

Vienna, City of Eros and Thanatos

I THE GOLDEN AGE OF CREATIVITY

Modern studies in cultural history regard fin-de-siècle Vienna as one of the main experimental hubs of modernity, a centre indeed for elite art.¹ Its golden age is traditionally seen as embracing the quarter-century between 1890 and 1914, a periodisation that telescopes a wide variety of artistic achievements and careers. However these twenty-five years do not in fact constitute an overarching cultural homogeneity, but must be divided into two distinct periods, reflecting the clash of generations. First came the generation of modernity, which flourished in the early 1890s; after them came the young expressionists who emerged from 1905 onwards, and who were more radical and avant-garde in their outlook. In the seven years before the outbreak of World War I, these two groupings moulded the intellectual and artistic world of Vienna, each influencing the other, although partly also opposing each other. The later (pre-war) period cannot therefore be seen as belonging to the “golden age;” instead it was characterised by deep scepticism, since confidence in a planned future, together with the youthful momentum that had characterised the 1890s, had now mostly evaporated. The earlier generation (represented in literature by the *Jung-Wien* [Young Vienna] circle and in the visual arts by the artists of the Secession) itself changed, being preoccupied with quite different problems after 1905 to those it had faced at the beginning of the 1890s.

Enough books and studies to fill a whole library have examined Vienna between 1890 and 1918. All of them have sought to explain how it came about that so many creative geniuses, in almost every field of culture, were contemporaneously active in the city. How was it possible that so many radically modern ideas, scientific theories, and literary or artistic masterpieces emerged here? And these achievements in turn created an intensely intellectual climate, stimulating a rich diversity of artistic styles and ideas, unparalleled in scope elsewhere.

The list of scientific, literary, artistic and musical talents is breathtaking: Ernst Mach, Fritz Mauthner, Sigmund Freud, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Arthur Schnitzler, Robert Musil, Karl Kraus, Otto Wagner, Josef Hoffmann, Adolf Loos, Gustav Klimt, Kolo Moser, Egon Schiele, Oskar Kokoschka, Gustav Mahler, Arnold Schönberg, Alban Berg, Anton Webern – to name only the most celebrated of them. Their significance reached beyond the borders of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and their works were to have a decisive influence on western elite culture for the rest of the twentieth century. Even in respect of political ideas and activism, a number of personalities emerged in Vienna who founded pioneering movements, most notably Theodor Herzl, the father of Zionism, and Bertha von Suttner, the initiator of the peace movement.

The cultural milieu of the capital of the Hapsburg Empire had become a fertile breeding ground for creativity, although in a sense it had always been that: a treasure trove of art had been accumulated in Vienna over the centuries by the dynasty, Vienna’s theatrical life was varied and of a very high standard, while making and listening to music was an integral part of the lives of the Viennese. Nurturing an appreciation of aesthetic quality was second nature to the rising bourgeoisie. Levels of general education and scientific learning were also exceptionally high. However, although this cultural-historical background was undoubtedly inspirational, something more must have been at work at the turn of the century to produce such an outstanding performance in almost every field of human creativity.

Recollections of the age, as well as novels and commentaries published after the event, are divided in their assessments of this period. Whereas Stefan Zweig is nostalgic and poetic in his evocation,² we also have Hermann Broch's embittered and one-sidedly negative judgment,³ Joseph Roth's elegiac tales,⁴ and finally, Robert Musil's uniquely nuanced and philosophical novel.⁵ The last named provides a more thorough and analytical depiction of the atmosphere and people in the dying years of the Monarchy than any scientific analysis. While Zweig highlights the persistence of tradition, the prestige and popularity of the arts, Broch castigates the morals that were built on lies and on the glossing over of an unpleasant reality. It is Musil however who focuses on the Austrian crisis of identity and the concomitant relativisation of values: the "man without qualities" is held up as the archetypal representative of the age. This epic work is essential reading for anybody who wishes to gain a deeper understanding of the late Hapsburg era. Nevertheless, in its generalised and somewhat abstract intellectual complexity, it tends to obscure the fact that the age also had individuals – and even whole layers of society – who possessed strong and consciously avowed identities. Such individuals may have had a far more positivist experience of the life under the late Empire, imagining a quite different future from the one projected by sensitive intellectuals, the troubled representatives of a privileged social elite. For the latter, the refined aesthetic of "the world of yesterday" was falling apart, despite Vienna's glittering diversity and apparently idealistic outlook.

Posterity is merciless in its selection: it affirms retrospectively only that which is deemed to have led to its own present. Later ages tend not to take note of otherness, the history of proposed alternatives, because in the light of hindsight they proved to be mistaken detours. In the decade preceding World War I, Vienna was still an imperial city enjoying an Indian summer of refined sensual pleasures for the privileged few. However to later generations it appears rather as a laboratory of febrile "end-of-the-world experiments" (Karl Kraus) than a model for a multicultural, pluralistic and incredibly multi-faceted society. Yet in many respects it was that. With its increasing wealth, development and refinement, Vienna offered individuals all manner of opportunities and pleasures and this positive side of Vienna was certainly just as real as its dark aspects. The polarities of this metropolis, the idealistic and the grotesque, have produced a touch of schizophrenia in accounts of the city at this time. Can both sides of the double portrait really be seen as equally true?

Why and how did Vienna differ so dramatically from London, Berlin, Saint Petersburg and Rome? Why does it seem today that its milieu was more favourable for artists than all the other major European cities, save Paris? Of course, in the eyes of contemporaries, the cultural capital of the world at the end of the century was Paris⁶; being the centre of the avant-garde, Paris had no rival as the world's most important art market. There were also other areas of French culture – fostered for centuries with state support – in which radically innovative individuals were operating around the year 1900 (for example, the elderly Émile Zola, Alfred Jarry, Anatole France, Marcel Proust, André Gide, Guillaume Apollinaire and Debussy amongst others); but this culture never reached the level of diversity achieved in Vienna, for the simple reason that it was French, an exclusively national phenomenon and would remain so.⁷ French writers considered it natural that they were the intellectual leaders of the world, the boldest experimenters, the guiding lights of culture in all its forms. Relativistic doubt was entirely alien to them and as far as they were concerned, their nation stood exclusively for the best in mankind.

Vienna could not have been more different. In spite of being a focal point of power and culture in central Europe for hundreds of years, the city had been sporadically traumatised by its exposed position on the border of the West (especially during the Ottoman advances in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries). Later it felt that it had been consigned to the fringes of Germanic culture.⁸ This volatile historical status was a long-standing source of angst and uncertainty to the intellectuals who lived here; when added to the experience of cultural differentiation and diversity,⁹ Vienna's precarious role represented a psychological and intellectual challenge to its intelligentsia that was unparalleled in European culture. Under the pressure of modernisation, creative spirits living in Vienna were impelled to produce different and more wide-ranging artistic and scientific answers to the fundamental questions of human existence.

The torturing existential questions that they addressed were always closely linked in their minds to the establishment of individual identity, and thus their solutions were more ambivalent than those supplied by the elites of other European countries that were ethnically more homogeneous and geographically more happily placed.

Gradually after 1890, and at a tempestuous pace from 1908, the artistic expression of the Viennese / Austrian identity crisis in literature and painting became at first enigmatic, then embittered and finally pessimistic.

The arts in general, and painting in particular, had traditionally been given extensive coverage in the daily press. In Vienna, high culture was regarded as one of the city's and the empire's greatest treasures both for the royal court, and for the politicians and plutocracy. Unlike in Berlin, which was looked down on as being parvenu, art and culture were considered essential in shaping and preserving the identity of the city (and by extension, Austria itself). Consequently artists received a substantial amount of direct and indirect state support to pursue their art; society as a whole tended to acknowledge this process as legitimate.

In the imperial city, the cultures of many nations interacted with each other, both at the elite and popular levels. There was sufficient consensus and tolerance for diverse aesthetic approaches for these different cultural inputs to build fruitfully on each other and thus to evolve. In the last third of the nineteenth century, scientists and artists had not yet rejected historical traditions based on enlightened optimism and a belief in progress; indeed they harnessed these traditions to their overall project of creating a brave new world. The number of players in Viennese elite culture was still low enough to enable members of different scientific or artistic groups to learn about each other's discoveries and ideas either directly or from a reliably close source.¹⁰

In the 1890s, the political world still seemed manageable; moreover, up until 1908 it appeared that the Monarchy could be reformed from within before it was broken apart by external forces. This was the last moment when the humanist ideals of learning and faith in progress that had been inherited from the Enlightenment could still provide a solid basis for scientists and artists to conduct their experiments. The preservation of a basic code of ethics also remained important for those who in other respects were beginning to demolish the accepted view of the world and traditional values. Despite their artistic exploitation of the vertiginous power of human irrationality and the world of instincts, they nonetheless (like Freud) opted for reform of cultural values rather than simply embracing irrationalism.

These pre-war years of intellectual turmoil in European culture were thus also the last years of a positivist belief in the possibility of rational improvements in society and politics before the whole region was overwhelmed by the destructive power of nationalism.

HISTORIOGRAPHY: REDISCOVERING VIENNA'S CULTURAL HERITAGE

Many scientific and pseudo-scientific explanations have been offered for the mystery of human creativity, the unpredictable geyser-like eruptions of spiritual and mental insights. In the interwar period many Austrian writers struggled with the question of why the "world of yesterday" had collapsed at the same time as so many great ideas and works of art were being produced, and why the vast majority of people had not felt secure in the "happy days of peace". The exegesis of later commentators was of course influenced by their own age, a perspective dominated by the much less happy 1920s and 1930s.¹¹ The annexation of Austria by Hitler, the war itself and the decades of post-war reconstruction left little opportunity for a scholarly and scientific re-evaluation of the Monarchy.

From the beginning of the 1970s, the culture of turn-of-the-century Vienna began to interest the world, and specifically cultural historians, in quite a new way. However the first major summary, William M. Johnston's ambitious work on *The Austrian Mind*,¹² attracted the attention (not all of it positive) of specialists only, while Peter Vergo's masterly panorama of Viennese art¹³ would only later have its importance recognised.

The first analysis to have a really wide impact, both scholarly and popular, advanced the thesis that the cultural golden age of Vienna sprang from a crisis in the "liberal ego", that is, in the minds of fundamentally secularised, optimistic citizens who believed in liberalism and in economic and social progress. This thesis was expounded by Carl E. Schorske in a pioneering book of essays published in 1980 and was the product of decades of research.¹⁴ Schorske blames the economic bankruptcy of the Austrian state in 1873 and the ensuing years of crisis for the disillusion felt by the liberal generation. Their sons – in a generational rebellion – turned not to politics and economics, but to culture, in the quest for a meaningful life and a new role for humanity. In Schorske's view, the key figure of the age was Sigmund Freud, whose revelation of the subconscious layers of the human soul undermined and "re-wrote" the image of the human as a rational being. Schorske analyses the main works of architecture, literature, painting and also music at the fin-de-siècle, using the prism of Freud's theories. He employs vivid metaphors to cast light on works of art (especially Klimt's painting) whose structure and underlying style were also, in his opinion, transformed by a Freudian perspective.

