Making Monsters: Ugliness, Hatred, and Self-Representation in Viennese Modernity

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation explores self-representation in early-twentieth-century Vienna, for example in local practices of self-portraiture. Visual artists discussed include Richard Gerstl, the composer Arnold Schönberg (who also painted), Oskar Kokoschka, and Egon Schiele.

Nevertheless this project is interdisciplinary, and as such other forms of self-representation are also considered – for example rhetorical self-representational strategies by Viennese figures such as the satirical writer Karl Kraus, architect and theorist Adolf Loos, and the young philosopher-psychologist Otto Weininger.

The primary phenomenon under investigation in this discussion is the extensive use of ugliness as a strategy for self-representation in Viennese modernity, an ugliness that was connected specifically – and, as I detail, pervasively – to an affect of hate. My argument is first and foremost that obsessive self-representation was a crucial component of Viennese modernity, and secondly that this obsession with self-fashioning and display must be understood at least in part in terms of a related cultural preoccupation with ugliness and hatred.

I analyze these cultural currents of hate and ugliness as they played out in philosophy, medicine (especially psychology and psychoanalysis), politics, and of course art history. I consider the significance of the scholars of the Vienna School of Art History – such as Franz

Wickhoff, who argued in defence of ugliness. I also consider the role of ugliness in contemporaneous aesthetic philosophy, for example in the theory of negative empathy popularized first by Theodor Lipps and later by Wilhelm Worringer. Sigmund Freud's comments on ugliness and hate further illuminate a cultural milieu known both for its alienation and antagonism and for its artistic achievements. I demonstrate that at the beginning of the twentieth century Viennese artists and thinkers fashioned oppositional personae and represented themselves as ugly for a variety of reasons: to emphasize the vanguard quality of their art, to grapple with Vienna's virulent antisemitism, to work through other identity issues, to express a sense of martyrdom, to "tell the truth," to create notoriety in a competitive local scene, and, ultimately, to affirm the totality of existence as that which includes the negative.

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Note on previously published material

Versions of three of the chapters in this thesis have been previously published and I wish to gratefully acknowledge those opportunites to develop and refine my ideas. An early version of chapter 1 was published in 2010 in the *Journal of Art Historiography*. A version of chapter 7 was published in the edited anthology *Ugliness: The Non-Beautiful in Art and Theory* in 2014, and that same year a shorter version of chapter 8 was also published, in the exhibition catalogue *Egon Schiele: The Radical Nude*. Interested readers may consult the Works Cited list for full publication details.

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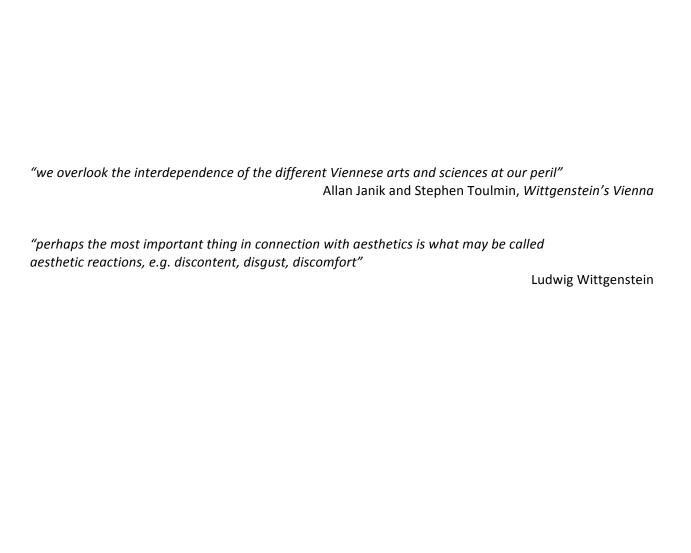
Figure 70. Egon Schiele, *Male Nude*, 1910, watercolour and charcoal, 44 x 31.5 cm, private collection (Kallir D. 687). This drawing is categorized as a self-portrait in Jane Kallir's catalogue raisonné of Schiele's works, but without further comment. From: Jane Kallir. *Egon Schiele: The Complete Works*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1998. Page 425.

Figure 71. Egon Schiele, For Art and for My Loved Ones I will gladly endure to the End!, 1912, watercolour and pencil, 48.2 x 31.8 cm, Albertina Museum, Vienna. From: Peter Vergo and Barnaby Wright, eds. Egon Schiele: The Radical Nude. London: The Courtauld Gallery in association with Paul Halberton Publishing, 2014. Page 62.

Figure 72. Egon Schiele, *Kneeling Male Nude with Raised Hand (Self-Portrait)*, 1910, black chalk and gouache, 62.1 x 44.1 cm, Leopold Museum, Vienna. From: Peter Vergo and Barnaby Wright, eds. *Egon Schiele: The Radical Nude*. London: The Courtauld Gallery in association with Paul Halberton Publishing, 2014. Page 93.

Figure 73. Egon Schiele, *Self-Portrait with Splayed Fingers*, 1911, pencil and gouache, 53 x 29.1 cm, Leopold Museum, Vienna (Inv. 1383). From: Peter Vergo and Barnaby Wright, eds. *Egon Schiele: The Radical Nude*. London: The Courtauld Gallery in association with Paul Halberton Publishing, 2014. Page 64.

Figure 74. Egon Schiele in front of a mirror (double self-portrait), c. 1914, photograph, Egon Schiele Archive, Albertina Museum, Vienna. From: Peter Vergo and Barnaby Wright, eds. *Egon Schiele: The Radical Nude*. London: The Courtauld Gallery in association with Paul Halberton Publishing, 2014. Page 6.



Introduction

There are a variety of genesis stories for the rise of ugliness in modern Western culture, and like all genesis stories each narrative probably leaves excluded as much as it includes. I propose here to tell one very partial story amongst many: a story of a burgeoning, interdisciplinary interest in ugliness as it was linked to hatred and self-representation in early-twentieth-century Viennese modernity. I further propose that this story about ugliness, hatred, and self-representation in Vienna may help us understand related phenomena in other places and times.

Writings on Vienna 1900 have constituted a massive industry at least since Carl Schorske's paradigmatically definitive work, throughout the 1960s and 1970s, on Viennese intellectual history. Schorske's *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (1979) continues to be highly influential. People both in and out of academia return obsessively to the history of Vienna, which has been home to an almost implausible number of artists, innovators, heroes, and villains – Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Ludwig van Beethoven, Franz Schubert, Gustav Mahler, and Arnold Schönberg in music, Ernst Mach, Martin Buber, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Karl Popper, and the Vienna Circle in philosophy, Carl von Rokitansky, Theodor Meynert, Josef Breuer, Sigmund Freud, and Ignaz Semmelweis in medicine, Otto Wagner and Adolf Loos in architecture, Theodor Herzl and Adolf Hitler in politics, not to mention the macabre Prince Rudolf, executor of the gruesome murder-suicide known as "The Mayerling Incident," and the doomed Archduke Franz Ferdinand – whose assassination set off the First World War. To name only a few of many more, Vienna was also home to writers Stefan Zweig, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Arthur Schnitzler, and Karl Kraus, and to visual artists Gustav Klimt, Richard

