. Schorske comments on the connection here with Nietzsche's understanding of the dark abyss of irrationality discussed in his *Birth of Tragedy*.[25] He also notes that in *Medicine*, there is the addition of the front character, Hygeia, who in Greek legend, is:

> ...ambiguity par *excellence*; accordingly, she is associated with the snake, the most ambiguous of creatures... The snake, amphibious creature, phallic symbol with bisexual associations, is the great dissolver of boundaries: between land and sea, man and woman, life and death. This character accords well with the concern with androgyny and the homosexual reawakening of the *fin-de-siècle*.[26]

Here we see the beginnings of Klimt's interest in equivocation, as with Freud's understanding of the androgynous Athena, as well as his representation of woman as the *femme fatale*, a combination of evil and highly charged sexuality. These themes are also present in another earlier painting from 1898, *Music*, in which Klimt depicts the Sphinx, a characteristic *femme fatale*, who represents "... the child-eating mother, embodiment of the metamorphic continuum of animal and man, of terror and female beauty."[27] These early examples act as a prelude to

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[24] Ibid, p.227.
[25] Ibid, pp.228-231.
[26] Ibid, p.242.
[27] Ibid, p.221.

Figure 9: Klimt, *Philosophy*, 1899-1907.

Figure 10: Klimt, *Medicine*, 1900–1907.

Klimt's later use of equivocal female imagery, representing them as evil, sexual, and somehow innocent, all at once. (Figure 11)

Figure 11: Klimt, *Music*, 1898.

Of course, these University paintings did nothing to depict the theme given by the University, and created a controversy within the academic community. When *Philosophy* was presented, eighty-seven faculty members signed a petition of protest against the panel, and asked the Ministry of Culture, who was overseeing the commission, to reject Klimt's final product. The Viennese philosopher Friedrich Jodl (1849-1914) became a key critic in the Klimt affair, publishing a statement in the *Neue Freie Presse* that -- "It is not against nude art, nor against free art that we struggle, but against ugly art."[28] Thus it was that the controversy erupted between Klimt's supporters and the establishment. Although Klimt would continue to paint and have a successful career, the attacks on his work in the political sphere would cause

[28]Ibid, p.234.

him to retreat into seclusion, and to paint largely without support from the Ministry of Culture. Another barrage of criticism and praise would come with Klimt's unveiling of his *Beethoven Frieze*, part of a Secessionist tribute to the composer which was shown at the 14th Exhibition on April 15, 1902. By some, his work was described as "obscene art," "painted pornography," and "the most revolting and disgusting forms and objects...that the brush of an artist has ever depicted."[29] As will be seen, these criticisms were not so different from the condemnation of Schiele's work, which Klimt would come to support. A man of very few words, Klimt did not leave behind much written or spoken expression regarding the University affair. As most historians agree, his response came through his art, in which he continued to abandon the rules of the establishment. Eventually, in April of 1905, in a rare interview, Klimt would take back his University paintings, stating, "Enough of censorship. I am having recourse to self-help. I want to get out."[30] It should not be forgotten that these very same paintings were heralded by some artistic allies and members of *Jung Wien* as the pinnacle of Klimt's creative genius; but it was partly the criticism that moved Klimt into seclusion, where he would continue to develop his highly decorative and ornamental style.

In 1905, divisions with the more conservative members of the Secession led Klimt and his followers, who formed the bulk of the "talent" of the Secession, to leave and start their own new endeavour. Among the men with Klimt were Josef Hoffmann, Koloman Moser, Carl Moll, Alfred Roller, Otto Wagner, and Josek Engelhart, and together they formed the "rump Secession."[31]. The writer Berta Zuckerkandl, who along with Hermann Bahr, was a staunch supporter of the talent of the Secession, wrote in 1907 that the artists left behind after Klimt's

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[29]cited in a collection of reviews, *Gegen Klimt*, edited by Hermann Bahr and published in 1903, as mentioned in Patrick Werkner, *Austrian Expressionism – The Formative Years*, Nicholas T. Parsons (trans.), Palo Alto: The Society for the Promotion of Science and Scholarship, 1993, p.13.
[30]Strobl, *Albertina Studien*, II, 161-3, as mentioned in Schorske, pp.265-266.
[31]Josef Engelhart, in Vergo's *Art in Vienna*, p.85.

exodus from the group, "have not noticed that the Secession has in effect left them...However, the Secessionists are dying a beautiful death. They perish in the fulfillment of their aims."[32] Klimt and his new group of defectors began supporting the younger, more controversial artists, like Egon Schiele and Oskar Kokoschka, and had another gallery built for exhibitions as well as an open-air theatre for small plays and skits. Peter Vergo notes that throughout the summer of 1908-1909, "the considerable energies of Klimt and his friends were again united in forcing upon the consciousness of the Viennese public everything that was new, revolutionary, shocking in contemporary art."[33] The two exhibitions of this time were entitled *Kunstschau*, and as mentioned before, it was at the second show in 1909 that the early work of Schiele was displayed. Through these shows, the spirit of "modern" art had been revived according to Klimt, as can be seen in part of his speech for the grand opening of the first *Kunstschau* in 1908:

> We do not, obviously, regard an exhibition as the ideal way of establishing contact between artist and public. For instance, the execution of large-scale public commissions would be infinitely preferable for this purpose. But as long as public life continues to occupy itself predominantly with political and economic matters, exhibitions are the only means which remain open to us. We must, therefore, be grateful for that public and private support which has enabled us, on this occasion, to make use of this means and demonstrate that we have not been idle during these exhibitionless years, that on the contrary -- perhaps we have been free from the cares of arranging exhibitions -- we have been working all the more industriously, inwardly, on the development of our ideas...
> ...it is in vain that our opponents attempt to combat the modern movement in art, to declare it dead. For theirs is a struggle against growth, against becoming -- against life itself. True, we who have toiled for weeks on end preparing this exhibition will, once it is opened, separate and go our own individual ways. But perhaps in the foreseeable future we shall find ourselves united again in some quite different association...[34]

Despite the grandeur surrounding the first and second *Kunstschau*, they proved to be financially disastrous, leaving no resources available for further experimentation. Klimt retreated further into seclusion after the second *Kunstschau*, continuing to paint, but doing so out of the Viennese

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[32]Berta Zuckerkandl, *Zeitkunst*, p.150, as mentioned in Partick Werkner's *Austrian Expressionism*, p.17.
[33]Vergo, p.179.
[34]Gustav Klimt, reprinted in the catalogue, *Ausstellung der 'Kunstschau,'* Vienna 1908, in Vergo, pp.179-180.

public eye -- he maintained some international praise, however, as with the International Art Exhibition in Rome in 1911, where he was honoured. While the *Kunstschau* did not bring personal success to Klimt, it had been successful in bringing the work of Egon Schiele into the public eye, and introducing him to other artists with similar interests.

Schiele's early life was quite different from the privileged upbringing and formal training of the master of Art Nouveau. Schiele was born in 1890 at Tulln, in Lower Austria, and his father was a railway officer. Comini notes that much of Schiele's childhood was overshadowed by the illness and advancing insanity of his father due to syphilis, which he refused to be treated for and which also infected Schiele's mother.[35] Her first four children were stillborn or died early, but finally, Marie Schiele was successful in raising three children -- two girls, and Egon. Schiele's father died completely insane in 1904, and young Egon was made the ward of his aunt's husband. The effect of these events on Schiele's childhood cannot be determined in any real way, but it is known that he had a sexual relationship with his younger sister Gerti not long after the death of his father -- they repeated their parents' honeymoon trip to Trieste when Egon was sixteen and Gerti only twelve.[36] Comini states that, "The impact of his father's tragedy on the fourteen-year-old Schiele was incalculable. Almost as though in retaliation for the venereal origin of the disease that had shadowed the family, the boy threw himself into a stormy adolescence of sexual exploration and activity."[37] Schiele's artistic ability was evident very early on, as can be seen in an early self-portrait, painted when he was just 16, and like Klimt, Schiele was sent to Vienna to study art in 1906. (Figure 12) Unlike Klimt, however, Schiele did not attend the *Kunstgewerbeschule*, but was accepted at the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts.

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[35] Alessandra Comini, *Egon Schiele*, New York: George Braziller Inc., 1976, p.10.
[36] Ibid, p.11.
[37] Ibid, p.11.

Figure 12: Schiele, *Self-Portrait*, 1906.

This path of study would last only a short while, and Schiele left the traditional art school not long after meeting Klimt in 1907, as mentioned above.