At the same time that Schorske's book was published, the German art historian Werner Hofmann organised an exhibition in Hamburg¹⁵ featuring works by the most important painters of turn-of-the-century Vienna. Independently of Schorske's analysis, this show also outlined a nuanced overall picture of the age and sought to illuminate the philosophical depths of its *Weltanschauung*.¹⁶

This cultural rediscovery, running along parallel lines and concentrating on Freud, psychoanalysis and painting, directed the attention of cultural historians to a Vienna that had thus far been off the map in most accounts of European modernity. From 1981, the disarmingly powerful and charismatic art of the Secession and the expressionists, the refined material culture of the Wiener Werkstätte, and the paintings of Klimt, Schiele and Kokoschka were increasingly put on show in a series of major exhibitions to be discovered by art lovers around the world (Hamburg 1981, Venice 1984, Vienna 1985, Paris 1986, New York 1987).¹⁷ Every anniversary became an occasion for a swelling army of cultural historians to analyse the events around the year 1900, to examine them according to specific criteria or re-evaluate entire oeuvres, often from new perspectives and in the most thorough-going detail.¹⁸ Schorske's observations have remained a lasting inspiration for later studies, even if younger authors have gone out of their way to stress the points on which they disagree. Steven Beller, for example, attributes a major part of the special nature of Viennese fin-de-siècle culture (except in the visual arts) to the assimilated Jewish community.¹⁹ In his view the socio-cultural Jewish traditions, their particular mode of thinking, together with the traumas of the assimilation process were what provided the yeast that enabled Freud, Mauthner, Schnitzler and Schonberg to produce genuinely new theories. The overall picture has also been enriched by the writings of feminist history, which has rediscovered the many talented women whose contribution to the creation of the golden age was far from insignificant.²⁰ At the University of Graz, several faculties conducted ten years of co-ordinated research to investigate the relationships of modernism and modernity in Austria and the Monarchy, and laid down a new methodology for the cultural history of the region.²¹ Taking their cue from Schorske's work, a number of historians have attempted to revive the significance of other cities in the region at the turn of the century,²² however neither Prague nor Budapest has managed to claim a niche in the international cultural-historical canon in the way that Vienna has done so successfully.

In 2012, the 150th anniversary of the birth of Gustav Klimt gave Vienna an opportunity to exploit the enduring appeal of Klimt's pictures in every way possible: no less than eight major exhibitions were dedicated to his career and the age in which he lived. Countless conferences and symposia were held, innumerable studies and monographs were published, all re-investigating the golden age of Vienna and its main protagonists. Even the neglected world of the proletariat was written up for the first time in a study volume edited by Wolfgang Maderthaner and Lutz Musner.²³ The subject seems still to be inexhaustible, although there are constant shifts in emphasis. Certain questions keep recurring, and despite their differing overall conclusions, the authors all tend to agree on the leitmotifs which underlie their group portraits:

- 1 • The late arrival of modernisation in Vienna, bringing with it turmoil and conflicts.
- 2 • Ethnic tensions and concomitant language problems, which raised fundamental issues about the fallibility of human communication.
- 3 • The role played by assimilated Jews in the modernisation of Austrian society and culture.
- 4 • The role of female emancipation and sexuality in fin-de-siècle Vienna and the repercussions this had on the arts.

In fin-de-siècle Vienna, the emergence of these issues triggered an identity crisis, both among individuals and in society as a whole, which put in doubt the image the intelligentsia and the artistic elite had built up of themselves and of the world. It encouraged scientists, writers and painters to experiment with radically new solutions to social and artistic conundrums.

II THE FIRST GENERATION OF MODERNISM IN THE ARTS

The 1890s turned out to be a successful decade in the artistic modernisation of Vienna. In architecture, the second “urban expansion” – the modernisation of Greater Vienna²⁴ – and the planning and organisation of its architecture and infrastructure are linked to the name of Otto Wagner. Working with his students, he constructed the Stadtbahn system and established a modern, functional style of architecture, which laid the groundwork for the Vienna Secession. The younger generation was soon in thrall to a passion for reform and improvement.

A new age was also dawning in literature. In 1890, a new generation of writers burst on the scene under the banner of *Jung-Wien* (Young Vienna).²⁵ Their aim was to modernise literature in Vienna, which they held to be sterile and threadbare, way behind Paris and Berlin. They wanted to prove – first and foremost as a challenge to contemporary German literature – that there was another German-language literature, full of energy and right up to date, and more especially Austrian, which is to say, Viennese. Their spokesman, Hermann Bahr,²⁶ was a passionate pamphleteer.²⁷ From time to time he would issue bombastic manifestoes, beating the drum for a new stylistic ideal. Besides Bahr, the group also included Felix Salten, Arthur Schnitzler, Richard Beer-Hoffmann, Leopold Andrian and last but not least a poet who was then still at grammar school, Hugo von Hofmannsthal. Together they gave a fresh voice to Vienna’s literary scene.²⁸

Initially, they were preoccupied with uncovering the reality that challenged woolly romantic ideals, showing up the contradictions between the surface and the world that lay beneath it. Most of the members of the group were also greatly interested in painting, and frequently wrote art



2 • JOSEPH MARIA OLBRICH: THE BUILDING OF THE SECESSION, 1899

criticism for the daily journals. The most versatile writer in the group, a young doctor named Arthur Schnitzler, was a perceptive observer, who specialised in portraying the mendacity and trauma that lay behind conflicts in the everyday lives of the Jewish middle class.

These writers experimented with symbolist and decadent styles in the name of modernity and their aim was to demonstrate their affinity with the artistic currents flowing from Western Europe.

As a result, most of the *Jung-Wien* group soon moved away from traditional realism, becoming increasingly narcissistic, and eventually concentrating exclusively on a personal realm of the senses. Their approach to Viennese modernity was inspired by the work of the dominant international novelists and dramatists, in particular Ibsen, Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky and Chekhov. They were not interested in the detailed depiction of huge social tableaux (Zola was beginning to go out of fashion), but in delicate psychological portrayals, with a central focus on the ego. Hofmannsthal expressed this most concisely in 1893: "Two attitudes seem modern in our time: analysing life and escaping from it ... one either dissects one's own soul, or one dreams."²⁹ Close psychological analysis, whether literary or scientific, pervades the whole history of modernity in Vienna. As if penetrating a downwardly narrowing and increasingly dark spiral, artists delved deep into the mysteries of the human soul in search of the essence of humanity.

After *Jung-Wien*, the establishment of the Secession in 1897 was the second great victory for artistic modernity in Vienna. Eighteen experimental artists resigned from the Künstlerhaus, and set up their own society, under the name of the Vereinigung bildender Künstler Österreichs (Union of Austrian Artists) (Wiener Secession). Through their outstanding organisational work, they succeeded in getting the city's cultural lead-

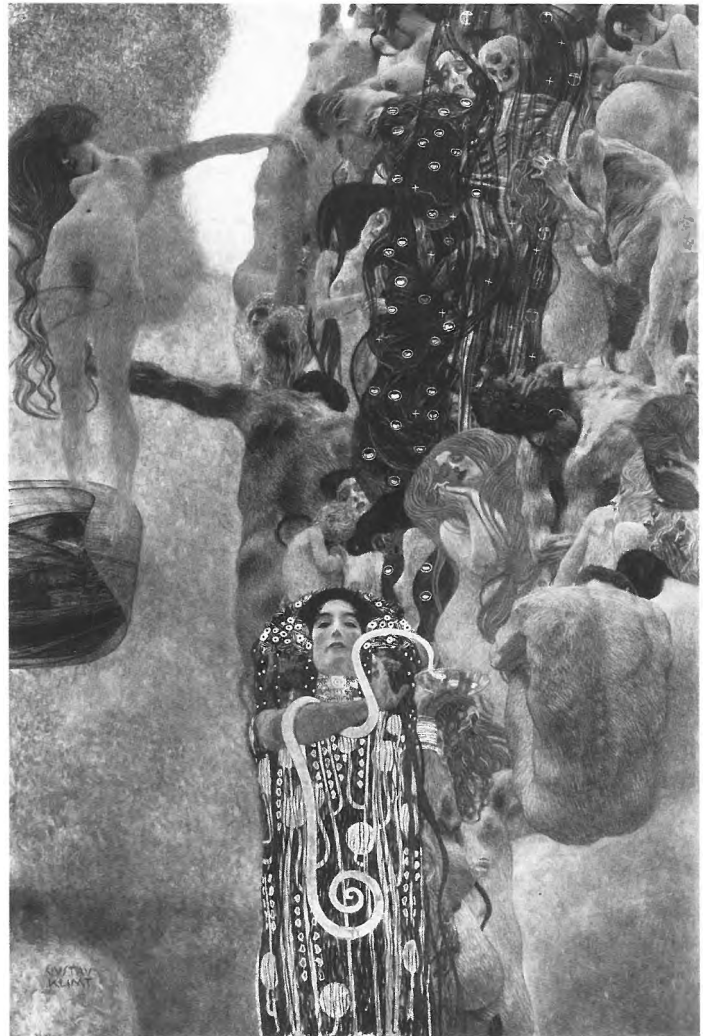
ership on their side, as well as a few wealthy patrons, such as the steel magnate Karl Wittgenstein. By the autumn of 1898 they were able to build their own, ultramodern exhibition hall (fig. 2).³⁰ Their periodical, *Ver Sacrum*, with its rarefied content and idiosyncratic format, was published from January 1898 to promote their artistic efforts, the first edition appearing even before their first exhibition. The Secession was successful from its very first show, and with the backing of a large part of the press, its fame continued to grow. One of the Secession's main champions was Vienna's most respected art critic, the Hungarian – born Ludwig Hevesi (1843–1910), who composed its famous motto: "To every age



3 • GUSTAV KLIMT: PHILOSOPHY, 1900 (BURNED IN 1945)

its art, to art its freedom.”³¹ Hevesi was always the first to report on its shows and set the appreciative tone, which most (but not all) fellow critics tended to follow. The group held three major exhibitions a year, all of them extremely varied and presenting a wide range of individual styles.³² The public’s enthusiasm grew with each show, the opening nights acquiring the status of major social events.

Until the spring of 1900, and despite of a certain amount of negative criticism that had always been present, the shows were increasingly popular and successful. They were supported by the economic and political elite, as well as by a majority of the *Bildungsbürgertum*, the old and the new art patrons. However this initially benevolent reception came to an abrupt end in 1900–1901. The dramatic turn of events was prompted by the scandal that erupted with the unveiling of Gustav Klimt’s (fig. 45) first “faculty painting” for the aula of the Vienna university entitled *Philosophy* (fig. 3). Even in terms of style, this symbolic composition was very unusual and daring, which was even truer of its message. That, however, being rather complicated and abstruse due to the iconography of the composition, had to be gleaned from the text in the catalogue. This unsettling work, with its unquestionably radical and pessimistic take on the world, sharply divided opinion among critics and the public alike. Although emotions cooled after a few weeks, and the mural won a gold medal at the World Fair in Paris in 1900, the following year, when the next university painting, *Medicine* (fig. 4) was exhibited, tempers flared once more. This time, the indignation could not be quelled, and the outrage swelled into a cultural-political furor. Instead of creating a celebration of man’s achievements in medicine, Klimt had depicted a turbulent mass of suffering people who were very obviously the prey of death. Eighty-three professors protested against the pictures being used to decorate the great hall at the university. They were offended not only by questions of taste, such as “the emancipation of ugliness,” but above all by the “message” of the pictures, which put a question mark against the positivist’s faith in the power of the human spirit and the possibility of acquiring knowledge of the world (*Philosophy*). Likewise the pictures cast doubt on faith in the progress of the sciences (*Medicine*); and finally, in the third mural, they undermined faith in the principles behind the socially constructed system of justice (*Jurisprudence*, fig. 5). The debates conducted in the press further exacerbated the conflict between supporters and opponents.