Gerstl, Oskar Kokoschka, and Egon Schiele, as well as the Vienna School and Ernst Gombrich in art history. A dizzying discourse has thus developed to describe what is admittedly a somewhat staggering situation. Schorske paints the situation thus:

The new culture-makers in the city of Freud ... repeatedly defined themselves in terms of a kind of collective oedipal revolt. Yet the young were revolting not so much against their fathers as against the authority of the paternal culture that was their inheritance. What they assaulted on a broad front was the value system of classical liberalism-in-ascendancy within which they had been reared. Given this ubiquitous and simultaneous criticism of their liberal-rational inheritance from within the several fields of cultural activity, the internalistic approach of the special disciplines could not do justice to the phenomenon. A general and rather sudden transformation of thought and values among the culturemakers suggested, rather, a shared social experience that compelled rethinking.¹

I've been researching, visiting, and writing about Vienna for over twelve years now, and I'm still thinking. I have read the first wave of scholarship like Schorske, who argued that Viennese modernism was apolitical, and developed from an inward turn – to psychic interiority – that was itself a reaction to the local failure of liberalism. I have read second-wave literature like Steven Beller, too; his edited collection Rethinking Vienna 1900 (2001) deliberately departed from the Schorskean paradigm with a renewed emphasis on politics. But I have not "rethought" Vienna in the sense of attempting to invent any unifying or unified theory that will

explain the city better than have others before me.

¹ Carl E. Schorske, Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture (New York: Vintage Books, 1981), xxvi.

My aims are more modest. Because the literature on Viennese modernism and modernity is so voluminous, because the figures are so contentious, because of my own interdisciplinary studies in philosophy, theory and criticism, and art history, and because of how long I have been reading, I have quite simply amassed an enormous amount and variety of information. And in the course of that amassing I noticed certain themes repeated over and over without being developed into full, detailed discussions, themes including: the paramount importance in Vienna of psychology and the Viennese obsession with selfhood, the confessional aspect, focus on self-portraiture, and ugliness of the Vienna-based visual art known as "Austrian expressionism," the hysterical hatred the city often had toward its own inhabitants, the disproportionate number of suicides and the endless enmities between colleagues, and despite all of that – the lively, fertile interpenetration of the arts and sciences locally. Gradually a theory developed in my mind that these themes – of selfhood and self-representation, ugliness and hatred, interdisciplinarity and innovation – were all related, and that while such themes were perhaps over-mentioned in a very superficial way, more fundamentally they remained under-discussed.

I decided that we needed a full book on ugliness, hatred, and self-representation in Viennese modernity. The novelty and contribution of my work lies in the fact that almost no one else has so closely combined philosophy, psychology, and art in the context of early-twentieth-century Viennese culture. No one else has undertaken a specific and sustained investigation of ugliness or self-portraiture in Vienna, either. And although the broader themes of Viennese negativity and narcissism are mentioned often, one would be hard-pressed to find books on these topics, too. As we shall see, these are strange scholarly omissions in light of the

Viennese obsession with representing identity in overtly repellent ways. In all other respects, however, I am deeply indebted to those who came before me.

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The strategic decision to present *oneself* as loathed, diseased, and ugly began to dominate Viennese visual arts in the early twentieth century. But these strategies of ugliness were related to contemporaneous Viennese culture and its various discourses of hate. Hatred and ugliness were inextricably intertwined in early-twentieth-century Viennese theory and practice, with various commentators – including artists, journalists, scientists, and art historians – pointing to the ways in which ugliness produces feelings of hate and hate affects visual perception.

While individual Viennese visual artists such as Oskar Kokoschka and Egon Schiele are certainly notorious, less well known is the overall eruption of such a distinct practice of unpleasant self-representation, including an explosion of ugly self-portraiture locally.² Artists and academics – from German expressionist artists of the *Blaue Reiter* group to historians

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² Thus although I have certainly considered it incumbent upon me, in this project, to consult the literature on self-portraiture, such literature does not make too many overt appearances in these pages. This, I argue, is the paradox of the Viennese obsession with selfhood, self-representation, and self-portraiture: it was a *collective* cultural phenomenon. Accordingly I have tried as much as possible to keep my discussion specific to that cultural context. By contrast literature on self-portraiture often tends, not surprisingly, to take the form of monographs focused on a specific artist prolific in that genre. Obvious examples include: Germain Renaissance master Albrecht Dürer, who made both beautiful and ugly self-portraits; Rembrandt, the Dutch Baroque artist who created an almost incredible range of dramatic and sensitive self-representations ranging from the tragic to the triumphant; Frida Kahlo, the renowned Mexican self-portraitist whose representations of her assorted – and often conflicting – identities were staunchly personal *and* politically revolutionary. Another trend in the literature has been to consider a selection of self-portrait artists as they relate to certain conceptual themes; thus in the "Sex and Genius" chapter of James Hall's *The Self-Portrait: A Cultural History* (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd, 2014), Schiele is linked conceptually to themes of masturbation, narcissism, and ambivalence but only very briefly – for fewer than ten sentences.

Schorske and William M. Johnston, author of the formative text The Austrian Mind: An Intellectual and Social History, 1848–1938 (1972) – have repeatedly demonstrated their aversion to tackling the topic of unpleasant Viennese self-representation head on. Instead artists and their idiosyncratic approaches and concerns tend to get neglected more or less entirely, or denigrated as merely prurient, or dismissed as narcissistic. For the artists of the Blaue Reiter group, for example, it was the confessional aspect of modern Viennese art that was "repugnant." Blaue Reiter painter August Macke had an antipathy toward Arnold Schönberg's practice of ugly self-portraiture and referred to the faces the composer painted as "'green-eyed waterlogged breakfast rolls with an astral gaze." Moreover Blaue Reiter leader Wassily Kandinsky – who never painted self-portraits and painted "only one real portrait" – was also irritated by his friend Schönberg's "dependence on the human face as the conveyor of spiritual values." ⁵ In *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna* Schorske discusses neither Egon Schiele's nor Richard Gerstl's art, much less the specifics of their representational strategies. And Johnston, who refers to Gerstl as a "fauve" who "committed suicide after painting a number of garish canvases," goes on to gloss both Schiele and Gerstl thus: "solipsistic and prematurely old, both youths made of every canvas a self-portrait." Johnston concludes that their "preoccupation with sexuality reflected the prevaricating morality that tainted the Vienna of Freud." 6 My feeling is that such avoidance of and antipathy toward Viennese self-representation constitutes

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³ Jane Kallir, *Arnold Schoenberg's Vienna* (New York: Galerie St. Etienne/Rizzoli, 1984), 60–1.

⁴ Norbert Wolf, *Expressionism* (Cologne: Taschen, 2004), 92.

⁵ Kallir, *Schoenberg's Vienna*, 60–1.

⁶ William M. Johnston, *The Austrian Mind: An Intellectual and Social History, 1848–1938* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 146.

a kind of negative evidence: it indicates that there is something unpleasant here, and phenomena we are averse to must be examined more closely on that very account.