At Schiele's first independent debut at the *Kunstschau* of 1909, he met several artists who shared his vision and enthusiasm for art. Like Klimt before him, Schiele and some of these colleagues started yet another artistic society, known as *Neukunstgruppe*, in 1909, and had their first exhibition in December of that year, at the Salon Pisko. A few reviews of this exhibition appeared in the Viennese papers, and Vergo mentions one from art critic of the *Neue Freie Presse*, A.F. Seligmann:

> A quite different impression is produced by the Neukunstgruppe, who are exhibiting at Pisko's on the Schwarzenbergplatz. They are mostly young academicians, or such as would like to be as much, imitators of Klimt, Kokoschka, and the French Neo-Impressionists. Some of them indeed, have talent, as far as one can judge from what one is offered here, but nearly all tend in a direction which leads only to a dead end... Schiele too, is certainly gifted. One can see here a whole series of drawings and paintings by him -- that is, the ones which don't offend our already much-blunted "public morals." How far his artistic talent will take him, it's too early to say. But, if I'm not much mistaken, he might easily find himself presented with a nice little summons.[38]

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[38] *Neue Freie Presse*, 1 December, 1909, as mentioned in Peter Vergo's *Art in Vienna*, pp.213-214.

This statement was prophetic, for Schiele would spend a month in prison for immorality and supposed seduction of a minor in April, 1912. He was eventually acquitted of the charges, but not before the judge burned one of his "immoral" paintings at the trial (see Figure 2). Indeed, many of Schiele's paintings were of a highly erotic, some said even pornographic, nature, and he often used young children as his models. (Figure 13)

Figure 13: Schiele, *Nude on Coloured Fabric*, 1911.

While in prison, Schiele wrote, "Have adults forgotten how corrupted, that is, sexually, driven and aroused they themselves were as children? I have not forgotten, for I suffered excruciatingly from it."[39] However, he was insistent on the fact that these pictures were still works of art:

> No erotic work of art is filth if it is artistically significant; it is only turned into filth through the beholder if he is filthy...I do declare as untrue...that I showed such drawings intentionally to children, that I corrupted children. That is untrue![40]

Schiele's direct probing of sexual subjects knew no limits -- he chronicled on canvas his sexual relationship with his wife, Edith, as well as extensive self-portraits of himself masturbating. This

[39]from Schiele's prison diaries, translated by Comini, Schiele in Prison, Greenwich: New York Graphic Society Ltd., 1973, p.59.
[40]Ibid, p.59.

element of his painting made Schiele unpalatable to many viewers, and like Klimt, he experienced censorship and public condemnation, which left him with feelings of bitterness and isolation. Letters to his friend, art critic Arthur Roessler, written in the months after his imprisonment, indicate Schiele's frustration -- "I am wretched, I tell you, I am inwardly so wretched," and on September 19, 1912, "I must live day after day with the evil thought that I work at nothing and just wait and wait. From March until now, I have just not been able to paint or, above all, to think."[41]

Aside from Schiele's subject matter and style, even his persona was striking and made an impact upon those who met him. The critic and longtime admirer of Schiele's, Arthur Roessler, left many memories and anecdotes of the artist, and although the historian Peter Vergo cautions against the accuracy of many of these stories, the account of his first impression of Schiele is considered useful:

> One felt one had before one a personality extraordinary in every respect, so extraordinary, in fact, that by no means everyone can have felt comfortable in its presence, sometimes not even its owner himself. To the sensitive, Schiele must have seemed like a sembling from an unknown land, like one who has come back from the dead and now, filled with a painful confusion, carries among mankind a secret message, without quite knowing to whom to deliver it...[42]

Indeed, Schiele's appearance in many photographs reveals his haunted expression, which seemed to some to explain the similar feelings manifested in many of his paintings. (Figure 14) Because of these and other elements of Schiele's work, it became increasingly known for its raw and powerful treatment of the subject, and was linked with Expressionism. The writer Hermann Bahr wrote of Expressionism early in 1903 -- "Now necessity cries out: man cries after his soul, and the whole age becomes a single cry of need. Art, too, cries with it, into the

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[41] Egon Schiele, from Vergo's *Art in Vienna*, p.218.
[42] Arthur Roessler in *Das Egon Schiele Buch*, pp.30-32, as mentioned in Vergo's *Art in Vienna*, p.212.

depth of darkness; it cries for help, it cries after the spiritual: that is Expressionism."[43] Unlike Secessionism, Expressionism became linked with its ability to bare the subject's soul on canvas, and to strip away the decorative facade that had been used by Secessionists to depict their subjects. It was this element in particular, that attracted critics of Viennese aestheticism to the work of Schiele and other Expressionists, like Oskar Kokoschka -- the interest of satirist Karl Kraus has already been noted. Despite this early appreciation of Schiele's work, he did not enjoy the early success that Klimt experienced with his commissions from the government and from universities. Klimt's eventual refusal to accommodate the artistic tastes of the establishment had paved a path for subsequent artists like Schiele, to find their own way without the aid of the traditional art community.

Figure 14: Egon Schiele, 1915.
Photograph by Johannes Fischer.

Although this freedom brought creative license, for Schiele it also brought difficult financial times. In 1911, Schiele and his mistress at the time, Wally Neuzil, moved to Böhmisch Krumau, Czechoslovakia, which was his mother's birthplace. Schiele enjoyed the picturesque

[43]Hermann Bahr, 1903, as mentioned in Almut Krapf-Weiler's "The Response of Early Viennese Expressionism to Vincent van Gogh," Patrick Werkner (ed.), *Egon Schiele: Art, Sexuality, and Viennese Modernism*, Palo Alto: The Society for the Promotion of Science and Scholarship, 1994, pp.31-32.

old town, and it served as inspiration for some of his first mature paintings, as with *Dead City* (see Figure 3). It was here that Schiele truly began to abandon the influence of Klimt and aestheticism, but his stay in Krumau was short-lived. Many neighbours were opposed to Schiele's lifestyle, as well as to his live-in mistress, and late in the summer of 1911, the two moved again to Neulengbach, continuing to live in financial straits. Neulengbach, however, proved to be another poor choice of dwellings, for it was here that Schiele was arrested in the spring of 1912 for disseminating indecent paintings, which led to subsequent "restless wanderings" for the remainder of the summer, after he was released from one month in prison.[44] Finally, later in 1912, Schiele returned to Vienna, and rented a large studio where he would remain until his early death in 1918. It was also here that he first met Edith Harms, whom he would marry in May, 1915. After 1912, Schiele began a more successful period in his artistic career. His work had been exhibited at the Munich Secession and at the *Sonderbund* exhibition in Cologne late in 1912, and a Munich art dealer Hans Goltz, organized a collection of Schiele's work in June and July of 1913. In Vienna, Schiele participated in the forty-third exhibition of the Secession, in January and February of 1913, and began to enjoy some of his success.[45] However, the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 would greatly affect the career of Schiele, while that of Klimt would remain largely the same.

Karl Kraus focused a great deal of attention on the early days of the war, commenting on the extreme duality of the influence of war on Vienna's communities in his periodical *Die Fackel*. In one particularly insightful commentary, Kraus simply placed two different articles that had appeared in one day's newspaper, side by side -- one was a report from the front, while the other spoke of the opening of a new café[46]. This duality seems to have been personified by

[44]Vergo, *Art in Vienna*, p.218.
[45]Ibid, p.218.
[46]Karl Kraus, *Die Fackel*, XVI, No. 405 (23 February, 1915), pp.1-2, as mentioned in Vergo's *Art in Vienna*,

Schiele and Klimt -- while Schiele was eventually called up for service, Klimt maintained his life of seclusion in the Austrian countryside. However, Schiele's duties were not at the front, but as a guard, which still allowed him some free time in which to draw. The war stopped art exhibitions until late 1917, and the Secession building was used as a hospital throughout much of the later stages of the war.[47] However, both artists remained active in their art careers throughout much of the war years, producing a considerable number of paintings, drawings, and sketches.

By the time the war ended in 1918, many Viennese people had died from starvation and disease, among them, two of the leading figures of Vienna's art movement -- Klimt died in January from the after-effects of a stroke, and Schiele died in October from an epidemic of Spanish influenza, which had claimed his wife three days earlier. Ironically, Schiele's last few months of life had witnessed some of his greatest successes as an artist. A month after Klimt's death, Schiele organized the forty-ninth exhibition of the Secession, which was entirely dedicated to his work and that of his friends, and was a great success. His final acceptance by the art community is shown by art critic for the *Neue Freie Presse*, Seligmann, who had earlier prophesied his failure:

> It is always a pleasure to look at drawings by Egon Schiele. Superb how, while completely renouncing light and shade, tone and colour, the entire life, the whole expression of the subject appears captured in the contour alone.[48]

This was quite a different sentiment from that proclaimed earlier, when he announced that Schiele offended the senses with his explicit paintings. Nevertheless, Schiele died knowing that he had finally become recognized and financially successful -- he had sold many of his paintings at the Secession Exhibition. Waissenberger comments that with this exhibition, Schiele,

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pp.220-221.

[47]Waissenberger, *Vienna Secession*, p.107.

[48]A.F. Seligmann, Öesterreichische Galerie, Vienna, as cited in Vergo's *Art in Vienna*, p.241.