4 • GUSTAV KLIMT: MEDICINE, 1900 (BURNED IN 1945)

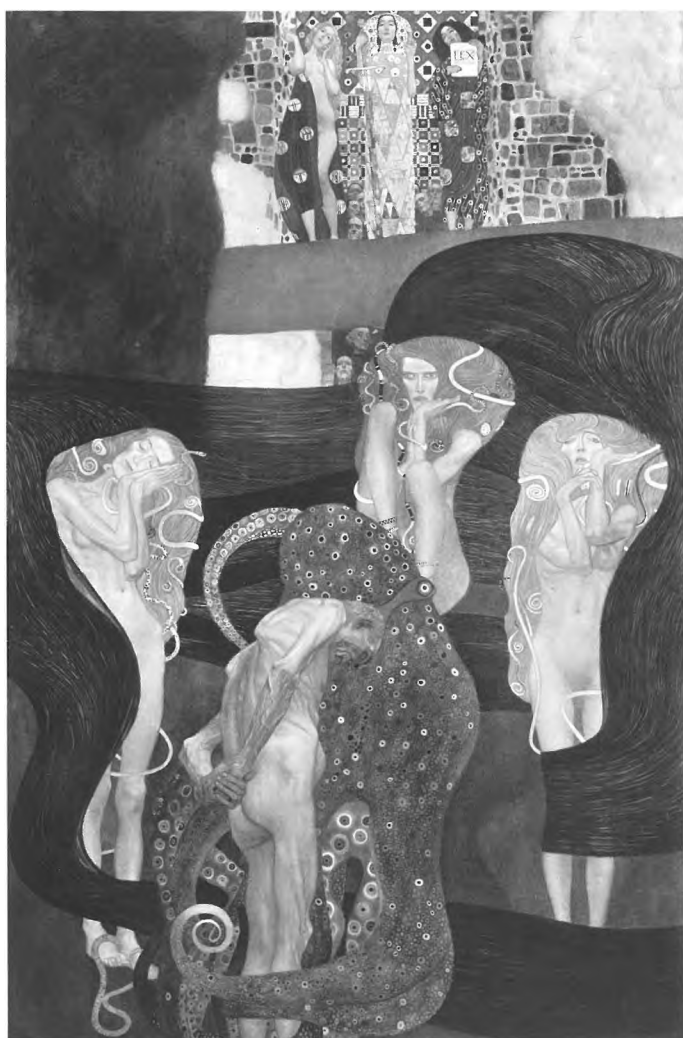
This controversy divided the Viennese intelligentsia down the middle: proponents of the values of positivist thinking rejected the pessimism of the modernists and their art, which they regarded as decadent, or even immoral. They were shocked out of their complacent belief that modern art – and specifically the painting of Klimt – could serve to improve society and the world. Those on the other side of the conflict, comprising mostly artists and aesthetes, a constituency

that automatically sided with modernity, challenged the conservative majority with a noisy defence of the freedom of artistic experimentation.

In his faculty paintings, Klimt interpreted the activities of science sceptically and pessimistically, and this was deeply hurtful to the scientists of the liberal generation, who were honestly convinced that they were promoting the gradual development and improvement of the world. Klimt's "message" seemed to cast doubt on all this. To add insult to injury, he painted the nudes on the canvas with a bold naturalism, which scandalised the cognoscenti who had been brought up on the conventional cult of beauty. Indeed the figure of the pregnant woman in *Medicine* broke a taboo which had existed for centuries. It had hitherto been impossible to display the female body to the public in such raw naturalism, and especially not with such undisguised sensuality. The combination of nudity, sensuality and mortality thus became the leitmotifs of the rebel arts in Vienna.

This brazen shattering of taboos, seemingly done for its own sake, alienated broad layers of the community from modern experiments in style. Such experiments may have been a liberating sensation for some, but they provoked extremely negative feelings in others. Even well informed critics were polarised in their opinions. Although there was still a narrow circle of supporters who backed Klimt and the other moderns, the rest of the critics no

longer felt it necessary to put up with the style of the revolutionary experimenters. Nor was it just conservatives who reacted against them – there was also an alternative group of modernists, led by the famous publicist Karl Kraus (fig. 6), who attacked the Secessionists on the grounds of the freedom of individual taste, objecting to the Klimtian monopoly line that only they were producing valid art. In this way Karl Kraus and his devotees broke a lance for freedom of choice in artistic preferences, and thus indirectly for the pluralism of style.



5 • GUSTAV KLIMT: JURISPRUDENCE, 1900 (BURNED IN 1945)

IDENTITY CRISES

The momentum of the first generation of modern artists lost steam after 1902. Those who were only capable of writing about themselves gradually fell silent, while the more talented of them underwent personal crises and then headed in new directions. An increasingly subtle portrayal of social and human problems began to have such an impact that even the most complacent elements in society flinched. The most impressive literary pioneer was Arthur Schnitzler, author of the heart-rending drama *Liebelei* (*Flirtation*, 1896), and one of the best observers and analysts of his age. In 1900, two of his works provoked outrage. The first was a novella, titled *Lieutenant Gustl* (1900) the internal monologue of a military officer, which gave such a powerful depiction of the protagonist's internal vacuousness and sense of failure that the army felt it was a fierce moral criticism directed against itself. In retaliation Schnitzler was stripped of his rank as a reserve officer. The other outrageous work was a play called *Reigen* (*La Ronde*) (1900), in which he exposed the cynical double standards of almost every layer of society. In a series of secret trysts, characters ranging from a prostitute to an aristocrat (whose liaison is recorded in both the first and last of ten scenes) complete a sexual roundelay which brings joy to nobody, and which only reveals the sexual and spiritual alienation of the participants.³³

The political tensions and conflicts erupting in the Monarchy had by then reached a level that was affecting people's daily lives, and a process of radical polarisation was beginning to disrupt the mechanisms and habits that had so far managed to keep society under control. The battle lines were also being drawn in culture and the arts, and the modern generation that had set out with such high hopes would, from now on, continually provoke bewilderment and at times hostility. Almost inevitably, every member of this generation was destined to go through a searing inner crisis.

Angst and Pessimism

A period in Vienna's history that was bereft of all hope, where artists felt that the earth was giving way beneath their feet, was now gradually approaching, evident at first in literature, and later in painting. In each of the arts there was a specific event or year that marked radical change. The crisis was marked by a revival of interest in the half-forgotten Schopenhauer, a great pessimistic philosopher of the romantic age, but also by enthusiasm for Nietzsche and for a work by the Berliner Eduard von Hartmann entitled *The Philosophy of the Unconscious*. The *Zeitgeist* had become fundamentally pessimistic.

The hyper-sensitive Hofmannsthal realised as early as 1902 that language and communication were becoming increasingly difficult and distorted. In a famous work entitled *The Chandos Letter*,³⁴ he adopted the persona of a seventeenth century Englishman writing about his personal trauma in a letter addressed to Francis Bacon. The fact that words and language seemed to have lost their communicative power for the individual prompted a questioning of the nature and meaning of human existence. Hofmannsthal was not alone in facing this problem, which was bound up with the moral questions revolving around the role of the individual ego. In the view of the eminent Austrian philosopher and physics professor, Ernst Mach, the ego was nothing more than a random process of constantly



6 • OSCAR KOKOSCHKA: PORTRAIT OF KARL KRAUS, 1909

changing impulses, with no solid core.³⁵ In 1901–1902 Fritz Mauthner (1849–1923) published his work on linguistic philosophy, *Beiträge zu einer Kritik der Sprache*. In Mauthner's view, every individual is quasi-imprisoned in his or her idiolect, something that leads to an entrenched cognitive dissonance. Always quick to react to novelty and fertile controversy, Hermann Bahr also took up the subject. In his famous essay *Der unrettbare Ich*,³⁶ he transmitted Mauthner's insight to an audience which, while it was not immersed in contemporary philosophical studies, still liked to discuss profoundly existential matters as they sat around the tables in the coffee houses.

The destruction in Vienna of the optimistic concept of the individual, resting on rational and ethical foundations and inherited from an enlightened view of humanity, was not solely a consequence of Freud's revelations, but was also due to the influence of Ernst Mach. In addition there was an increasing number of writers producing illustrations of the new way of thinking, whereby the "true" ego of people is either constantly in flux and therefore unfathomable, or it is puppet-like, solely motivated by instincts. In this view, the values of culture and European civilisation are nothing but a thin (and peeling) gloss.

One particular distinction of fin-de-siècle Vienna was that, perhaps uniquely in Europe at that time, the majority of the city's intelligentsia and artistic elite acknowledged that humans were not rational beings who were capable of development, but rather unpredictable beasts of instinct, slaves first and foremost to the instincts of sex.³⁷ The intellectual achievement of the first generation of modernism was to lay the theoretical groundwork for this point of view. While they experienced its impact in the form of a crisis, the accompanying pessimism and the dissipation of all belief in a better future did not generally lead them to self-destructive gestures, but "only" to pessimism. The process by which the power of the instincts came to be accepted as having greater importance in human behaviour than rational thought was set in motion by the "discoveries" of Sigmund Freud.

These novel insights had a misogynist bias: the immoral depths of the instinctive world were, in the opinion of people at the time, more typical in women than in men. This supposition informed the work of several Viennese artists. When Hofmannsthal resumed writing after his creative crisis, and began to reassess long-standing traditions, he produced a shockingly cruel reconstruction of the heroines of antiquity in his rewriting of the classic Greek drama *Electra* (1904), which indeed appalled and repulsed the devotees of Apollonian art.³⁸

Hofmannsthal's equally uncompromising libretto for *Salome*, depicting the most destructive type of *femme fatale*, was likewise written for the composer Richard Strauss, but the censor was reluctant to allow it to be performed. Although Frank Wedekind was a German who lived in Munich, his plays (especially *Lulu*) were hugely successful in Vienna (Karl Kraus was one of his promoters.) The misogyny that gave birth to such exaggeratedly demonic heroines had been particularly prevalent in contemporary German culture, and this demonisation of women swept into Vienna in the 1890s, later reaching its peak in the works of the expressionists. Feminists, even though there were some important intellectuals among them,³⁹ remained a small minority in Vienna.

The question of women and the problem of Jewish assimilation were among the issues that engendered great anxiety among the thinkers of the age. For example, Schnitzler grew increasingly uneasy at the anti-Semitism prevalent in contemporary society; his novel *Der Weg ins Freie*,⁴⁰ published in 1908, is dominated by an atmosphere of despondency and scepticism.

Indeed the entire range of outstanding works produced at this time was characterised by a negative view of human existence and made no concessions to the traditional resolution in catharsis. The individual simply ended up no longer able to believe in an ideal world, deprived even of a utopian dream. The younger generation growing up in the first decade of the century found themselves trapped in a doom-laden Vienna, where pleasure, beauty and abundance were restricted to a very privileged, narrow and exclusive layer of society, a society in which all the leading artists shared a profoundly pessimistic outlook.

Death, the universal experience of human existence, had always been a fundamental and enduring leitmotif in the culture of Austria, particularly so in Vienna. It may be traced back to the sombre preoccupation with mortality introduced by Spanish Catholicism, which pervaded the sixteenth and seventeenth century imperial court and the church. From there it spread through society, leaving a mark on popular culture and on a population that was frequently traumatised by recurrent plagues. The sensuous pomp of the baroque may actually have brought some relief from the constant fear of dying. By stressing both repentance and the transience of earthly vanities, the baroque aestheticised death.⁴¹ In every age, this preoccupation with mortality recurred in all branches and genres of Viennese art. By the nineteenth century, it was so deeply rooted in songs, music and dramatic literature that not a single artist could escape its influence.⁴² Intimations of mortality, an ubiquitous whispering background to life, intensified the desire for the pleasures of life and love. It is no coincidence that it was in Vienna that Freud discovered the death wish as a component of the soul.