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As these phenomena – preoccupations with ugliness, with hatred, with self-representation, not to mention obsessions with their interpenetration – were widespread, so too have I included a wide range of cultural objects in my own discussion. And to the extent that my arguments about ugliness, hatred, and self-representation take in an entire cultural milieu – Viennese modernity – I have made sure to look at lots of different, and often oppositional, facets of that milieu. Core disciplines, discourses, and areas of endeavour I examine include: both broadly Germanic and specifically Viennese art history and philosophy, competitive local scenes in visual arts, literature, and psychoanalysis, and more ephemeral Viennese cultural artefacts and processes such as lectures, newspapers, and temporary art exhibitions and theatrical productions. My primary sources include private art such as Richard Gerstl's late self-portrait drawings and public art such as Gustav Klimt's paintings for the interior of the University of Vienna. I look at psychological and philosophical texts by eminent thinkers who are well known (if not always well loved) such as local luminary Sigmund Freud or his German predecessor Friedrich Nietzsche, and by those who are barely acknowledged, including Viennese Otto Weininger.

My primary sources are also interdisciplinary because my training and methodology is itself interdisciplinary. In that sense my approach also deliberately complements a local scene that was self-consciously irreverent about artistic and scientific boundaries. In the

interdisciplinary context of early-twentieth-century Vienna, fruitful dialogue developed across ostensibly discrete areas of endeavour. This model of dialogue – albeit often hostile – has deeply informed my thinking in the sense that I reject hierarchical divisions between disciplines, as well as any absolute authority afforded to one school of thought. Indeed just as Kokoschka took it upon himself to talk back to Freud and psychoanalysis, so too have I – an interloper originally trained in philosophy – decided to enter into dialogue with both. Primary texts both visual and written are not so much permitted to speak to one another as they are acknowledged as having always already been talking. Moreover throughout my discussion artists and other thinkers are treated as figures capable of both reflecting and critiquing culture. That is to say: my methodology at times includes treating cultural artefacts as, simultaneously, primary and secondary documents. Thus a book like Freud's Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious (1905) is read both as a "primary" text containing historical information about the alienated personal and political contexts of its production and as a "secondary" text with theoretical insights useful to aesthetic analysis. Some cultural documents have lasting value in that they tell of being both a part and apart.

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This feeling of apartness, of alienation, permeates my entire discussion as it permeated Viennese modernity. At the end of the nineteenth century, Vienna was in turmoil. In their seminal scholarly study *Wittgenstein's Vienna* (1973), Allan Janik and Stephen Toulmin claim that at the turn of the century "Viennese aestheticism and the mass political movements

emerged alongside each other, but independently, as the twin orphans of liberalism." But actually they weren't independent at all. Janik and Toulmin themselves admit that Theodor Herzl's founding of modern Zionism in Vienna "involved translating [Richard] Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk* from the sphere of art into that of politics." They claim further: "the origin of modern Zionism was yet another Viennese response to the problems of alienation in modern mass society, which spread throughout the rest of Europe only after World War One." Aesthetic and political issues were generating increasingly explosive debate in the public sphere; and yet at the same time private, internal states of subjectivity also garnered unprecedented attention – especially in philosophy, medicine, and the burgeoning psychoanalytic movement.

Thus Viennese political and aesthetic alienation was often represented through strategies of ugliness that also reflected interpersonal frustration and, more fundamentally, frustrated ego ideals. I generally follow Freud in thinking that the ego is essentially a projection of our ideas about the surface of our own body. And our ideas about our bodies are themselves formed in part by how we perceive and react to the bodies of those around us.

Thus representing – our selves, each other – is a self-constituting activity fraught with potential peril. Whereas literature on Vienna tends to mention narcissism in a largely passing and pejorative way, I will be attending more specifically to representations of thwarted, traumatic narcissism. Viennese doctors and scientists, writers and journalists, artists, religious leaders, and politicians all used hatred and ugliness as tropes and tools in debates about the alienation

⁷ Allan Janik and Stephen Toulmin, Wittgenstein's Vienna (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973), 48.

⁸ Ibid., 61.

of modern man, and these cultural conditions seem to have affected not only representational strategies but also the self-perceptions underpinning such strategies.

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Viennese self-portraiture is particularly notable for its unique and often ugly representation of skin. This fixation on skin – a corporeal feature that is both intra- and intersubjective, visually and haptically both a surface and a boundary – can itself be related to the accusation of narcissism so frequently leveraged against both specific Viennese figures and Viennese modernity at large. Moreover the important relationship between skin and narcissism is thoughtfully parsed in Freud's 1914 essay "On Narcissism." In that essay Freud talks about the subject's sense of unity and cohesion – the ego – as a corporeal projection that develops with the advent of primary narcissism. He continues this line of thought, and in the 1923 essay "The Ego and the Id" explicitly refers to the ego as a "bodily ego." These ideas are particularly relevant for our purposes because they help us understand why frustrated egos caught in traumatic identities and hateful subjective dynamics might create ugly self-representations. When Freud defines the ego as "first and foremost a bodily ego ... not merely a surface entity, but ... the *projection* of a surface,"9 his comments seem almost uncannily suited to analysis of a Viennese culture obsessed with embodied identity, and art that repeatedly represented skin – the surface of the body. Uncanny, that is, until we recall that Freud himself experienced and contributed to this very culture.

⁹ Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud XIX*, prepared under the general editorship of James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1960), 25.

The purported narcissism of Freud's Vienna has been a source of protest for commentators both contemporaneously and today. In fact the concept of Viennese narcissism often gets invoked as a sort of general idea and used to lump together and dismiss what are actually discrete, interesting cultural phenomena. Naturally scholars (and others) opposed to psychoanalysis identify it as a narcissistic cultural development par excellence, but the literature often also critiques Viennese narcissism with reference to the tremendous local popularity of the feuilleton. The Viennese feuilleton was an ostensibly literary or cultural essay that mutated into an entirely personal article. 10 Famed Viennese author Stefan Zweig says that the feuilleton writer "'sought to endow his material with color drawn from his imagination. The subjective response of the reporter or critic to an experience, his feeling-tone, acquired clear primacy over the matter of his discourse. To render a state of feeling became the mode of formulating a judgment. Accordingly in the feuilleton's writer's style, the adjectives engulfed the nouns, the personal tint obliterated the contours of the object of discourse." The feuilleton, often associated with the decadent Jung Wien [Young Vienna] group of writers, subsequently became a symbol of the city's penchant for pointless affectation, ornamentation, and narcissism – of much that was purportedly wrong with Viennese art and culture.

Joseph Leo Koerner, an American art historian (with Viennese ancestry) known for his work on German Renaissance self-portraiture, has things to say about narcissism in Albrecht Dürer's oeuvre that are also helpful to us here. For example Koerner refers to Dürer's famed,

¹⁰ Janik and Toulmin, Wittgenstein's Vienna, 45.

¹¹ In ibid., 45–6.

gorgeous self-portrait of 1500 (Fig. 24) as "an egoistic document of ego," by which he means both "an ideal ego-document [and] also, simultaneously, the document of an 'ego-ideal.'" Koerner describes Dürer's narcissistic self-image thus: "in it, one feels that the artist offers himself to himself as his highest standard: thus should a man look, the beautiful likeness testifies, and thus should he act, with talent and discipline, making things as perfect as this." Koerner also points to self-portraiture's association with narcissism when he reminds us that the concept "draws from the ancient myth the conceit of self-love occurring accidentally by way of a mirrored likeness. The ideal-ego places before the subject a *picture* of what it wants to be." But really Koerner's remarks are relevant for us as a point of sharp contrast and departure – for whereas he considers successful narcissistic moments in Dürer's life and work, we will mostly attend to the opposite: traumatic identity, failed narcissism, and ugly rather than beautiful self-representations.