"became a bridge between the past and the present," and although he and other Expressionists were not directly a part of the Secessionist movement, "...they were nevertheless given the opportunity to display their works, and their participation seemed in a way to renew the spirit of the Secession."[49]

This section has aimed to provide an understanding of the lives and the chronology of events that linked Gustav Klimt to Egon Schiele, as well as to examine the development of their respective art movements, Secessionism and Expressionism. The two artistic styles were born out of similar impulses -- a desire for change and innovation, as well as a disregard for established ideas about art and its forms. They were influenced by the writings circulating Vienna at the turn of the century, and even if they did not read Nietzsche or Freud, their paintings often embodied themes of the irrational, which were key topics of discussion at the time. Patrick Werkner echoes this sentiment in his study *Austrian Expressionism*:

> ...it would be wrong to see these artists as embodying a specific ideology or philosophy. In neither Theosophy, Nietzsche nor Schopenhauer, Weininger nor Freud, are the creative impulses of Austrian Expressionism to be found. On the other hand, it is important to be aware of the intellectual, spiritual, and philosophical context within which it developed, a context that left its mark, in individual and frequently in contradictory ways, on the artists concerned.[50]

Both artists were ridiculed during their early days, but Klimt's intense decoration and ornament eventually won over the artistic *haut-monde*, while Schiele's raw treatment of life and death also found eventual success. Indeed, the work of Klimt in particular had changed from his early work on the University panels, becoming extremely preoccupied with the aesthetic facade of the *fin-de-siècle*. Schiele's work also changed, but moved away from the ornamentation of Klimt, toward his own powerful brand of line and colour. Before their work can be compared as a

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[49] Waissenberger, *Vienna Secession*, p.107,112.
[50] Patrick Werkner, *Austrian Expressionism*, p.252.

similar expression of paradox and equivocation, it is important to examine these stylistic differences between the two artists.

Contemplation and Confrontation

When Egon Schiele dropped out of the Vienna Academy of Fine Art in 1909, he and some of his classmates composed a manifesto declaring the intentions of their new artistic group *Neukünstler (The New Artists)*. They wanted complete independence and separation from all artistic tradition, and deemed creative subjectivity to be the most important element of their work. Although the Secessionists yearned for a similar kind of artistic freedom, they were also concerned with depicting modernity, and using their craft to address social concerns as they saw them at the turn of the century. With Expressionism, these broader goals were largely abandoned -- the personal voyage and expression of the artists' inner thoughts and feelings became the pinnacle of their creative process. In this regard, Schiele's words in a letter to his legal guardian Leopold Czihaczek in 1911 take on a particular significance -- "I yearn to experience everything."[51] The initial aims of Klimt and the Secessionists to hold up a mirror to the face of modern man were left behind as the younger Expressionists took the mirror and directed it at themselves.

Patrick Werkner argues that part of the Expressionist inward turning was related to the psychoanalytic studies of Freud, which has been mentioned earlier, especially his unique approach toward the repression of emotions revolving around death and sexuality -- "The reaction to this suppression of anxiety, of suffering, and of human desperation led directly to

[51] Egon Schiele, Letter to Leopold Czihaczek, Sept. 1, 1911, in Christian M. Nebehay, *Egon Schiele, 1890-1918: Leben, Briefe, Gedichte*, (Salzburg, 1979) p.182, no.251, cited in Werkner's *Austrian Expressionism*, p.119.

Expressionism. It responded almost automatically with a shift of focus 'from the facade to the psyche.'"[52] Thus, Expressionists like Schiele, responded in a much harsher fashion to the negative aspects of *fin-de-siècle* culture in Vienna, and where the Secessionists hid these darker elements "under a veil of stylization," the Expressionists sought to bare these repressed feelings upon the canvas.[53] Of course, it should be remembered that Gustav Klimt played a large role in fostering this attitude, through his paintings of death and ugliness, and the abuse he received from the art establishment for his early University panels.

Understanding the different ways that the goals of the two art movements manifested themselves on canvas has been the subject of many historical studies. Most art historians and critics, Frank Whitford and Otto Breicha for example, emphasize the differences between Klimt and Schiele in almost every way, from their use of line and colour, to their incorporation, or lack thereof, of background, to their subject matter. It is difficult to give both Secessionism and Expressionism a general description, as each artist brought a personal style to his work -- this is especially true of the Secessionist movement -- but understanding some of the stylistic elements in the work of Klimt and Schiele is particularly useful here. While the later art of Klimt, which is the primary focus of this study, was decorative, ornamental, and heavily reliant on the "facade," Schiele's Expressionist paintings displayed raw emotion and seemed to lay the subject's psyche bare on the canvas. Breicha sums up the differences poetically:

> ...their techniques should not be confused: with Klimt what is fluent, surging and compliant is always entrusted exclusively to his supple line, whether he uses pencil or crayon; with Schiele line is a scaffolding that both carries and is strengthened by colour. Line is a decision made, a knife unsheathed. Colour throbs and festers like a wound.[54]

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[52]Werkner, *Austrian Expressionism*, p.25.
[53]Ibid, p.25.
[54]Otto Breicha (intro.), *Klimt, Schiele, Kokoschka: Drawings and Watercolours*, London: Thames&Hudson Ltd., 1981, p.17.

Indeed, on the surface, the styles and techniques of Klimt and Schiele were very different. Breicha continues, stating that Klimt "...drew like one enraptured, flirting with his subject, caressing her body like a lover, at once pliant, careless, audacious, intent on the turns and formations...," while Schiele's work "...seiz[es] on the essentials, as he saw them, and hold[s] them up to mocking scrutiny."[55] In Patrick Werkner's collection of essays on Egon Schiele entitled *Egon Schiele: Art, Sexuality, and Viennese Modernism*, art historian Elsen describes Schiele's style this way -- "Rather than outlines, the lines are now more emphatic contours. The drawing instrument is now a probe pressing for bone, muscle, and tissue."[56] In this way, Elsen believes, Schiele "let the body speak for itself," and his subjects were "naked" in the intimate sense, not "nude" in the academic sense. He argues that "Perhaps this was a reaction against the flowing, flat, boneless style of *Jungendstil*, or the decorative but sometimes fussy scribblings of Klimt's silhouettes."[57]

These techniques were believed by some to typify Klimt's work as "beautiful," while Schiele's work was deemed "ugly" -- indeed, Schiele's "total demolition" of beauty, in Klimt's sense of the word, is seen time and time again in his paintings, which depict men, women, children, and most often himself, set in contorted and painful poses.[58] (Figures15 & 16) Breicha adds to this dichotomy with his understanding of Klimt's depiction of death and ugliness:

> Throughout his life Klimt's objective remained the evocation and advocacy of beauty in every context. Even when he touched on the 'last things,' when his subjects were evil, suffering and death, stylization and colouristic refinement make them good to look at. His fundamental sympathy for the beauty of women and the world did not exclude

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[55]Ibid, p.16.
[56]Elsen, Patrick Werkner (ed.), *Egon Schiele: Art, Sexuality, and Viennese Modernism*, p.7.
[57]Ibid, pp.13-14.
[58]Klaus Albrecht Schröder, *Egon Schiele: Eros and Passion*, David Britt (trans.), Munich: Prestel-Verlag, 1995, p.90.

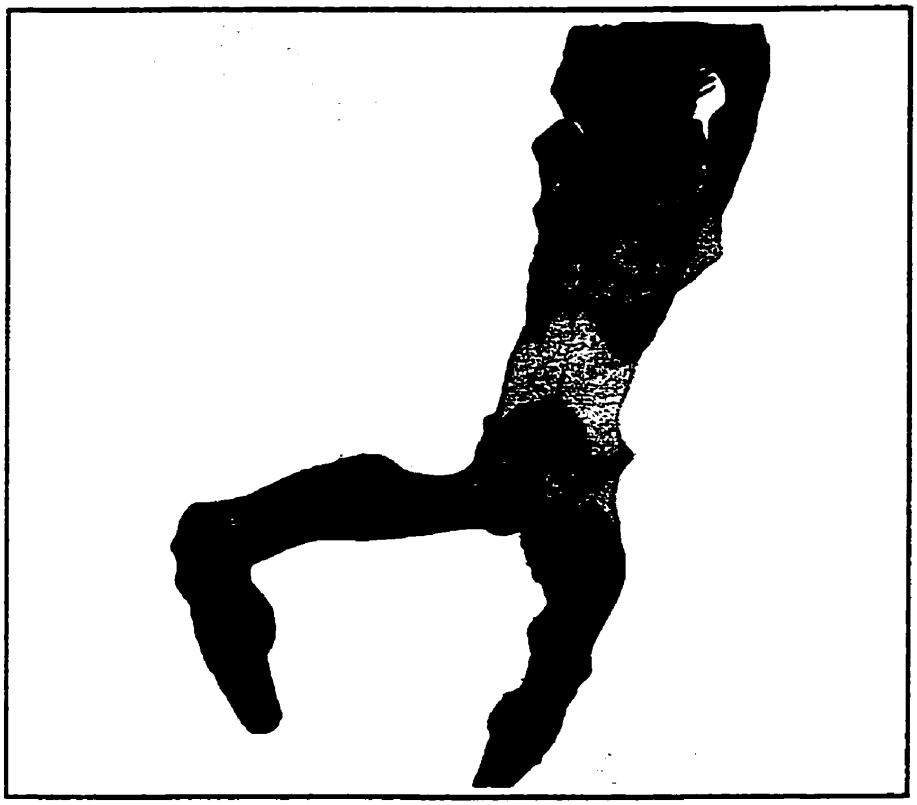

Figure 15: Schiele, *Seated Male Nude*, 1910.