It was natural, therefore, that awareness of mortality, whether melancholic and lyrical or stifling and overwhelming, permeated the most charismatic works of Austrian art, music, poetry and painting. It is there in the lines of the four-hundred-year-old city folk song *O du lieber Augustin*, it resounds in Mozart's slow movements, thunders in his *Requiem*, and when we turn to the romantic period, it is a brooding presence through Schubert's song cycles, abruptly reducing to shocked silence the vanity of the human a desire for happiness.⁴³

The dramatic destinies of the artists who died young bore witness to the horror that can touch the human soul at a very young age. Seasons and times of the day that are especially evocative of a sense of the passage of time – the Indian summer, dawn, sunset, autumn and winter – gained a metaphysical dimension for Austrians in the second half of the nineteenth century, their plangent charm beautifully evoked in Schubert's songs. Everybody, even the apprentices toiling in the suburbs, knew the composer's songs as well they knew their traditional *Wienerlieder*. Even among citizens who were only superficially cultivated, these aesthetic phenomena came to symbolise the familiar parabolas of human life.⁴⁴ At the same time (for the more learned), Richard Wagner's elemental and captivating music, with its recurring motifs of the quest for meaning in life and death, the secret that will lead to the transformation of the world, had become a fundamental part of modernity in Vienna since the great awakening of its first modernist generation.⁴⁵ The constant awareness that death was a factor in love (*Liebestod*), in honour (through the practice of duelling), or in ineluctable fate (mostly as incurable diseases like tuberculosis), became an integral part of the artists' view of the world.

The modern artists who arrived on the scene in the 1890s absorbed all these impulses; their symbolism, spiced with neo-romanticism, challenged the cultural inheritance of the past and reinforced the perception of time and transience as a common experience. The imagination of the *Jung-Wien* writers is also interwoven with this perception. Twenty-year-old writers and poets explored the meaning of life, in the knowledge that death allowed them all too brief a time to find the answers. Death was indeed omnipresent in Viennese society and many of these writers' contemporaries fell victim to tuberculosis, syphilis or simply abject poverty leading to early death. However writers were also in flight from a reality that simultaneously fed their art. Hofmannsthal, estranged from his own age, fearful of the future and obsessed with mortality, routinely projected the fundamental questions of existence into the past.⁴⁶ The leitmotif of the plays he wrote in the 1890s, (when he was in his twenties) was continually that of life in the shadow of death. He continued to deal with this conundrum throughout his life, crystallising it in *Jedermann*. Death also takes the leading role in Schnitzler's bitter love stories set in the present: the answer provided when there is no escape from a sexual and emotional cul-de-sac is frequently suicide (*Liebelei*), while the social roundelay swirling around the act of love is shown as a *danse macabre* in *La Ronde*. Even in Schnitzler's provocative anti-clerical play *Professor Bernhadi* it has a major presence. The fundamental anxiety about evanescence and death, which is always present in the desire for happiness and redemption, is present in Gustav Mahler's entire oeuvre, and it is also there in the songs of Hugo Wolf.

The association between love and death is of course a very ancient topos in European culture, and virtually all the great artists have confronted it. In Vienna, however, because of the modernists' more analytical approach, the Eros that had hitherto been idealised, even by Klimt, became a force that brought only distress, suffering and destruction. The artists in turn-of-the-century Vienna derived this ambivalent stance from mythological and archetypal tradition. In the case of Kokoschka and Schiele – who discarded every trace of mythical beauty – it appeared as the agony of the flesh and the welling up of barbarian instincts: Eros and Thanatos cling tightly to each other, and their orgiastic union demolishes the harmonious vision of love between man and woman.

EROS: THE METAMORPHOSIS OF LOVE

Cultural-historical studies of Europe in the decade after 1900 emphasise the sexual identity crisis above all other psychological crises that were then causing social turmoil. It was perhaps the most striking feature of the complex social and political process that modernisation implied.⁴⁷ As a consequence of economic, political and cultural reforms, women acquired new roles; thereafter the concepts and demands of feminism had a profoundly disturbing impact on male society. The questioning of the traditional relationship between the sexes, together with the doubt that was now cast on the hitherto natural determination of the gender roles, was manifested extremely vividly in the arts.

While the male identity crisis can be traced in the visual arts and literature of contemporary Europe, nowhere did it appear with such intensity as in Viennese painting. Vienna in the last third of the nineteenth century was one of the most celebrated centres of medical science, and from the 1880s onwards, one of its key fields of research was psychology. In this it drew on pioneering work from further afield. The works of the psychiatrist Richard von Krafft-Ebing, based in Graz, and the theories of the novelist Leopold von Sacher-Masoch of Lemberg (now Lviv, Ukraine) quickly gained renown, and not just in professional circles. In the 1890s, literature and medicine existed in close intellectual symbiosis. The two professions were not only linked by personal friendships; many writers started their careers as doctors (Schnitzler), and Freud formulated his theories and wrote up his case studies in literary form.

Thanks to the professional journals as well as the daily press, awareness of psychology's new discoveries and novel scientific (or pseudo-scientific) theories spread very rapidly. The most exciting topic naturally proved to be that of sexual-psychological phenomena, which ran up against taboos, and which – by virtue of their sensationalist potential – were always an important subject for artists, and especially for writers. Elsewhere, for example in France or England, they had much less impact on elite culture.⁴⁸

Vienna benefited greatly from the fact that German-language scientific and literary writings had a direct influence on those living and working in Austria, and there was a direct connection to every field of German science and culture. Yet propinquity also presupposed rivalry: German civilisation posed an eternal challenge to talented Austrians, who were obliged to struggle in defence of their distinctive identity. In addition to the influence of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, mentioned earlier, the philosophy of the Austrian Ernst Mach contributed to the pessimistic view of the world that was being advanced in novels and plays, and on occasion also in painting. Literary masterpieces of psychological realism and naturalism (Ibsen, Strindberg, Wedekind) had almost as great an impact on the age's outlook as the scientific and pseudo-scientific theories of the psychiatrists. It was not only the ideas of Sacher-Masoch or the theories of Krafft-Ebing and later Freud that caused a stir; for example the German psychiatrist Paul Julius Möbius published his misogynistic magnum opus *Über den physiologischen Schwachsinn des Weibes* (On the Physiological Idiocy of Women) in 1900, causing excitement in male intellectual circles.

In Vienna, due to the important role played by medicine in the city, the modern theories and errors of psychology rapidly became part of the "subconscious" of cultural circles. It was therefore not only Freud who was significant in this respect, since the entire body of the psychiatric literature of the age, and the sexual-psychological literature on

pathological phenomena, was well known and widely discussed in the coffee houses and salons.⁴⁹ However, the greatest influence on the new generation was none of the established medical figures, but a twenty-three-year-old philosophy student, Otto Weininger (1880–1903), who claimed to have discovered a fundamental truth about the world in the notion of bisexuality. In Weininger's book entitled *Sex and Character (Geschlecht und Charakter, 1903)*, every being and every social phenomenon is characterised as bipolar, having male and female characteristics, in the light of which they can be evaluated. The female is an absolutely negative pole, the incarnation of passive unconscious existence, and lacking in moral fibre. On the other hand the male embodies the intellectual creative force allied to ethics. Weininger's personal identity crisis, his extreme misogyny and his self-hatred determined by his Jewish origins, resulted in a dangerous and absurd system of classification, which categorised individuals and nations on a formally logical basis according to the extent to which they were deemed to possess male or female characteristics. Weininger committed suicide in the autumn of 1903, not living to see an abridged version of his dissertation become a bestseller, which was avidly read in secret by the youth of the day until the pages fell apart.⁵⁰ His work was an extreme example of pseudo-scientific psychological literature; however, due to its formal logic and its persuasive, Mephistophelian style, it was hard for those who were not its targets (i.e. who had not been born a female or a Jew) to escape from its spell. Specifically it had a profound influence on the expressionist generation; in addition to licensing the emotional demonization of women, it also served artists and writers with pseudo-scientific arguments which could be used to denigrate the female sex, now imminently a rival to the male. Could there indeed be anything more interesting to a male artist than his own identity crisis, or than the relationship that tied him unwillingly to the world of women? Weininger seemed to have provided a brilliant guidebook for such seductive self-absorption.

CHANGES IN THE VISUAL ARTS

Following on from the scandals that erupted around Klimt's faculty paintings, the Beethoven Exhibition of 1902 (the most important manifesto of the Secession in support of the heroic power of art) failed to build any bridges between the artistic elite and the general public.⁵¹ The elitist art policy of the Secession, which rejected all other kinds of art and all "other modernities" as invalid, soon ran into internal criticism. Its tactic of ruthlessly intimidating opponents through campaigns in the press and its exclusivity were in fact destroying the union of artists from the inside. The original radical representatives of the *Stilkunst* around Gustav Klimt, who had been the most prominent figure in the Society, gradually lost their dominance and in May 1905 they decided to leave the Secession.⁵² As a result, they also lost the chance to hold large public exhibitions, although they did retain control of the most important commercial art gallery in Vienna, the Galerie Miethke, which had recently been taken over by Carl Moll, an organizational and marketing genius.⁵³

The Viennese Secessionist "Gesamtkunstwerk" style in home design was warmly received by the press but actually supported by rather a small number of patrons.⁵⁴ In its purest form, the exclusive aesthetic of strictly geometrical *Würfelstil* objects produced by the studios of the Wiener Werkstätte did not allow clients to mix them with anything else in their homes. The relative impersonality of the black and white objects also made interiors somewhat uniform. It was therefore not a style for everyman; and as a result, the anticipated domination of the Wiener Werkstätte aesthetic only applied to art exhibitions like the Kunstschau. Painting in Vienna also became very varied and colourful and there was never a specific local group or period style. Klimt himself was a "one off" artistic phenomenon who never established a school. Instead, a wide range of different styles were flourishing in these years. A diverse body of artists now formed lobbies and swarmed around the commercial galleries. The situation was no longer defined by competition between the two original groupings of conservatives on the one side and champions of progress on the other, but by a plethora of artistic institutions, each challenging the other, with none of them capable of establishing dominance. In addition to the shows taking place at the Künstlerhaus, events held by the now reduced Secession, the Hagenbund, the Galerie Miethke,

the Kunstsalon Pisko and the Galerie Arnot, along with occasional international exhibitions, generated an increasingly intricate patchwork of artistic activity in which new talents were forced to find their own place and had to work hard to stand out from the crowd.⁵⁵ Talent was not enough however – other self-publicising skills were definitely required if an artist wanted to attract attention.