The ugly, hateful Viennese self-representations we will be examining often function as unpleasant accusations: the ugly self railing hatefully against society's imperfections, subjects bound together in agonism. In such a cultural context, harmonious mirroring was neither attainable nor desirable. Instead of reflecting beauty back to society, the Viennese men I look at often chose instead to present themselves as a monstrous threat: as harbingers who, in inspiring fear and revulsion, also actually served as educators. This is in keeping with the

¹² Joseph Leo Koerner, "Self-portraiture Direct and Oblique," in *Self Portrait: Renaissance to Contemporary*, ed. Joanna Woodall (London: National Portrait Gallery, 2005), 68.

¹³ Ibid., 70.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

historical and etymological understanding of the monster as an ugly, fearful creature who serves as an omen to the body politic.

In "The Look of Self-portraiture," art historian T.J. Clark dispenses in short order with two common ideas about mirroring and self-portraiture. The first is self-portraiture's association with narcissism, which Clark immediately dismisses as nothing but a platitude. The second is the notion of the self-portrait as a reliable visual representation; the mere fact of a self-portrait, Clark argues, by no means tells us that the artist "is necessarily a good judge of what he *looks* like." We shall encounter very few realistically rendered self-images in these pages – instead we will see the meaning of accurate, skilful self-representation acquire a strange new valence in Viennese modernity. More evocative of the self-representational styles we will see here is Clark's passing remark that self-consciousness itself often has pejorative overtones, for example its association with "adolescence and bad skin." In fact adolescent themes of painful self-consciousness and bad skin rather precisely describes Viennese self-portraiture.

So it is the negative narcissism of alienated subjects and threatened egos that is at stake here. In Vienna ideas about identity and selfhood were crucially important, but also constantly contested. In his *Critique of Cynical Reason* German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk notes that "reduced to a formula, Freudian analysis presupposes that the metaphysical dogma of the unity of the person in its ego has been burst … Freud only finds this bursting as a *fait accompli* and

¹⁶ T.J. Clark, "The Look of Self-portraiture," in *Self Portrait: Renaissance to Contemporary*, ed. Joanna Woodall (London: National Portrait Gallery, 2005), 58.

¹⁷ Ibid.

does not himself bring it about. That is his place in the history of ideas."¹⁸ The idea of a unified self is no longer tenable. And yet in both Freudian theory and Viennese art and culture the discrete particularity of the individual is asserted more trenchantly – and perhaps tragically – than ever. Self-as-ruptured-ego becomes a real identity, seen not only in self-portraits and clinical case histories but in philosophy, novels, plays, music, even the paranoid caricatures in local newspapers.

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I further argue that the subjects of Viennese modernity somatized a sense of traumatic psychic identity. Psychological conflicts were recast in physical terms. In other words, artists and writers in Vienna represented *hysterically* – hysteria being, quite simply, the somatization of psychic distress.

Hysteria is a fascinating but perilously nebulous topic, in part because of its enigmatic and often unruly character. Freud changed his theory of hysteria a great deal over the years, but recognized and generally respected the intellectual precociousness of the hysteric. One of his more succinct statements was in *Studies on Hysteria* (1895) when he declared, referring to himself and co-author Breuer: "We regard hysterical symptoms as the effects and residues of excitations which have acted on the nervous system as traumas ... Now we are accustomed to find in hysteria that a considerable part of this 'sum of excitation' of the trauma is transformed into purely somatic symptoms. It is this characteristic of hysteria that has so long stood in the

¹⁸ Peter Sloterdijk, *Critique of Cynical Reason* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 366.

way of its being recognized as a psychical disorder."¹⁹ Like Freud, then, I conceptualize hysteria as the symbolic conversion of excessive, traumatic stimulation from the level of psyche to that of soma. I likewise follow Freud and psychoanalytic theory more broadly in conceptualizing trauma as an intense and excessive stimulation that the subject is unable to master, and which therefore produces a wound that affects the whole psychic system.

Another difficulty is that specifically male hysteria is almost always overlooked. To date cultural theories of hysteria have largely been explored within feminist literature focused on women. While some authors detail the socio-symbolic implications of hysteria as a cathartic reaction against an oppressive, misogynist society, ²⁰ others emphasize the future value of hysteria as an essentially subversive form of embodied knowing and a foundation for *écriture feminine*. ²¹

Mark S. Micale, a historian who specializes in psychiatry, psychoanalytic studies, and histories of masculinity, and who published the singular *Hysterical Men: The Hidden History of Male Nervous Illness* in 2008, accounts for the neglect of male hysteria while also arguing that our view of history – as well as our discourse – needs to change. Micale notes both that hysteria is deeply associated with the female body and femininity in the cultural imagination, and that this association is at least partially erroneous. He insists that on the contrary hysteria

¹⁹ Freud, *Standard Edition II*, 91. Freud would later shift the emphasis in his definition of hysteria away from trauma toward so-called "seduction." But the core definition of hysteria – as arising from the somatization (conversion) of excess stimulation not properly abreacted – remained.

²⁰ Dianne Hunter, "Hysteria, Psychoanalysis, and Feminism: The Case of Anna O.," in *Writing on the Body: Female Embodiment and Feminist Theory*, eds Katie Conboy, Nadia Medina, Sarah Stanbury (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 257–82.

²¹ Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément, *The Newly Born Woman*, trans. Betsy Wing (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986).

has a long, rich history as an illness besetting males, too.²² Male hysteria is relevant to my own project for several reasons, including the hysterical representational strategies of the figures being discussed, the conceptual and cultural connections between hysteria, hatred, and ugliness, and the ubiquity of explicit representations of hysteria in Viennese culture and discourse.

Indeed it is male – not female – hysteria that played the more prominent role in the genesis of psychoanalysis in late-nineteenth-century Vienna. Freud's first publication in psychology, his first two public presentations on psychopathology, and his first medical translations all addressed male hysteria. Freud's etiological focus on the causes – rather than effects or symptoms – of hysteria had very important consequences for how the hysterical subject came to be understood not only in medical discourse but also in culture at large.

Conventionally hysteria was considered highly changeable and unpredictable, and thus elicited

Juliet Mitchell frames the whole repressed history of male hysteria powerfully and succinctly when she says: "There is no question but that men can be hysterics. Galen affirmed this in the history of Western thought in the first century AD; it was soon rejected. It was revived deliberately in the seventeenth century, when it was once more rejected; the late nineteenth-century conviction of its prevalence was eventually not disputed. However, the whole category of hysteria was soon set to disappear ... in Western accounts and in anthropological observations, as in psychoanalysis, there is a tendency to treat hysteria in the male as more serious than hysteria in the female so that, if it is recorded at all, it is frequently labelled 'hysterical psychosis.' More usual is that the notion of male hysteria is rejected, and then other categories are used to encapsulate acute hysteria and its male sufferers: melancholia and hypochondria in the seventeenth century; schizophrenia at the turn of the nineteenth century; traumatic neurosis and then 'borderline' after the two World Wars of the twentieth." Juliet Mitchell, *Mad Men and Medusas: Reclaiming Hysteria* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 320–1.