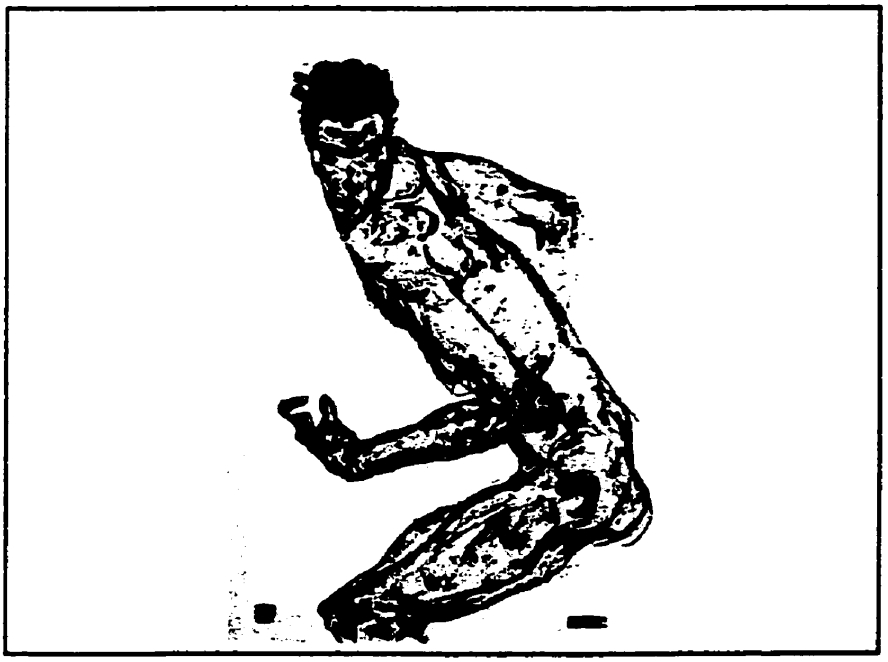

Figure 16: Schiele, *Fighter*, 1913.

> transience and decay from his reckoning, but he was able to glorify even menace and revulsion.[59]

I will argue that it is exactly this tendency in Klimt's treatment of death and pain -- which depicts it as "beauty" and "refinement" -- that explains the overall paradoxical nature of his later work. In a similar way, while most historians agree that Schiele's paintings deal with only pain, horror, and death, I will argue that he also incorporates life and love into his work.

Nevertheless, the styles of these two artists were executed quite differently. Klimt's technique, best personified in the "golden period" of his later work, involved placing a heavy overlay of decorative ornaments and shapes on his subjects. This use of decoration was believed by many to be pure beauty and elegance, creating a facade and illusion that best typified the adoration of aestheticism in *fin-de-siècle* Vienna. Conversely, Schiele's art stripped away the ornamental facade, revealing the agonized reality that lay underneath, which is depicted in one of his early self-portraits in 1909. (Figure 17)

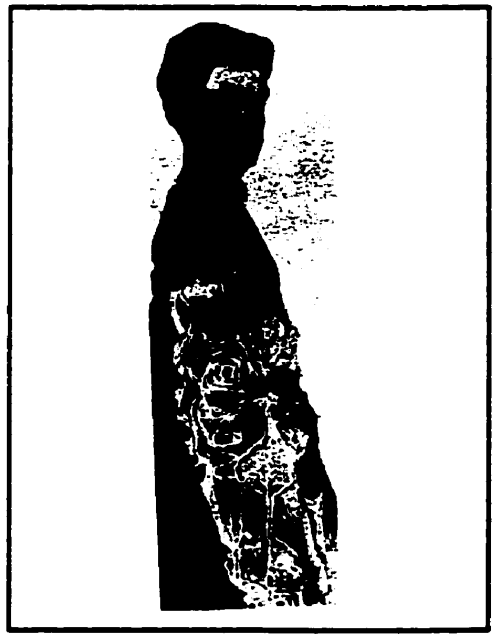

Figure 17: Schiele, *Nude Self-Portrait*, 1909.

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[59]Briecha, p.14.

Here, Schiele's sly countenance and brazen nakedness are coupled with a shedding of a covering reminiscent of Klimt's decorative work. The gold and silver leaf used by Klimt was replaced by Schiele with the broad brushstrokes of intense black, red, orange, and yellow. This golden ornamentalism was most often used by Klimt in his portraits of Viennese socialites -- women that Breicha and Whitford argue Klimt depicted with grace and honour. Indeed, it is easy, at first glance, to see why this appears to be so -- Klimt's women often stand or sit amidst a beautiful array of gold and lavish colour. Schiele, on the other hand, visited a women's hospital in Vienna on several occasions, in order to capture the young or pregnant female patients, in various stages of illness and disease.[60] The manner in which both men depicted women is of importance in the following section.

Another difference between the styles of these two artists was Schiele's near obsession with painting his portrait, in an act of intense narcissism, while Klimt never painted himself. Again, this points to the conventional argument that Schiele was intent on depicting the inner workings of the human psyche, while Klimt was not. Klimt once described why he refrained from painting his portrait: "There exists no self-portrait by me...rather am I interested in other individuals, above all women, and even more am I interested in other appearances."[61] This interest in appearances is quite different from Schiele's continuous unveiling of the subject's soul and psyche to the viewer. The art critic and ally of Schiele's, Arthur Roessler, described this tendency of Schiele's in 1911:

> Schiele has seen and painted human faces that shimmer pallidly...; faces of the obsessed, whose souls fester; faces frozen by untold suffering into rigid masks; faces that subtly delineate the synthesis of an individual's inner life...[62]

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[60] Patrick Werkner, *Egon Schiele: Art, Sexuality, and Viennese Modernism*, Werkner (ed.), p.59.
[61] Comini, *Klimt*, p.8.
[62] Schroder, *Egon Schiele*, p.50.

A tortured inner life was something close to Schiele, whose troubled childhood has already been mentioned. These events surely had a bearing upon Schiele's artistic expression, which repeatedly exposed him and his subjects to the unrelenting gaze of the viewer. Comini succinctly summarizes this difference by describing Klimt's style as "contemplation," while calling Schiele's style "confrontation." [63]

As a final way of depicting the stylistic differences between Klimt and Schiele, Alessandra Comini gives an interesting metaphorical comparison of the signatures of both men (Figures 18 & 19):

> Klimt's fluid, elegant, embellished scrawl was a faithful microcosm of the multiple stimuli and sensations in which he felt at home. Schiele's aggressive, self-confirming thick block lettering boxed itself in from the void so keenly sensed by his generation.[64]

Figure 18: Signature of Gustav Klimt

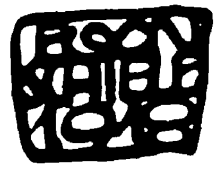

Figure 19: Signature of Egon Schiele

Here Comini points to another difference between the two artists -- that of time period. Although I have emphasized that both men felt the nihilistic tremors of *fin-de-siècle* Viennese culture, Klimt's personal experiences had grown from a more established, bourgeois, and aestheticized past. Schiele, on the other hand, was Klimt's junior, and grew up challenging the aesthetic facade almost from the very beginning. While this is important, it should be remembered that Klimt and the Secessionists were in large part responsible for the challenges made to the established art world, and without them, Expressionists like Schiele may not have

[63] Comini, *Egon Schiele*, p.20.
[64] Ibid, p.17.

come to the same realization. To this end, Patrick Werkner astutely warns against emphasizing the "linear development" from Symbolism to Secessionism to Expressionism, believing that it has "...already been exposed as the artificial construction that it is...".[65] He argues that it is much more valuable to "...uncover the common, highly expressive impulse of creation that binds together the artists concerned."[66] Thus, it is to this task, through the theme of paradox and equivocation, that we now turn.

Paradox and Equivocation

This study has been working towards a rethinking of certain elements in the art of Gustav Klimt and Egon Schiele -- a rethinking that takes into account the prevalence of paradoxical and equivocal ideas that were evident in *fin-de-siècle* Vienna. The various stylistic differences between their work have been outlined in order to gain an appreciation of the unique elements of both Secessionism and Expressionism. However, some of the scholarship indicates a strict division between the painting of Klimt and Schiele -- that the former painted beauty while the latter dealt with ugliness and death. I will argue that both artists included *both* elements in their work, in order to create images that sometimes defy definitive description. Indeed, underneath the stylistic differences lies an incredible similarity in their use of the paradoxes of life, love, and death. While with Schiele it is often easy to understand the darker impulses in his work, as it is apparent in his style, with Klimt it is more difficult to perceive, as it is sometimes hidden by his decorative facade. However, these impulses are still evident, and show a striking similarity to several paintings by Schiele. In fact, Klimt's use of the decorative

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[65]Werkner, *Austrian Expressionism*, p.3.
[66]Ibid, p.3.

facade can be seen as a contributing factor to the life-death images he creates. Once this darker element of Klimt's style is understood, recognizing the way it is used to equivocate his subjects is possible.