After 1903, and more pronouncedly after 1905, Viennese art was more influenced by the many foreign works that were shown at exhibitions in the city than had been the case earlier. These works unveiled stylistic trends which could no longer be judged according to traditional critical categories based on mimesis. The principal yardsticks for judgement now became originality and the boldness of a picture's formal experiment. Works by expressionists, fauvists, cubists and futurists soon became well known in Vienna, thanks mainly to the commercial art galleries. Their excitingly novel visual effects made an enormous impact on the youngest artists. On the other hand, even well-informed critics of the older generation either derided them or were at a loss in interpreting them, making only hesitant attempts to decode their artistic ethos and unravel real or imagined points of reference behind frankly puzzling works. The artistic elite, as well as a wealthy section of the intelligentsia that was on principle open to all that was new, thus became the only enthusiasts among the public at the foreign exhibitions. Painting became more intellectual, the turnover in styles accelerated, and this led to a rapid alienation of the broader and less well-prepared public. The result was a sharp break between modernists and conservatives, engendering an isolationist stance on the part of the latter, who continued to believe in the traditional, didactic and morally improving functions of art. Against them the assimilated plutocracy from a handful of extremely wealthy families, living in awe of exclusivity and modernity, made up the bulk of patrons. They nailed their colours to the mast of modernism and generously patronised the group of artists and experimenters associated with Klimt.⁵⁶ This financial support meant that the Klimt group could live quite comfortably and produce their art even without state commissions and the support of the wider community. In addition they still had a large number of useful international contacts, which they had made during their time with the Secession. The experimentalists of the younger generation naturally gravitated towards this financially successful and trend-setting group.

In 1908, Klimt and his friends Josef Hoffmann, Kolo Moser and Carl Moll were given a major new opportunity to organise an important artistic event, namely in celebration of Emperor Franz Joseph's diamond jubilee. This event was to be the famous first *Kunstschau*, the swansong of the Viennese "Stilkunst", and also the launch of the Viennese expressionist generation.

III THE RISE OF THE SECOND GENERATION

The fact that Vienna's cultural golden age had two layers and two stages is of great significance, because the mid-era change was fundamental as well as dramatic. The major figures of the second period were Musil, Trakl, Werfel and Gütersloh in literature, and in painting, Richard Gerstl, Oskar Kokoschka, Max Oppenheimer and Egon Schiele.⁵⁷ Nevertheless it must not be forgotten that the first generation of modernism still had impressive creative resources. Klimt, Kolo Moser and Carl Moll continued to paint, each in an individual style that could rightly be described as new. Within their chosen aesthetic, the younger painters continued the practices of their "fathers"; they painted portraits, landscapes and female nudes, yet did everything they could to differentiate their work from that of the first generation, who were still "in power".

The most tragic painter of this generation was Richard Gerstl (1883–1908). In the relatively few works of his that have survived, we can see that he did indeed arrive at the threshold of non-figurative painting.⁵⁸ He experienced the kind of emotional trauma and identity crisis that we associate with both Kokoschka and Schiele, but his character determined that he was to be the most solitary and the most stubbornly consistent of his contemporaries. He radically rejected the aestheticism of Klimt and the seductive lure of ornamentation. There seems little doubt that he was influenced

by Edvard Munch and Van Gogh, but probably also by the impulsive painting style of Simon Hollósy, when the latter was working in Nagybánya.⁵⁹ Gerstl was unwilling to get directly involved in the artistic life of his day.⁶⁰ Moreover his artistic radicalism, which rendered him incapable of compromise, isolated him to such an extent that he remained unknown to his contemporaries. He also refused to exhibit his works, and therefore exercised no influence on the art scene. His links to the musical avant-garde around Schönberg apparently went some way to alleviating his almost paranoid sense of alienation, but the trauma of his tempestuous and failed love for Mathilde Schönberg led to his early death. For decades after his tragic suicide, his pictures were kept in storage. Gerstl died just as Kokoschka was embarking on his career, was soon forgotten and had no influence on subsequent painters.

THE SWANSONG OF "STILKUNST": THE KUNSTSCHAU, 1908

Gustav Klimt opened the Kunstschau exhibition in the summer of 1908. Included among the 146 artists on display were Oskar Kokoschka (1886–1980) and Max Oppenheimer (1885–1954).⁶¹ The works for the exhibition were selected by Klimt and his artist friends, Carl Moll and Josef Hoffmann. The pavilions were designed by Hoffmann, and built in accordance with the aesthetic ideal of the Gesamtkunstwerk, all of them in the Viennese "cubic style" (*Würfelstil*). A template had been created for this idealistic notion of applied art which covered the entire human span from the cradle to the grave, encompassing each phase of life from the children's room to the memorial garden.⁶²

The Viennese artistic elite had now retreated into an aestheticised utopia, comforting themselves with the belief that they could form a commercial and aesthetic alliance with the plutocracy (who were the main backers of the exhibition). This conviction was mutual, and Klimt's opening speech was a manifesto to it. It was indeed a time when every young artist dreamt of becoming part of this elite circle. Beyond the offerings of the Klimt group, the critics noted Kokoschka's idiosyncratic drawings and his exotic fairytale illustrations, but did not stay to praise them (fig. 103). Although the exhibition was financially a failure (approximately 40,000 people went to see it), at least it gave the organisers a chance to hold a show of international painting in the same pavilions in the following year.

At the second Kunstschau in 1909, pictures by foreign painters (French, German, and fourteen by Van Gogh) took centre stage, but the local talent was also given another chance to promote itself. At this show Egon Schiele's pictures⁶³ were first exhibited to the Viennese public, which was something of an achievement, because Schiele, four years younger than Kokoschka, was a complete beginner. (His paintings were actually hung in the same section as those of Kokoschka and Oppenheimer.) However his work caught the eye of the most revered critic in Vienna, Ludwig Hevesi who wrote: "A very young painter, Egon Schiele, stands out as a blatant imitator of Klimt's mosaic painting. He will abandon this soon, because pursuing that line would certainly destroy him; but he is definitely talented."⁶⁴

At this exhibition, it was Kokoschka who caused the cultural scandal of the year, a scandal which finally brought him fame, or at least notoriety. When his expressionist play titled *Murderer, Hope of Women* went on show, there was (perhaps not surprisingly) a violent reaction (fig. 7). Although the painter later regarded his grotesque, pantomime-like meditation on the battle between the sexes as an artistic triumph, this had certainly not been the case at the time. On the other hand it was here that he was "discovered" by Adolf Loos and Karl Kraus, two avowed enemies of the Klimt–Hoffmann group, who subsequently took control of Kokoschka's career, their mission being to save him from the influence of the "Stilkünstler" (the Secession artists). Over the next few years, Loos, the highly talented architect⁶⁵ became Kokoschka's main patron, as well as being his manager, his financial backer and his avuncular friend. He encouraged him to take up portrait painting, and obtained commissions from his friends and from his own clients by offering a guarantee: if they did not like the finished result, he would take it and pay for it. In this way, all the portraits bar one made by Kokoschka between the middle of 1909 and March 1910 (twenty-six paintings) came into Loos' possession. Kokoschka, untrained in oils, picked up the secrets of portraiture "as he went along", was unbound by the traditions of academic training,

and did not aim for a strict likenesses (a particular source of grievance to the sitters); for him, the most important thing was an impassioned search to reveal the soul of the sitter. Although he tried to hide his own frequently unruly feelings and chaotic ideas behind a phlegmatic mask, in his models he sought, and invariably found, the anxious, doubt-ridden, insecure human spirit behind the facade. Decades later in his autobiography, he emphatically denied being influenced by Freud, claiming that he was not even aware of the latter's theories at the time.⁶⁶

EXPERIMENTATIONS AND RIVALRIES

The three main figures in early expressionist painting in Vienna – Kokoschka, Oppenheimer and Schiele – led different careers, and their historical afterlives are also fundamentally different, but they are similar in one way. All three of them were, right from the beginning, extremely focused on their careers, carefully observing the art markets, taking every opportunity to exhibit their works, making every effort to gain attention. To achieve this they ruthlessly manipulated their friends and clients. Kokoschka and Schiele were both convinced of their individual genius and they worked incessantly to have this noticed by the people who mattered.

Oppenheimer was slightly different, although he was also undoubtedly an outstanding talent. He socialised in a different way from his rivals. Part Jewish and orphaned at a young age, he studied art as a German in Prague, only making his way back to Vienna in 1908. In his life and art he was less of an exhibitionist, or at least less narcissistic, than his colleagues, which can perhaps be explained by the fact that in those days it was not easy to make a career if you had homoerotic tendencies. Mopp (as Oppenheimer began to style himself and signed his paintings) had enjoyed a conventional academic education like Schiele, but he totally rejected the Secessionists's cult of ornament and the decorative.

In his memoirs Mopp describes his meeting with Schiele, who had sought him out to show him his drawings. Although Oppenheimer did not much like these, he immediately spotted the other man's extraordinary talent. It is said that the two young painters spent three days and three nights in continuous conversation, chewing over the problems of art and of the world. Subsequently they lived in a shared studio and devoted many months to intensive painting. They posed as models for each other and shared each other's paints and food. Despite being financially destitute, they both worked fanatically round the clock. Oppenheimer, who was five years older than Schiele and the more cultured of the two, must have had a great influence on his young friend, who had probably never before enjoyed such an intensive exchange of thoughts and ideas. As a passionate music lover, Mopp knew Schönberg, but also Schnitzler and Freud and indeed many of the great and the good of Vienna. It was probably through him that Schiele first encountered them, and likewise through Mopp's exegesis that he became acquainted with their theories. The two men also painted each other's portraits (figs. 8–9), and Mopp helped Schiele to free himself from the influence of Klimt. In his oil paintings, Schiele adopted Mopp's brownish palette, abandoned decorative backgrounds, and placed his figures in a void. The inspiration he got from the portraits by his friend is unmistakable in his work. Mopp broadened the young painter's intellectual and artistic horizons, and helped him to overcome certain sexual inhibitions as well. He played the major role in enabling Schiele, a twenty-year-old with no experience of the art world, to start out on his own path, now with a firm basis of artistic self-confidence. From 1909, Oppenheimer painted many portraits of famous Viennese personages, including Schönberg, Schnitzler and Freud.⁶⁷

In the meantime, Kokoschka (with help from Loos and Karl Kraus) was continuing to build his international career in Berlin, with the enthusiastic support of Herwarth Walden, making illustrations for *Der Sturm* and painting portraits. He only appeared back in Vienna when he heard that a book was being written about Oppenheimer, and that the latter would be exhibiting in Munich at Thannhauser, one of the most important private galleries specialising in modern contemporary art. Assisted by his friends (Loos and Kraus) he launched a shockingly rabid campaign to discredit Oppenheimer, whom he regarded as a dangerous rival and threat. He accused him *inter alia* of "copying" his (Kokoschka's) style.⁶⁸ While the initial provocation seems to have been a poster for the Oppenheimer exhibition in Munich (which may indeed

have been inspired by the infamous Kokoschka self-portrait in *Der Sturm*⁶⁹), the accusations rapidly escalated into the realm of fantasy. Using his already good connections in the international expressionist avant-garde, Kokoschka managed to prevent the book on Oppenheimer from being published. Some mud always sticks and soon there were many in *Der Sturm* and in the Viennese art elite who were persuaded that Oppenheimer was little more than a plagiarist. The media influence of Karl Kraus, Adolf Loos and the Berliner Herwarth Walden was powerful enough to sideline Oppenheimer from the Viennese scene; accordingly he moved to Munich, then to Berlin, where Paul Cassirer, an expert on modern art and the director of one of the most well-respected commercial galleries, offered him support and defended him against his detractors.⁷⁰

This sorry tale helps to explain why the early expressionists of Vienna were unable and unwilling to form a group. Every tiny feature of style, every single mannerism, was considered by them to be their private property.⁷¹ The relatively coherent stylistic unity that informs certain art groups, which exists for example in the works made around the same time by members of *Die Brücke*, the fauves or the cubists,⁷² is completely absent from early Viennese expressionism.⁷³ Just when a semblance of unity could have arisen (as in the case of Oppenheimer and Kokoschka), personal rivalries ensured that it did not.