²³ Mark S. Micale, *Hysterical Men: The Hidden History of Male Nervous Illness* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 242. Ostensibly rejecting any inherent connection between the female sex and hysteria, Freud claimed that the word "originates from the earliest times of medicine and is a precipitate of the prejudice, overcome only in our own days, which links neuroses with diseases of the female sexual apparatus" (Freud, *Standard Edition I*, 41).

comparisons to chameleons and to the Greek god Proteus.²⁴ By contrast in his 1888 essay "Hysteria" Freud asserts that this popular understanding of hysteria, as characterized by "instability of will, changes of mood, increase of excitability with a diminution of all altruistic feelings," is not accurate. Rather, he notes, there are even "severe cases of hysteria in which a psychical change of that kind is entirely absent; many of the patients who belong to this class are among the most amiable, clear-minded people, with the strongest will, who feel their illness distinctly as something foreign to their nature."²⁵

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Micale notes that it "would appear that women and hysteria are found synonymously unattractive, so a hysterical man is 'feminine.'"²⁶ Masculinity in an age of hysteria thus becomes a double bind: the very pressure to be masculine creates the kind of anxiety and traumatic identity that can itself also cause hysteria. The "hysteric becomes hysterical because there seems to be something intolerable around that threatens his unique existence, something that prevents him from being who he is."²⁷ Representing failed masculinity was a way to both

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²⁴ Freud, Standard Edition III, 262–3.

Freud, *Standard Edition I*, 49. A noteworthy example can be found in a bit of gossip in Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams*. Freud tells a story about Theodor Meynert – who was the director of the psychiatric clinic at the University of Vienna, Freud's teacher, and a great medical pioneer in the field of neuropathology – that reveals Meynert's ambivalence about himself and about hysteria. Meynert and Freud, after an early period of mutual enthusiasm, became enemies in large part because of their disagreement about male hysteria – Meynert insisted it did not exist. And yet apparently Meynert's protestations had been merely a ruse: on his deathbed he confessed to Freud that he himself clearly suffered from the very male hysteria he had disavowed (Freud, *Standard Edition V*, 438).

²⁶ Micale, Hysterical Men, 321.

²⁷ Mitchell, Mad Men and Medusas, 46–7.

articulate and potentially also overcome a hysterical sense of sexual and subjective lack in a threatening environment. In her book *Mad Men and Medusas: Reclaiming Hysteria* (2000) Juliet Mitchell notes that for the hysteric, hatred "is an emotional response to the need to survive in hostile conditions." ²⁸ In Viennese modernity the threads that bound failed masculinity, femininity, hysteria, and hatred were tangled but tight.

Contemporary feminist theorist Elizabeth Grosz discusses hysteria as the result of misogynistic representational regimes:

Hysteria can, in a way, be seen as a response to this absence of representation, especially of autonomous representations of women. In much of the relevant literature, the [Freudian] homunculus is *explicitly* described as male, and there is no mention of what this means for women. Hysteria is a somatisation of psychical conflict, an acting out of resistance rather than its verbal articulation or conceptual representation. It is, according to Freud, a largely feminine neurosis. This may help explain how anorexia, a sub-branch of hysteria, is also an overwhelmingly feminine neurosis. It is a form of protest against and resistance to cultural investments defining what the 'proper' body is for women. (It is significant that there is no such 'proper' image for men. A wide variety of body-images remain perfectly tolerable).²⁹

Grosz also asserts that "the human subject is capable of suicide, of anorexia, because the body is *meaningful*, has significance, because it is in part constituted both for the subject and for

²⁸ Ibid., 145.

²⁹ Elizabeth Grosz, "Psychoanalysis and the Imaginary Body," in *Feminist Subject, Multi-Media: Cultural Methodologies*, eds Penny Florence and Dee Reynolds (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 187, emphasis in original.

others in terms of meanings and significances."³⁰ In part because I so thoroughly agree with Grosz about the body's meaningful materiality, I disagree with her other claim that representational politics constrain women only.

For me the hatred toward one's body implied by and involved in a practice of ugly self-representation, for example (and I refer here to both self-directed hatred and hatred from others), is of more interest than pretending we can parse out the precise differences in how men, women, and others experience such hatred. In arguing that Viennese artists somatized a sense of traumatic psychic identity, I am also in effect insisting that men too are susceptible to hysterical self-hatred, gender dissatisfaction and dysphoria, and bodily dysfunction. The salient issue here, however, will not be the gendered manifestations of those experiences *per se* so much as the broader representational hegemonies and the trauma sustained and somatized by those who are excluded from, or demonized by, the dominant representational regimes. Indeed it would seem that trauma and ambivalence are more significant factors, in hysterical conversion, than sex and gender.

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Freud frequently asserted that neurotics mix love and hate, and hysterics are perhaps especially prone to such oscillations. Not just love and hate in particular, but also ambivalence more generally, undergirds hysteria – and ambivalence will likewise be a central facet of our discussion. Ambivalence, far from being the general state of apathy or indecisiveness that it is

³⁰ Ibid., 186.

often mistaken for in colloquial conversation, in fact refers to an intense internal feeling of conflict. "Ambi-" means two ways, and in psychology "valence" refers to either the positive or the negative power an object has for the subject. Mitchell notes that although there "is always ambivalence in human relationships," nevertheless such ambivalence is particularly central to the dynamics of hysteria. This ambivalence, she explains "crops up time and again in Freud's letters to Fliess. Rather than think through the ambivalence ... the hysteric 'becomes' [it]." According to Mitchell, Freud himself enacted the specifically "negative side of the ambivalence that hysteria has towards itself ... he could not quite leave it alone and oscillated between the ecstasy of thinking he had understood it to a phobic avoidance of it as something elusive, ungraspable, contaminating and dishonest." This kind of ambivalent oscillation between attraction and repulsion will reappear again and again here.

Hysterical ambivalence is in fact an essentially intersubjective process insofar as hysteria "always engages the other, inducing a reciprocity or a refusal."³³ This is one of the reasons why hysteria is compared to – and even referred to as – performance art: like performance art, hysteria requires a viewer's participation. The ugly self-representational strategies I discuss likewise both arise from and induce ambivalence, and demand reciprocity or refusal. Indeed ambivalence, as a psychological concept, is extraordinarily helpful in trying to understand the violent contradictions and affective intensity of Viennese modernity. Janik and Toulmin, from a philosophical perspective, make an observation pertinent to my own claims about Viennese

³¹ Mitchell, *Mad Men and Medusas*, 56–7.

³² Ibid., 47.

³³ Ibid., 59.

ambivalence when they say that "after studying nineteenth-century Habsburg history, one can hardly deny the charm of [the] Hegelian dialectic, as a mode of historical explanation." They elaborate: "for in it one continually sees situations begetting their own opposites," and we will see that kind of ambivalent interplay of opposites in Viennese tropes of spirit and body, beauty and ugliness, Aryan and Jewish, healthy and sick, love and hate, honesty and dishonesty, and male and female.