Consider, for example, Klimt's famous portrait of Adèle Bloch-Bauer in 1907. (Figure 20) Whitford argues that in this painting, the use of extensive ornament and decoration "transform the flesh and blood into an apparition from a dream of sensuality and self-indulgence."[67] Another reading of this painting suggests something quite different. The heavy decoration seems to be strangling Adèle -- indeed, only her head and arms are left to penetrate through the intense gold and silver that threatens to take over her body. The skin that is exposed is gray and pale, and the only colour upon her cheeks is a rouge that seems artificial, as if it is somehow attempting to revive life to her face. Her eyes are tired and vacant, and her entire person is indistinguishable from the background that crowds in around her. Her dress blends into the ornamental aura surrounding her head, which gives the effect of suffocation and immobilization.

Art critic Arthur Danto also discusses this darker aspect of Klimt's decoration, arguing that it crushes any life left in the flesh of the subjects -- "...it is striking that the flesh of Klimt's women contrasts almost morbidly with the surrounding stuffs and stones and metals. It is bloodless and nearly necrotic."[68] Danto's interpretation of this element is that "...ornament is the state to which his figures aspire, and they are undergoing some kind of sea change that is to turn them, at last, into something beyond life and longing and decay."[69] This "enjewelment of the flesh" acts as a technique for "slipping out of the flesh," and leads Danto to the conclusion

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[67]Whitford, *Klimt*, p.9.
[68]Arthur C. Danto, "Vienna 1900," in *Encounters and Reflections: Art in the Historical Present*, New York: The Noonday Press, 1991, p.39.
[69]Ibid, p.39.

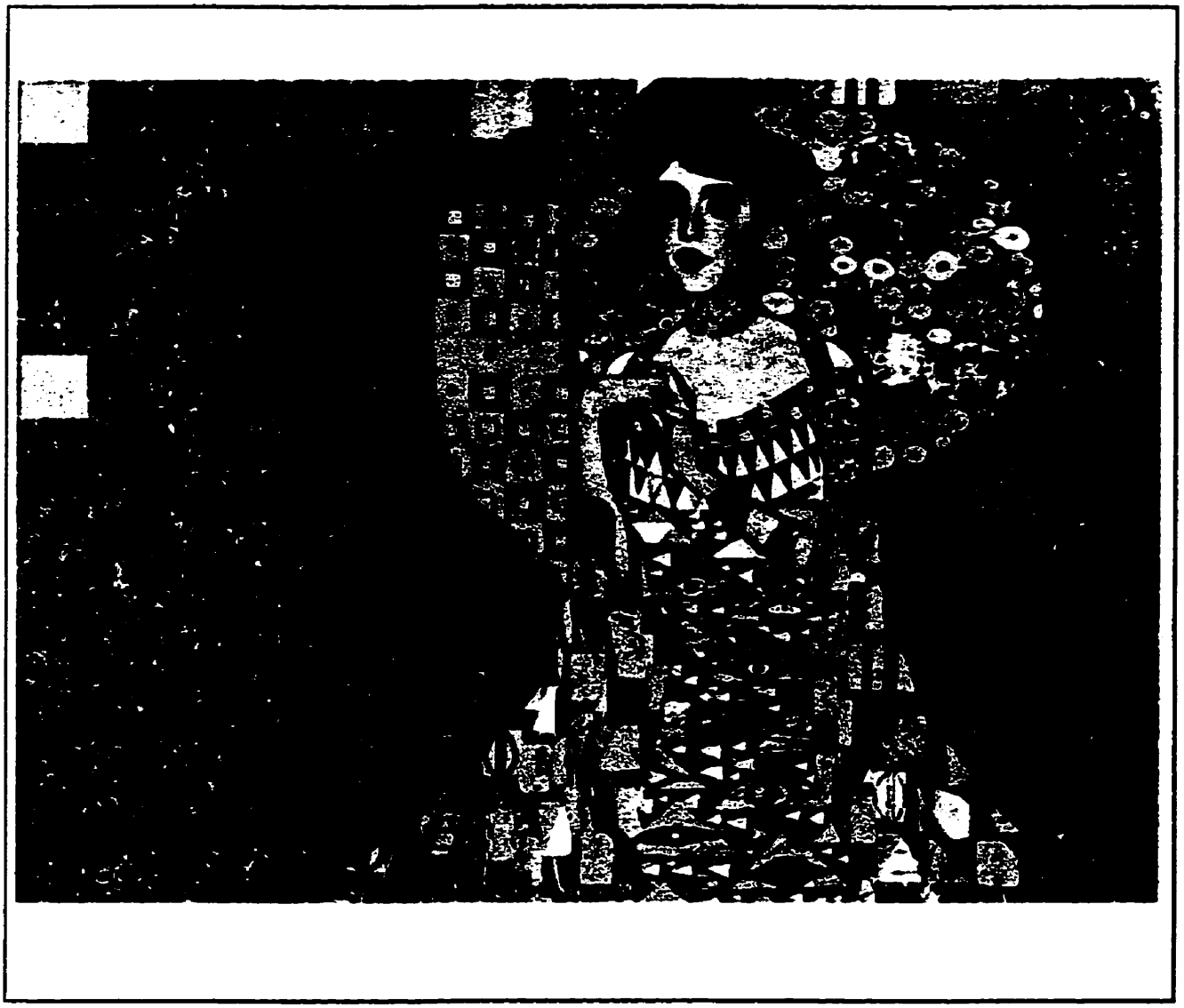

Figure 20: Klimt, *Adèle Bloch-Bauer I*, 1907.

that "in Klimt flesh is something to be overcome."[70] Once this is completed, the subject has been immortalized into something permanent and static -- life is extinguished, but the subject has been transformed into precious metal and stone. This representation of death and immortality, of women changed into creatures made of gold, creates a disturbing and paradoxical effect, where flesh and jewels are interchangeable. While this could be seen as an exaltation of the female form, it could also be easily seen as a suffocating, almost mummifying technique, intent on preserving, not truly celebrating, the subject. This element of Klimt's decorative device is all the more unsettling because of its paradoxical effect, which occurs on a deeper plane of subtleties.

This other use of Klimt's decoration can also be seen in a portrait he completed of a Viennese woman, Friederike Maria-Beer, in 1916. Egon Schiele had also painted Friederike's portrait two years earlier, providing a good opportunity to compare how the two artists use different techniques to produce a similar effect of life and death. Friederike was the daughter of a wealthy club owner, and is a perfect example of the Viennese bourgeoisie in her desire to be associated with famous artists. (Figure 21) For Schiele's portrait, Friederike posed lying on a mattress, while he painted her from above on a ladder -- Klimt, conversely, painted her standing in front of a Korean battle scene, which he had copied from a vase in his collection. (Figures 22 & 23) In both portraits, Friederike is wearing a colourful, patchwork dress; her posture is rigid and stiff; her hands are frozen in a pained clutch, and she has a vacant, somber look on her pallid face, reminiscent of Adèle Bloch-Bauer. Admittedly, Schiele depicts a much more gruesome Friederike, whose skin appears to be in a stage of decomposition. In fact, Friederike's maid made the astute observation that because she was set against a void, she

[70] Ibid, pp.39-40.

Figure 21: Friederike Beer, 1914.
Photograph by Wolfgang Fischer

Figure 22: Klimt, *Friederike Maria-Beer*, 1916.

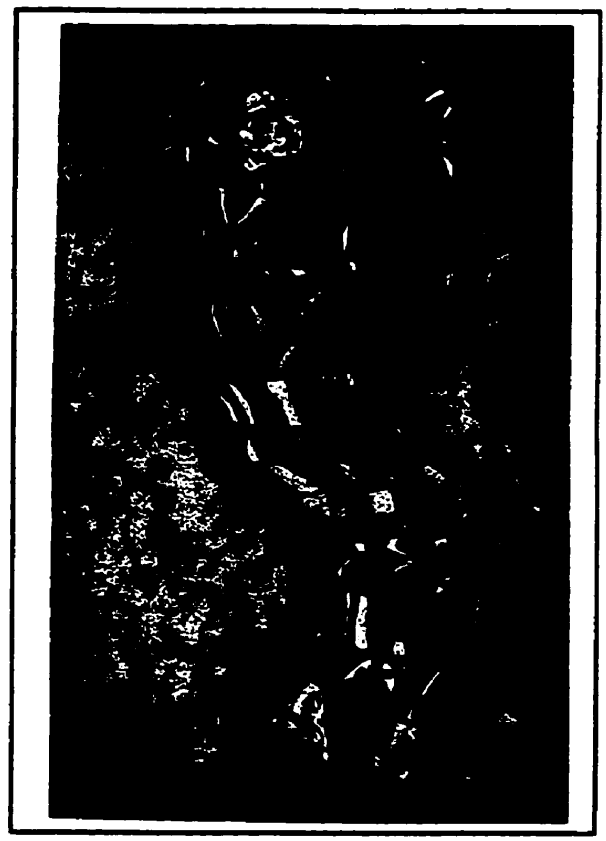

Figure 23: Schiele, *Friederike Maria-Beer*, 1914.

looked like she had been painted lying in a tomb.[71] Arthur Danto makes the observation that both artists paint the skin in a way that makes it appear thin and flat, but with a different effect -- "...if Klimt's men and women have the opaque thinness of gold leaf...Schiele's men and women instead have the translucent thinness of membranes, as if the life has been pressed out of them, as with flower petals or insect wings...".[72] Nevertheless, in both portraits, Friederike's skin does not give the appearance of life, but rather emerges stagnant from the surrounding background.