It is also remarkable how narrow and cloistered was the modern art scene in Vienna around the year 1910. Only a few critics who supported experimental modern art (Hans Tietze, Arthur Roessler, occasionally Karl Kraus) played a key role in smoothing career paths and in introducing their protégés to the commercial galleries. Good relations with the limited number of collectors of modernism were of course essential for every budding expressionist painter. One of the most important early collectors, Dr. Oscar Reichel, was the first to commission Oppenheimer to paint himself, his wife and his son. He was also the patron who put up the money to publish a book on Oppenheimer (which, as stated above, was subsequently torpedoed by the Kokoschka lobby). Reichel also bought paintings from Kokoschka, later from Schiele as well, and kept in regular contact with both of them.

Arthur Roessler, on the other hand, was the critic of the *Arbeiterzeitung*, becoming Schiele's discoverer, patron and fatherly friend. He had been dismayed by the Kokoschka–Oppenheimer feud,⁷⁴ but was too intimidated by the Loos–Walden lobby



7 • OSKAR KOKOSCHKA: PIETÀ, 1909 (POSTER OF THE DRAMA MURDERER, HOPE OF WOMEN)



8 • MAX OPPENHEIMER: EGON SCHIELE, 1911

to intervene. The root of the problem was that Kokoschka saw himself as the leading genius of his generation and refused to share this position with anybody else. A similar fate to Oppenheimer's might indeed have overtaken Schiele, who was four years younger, had his temperament and character not been radically different from the aggressive and scheming Kokoschka.⁷⁵ In the event Schiele – probably instinctively – kept out of the way of the rival genius, although it was also true that he was less skilful at self-promotion, and therefore probably not deemed worthy of notice by his aggressive colleague.

EGON SCHIELE'S JOURNEY

The phases of Schiele's artistic career may be regarded as uniquely transparent, in that his works allow us to trace with precision his development through adolescent anguish, identity crisis, metaphysical preoccupations and (less exaltedly) his immature handling of the opposite sex.

His early period was like an incessant internal monologue, only very rarely looking outwards towards the lives of others. The charismatic power of his deconstruction of the self, laying bare all his suffering, his doubts and his bewildering passions, is exerted through an awesome consciousness of form realised through virtuoso drawing skills and a daring palette. As an artist, Schiele was early to mature, but as a social being he was a very late developer. After the first joint exhibition held at the Kunstsalon Pisko in December 1909, he quit the Neukunstgruppe. Then he spent several months with Oppenheimer. In May 1910 he split with his guardian, who had till then provided financial support, and moved to the countryside, to his mother's home town of Krumau.⁷⁶ For Schiele, the countryside, small towns and natural surroundings, seemed more inspirational than metropolitan Vienna.

1910 was filled with paradigm turns and dramatic changes in the artist's psyche. The year was marked by frantic self-examination and an eruption of creativity, as well as a precarious existence and chronic destitution. Schiele had been accompanied to Krumau by an odd pantomime artist, the eccentric theosophist Erwin Osen.⁷⁷ If the sources are to be believed, Osen developed an almost hypnotic hold over the young artist. The awkward gestures and hand movements in the drawings and paintings he made at this time also bear witness to a spiritual apocalypse, the liberation of seemingly demonic powers.⁷⁸ For Schiele, already an over-sensitive being due to the traumas of his youth, the initiation into theosophy represented the birth of a spirituality that opened his mind to existential doubt. In this awakening of his consciousness, he began to question, with typically adolescent excess, all his human relationships, but in particular that with his mother (fig. 53). Likewise he became obsessed with mortality. It was at this time that Schiele wrote the majority of his poems,⁷⁹ and it was also in this year he was joined by a companion and model, Wally Neuzil

(fig. 66), the "object" of most of his erotic sketches and compositions.⁸⁰ However the twenty-year-old boy, who had taken a passionate interest in physicality since puberty, was too immature to enter into a responsible and loving relationship. With a cold heart, and breaching every contemporary taboo of depiction, he obsessively rendered the body as simply the plaything of instincts. From these radical beginnings, he began to develop his idiosyncratic vision as a painter with astonishing swiftness.⁸¹

The time he spent in the countryside seems to have been a year in hell, driven by an obsessive urge to dissect and analyse humanity by means of the human body. As a sideline, he also made a series of erotic drawings of the proletarian children roaming around his neighbourhood.⁸² Krumau also inspired him to paint several cityscapes, to which he gave poetic titles (the *Dead City* series). His constant self-observation in the mirror, posturing and experimenting with roles, can be seen as the exploration of a split personality. The dramatic outcome of this was to be his most important early symbolic work – *Self-Seer* –, painted at the end of 1910 (fig. 39). Rooted in romanticism, then enjoying its second golden age, the "*Doppelgänger*" theory fascinated the painter, and inspired some of his most hair-raising visions.

Schiele was so self-absorbed that his art and the role-playing that sprang from it are all but inseparable. Although it was primarily financial difficulties that had forced him to leave Vienna for the countryside, deserting the metropolis turned out not to have been a smart career move after all. His champion, the shrewd and benevolent Arthur Roessler (fig. 10), was his sole dependable link to the art world during this period. Having abandoned the Neukunstgruppe, Schiele had temporarily burned his boats and did not feature in the group's second exhibition at the Hagenbund (in February 1911).

Schiele's letters at this time reveal his constant search for a father figure, or at least for someone he could rely on. Roessler, who had discovered him at the Kunstsalon Pisko exhibition, together with his first major clients and sponsors, Carl Reininghaus, Heinrich Benesch and Dr. Oskar Reichel,



9 • EGON SCHIELE: MAX OPPENHEIMER, 1910

all filled this role in their different ways. It is likely that the childhood trauma of his father's sickness and death contributed to the young artist's troubled introversion with its unhealthy emphasis on solitude and martyrdom. Yet his posing and role-playing are conspicuously effective features both of his art and of his correspondence.⁸³

In 1911 Arthur Roessler obtained sponsors for Schiele, and helped to arrange an April exhibition of his works at the prestigious Galerie Miethke. Schiele's colleague, the painter and writer Paris von Gütersloh, wrote a fine article about him in 1911, which was reprinted in the catalogue for the exhibition.⁸⁴ Schiele was also invited to exhibit with the Blaue Reiter in the Galerie Goltz in Munich, and in July 1912 he participated in the Sonderbund exhibition in Cologne, the first major show of Austrian expressionism abroad. There Goltz managed to sell a Schiele painting (*The Dead City VI*) to the celebrated collector, Karl Ernst Osthaus. It was an extremely rare honour for such a young painter to have one of his pictures already displayed in a public gallery (the Museum Folkwang).

NEULENGBACH: TRAUMA AND TURNING POINT

In August 1911, Schiele and his girlfriend, Wally, moved to Neulengbach, a picturesque village not far from Vienna. As he had done in Krumau, here too he surrounded himself with the local (unsupervised) children, drawing and painting them as the mood took him. Perhaps inevitably, a scandal erupted, and Schiele was accused of paedophilia. However the artist's influential supporters did everything they could to get him released from custody.

In the end he spent a total of three weeks on remand while collectors and sponsors pulled all the strings they could to save him from prison. In due course he was tried and sentenced to only three days' imprisonment, but the confiscated drawings were all destroyed.⁸⁵ Ordinary citizens, who had been brought up conventionally and who adhered to a strict moral code, were outraged by his visual transgressions of sexual taboos.⁸⁶ After the trial, even Reininghaus, who was an avid collector of erotic works and had indirectly intervened in Schiele's defence, thought it best to revise his close relationship with the painter, with the result that Schiele now needed to find new sponsors in order to make a living. He returned to Vienna, and was now much more circumspect, avoiding young children and instead using the seventeen-year old Wally as the model for his taboo-breaking erotic sketches and watercolours. But Schiele had changed: the shock of genuine danger had made him grow up, and his relations with other people also started to improve, so that he began to show them more empathy.⁸⁷

Nevertheless, Schiele remained the chief protagonist of his paintings. He now made large oil canvases of his "artistic martyrdom", casting himself in various tragic roles. His style underwent a major development, and his palette became more colourful, although his emotional state of mind and the gravitational pull of local Viennese tradition still held him in thrall to Eros and Thanatos. In early 1912, for example, he painted his loving couple, a grotesque paraphrase of Klimt's *The Kiss*. The original title of *Cardinal and Nun* (fig. 11) was *Caress (Liebkosung)*, portraying not a paradisiacal idyll, but the claustrophobic anxiety of forbidden, carnal love. Typically the figures in Schiele's erotic drawings are prisoners of instinct, vulnerable beings who struggle with their consciences, or who are burned by their uncontrollable passion.

By now Schiele had achieved a modicum of success, but he was by no means satisfied, since the galleries seemed incapable of selling his pictures. Moreover he refused to obey the unwritten code of the art trade and frequently went back on his agreements. He also failed to appreciate the long-term advantages of having a presence in museums, of "visibility," or the enormous importance of having articles written about him; likewise he seemed to be oblivious to the need for international connections. Instead he concentrated blindly on the only thing that was important for him, the need to earn as much money as possible.⁸⁸ Again and again he besieged Roessler and his sponsors for financial support, because the money that he earned poured through his fingers, leaving him frequently famished and destitute.

In spite of the evidence provided by his correspondence and his poetry, it is difficult to determine how much of Schiele's contorted, angst-ridden self-depiction was an affectation that went with the virtually obligatory alienation that was expected of genius, and how much was the product of genuine misery. Whichever it was, this embittered performance gave birth to works of art that conjured up a charismatic and startlingly new vision, an evocation of an oppressive inner world.

But even if Schiele's early patrons were wavering in their support, he was still offered assistance by his older fellow painters. Gustav Klimt, for instance, recommended him to the millionaire August Lederer. The family's teenage son, Erich Lederer, whose portrait Schiele painted, became a fan of the painter. The Lederers invited Schiele to their estate in Győr on several occasions, which gave Schiele his first taste of the high life. Another enthusiastic collector, the Viennese restaurateur Franz Hauer, also purchased many works from him (and it was well known that he was not mean with his money.) Meanwhile, Schiele's quotidian financial needs continued to be met through the sale of erotic drawings.



10 • EGON SCHIELE: ARTHUR ROESSLER, 1914 (CAT. 42)

The 25th June 1913 saw the opening of Schiele's second exhibition at the Galerie Goltz in Munich, a financial disaster, since none of his paintings sold. Then in 1914 (through the mediation of Josef Hoffmann) he earned his first commission to paint the full-length portrait of Friederike Maria Beer, a wealthy upper-class lady, and the girlfriend of the painter Hans Böhler.⁸⁹ As a likeness, this bizarre painting is an extraordinary composition, and seems to justify the opinion of Anton Faistauer, a perceptive contemporary painter, who said that Schiele was not at all interested in the character and social position of his models.⁹⁰

In this, however, he was not alone: social engagement was now generally absent from the art circles of Vienna. There were very few writers or artists in the pre-war years who wanted to portray the impending changes in society, or who concerned themselves with issues of class and nationality, not to mention extreme poverty or the threat of war. In Vienna, the dominant theme was still the individual, the exclusively spiritual and intellectual aspects of human destiny, and such themes were rarely compatible with matters of class or with the concept of a social utopia. Lost in their existential torment, the majority of Viennese artists were taken completely unaware when war came.