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No doubt in part because of this build-up of traumatic stimulation and affective ambivalence, late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century Viennese culture developed a preoccupation with catharsis. The Viennese catharsis craze was also part of a broader concern with mythology and tragedy. Not only psychoanalysis but also other Viennese arts and sciences drew on mythology and especially tragedy for their understandings of intersubjectivity, and for self-definition and representation.

In his book *Art's Emotions: Ethics, Expression and Aesthetic Experience* (2012) Damien Freeman, citing the noted American analytic philosopher Martha Nussbaum, suggests that catharsis "can be seen as something like articulation of emotion." Based on this interpretation Freeman then proposes a very interesting conceptual model for understanding tragic catharsis: as a process constituted by "interactions resembling infection, communication and

³⁴ Janik and Toulmin, Wittgenstein's Vienna, 39.

articulation."³⁵ The canonical definition of catharsis comes from Aristotle's *Poetics*, a "manual for writing a successful tragedy" written around 335 BCE.³⁶ Before Aristotle penned his *Poetics*, catharsis referred to medical physical processes such as the discharge of menstrual blood from the body. In the *Poetics* the cathartic process – now the viewer's empathetic identification with the stage performer's tragic situation – is no longer exclusively medical although it is still corporeal. Moreover catharsis now depends on a psychosomatic intertwining. Purgation looms large in the Aristotelian medical understanding, while intersubjective identification is foundational to Aristotle's theory of tragedy. In turn early-twentieth-century Viennese theory and practice drew on contemporaneous versions of these notions of intersubjectivity and purgation.

In Re/Casting Kokoschka: Ethics and Aesthetics, Epistemology and Politics in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna (2002) Claude Cernuschi notes, for example, that in 1904 Jung Wien writer

Hermann Bahr dedicated an aesthetic treatise to Gustav Klimt – Dialog vom Tragischen

[Dialogue on the Tragic] – that was heavily influenced by Freud and Breuer's Studies on

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³⁵ Damien Freeman, *Art's Emotions: Ethics, Expression and Aesthetic Experience* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 43. Nussbaum, known for her work on Aristotle, also describes the ancient Greek philosopher's approach to catharsis in a manner strongly reminiscent of Anna O.'s description of the cathartic psychoanalytic talking cure as "chimney sweeping."

³⁶ Ibid. The *Poetics* is also an extremely contested text, especially in light of its brevity. Only the tragedy portion has survived but the text was originally in two parts, one addressing tragedy and one comedy. Nevertheless, despite its fragmentary and enigmatic nature – or perhaps in part because of it – the *Poetics* has produced a voluminous secondary literature that debates the precise meaning of concepts including representation, fear, and catharsis. These same concepts are extraordinarily relevant to our investigation of ugliness, hatred, and self-representation in Vienna.

Hysteria.³⁷ Indeed Bahr used the idea of catharsis in his own interpretation of tragic drama, contributing to explicit contemporaneous links between Aristotle and Freud, tragic catharsis and psychoanalytic catharsis. In his book *Freud, Biologist of the Mind* (1992), Frank J. Sulloway further explains that in Vienna the development of cathartic clinical technique was intimately related to a burgeoning cultural interest in catharsis:

The evolution of the cathartic technique appears to be linked to another contemporary development ... Jacob Bernays, the uncle of Freud's future wife, had long been concerned with the Aristotelian concept of dramatic catharsis (Bernays 1875, 1880). In Vienna, as elsewhere, this whole subject was much discussed among scholars and in the salons and even assumed for a time the proportions of a craze ... by 1880 Bernays's ideas had inspired some seventy German-language publications on catharsis, a number that more than doubled by 1890. It seems very possible that an intelligent girl like Anna O. might have been acquainted with the subject and unconsciously incorporated this knowledge into the dramatic plot of her illness. And the connection between catharsis in its theatrical and medical senses was certainly not lost upon Bernays and others. It is not known whether Breuer and Freud were acquainted with Bernays's ideas while they were developing their theory of hysteria. Still, it is extremely difficult to believe they were not; and a year after *Studies on Hysteria* appeared in print, Breuer, who had a special interest in Greek drama, discussed Bernays's views in a letter.³⁸

³⁷ Claude Cernuschi, *Re/Casting Kokoschka: Ethics and Aesthetics, Epistemology and Politics in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna* (London: Associated University Presses, 2002), 101.

Frank J. Sulloway, *Freud, Biologist of the Mind: Beyond the Psychoanalytic Legend* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1979), 56–7.

Ideas about catharsis were so diffuse in Viennese modernity that they could influence even those who had never read Aristotle, Bahr, or Breuer and Freud. And very often what was at stake was the expression of traumatic identity through ugly self-representation.

Regarding the fascination and function of mythology within psychoanalysis in Vienna,

Cernuschi explains that

Although dynamic psychiatry eventually developed a highly intricate and specialized vocabulary of its own, at the turn of the century, thinkers like Freud, [Havelock] Ellis, or Krafft-Ebing found the characterology of ancient myth particularly helpful in disseminating meaning and in justifying the legitimacy of their enterprise, especially to an audience already well versed in Greek culture and whose intellectual assumptions were already preconditioned (as Freud's probably were) by Nietzsche's ideas. And once those assumptions were in place, the possibility of projecting one's personality onto mythic characters no longer qualified as fantasy ... but as a mode of self-analysis sanctified and practiced by the "science" of the day.

Cernuschi's observations can be extended far beyond merely psychoanalysis, however; more broadly the idea of art as a conduit to self-analysis permeates these pages, as it permeated Viennese modernity. And because in Vienna such self-analysis and representation often produced ugly, hateful imagery, Aristotle's model of catharsis – as the viewer's empathetic identification with a staged tragic situation – is relevant. While, on the one hand, representing hateful, ugly aspects of the self could be cathartic, on the other hand we will also see Viennese figures deliberately eschewing such empathetic identification again and again.

In the next eight chapters we will examine the themes of ugliness, hatred, and self-representation in a variety of related contexts in Viennese modernity. The themes themselves have determined my choice of objects, but my methodological approach is a quite deliberate attempt to combine cultural history with art theory. My storytelling strategy is straightforward: by and large the information is presented chronologically, as I track the development of certain manifestations of ugliness, hatred, and self-representation through Viennese modernity. Within that largely chronological structure I also cluster chapters around related themes, such as antisemitism and ambivalent Jewishness, and actual relationships between Viennese players. Throughout, the emphasis is consistently on the roles of ugliness, hatred, and self-representation in the larger drama of Viennese modernity.

In chapter 1, I foreground the concept of ugliness itself by offering an overview of its intersection with Viennese art and the Vienna School of Art History at the turn to the twentieth century. In chapter 2, this general consideration of ugliness shifts toward a focus, instead, on relationships between hatred, self-representation, and ambivalent subjectivity in one particularly Viennese work: Otto Weininger's hugely influential book *Sex and Character* (1903). Weininger's thought is essential to any psychological or philosophical understanding of Viennese culture, and certainly to any cultural history of the period; yet despite this foundational character, *Sex and Character* is routinely neglected in the literature. Such neglect stems directly from the difficulties inherent in reading the work: both in the sense that Weininger's theories are so upsettingly hateful that they become difficult to read, and insofar as *Sex and Character* is, more legitimately, just a difficult medico-philosophical text.