The use of background itself is another area of contrast between the portraits. While Schiele sets Friederike against a coffin-like void, Klimt sets his subject against a lavish background of Asian warriors, that crowd around her and blend in with her outfit. Of course, the gold and silver decorative leaf is absent, but a colourful vase takes its place, creating a similar effect of suffocation, as if the subject is again being sucked into the decorative facade of the vase. Indeed, Friederike's rounded face and eyebrows look quite similar to the faces of the Korean warriors. Schiele's subject, by comparison, has a gaunt and drawn face, and despite the contrary use of an empty background, Friederike also appears lost, but this time against the void, as if she has been set adrift, left to float aimlessly. Using different backgrounds and techniques, Klimt and Schiele achieve the similar effect of depicting an aristocratic woman who hardly appears regal, but more a victim of her background, whether she is being choked by its images, or cast out against an empty landscape.

These depictions of Friederike and Adèle Bloch-Bauer point to another common element in their work -- the portrayal of women in their painting. It has been mentioned that both Klimt and Schiele often used women as the subjects of their paintings and drawings, and

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[71] Whitford, *Egon Schiele*, p.146.
[72] Danto, p.40.

that the effects were often erotic -- with Schiele, some said pornographic. Indeed, eroticism was an important component to the work of both artists. However, the use of women in some of their paintings is also often ambiguous. As mentioned in Chapter 1, women were seen in a variety of ways at the *fin-de-siècle* -- as sexual predators and masters, yet also as servile, innocent, and often something to be feared yet desired. These attitudes were also combined with a general feeling that women were linked to nature, thus making them more closely connected to the irrational, impulsive urges that connect man to their primal roots. Patrick Werkner argues that one way this ambiguity manifested itself was in the painting of the "child-woman," which he says was common at the *fin-de-siècle*, and part of the larger interest in painting the adolescent body.[73] He states that Schiele's "fascination" in particular with young adolescent bodies can be traced back to a common interest in this at the turn of the century -- "Adolescence was seen as a synonym for change, for newness, for openness and creativity."[74] In this way, even *Jugendstil (jugend = youth)*, the style of Klimt and the Secessionists, was part of this art of renewal. Werkner also argues that Klimt anticipated the use of the *femme fatale* as well as the *femme fragile* in his paintings -- "This does not mean that the *femme fatale* was no longer an object of desire -- but simply that her younger sisters, who were already present in *fin-de-siècle* art and literature, grew in importance. The fragile woman, although sometimes the prey of illness, was nonetheless seen as a powerful personality."[75]

Thus, the sexual woman and the innocent women were often "amalgamated" into the child-woman -- "The attraction of this fusion lay in a mixture of attributes or projections. Youth itself...was an important characteristic. Creativity and change were associated with it. In the case of the child-woman, the old myth of androgyny probably served as inspiration: the

[73]Partick Werkner, *Egon Schiele: Art, Sexuality, and Viennese Modernism*, Werkner (ed.), p.68.
[74]Ibid, pp.61-62.
[75]Ibid, p.68.

yearning for 'oneness' on the basis of a speculative philosophical monism was a widespread characteristic of the contemporary *Weltanschauung* around the turn of the century."[76] As another way to state the paradox of maturity and innocence, the child-woman provided a unique representation of the various attitudes toward women at the turn of the century. All of these elements of the woman find their way into the art of Klimt and Schiele, and are often used interchangeably in the same painting, creating a paradoxical and ambiguous effect. Indeed, both men painted highly charged sexual images of women masturbating, or engaged in sexual intercourse, but more often, they portrayed women in a state of ambiguity in which it is difficult to ascertain whether the women are dead, alive, asleep, or in a state of sexual ecstasy; whether they are women, dolls, or young girls. Some examples of these elements will be examined.

When placed side by side, some of the paintings of Klimt and Schiele are strikingly similar in their contemplation and confrontation of life and death. As has been mentioned, scholars like Breicha argue that even in dealing with death, Klimt is most concerned with beauty and refinement, with making his paintings "good to look at."[77] But, again, this refined element of his work seems to actually make the underlying life-death paradox all the more menacing. A good example of the juxtaposing of life and death is depicted in Klimt's appropriately entitled *Death and Life* (1915), and in Schiele's *Pregnant Woman and Death* (1911). (Figures 24 & 25) Both paintings are divided vertically into left and right sections, with death depicted on the left side of the canvas. In both works, death is paralleled with religion -- Schiele's death is tonsured like a monk, while Klimt's death is a more traditional version of the grim reaper, replete with cross-like symbolism on his robe. The life force of both paintings

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[76]Ibid, p.68.
[77]Otto Breicha, *Klimt, Schiele, Kokoschka: Drawings and Watercolours*, p.14.

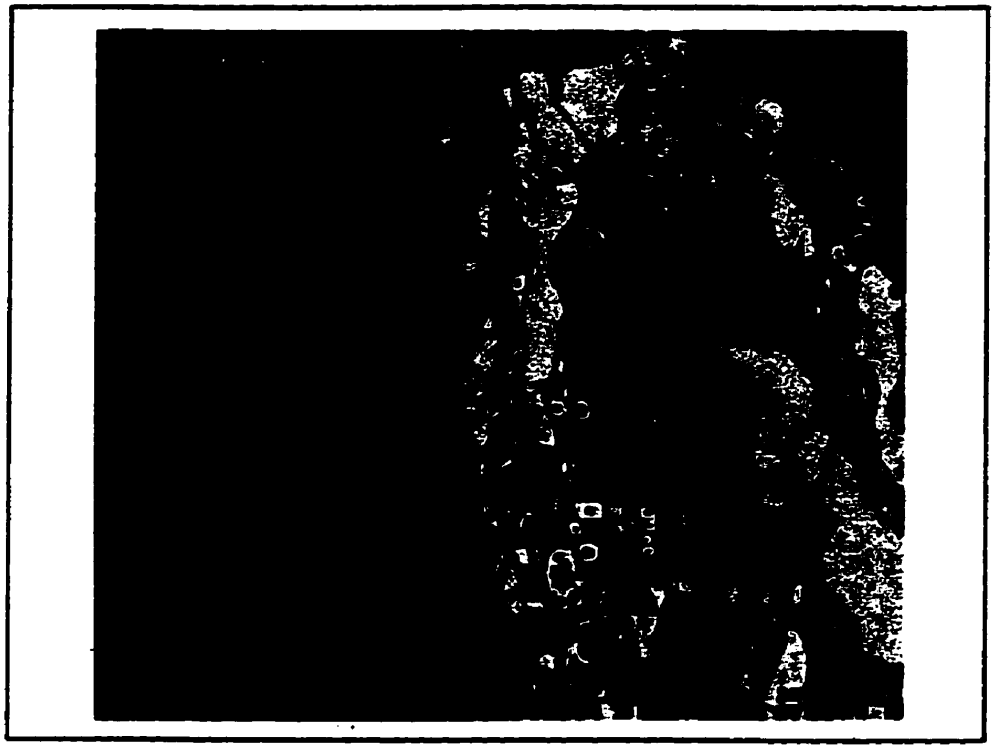

Figure 24: Klimt, *Death & Life*, 1911, revised 1915.

Figure 25: Schiele, *Pregnant Woman & Death*, 1911.

involve female figures, and a child -- Klimt includes numerous women, men, and a child being smothered by the decorative, colourful tapestry upon which they lie, while Schiele depicts one pregnant woman, also robed in a bright fabric. The intriguing aspect of these paintings lies in the fact that while the life force is the only section given strong colour, the figures that represent life appear to be either sleeping or dead, and have a trademark gray skin, as if death has already come to visit, or is about to extinguish their vitality. Both paintings are set against a black void, and although Schiele's piece is stripped of any of the decorative facades used by Klimt, both convey a sense of life that is ambiguous, but a death that is clearly understood.

In addition to the paradox of death in life, Klimt and Schiele deal with a paradox of love and death, between mother and child, and between man and woman. The first is depicted similarly by the two artists in *Mother with Children* (1909-10) by Klimt, and *Dead Mother* (1910) by Schiele. (Figures 26 & 27) Both show the mother with her children surrounded by a dark void -- Klimt uses the background to dominate the subject almost completely, while Schiele's void almost appears to depict the child still within the womb. Again, the figures are sleeping or dead, and have a pallid complexion, and although Klimt's mother and children have rosy cheeks and lips, this is in stark contrast to the almost blue skin tone around their eyes. Schiele's mother is surely dead -- her face and hand have a skeletal quality, gnarled and green with decay. The child is also strange -- while it appears to be an infant, its hands indicate a much older child, and its warm skin colour indicates life as opposed to death. The effect of both paintings, however, while haunting, still seems to evoke an ambiguous feeling of maternal protection and love of the mother for her children.