THE WAR YEARS

When war broke out, Schiele was not called up immediately, as his frail state of health had previously exempted him from having to do military service. He was therefore free to paint until mid-



11 • EGON SCHIELE: CARDINAL AND NUN, 1912

1915. It was during this period that he created one of his most stunning canvases, *Death and the Maiden* (fig. 12). The painting was his artistic farewell to Wally, who was cruelly and abruptly dismissed by Schiele when he decided to marry a moderately well off middle-class girl, Edith Harms.

Death and the Maiden was the title of a famous Schubert song, familiar to everyone in Vienna, but all that the painting and the song have in common is a sense of drama. Schiele transformed the motif to fit his pessimistic vision: in his representation the maiden is clinging desperately to her cowled lover, the embodiment of Death. Schiele invested the man with his own stylised features, and the maiden with those of Wally. Everything in the picture – the earth broken up into angular fragments, the rumpled cloth,

like a death shroud, the dark colours mixed with dirty greys, the barren, scorpion-inhabited desolation of the surrounding countryside – enhances the hopelessness and terror of a life condemned to perdition and destruction. The annihilation of emotions, love and life is seen as ineluctable and there is no space for catharsis.

Schiele and Edith got married in July 1915, in the middle of the war, and the painter was drafted into the army a few days afterwards. In the following months and years, a relatively well-functioning marriage, and perhaps also the terrible amount of suffering that he witnessed around him, forced him to look beyond himself and his art for the first time. His attitude towards the rest of the humanity and specifically his relationships with the other individuals perceptibly mellowed, a development that also had an effect on his style of drawing and painting. He also became more compassionate in his treatment of his models.

Schiele was fortunate not to be dispatched to fight on the frontline, but in the first eighteen months he nevertheless had little opportunity to paint. From the start of 1917, however, he was given a new post in Vienna, and his superior there allowed him to devote almost all his time to painting. Schiele was infused with a fever of creativity, and in the spring of 1918 he was able to display fifty works (nineteen oil paintings, the rest either drawings or watercolours) at the 49th Secession exhibition. This presentation finally brought him his long-anticipated success with the public, and almost all the works found buyers.

His professional circumstances were now also very favourable. He was the only remaining early expressionist painter of exceptional artistic quality on the Viennese art scene: Oppenheimer was living in Switzerland, painting his musician friends there. Kokoschka had been seriously injured in the war in 1915, and moved to Dresden in 1917. The other early Austrian expressionist members of the old Neukunstgruppe (Anton Faistauer, Paris von Gütersloh, Anton Kolig) were neither as radical nor as charismatic as Schiele. His former students were summoned to the exhibition by the young master, which demonstrated that he had taken on a new, integrating role as a paradigm for the even younger revolutionaries. No longer was he the marginalised genius and indeed he felt that the mantle of leadership, worn by Gustav Klimt until his death, was now rightly his.

In Schiele's drawings of his wife, there is also the sense that he was now emotionally aware of other people in a way that he had not been before. The portraits he made at that time are consequently much more realistic than his earlier ones. No longer is he himself the only hero of his paintings, routinely projecting the fundamental questions of existence on himself. His oils become



12 • EGON SCHIELE: DEATH AND THE MAIDEN, 1915

more "painterly", and the backgrounds fill up with objects. His line grows more delicate and empathetic, his colours less sombre, and he strives to show his models from their most attractive side (*Dr. Hugo Koller, Edith Schiele*).

Some art historians, who view his artistic development exclusively in the renewal of form observable in Schiele's tragic visions of humanity,⁹¹ have claimed that the disappearance of soul-wrenching angst from Schiele's art represents a qualitative weakening. In reality it is a process of adaptation to a new and different representation of the human character. The dramatic quality which was previously dominant is indeed absent from these pictures, but the virtuoso drawing and painting skills are still there. However Schiele no longer forces his models into the straitjacket of



13 • EGON SCHIELE: FAMILY, 1918

his tortured imagination, no longer exclusively insists on their suffering. The portraits he made at this time are instead characterised by a refined empathy and delicate lyricism. Even the portrait he now drew of his mother radiates a glow of understanding and love.

In the summer of 1918 Schiele was full of plans, and preparing to embark on a major cycle of new works. In October, he was busy painting the *Family* (fig. 13), a large canvas that he had begun in the spring. Suddenly, Edith, who was pregnant with his child, died in the post-war pandemic of Spanish influenza. Schiele too fell victim to the illness and died three days after his wife. The painting, which can be considered a valedictory family portrait, remained unfinished.

In this picture, the implacably interrogative adolescent soul, now seen in more considered contemplation of the world as a twenty-eight-year-old, looks out at us with a melancholy gaze and gestures bleakly with his hand. It is the same gesture which, since the age of Dürer, has pointed to the unanswerable riddle of human existence. Not only the tragic circumstances of this picture, but also its artistic sophistication make it stand out from the other portraits of his last period. Its sense of anguish emanates from the dull, subdued colours and the coarse brushstrokes. Rough and pasty patches of paint barely cover the dark foundation, so the flesh tones of the naked man and woman have a disturbingly blotchy and sickly consistency. The effect is to suggest the cruel menace of approaching fate.

The painting is simultaneously a portrait and an allegory. Schiele's and Edith's features are individual, but their nakedness gives them the weight of the eternal man and woman, of Adam and Eve. The man, with his angular limbs enclosing and protecting the family, looks out at us from the picture with eyes wide open, fixing the viewer with a penetrative and meditative gaze. This self-portrait seems to be an expression of the male role, interrogating the world. The woman, on the other hand, seems absorbed in her own thoughts, with sadness lining her eyes and her mouth. Her body forms an oval, sheltering new life, the young child, leaning against the legs of the mother and taking in the world with openness and curiosity. All three figures have a profoundly melancholy seriousness, all three are looking in different directions, and although they are not together as one soul, they do form a unity in the indistinct dark world that surrounds them. However the picture is far from being an idyll, but rather a prophecy of the physical and spiritual vulnerability of a family cast into an uncertain existence, an unconscious prophecy of the fate was to befall them.

EPILOGUE

Schiele was but one of many the important actors on the Viennese scene who were swept away by World War I and the collapse of the Monarchy. Those who survived, whether stars or minor figures, could not just continue as before. They bore the weight of an enormous heritage of genius and unease, which certainly did not make it easy for them to adapt to the new circumstances. However the angst-inducing revelation of the power of the instincts, the manifest failure of human communication, the impotence of noble humanist traditions in the face of aggression, the eternal questioning of internal human values, all these continued to inform a struggling society. The trauma that this brought about, a pervasive and enduring anxiety, has become entrenched in cultural memory. This trauma was indeed so deep that it not only had a huge impact on European culture throughout the twentieth century, but has also become integral to our modern world. Schiele's painting represents the visible scars of this trauma, which is why, a hundred years later, we still regard him as our contemporary.

- 1 Blom 2009.
- 2 Stefan Zweig, *The World of Yesterday* (Viking Press, 1943).
- 3 Hermann Broch, *Hugo von Hofmannsthal and His Time* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).
- 4 The novels of Joseph Roth (1894–1939) [*Radetzky March*, 1932, *The Emperor's Tomb*, 1938] portray the final period of the Monarchy with insight and sympathy.
- 5 Robert Musil (1880–1942) left his monumental novel *The Man without Qualities*, written through the 1930s, unfinished at the time of his death.
- 6 The celebrated Paris world fairs (1855, 1867, 1878, 1889 and 1900) made an enormous contribution to the city, earning it the status of the cultural capital of the world, which it retained undisputed until the end of World War I. Its exemplary urban modernisation also played a role in Paris becoming a role model in culture. Nevertheless, there were certain intellectual and spiritual challenges to which forward-looking answers were provided not by the French avant-garde, but by the artists and scientists of Vienna (such as Freud, Herzl, Schiele and Schönberg).
- 7 To date, there is one essay which compares the avant-garde in Paris with that in Vienna: Jean Clair's study entitled *A Skeptical Modernity*, written for the catalogue of an exhibition in Paris in 1986, and republished in English in the exhibition catalogue of the Neue Galerie in New York. See Clair 2011. This Paris exhibition in 1986 covered a greater time period than any other exhibition, so the peak achievements of Viennese culture between 1880 and 1938 were, for the first time, examined together. Jean Clair regards the Viennese avant-garde as having a deeper intellectual content than the Parisian, because the artists of Vienna concentrated less on formal problems of style, and more on existential questions that concerned every human being.
- 8 The defeat in battle against the Prussians of Germany in 1866 irreparably demoted Austria to the second rank in the German sphere, and this led directly to Austria developing its own national identity, separate from the concept of Greater Germany.
- 9 Vienna, with its German, Italian and Spanish traditions, was a cultural melting pot throughout the long nineteenth century: the ethnically non-Germanic population who settled there (Czechs, Slovaks, Poles and Jews) took on a Viennese identity within a few decades. For the majority, assimilation into the German-language culture of Vienna went hand-in-hand with social improvement, a better quality of life, and with generally positive feelings and memories, all of which reinforced the Viennese identity. Despite all its problems the impact of assimilation on the mentality of the age was positive overall.
- 10 This is what gave the coffee houses their vital role, although salons, circles of friends, cultural institutions and newspaper editorial offices were also important forums for the exchange of ideas. According to research by Edward Timms, there were approximately four hundred progressive minds in Vienna who were active in forming contemporary modern culture, and most of them knew each other personally.
- 11 See Zweig, Roth, Musil, etc.
- 12 William M. Johnston, *The Austrian Mind* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: The University of California Press, 1972).
- 13 Peter Vergo, *Art in Vienna* (London: Phaidon, 1975).
- 14 Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna* (New York: Knopf, 1980).
- 15 Werner Hofmann, *Experiment Weltuntergang um 1900*, exh. cat. (Munich: Hamburg Kunsthalle and Prestel Verlag, 1981).
- 16 As early as 1970, before American historical researchers discovered the culture of fin-de-siècle Vienna, Werner Hofmann had analysed the metaphysical questions of the age in his impressive book centred on the life and works of Klimt. See Hofmann 1970.
- 17 Among the most important: *Traum und Wirklichkeit*, Vienna, Künstlerhaus, 1985; *L'apocalypse joyeuse*, Paris, Centre Pompidou, 1986.
- 18 Two major exhibitions about Vienna have been held in Budapest: Hungarian National Gallery, *The Era of Breakthrough*, 2010; and Museum of Fine Arts, *Nuda Veritas*, featuring mainly artists from the first period, Klimt and other contemporary Secession designers.
- 19 Steven Beller, *Vienna and the Jews, 1867–1938: A Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).
- 20 Harriet Anderson, *Utopian Feminism: Women's Movements in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna* (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).
- 21 Their volumes of studies were published under the title *Studien der Moderne*, such as Rudolf Haller, ed., *Nach Kakanien – Annäherung an die Moderne* (Vienna, Cologne, and Weimar: Böhlau Verlag, 1996).
- 22 For more on Budapest, see John Lukacs, *Budapest 1900: A Historical Portrait of a City and Its Culture* (London: Grove Press, 1988); Péter Hanák, *The Garden and the Workshop* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998). For more on Prague, see Peter Demetz, *Prague in Black and Gold: Scenes from the Life of a European City* (London and New York: Hill and Wang, 1997).