Nevertheless the early-twentieth-century Viennese predilection for ugly, hateful self-representation can really be much more clearly understood if we first grapple with Weininger. In fact I argue that the vision — of an ambivalent, self-hating subject — that Weininger reveals in *Sex and Character* is a kind of self-portrait. In chapter 3 I expand further on these themes of hatred and ambivalence by exploring their specific connections with Jewishness in virulently antisemitic Vienna, with reference to how such ambivalence and hatred affected a variety of local representational practices, for example in politics, literature, psychoanalysis, and caricature. These same emotions and psychological dynamics will also be relevant in subsequent chapters.

In chapter 4 I examine Richard Gerstl's avid practice of self-portraiture in terms of his feelings of ugliness and despair and his 1908 suicide. Gerstl's fate was entangled with that of the far more famous Viennese figure Arnold Schönberg, Gerstl's friend and sometime enemy. In chapter 5 I consider Schönberg's ugly self-portraits and portraits around 1910, and in the process offer some biographical and philosophical interventions into the Schönberg literature. In chapter 6 I examine the contested relationship between ethics and aesthetics in Viennese modernity, and the fanatical enmities created along both local fault lines and in subsequent scholarship. I argue that such enmities are performative: the fostering of deliberately hateful relations in Vienna was tied up with attempts to enact new definitions of beauty and ugliness. I furthermore investigate the ways that subsequent scholars have reinscribed – somewhat obsessively – the contemporaneous discourses of such enemies. An example of this would be the perpetuation of a division between style and idea that is itself, I argue, somewhat spurious. Continuing with this notion of deliberate hatefulness, in chapter 7 I analyze Kokoschka's early

self-portraiture around 1909–10 with reference to the contemporaneous Germanic aesthetic theory of negative empathy (*Einfühlung*), which argues that hatred and ugliness are inextricably intertwined in aesthetic experience. Finally, in chapter 8 I argue for an affirmation of ugliness via the kindred visions of Friedrich Nietzsche and Egon Schiele, more specifically Schiele's creation – in his self-portrait practice from 1910 – of radical beauty out of Dionysian ugliness.

These stories I tell matter for several reasons. First, because I suspect the academic industry of publishing on Vienna will not stop any time soon, and I believe I have fresh insights to offer within the context of that industry. Second, because of the abyssal but in my opinion unnecessary opposition between pop culture's infatuation with prettier, more decorative elements of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century Viennese culture (for example the 2015 film *Woman in Gold* – a fictionalized family saga based on Klimt's famed decorative portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer – or the celebrity party held recently that asked attendees to dress after Klimt and in gold) and academic culture's denigration of this culture in favour of more austere elements in Vienna. ³⁹ I contend that these opposing camps should talk to, and hopefully make some peace with, each other. And finally, these stories matter insofar as I do not believe that real beauty comes from the repression of what's threatening, of what scares or repels us. I think real beauty comes from real happiness, and real happiness comes from real acceptance – of ugliness, of hatred, of the ways that we tend to be both obsessed with and

³⁹ The recent exhibition and corresponding catalogue, edited by Gemma Blackshaw, *Facing the Modern: The Portrait in Vienna 1900* (London: National Gallery, 2013) managed to combine both academic and popular interest in the topic. Moreover the contributing authors also contest, to some extent, this opposition between pretty, refined historicism and austere, avant-garde modernism in Vienna.

divided against ourselves – of, as Freud once put it, our right to sometimes linger at disagreeable stages of development.

Chapter 1

Viennese Art, Ugliness, and the Vienna School of Art History: The Vicissitudes of Theory and Practice

Everything depends on understanding that the aim of the fine arts is not ... beauty.

– Alois Riegl

In 1891 the artistic commission of the University of Vienna submitted to the Ministerium für Kultus und Unterricht [Ministry of Culture, Religion, and Education] a proposal for decorating the ceiling of the university's great hall with oil paintings. These oil paintings were intended to represent the four faculties of Theology, Philosophy, Medicine, and Jurisprudence. The Ministry chose the theme of "The Victory of Light over Darkness" and selected artists Gustav Klimt and Franz Matsch to undertake it. Matsch was to paint the centrepiece, representing the university, as well as theology and six lunettes; Klimt was to paint philosophy, medicine, jurisprudence, and ten lunettes. The project had been fraught with disagreement from the first; indeed Peter Vergo notes that both "the artistic commission of the university and the fine arts commission of the Ministry" asked Matsch and Klimt to "declare themselves ready 'within the limits of artistic freedom' to undertake such alterations as were deemed necessary." But with the exhibition of Klimt's Philosophy at the annual Secession exhibition of 1900 the controversy achieved the status of a massive public scandal.⁴⁰ This scandal reverberated throughout various faculties of the university and into Viennese newspapers, which published written protests against Philosophy and caricatures of the work that focused on its ugliness as well as the literally sickening effect it purportedly had on the body politic. The art critic

⁴⁰ Peter Vergo, *Art in Vienna 1898–1918: Klimt, Kokoschka, Schiele and their Contemporaries* (London: Phaidon, 1981), 49.

Hermann Bahr documented these controversies in his *Gegen Klimt* [Against Klimt] (1903), which compiled the voluminous negative reviews to which Klimt's transgressive painting gave rise.

But what was so transgressive about this painting? Now destroyed, in the extant blackand-white photographs of the canvas we see a nebulous, almost gossamer miasma whose
swirling clouds are dominated by the vague emergent apparition of a monumental female
figure (Fig. 1). The viewer can discern her shadowy face and improbably large, spherical
breasts. This woman represents the world itself. On the left a writhing column of human
bodies floats in contorted poses with gestures of despair. These figures represent the human
life cycle in the most pessimistic of terms – those of perpetual confusion and suffering.

The "light" demanded by the commissioned theme of the victory of light over darkness is presented in the form of a human personification of knowledge, who ironically barely appears within the frame, hovering in darkness in the extreme lower foreground. ⁴¹ Her youthful but ethereal face glows dramatically — as though spotlit from below — and suffocatingly thick black hair coils threateningly around her head like a serpentine halo. This dark hair also obscures the woman's mouth (an important organ for the dissemination of knowledge) and lends dramatic emphasis to her glowing, upturned, dark-rimmed eyes. Although thematically she represents knowledge, visually this figure belongs to the iconography of the fin-de-siècle femme fatale, the dark and dangerous women in the works of Jan Toorop, Edvard Munch, Alfred Kubin, and others. Formally and compositionally Klimt's work is disorienting, presenting

⁴¹ In a preparatory sketch a different young female figure appears in the same spot: she holds her head in her right hand and stares downward.

no clear relationship between the tortured human beings, the mysterious appearance of the world, and the forbidding image of knowledge.

Richard Muther, a prominent German critic and historian of art, praised the philosophical insight of Klimt's painting, suggesting that its pessimistic vision of the struggle between knowledge and ignorance was more meaningful than any works of art based on a classical ideal. For Muther, artists who recycled the classical style contributed nothing to the historical development of art, whereas Klimt was forging new visual forms that developed out of his own perceptions of his time and culture. But despite the enthusiasm of Muther and a few others, *Philosophy* nonetheless "unleashed the fury both of the public and of the popular press." Attacks focused variously on several key themes; for example some abhorred the representation of philosophy as such, arguing that there was no "'profound philosophical meaning'" behind the picture. For such commentators, who apparently expected a cogent representation of the western philosophical tradition, Klimt's rather esoteric vision was incoherent, presenting "nothing but nonsense."