In a similar way, Klimt and Schiele deal with love between a man and a woman in their paintings *The Kiss* (1907-08), and *Death and Girl* (1915) respectively. (Figures 28 & 29) The

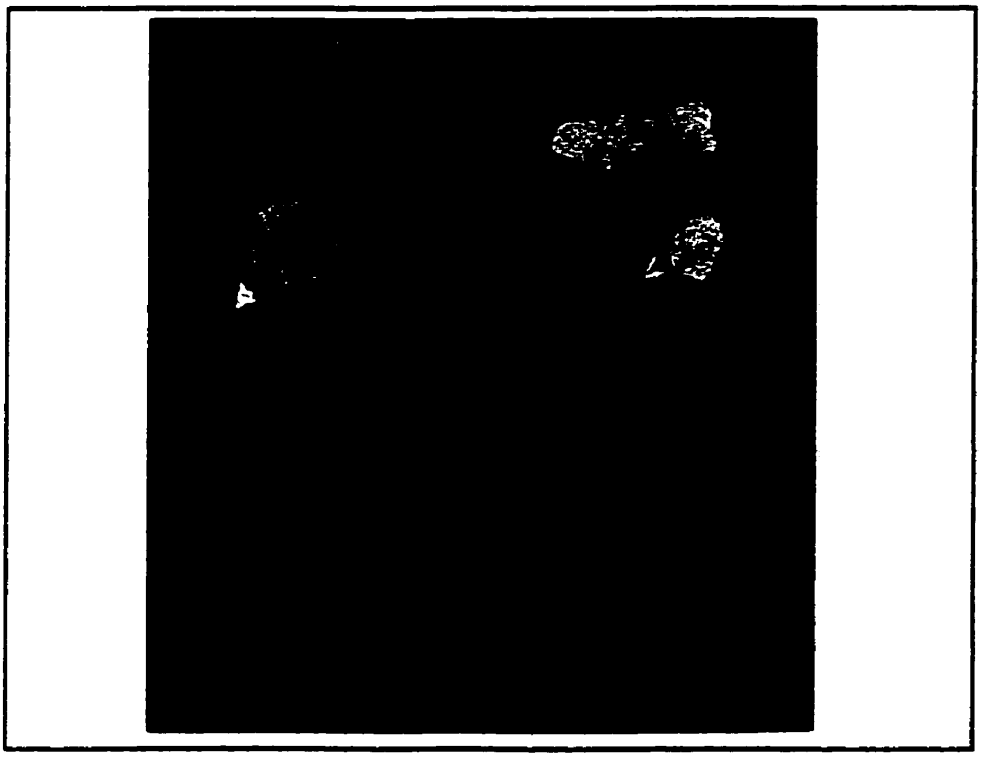

Figure 26: Klimt, *Mother with Children*, 1909-10.

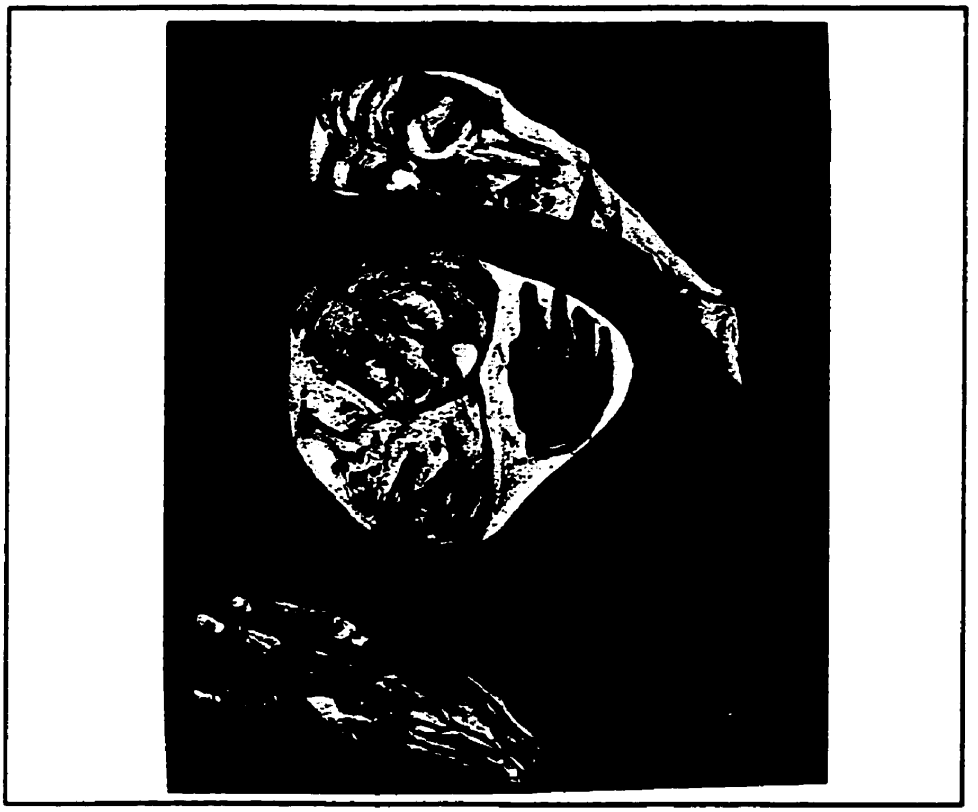

Figure 27: Schiele, *Dead Mother*, 1910.

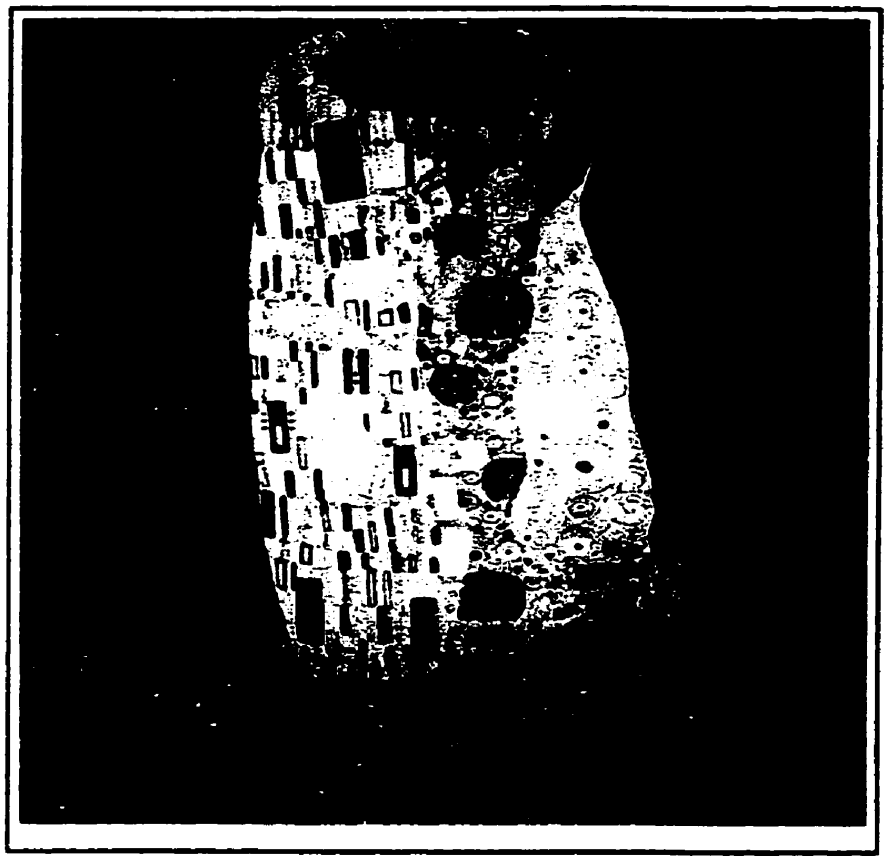

Figure 28: Klimt, *The Kiss*, 1907-08.