- 23 Wolfgang Maderthaner and Lutz Musner, *Die Anarchie der Vorstadt. Das andere Wien um 1900* (Frankfurt am Main and New York: Campus Verlag, 1999).
- 24 In 1890, the ring of suburbs and villages lying outside the Gürtel were legally incorporated into Vienna, and this administrative expansion presented an enormous task for the city and state leadership. Large-scale city, construction and transport planning was launched, bringing with it an upturn in building work (and, for a while, an enthusiasm for planning the future).
- 25 Wunberg 1976; Wunberg 1981.
- 26 Hermann Bahr (1863–1934) writer, dramatist, journalist, but mainly art critic, who until 1907 championed every new stylistic experiment. His role in Vienna was to be the most passionate protagonist of modernist ideas.
- 27 Hermann Bahr, *Die Überwindung des Naturalismus* (Dresden: E. Pierson, 1890).
- 28 In the early days Karl Kraus and his friend, Peter Altenberg, were enthusiasts for *Jung-Wien*, but Kraus was soon unable to resist satirising the posturing and bombast of Bahr. Wunberg 1981.
- 29 Hugo von Hofmannsthal, *Reden und Aufsätze*, vol. I (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1979), 176.
- 30 The exhibition hall of the Vienna Secession was designed by Joseph Maria Olbrich, one of Otto Wagner's most talented students, but the external appearance of the building, recalling a shrine, was inspired by a sketch by Klimt.
- 31 On the façade of the Secession building, in gold letters, was the motto: "Der Zeit ihre Kunst, der Kunst ihre Freiheit".
- 32 Sármany-Parsons 1991.
- 33 Schnitzler only dared share it among friends in a private printing, because the censor had forbidden its publication. It was first released in 1912 in Budapest, and was only published in Vienna after the war.
- 34 *The Lord Chandos Letter* (NYRB Classics, 2005), 321–325.
- 35 Ernst Mach's masterwork, which also influenced artists, was: *Die Analyse der Empfindungen und das Verhältnis der Physischen zum Psychischen* (Jena, 1886).
- 36 Hermann Bahr, "Das unrettbare Ich", in Wunberg 1981, 148.
- 37 There were also scientists and artists in other European countries who discarded the theory of evolution and the rationalism of the enlightenment, but they worked mostly in isolation, and almost nowhere else were they able to dominate the outlook of the local elite intelligentsia as in Vienna.
- 38 Richard Strauss set the drama to music, and it is still part of the opera repertoire.
- 39 Rosa Mayreder was one of the most prominent Viennese feminist thinkers. Her most important work, *Zur Kritik der Weiblichkeit*, was published in 1905.
- 40 *The Road into the Open*.
- 41 See, for example, the Imperial Crypt in the Capuchin Church.
- 42 An integral part of the Viennese popular/city folklore was its emphasis on the omnipresence of death, such as in the many Wiener Lieder, written in the spirit of "carpe diem". These songs, mostly in waltz rhythm, had an identity-making role, and meant to Vienna what the chansons meant to Paris.
- 43 Franz Schubert: *Die Winterreise (Winter Journey)*, or the *Death and the Maiden*.
- 44 These natural phenomena also appeared as symbols of the ephemeral nature of human life in paintings in the 1890s (such as Klimt's landscapes).
- 45 In particular *Tristan and Isolde*.
- 46 Such as *Death and the Fool* (1893).
- 47 See Blom 2009, esp. chapters 9 (219–248) and 11 (277–307).
- 48 The censor in England was much stricter than in Vienna. For example, Krafft-Ebing's book on sexual aberrations (first published in Latin as *Psychopathia Sexualis*) could not be published there. Works on a similar topic by Havelock Ellis, the English psychiatrist colleague of the medical professor from Graz, could only be accessed by doctors, under very strict controls, until 1935. In France, books which dealt with issues of sexual psychopathology were also not generally available or well known. In this respect, Vienna was much more liberal and tolerant.
- 49 This type of passionate, obsessive interest, which in Vienna displaced so many other subjects, such as social political issues, could not be seen in contemporary Paris or London or Berlin.
- 50 Freud was horrified when he read the work in manuscript and opposed its publication.
- 51 Klimt's pictures were the most problematic, precisely because of their depictions of the female nude, which continued to emancipate the unsightly (the figures representing dark forces in the Beethoven Frieze), and served as an example of the demonisation of women.

- 52 Eighteen left, among whom the most significant were: Klimt, Carl Moll, Adolf Böhm, Kolo Moser, Alfred Roller, Josef Hoffmann and Otto Wagner.
- 53 Some truly good artists remained in the Secession (e.g. Josef Engelhart, Ferdinand Andri), but they represented a different diversity of decorativeness blended with impressionism, plein air and realism, and were not concerned with creating a new, cohesive Viennese style for the age. They continued to hold three exhibitions per year of the latest works by local and foreign masters.
- 54 The rapid spread was due to the fact that its main representatives, Josef Hoffmann and Kolo Moser, took over the citadel of applied arts training in what amounted to a coup in 1898, and within a few years their students were popularising their style.
- 55 The first to question the existence of the Viennese Generationsstil was the contemporary, Robert Musil, looking back acrimoniously in 1921; see Musil 1983.
- 56 The main members of the plutocracy providing patronage were the Wittgenstein family, Fritz Waerndorfer, Primavesi, the Bloch-Bauer family, Zuckerkandl and the Lederer family. Natter 2003, 27–139.
- 57 They were surrounded by a circle of lesser talents, such as the other members of the Neukunstgruppe, but this study only has space to outline the careers of the major players.
- 58 Klaus Albrecht Schröder, *Richard Gerstl*, exh. cat. (Vienna: Kunstforum, 1993).
- 59 Gerstl stayed with the Hungarian painter Simon Hollósy in Nagybánya (now Baia Mare, Romania) in 1900 and the summer of 1901, something that was unique among Austrians at the time, who were generally not interested in what was going on in Hungarian painting.
- 60 True to his boundless hubris, he apparently rejected an offer from Carl Moll to exhibit at the Galerie Miethke, because he didn't want to appear alongside "such a bad painter" as Klimt.
- 61 Vienna 2008–2009.
- 62 Represented predominantly by Josef Hoffmann and the Wiener Werkstätte, the Vienna Secession used squares and cubes in architecture and design; contemporaries scorned it as the "cubic style".
- 63 He exhibited four paintings which still followed the style of Klimt.
- 64 Ludwig Hevesi, Internationale Kunstschau, *Fremdenblatt* no. 101, 29 April 1909.
- 65 Adolf Loos (1870–1933), the functionalist-oriented, technically not qualified but still outstanding architectural designer, was the artistic antagonist to the art of the Secession. His first major work to make a mark on the cityscape was his building on Michaelerplatz in 1910, which caused a scandal because of its façade, which was completely devoid of all ornamentation.
- 66 He did know those of Weininger and Möbius, however, and the influence of occultism and theosophy can also be detected in his early portraits. The latter inspiration is even mentioned in his autobiography.
- 67 Oppenheimer made portraits of many well-known personages: Arnold Schönberg (1909), Anton Webern (1909/10), Heinrich Mann (1907, 1911), Peter Altenberg (1910), Dr. Alfred Spitzer (1910), Adolf Loos (n. d., but before Kokoschka's libellous campaign), Arthur Schnitzler (1911), Franz Blei (1910/11), Heinrich Thannhauser (1912) and Tilla Durieux (1912). It is as if he was planning a portrait gallery of the most progressive leading lights of the day. In 1910, Otto Wagner is alleged to have suggested this path to Schiele, who, however (after the fiasco of the Wagner portrait) did not seek out "celebrities". After 1912, Oppenheimer became mainly the portrait painter of German and Swiss famous people.
- 68 For a hundred years, the professional literature has embarrassedly avoided this issue, because it was extremely dangerous to get into an argument with the world-famous Kokoschka (who lived until 1980). Plagiarism is difficult to prove from the pictures, although the similarity of style is clear to see; however it does not exceed the extent to be expected from the style of a group of painters working with the same inspirations and artistic principles. The Kokoschka lobby claimed that they had not read the book written on Mopp, and did not even know the latest paintings. Nevertheless, they succeeded in generating a hostile atmosphere.
- 69 Here, there can be no question of copying, merely iconographic affinity.
- 70 See Natter 1994, 17–24.
- 71 This is particularly true of Kokoschka, but after these events, every young painter exercised extreme caution.
- 72 Oppenheimer was more open towards the style of his French contemporaries, and he is the only "Viennese" whose pictures reveal most powerfully the inspiration of cubism, but without any subservience to the style.

- 73 If the type of behaviour Kokoschka exhibited had existed in the Paris of the French impressionists, they would never have been able to form a group; similarly, the members of the Nyolcak (the Eight) in Budapest would have accused each other of plagiarism, because they were constantly taking inspiration from each other's styles.
- 74 Originally, Roessler was supposed to write the volume on Oppenheimer. Natter 1994, 18.
- 75 It seems that Kokoschka did not consider Schiele to be important, because he did not receive enough critical acclaim. Later, after his death, he neglected him completely, and made no mention of him in his autobiography.
- 76 The breakdown of their studio community happened around the same time as the start of the campaign of defamation against Oppenheimer, but it still seems most strange that there are no further signs of any close relationship between Schiele and Mopp.
- 77 Erwin Dom Osen (1891–1970) moved to Krumau with his girlfriend, and stayed there until late July 1910. Schiele drew them often. Initially, Osen had been a member of the Neukunstgruppe.
- 78 In the development of this forced, convulsive and unnaturally expressive language of gestures, in addition to the long-recognised inspiration of dance, the latest literature also points out the influence of contemporary silent film. See Klee 2011, in particular 37–38.
- 79 His poems are strongly reminiscent of the works of his favourite poet, Rimbaud.
- 80 Wally was four years younger than Schiele. According to Nebehay she had previously posed as a model for Klimt.
- 81 The fact that he regarded Wally as an object is certainly due, at least in part, to the influence of Weininger, whose ideas cast a shadow over his relations with every woman, including his own mother.
- 82 Apart from his own interest, this fact is also explained in the professional literature by the high prices offered on the art market for erotic, even pornographic drawings. Schiele constantly faced poverty, and therefore drew many such drawings.
- 83 Schiele is portrayed as an instinctively brilliant career-builder in a study by Robert Jensen; Jensen 2001.
- 84 Despite the exhibitions, no pictures were sold. The reasons why Schiele failed to gain greater fame and popularity in Germany during his lifetime would fill a separate study. In any case, it seems that the Germans were less passionate for feverish eroticism than the Viennese.
- 85 See the essay by Kata Bodor, 87.
- 86 The most frequent exceptions were artists or doctors, who had a different attitude towards the human body. There is no certainty about who exactly were the purchasers of drawings which verged on pornography, but the names of many doctors and gynaecologists have already been put forward. Collectors were always men, and rarely showed off their "treasures" to other members of the family. The few middle-class women who came face-to-face with Schiele's drawings through their husbands did not like them (for example Ida Roessler, who was quite familiar with the art world).
- 87 According to Jane Kallir, his relationship with Wally also began to grow closer and emotionally more mature. Vienna 2010, 126.
- 88 It is true that Kokoschka was also very concerned about the price of his paintings, but he was aware of the mechanisms of the art market, and could manipulate them to his own advantage.
- 89 Comini 1974, 128. Maria Beer was portrayed two years later also by Gustav Klimt.
- 90 Faistauer, in *Vienna 2010*, 34. Originally published in *Neue Malerei in Österreich. Betrachtungen eines Malers* (Zürich, Leipzig, and Vienna, 1923), 18.
- 91 Such as Werner Hofmann; see Hofmann 1981.