Figure 29: Schiele, *Death and Girl*, 1915.

placement of the figures in both is similar -- a man and woman locked in an embrace, the man's lips at the woman's head. They occupy the center of the canvas, and while Schiele's figures appear to be lying down, it is hard to tell with Klimt -- they could be lying or standing, and seem to levitate. Klimt's figures are bound up in a decorative blanket that seems to indicate both a lovers' bed and a death shroud, and while Schiele's figures have shed their covering, and lie upon it, there is still a sense that sex has taken place among the rumpled sheets. In *Death and Girl*, the woman wears a colourful dress reminiscent of Klimt's decoration, which contrasts with the dark and almost clerical robe of her companion. Again, in both paintings the man and woman could be asleep, dead, or in a lover's embrace -- the eyes of the man in *Death and Girl*, although open, are vacant and lifeless. The womens' skin is, again, gray and almost translucent, except for the stark rouge applied to their cheeks, as if to give the semblance of life. This is in contrast to the darker skin of their male counterparts, which in Schiele's case, is bruised and mottled. In *The Kiss*, the man has his lover's neck in a grip that looks very awkward, yet almost tender, and the woman's frail hand is at her neck, as if trying to pull his arms away. Schiele's woman appears to be taking her final breath, but is locked with the man in an almost tender embrace -- notice how his hand holds her head. This depiction of the man as dominant yet tender and loving in both paintings is also equivocal, and speaks of the male identity crisis prevalent at the *fin-de-siècle*, discussed in Chapter 1. Both images are set against an empty background, which is in stark contrast to the gold and white rings encircling both couples. In *The Kiss*, the two figures dangle precariously at the edge of a flowered expanse, while the woman's feet clutch at the edge in an attempt to keep them from toppling into the abyss. Her legs are bound with golden vines, and the entire effect is to make her appear trapped. Schiele's woman looks as if she has already lost her fight with death. Thus, for both artists, these images

of love and tenderness, both between mother and child and man and woman, are bound up with an ominous presence of death and pain.

As has been noted throughout this study, Klimt and Schiele both paint figures that appear to be asleep or dead, which has an ambiguous effect. This is often achieved with their female subjects, and usually contains an overtone of eroticism. By way of a final comparison, this tactic should be addressed specifically through *The Maiden* (1913) by Klimt, and *Female Nude* (1910) by Schiele (Figures 30 & 31). Bram Dijkstra argues, in his extensive study *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siècle Culture*, that this death-sleep ambiguity was pervasive in art at the turn of the century:

> Indeed, portrayals of women whose obvious inanition seemed to prove that sleep was death and death was sleep became a source of endless delight among late nineteenth-century painters... nothing could prevent the male viewer from indulging in the sleep-death equation and immerse himself, to virtually any degree of pleasurable morbidity, in thoughts of sensual arousal by a woman who appeared to be safely dead, and therefore also safely beyond actual temptation, even while the viewer could continue to tell himself that he was merely looking at a harmless image of a beautiful woman sleeping.[78]

This approach is evident in these two paintings. Klimt's *The Maiden* depicts an orgiastic grouping of young women, who are either asleep, dead, or in a state of sexual ecstasy -- it is impossible to tell. Covered by the decorative blanket, these women appear dismembered or suffocating under the weight of the fabric. They blend into its folds, and seem to become merely an extension of the decorative device. Schiele's *Female Nude* is a solitary figure, splayed out on the right side of the canvas. Her skin, unlike the gray lifelessness of most other figures, is red hot, and would burn to the touch. Her hair forms a similar halo of fire around her head,

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[78]Bram Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siecle Culture*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1986, p.62.

Figure 30: Klimt, *The Maiden*, 1913.

Figure 31: Schiele, *Female Nude*, 1910.

and her eyes have a languishing look of sleep-death. Like Klimt's painting, Schiele dismembers his subject, leaving a stump where her right arm should be. Similarly, her left hand, agonized as it is, lies lifeless across her chest -- indeed, it is difficult to decide whether it is her hand at all, or the groping hand of the viewer. Her torso is bisected into left and right portions creating a line that runs from her neck to her thighs, making the appearance of a body marked for autopsy. Both artists set their subjects against the blank void, Schiele surrounding his nude with a white shimmer that adds a startling effect. All of this results in two paintings that deal with an ambiguous state between sleep and death, but which is also underlined with an extremely aggressive eroticism, both occurring simultaneously.

Conclusion

In their equivocal pairing of contradictory images of life, love, eroticism, sleep, pain, and death, Gustav Klimt and Egon Schiele embody the paradoxical culture of Vienna at the turn of the twentieth century. Although Klimt painted with the beauty and refinement of the Secessionists, while Schiele's Expressionist style tore away the aesthetic facade to reveal the often ugly interior of modern man's psyche, both artists incorporated similarly contradictory themes in their paintings. Arguing that these artists painted images that were either beautiful or ugly, erotic or pornographic, or centered on life or death, would not address the blurring of boundaries that has been shown to have existed at the *fin-de-siècle*. Instead, it seems more accurate to emphasize that Klimt and Schiele, like other members of *Jung Wien*, were concerned with depicting the point where these opposite forces converged -- that this was not always possible only added to the ambiguous effect of their work. Just as Nietzsche claimed

that life was rational and irrational, as Freud argued that people were ruled by their minds as well as by their primal instincts, and as Weininger argued that in every man there existed some degree of woman, and vice versa, so too did Gustav Klimt and Egon Schiele attempt to illustrate these blurred distinctions through images like life-death, sleep-death, love-pain, dominance-submission, and the child-woman.

CONCLUSION

This study ends where it began -- with Gustav Klimt's death in 1918. After he died, Egon Schiele went to the morgue of Vienna's General Hospital, where his mentor's body was being held, and drew a series of sketches of his face. (Figure 32)

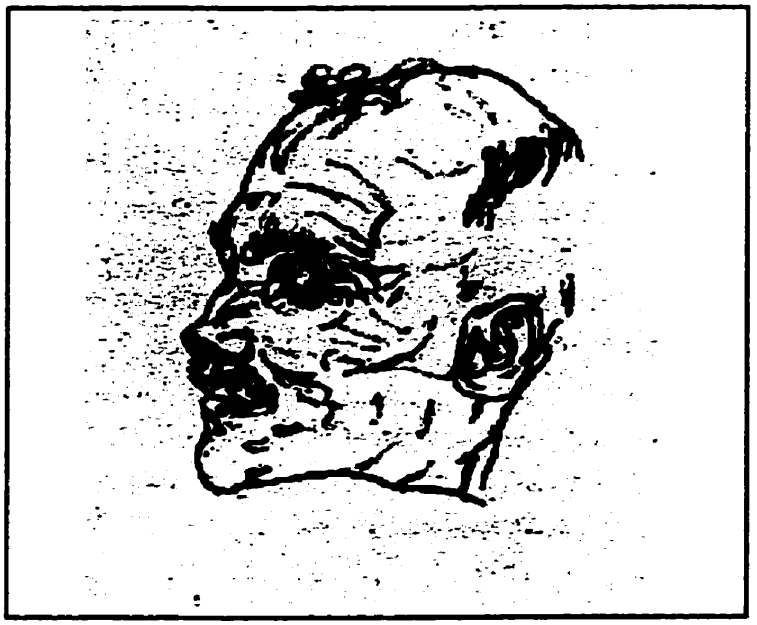

Figure 32: Schiele, *Dead Klimt*, 1918.

This tribute depicts a man in peaceful rest. Although his cheeks are slightly sunken, and his hair shaved off, Schiele reveals a Klimt, who in death, seems not haunted, contorted, or in pain, but who is rather, calm. Here we have a subject whose death is certain -- there should be no evidence of paradox. However, Klimt in death, looks much like the men and women caught in the sleep-death paradox that he and Schiele so often depicted on canvas. By embodying the paradox and equivocation felt at the *fin-de-siècle*, Klimt himself shows that notions of life, love, pain, and death, are truly intertwined in an ambiguous fashion.

This study has attempted to define a certain element -- that of paradox -- running through the cultural and intellectual landscape of a specific time and place -- that of *fin-de-siècle* Vienna. By examining the concrete political, economic, and social factors that contributed to this element of paradox, as well as the ways in which it was defined by leading intellectual voices at the time, it is possible to verify that it indeed was a palpable force within the Viennese community. How pervasive it was, and how far it extended within that community is extremely difficult to determine -- it is important to remember that *Jung Wien* composed a very small portion of Viennese society. However, using paradox as an interpretive tool makes it possible to examine the artistic career of Gustav Klimt in a new and different way -- a way that questions the traditional interpretation of his work, and a way that makes it possible to link him more closely with one of his contemporaries, Egon Schiele. Of course, there were many ways in which these two artists differed. They were part of different artistic movements, and belonged to slightly different generations. However, their similar representations of contradictory themes like life and death, love and pain, man and woman, create a link that not only draws them closer together as artists, but that adds to the idea that paradox and equivocation were forces present at the *fin-de-siècle*.

One of the limits of this study is that it only incorporated the voice of men at the time. Although women are depicted through their portrayal on canvas by Klimt and Schiele, their own experiences with the forces of paradox has not been explored. There were several prominent female artists painting at the time of Gustav Klimt and Egon Schiele -- women like Bronica Koller-Pinell, Hermine Heller-Ostersetzer, and Elena Luksch-Makowskaja -- whose experiences, or lack thereof, with the paradoxical tensions of the *fin-de-siècle* would be interesting to examine. Perhaps their growing voice within society, through the development of such things as the New Woman, would have changed the way they perceived life at the turn of the century. Perhaps the nihilisitic contemplation of life and love, mixed with a veneration of aesthetics, used to replace failed political experiences, would have been absent. The lack of resource material avaliable in English on these, and other, women, made this avenue difficult to explore. Nevertheless, by re-examining the work of Gustav Klimt through the lens of paradox, it becomes possible to use this lens to examine other segments of Viennese society at the turn of the twentieth century.

LIST OF FIGURES

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