Other critics focused their vitriolic remarks on the ugliness of the bodies represented.

They described *Philosophy*'s ugly corporeality in terms of violations of the canons of classical beauty, and as Gemma Blackshaw has stressed, the furor around the depiction of ugly bodies in Klimt's university paintings also relied on antisemitic rhetoric.⁴⁵ In Vienna – a city renowned

⁴² Vergo, *Art in Vienna*, 50.

⁴³ Ibid., 54.

⁴⁴ Anonymous reviewer cited in Vergo, *Art in Vienna*, 55. Translation by the author.

⁴⁵ Gemma Blackshaw, "The Jewish Christ: Problems of Self-presentation and Socio-cultural Assimilation in Richard Gerstl's Self-portraiture," *Oxford Art Journal* 29, no. 1 (2006): 44.

around the world for its medical culture — a preoccupation with vague notions of a decadent modernity and the place of diseased bodies within that modernity was disseminated, increasingly, in highly antisemitic but pseudo-medical terms of Jewish hysteria, Jewish weakness and deformation, and Jewish ugliness. Bahr's *Gegen Klimt* evinces the ease with which contemporaneous commentators consistently moved from commenting on the ugliness of modern art to its Jewishness, from the ugliness of a hunched back or a swollen belly to these physical characteristics as inherently Jewish — rather than Germanic. Indeed the contemporaneous Viennese tendency to regard both ugly bodies and ugly art as somehow distinctively Jewish deserves significant scholarly attention.

Moreover, the perceived medicalization of art was also a source of concern and even disgust for many. When Klimt exhibited *Medicine* the following year, in 1901, one reviewer – commenting that the painting "'surpasses in strangeness and monstrosity even the much disputed *Philosophy*" – insisted that Klimt's figures were suitable only for an anatomical museum. Another reviewer satirically described *Medicine* as an emetic – whose function is to induce vomiting. Throughout such controversies visual ugliness, and especially corporeal ugliness, became the dominant organizing concept through which social concerns – about decadence, Jewishness, and sickness, for example – were articulated.

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⁴⁶ Anonymous reviewer translated in Vergo, *Art in Vienna*, 58.

⁴⁷ Anonymous reviewer in Hermann Bahr, *Gegen Klimt* (Vienna: J. Eisenstein and Co., 1903), 56.

Concepts of beauty and ugliness were employed discursively in a variety of cultural, philosophical, psychological, and medical contexts in the capital of the Habsburg Empire at the beginning of the twentieth century. Aesthetic terminology was being exploited for its explanatory power in other, ostensibly non-aesthetic contexts, while at the same time beauty – long associated with truth and the classical ideal – was losing its privileged status in art. The concept of ugliness developed a new significance in both art theory and practice. Theorists of the emergent "Vienna School" of art history, including Franz Wickhoff and Alois Riegl, ⁴⁸ were rejecting the scholarly traditions of contemporaries like renowned Swiss art historian Heinrich Wölfflin, who championed classical art as the highest aesthetic good. ⁴⁹ By contrast the Vienna School art historians opposed such absolute aesthetics and the insistence that a specifically classical beauty was the goal of all art. ⁵⁰ At the dawn of the twentieth century, Wickhoff and Riegl both presented radically new theories arguing for a revaluation of aesthetics, a non-

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⁴⁸ The Vienna School refers to the methods of art historical analysis developed by a series of art historians working at the University of Vienna from the late nineteenth century well into the mid-twentieth century and beyond. Although Vienna School forefather Rudolf Eitelberger was working at the University as early as 1852, the specific concept, and attendant phrase, of a "Vienna School" did not emerge until the year 1910. In this work we will mostly be limited, in our consideration of Vienna School scholars, to Franz Wickhoff, Alois Riegl, later Max Dvořák and Otto Benesch, Ernst Gombrich, and, briefly, the deplorable Nazi art historian Hans Sedlmayr.

⁴⁹ Wölfflin (1864–1945), a pioneering art historian, is known especially for his formalist methodology. After studying philosophy with Johannes Volkelt Wölfflin developed an interest in art history and classicism through the lectures of cultural historian Jakob Burckhardt. In Wölfflin's own 1886 dissertation he invoked the theory of *Einfühlung*, or empathy, to suggest that asymmetry in art causes the viewer physical pain (cf. *Empathy, Form and Space: Problems in German Aesthetics 1873–1893*, eds Harry Francis Mallgrave; Eleftherios Ikonomou (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 155); Wölfflin later rejected (future Marxist art historian) Max Raphaël's dissertation because of its modern subject matter. Wölfflin's most famous art historical texts are *Renaissance und Barock* (1888), *Klassische Kunst [Classic Art*] (1898), and *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe* [Principles of Art History] (1915).

⁵⁰ Michael Gubser, "Time and History in Alois Riegl's Theory of Perception," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 66, no. 3 (July 2005): 455.

hierarchical relationship between so-called beauty and ugliness, and art appropriate for the age.

Ugliness was suddenly spotlighted in Viennese artistic practice as well. Klimt was the undisputed king of the Viennese art scene, having inherited the throne from the revered history painter, designer, and decorator Hans Makart whose sensual, decorative sensibility had defined late-nineteenth-century tastes in Vienna. The term *Makartstil* [Makart Style] was even coined to characterize that artist's pervasive cultural influence. After three years as the leader of the Vienna Secession movement, Klimt enraged sectors of both the intellectual and artistic establishment and the general public with the purported *ugliness* of his representational style.

Yet shortly thereafter young Viennese artists eager to lead what they called the "new art" movement began to develop deliberate strategies of ugliness that shaped and buttressed their antagonistic artistic personae. Three young Viennese artists in particular – Richard Gerstl (1883–1908), Oskar Kokoschka (1886–1980), and Egon Schiele (1890–1918) – began to produce ugly art and especially ugly self-portraits. Like Wickhoff, Riegl, and Klimt, these artists produced work that challenged absolute aesthetics' teleological focus on beauty.

Implicitly rejecting the classical and philosophical association between beauty and truth, the Viennese avant-garde after Klimt seemed to connect truth with ugliness, believing that the most truthful representations were ones that showed people naked, diseased, angry, deformed, and in pain. Not surprisingly these representational strategies created a great deal of controversy in the context of a Viennese culture that, although highly artistic, was also Catholic, conservative, and increasingly subject to the burgeoning pan-Germanic cult of health

and beauty.⁵¹ The refined prettiness of *Secessionstil* [Secession Style] and the local applied arts studio, the *Wiener Werkstätte* [Viennese Workshop], which had defined the Viennese visual arts, came increasingly under censure from avant-garde artists and writers. Given the polemical quality and highly ideological slant of aesthetic debates in Vienna around this time, the burgeoning of an aesthetic of ugliness deserves to be examined further. This chapter introduces historical Germanic theories of ugliness, suggesting links between these ideas and early-twentieth-century Viennese art, art history, and culture, and analyzing how the concept of ugliness functioned discursively as a trope to represent – variously – Jewishness, social and biological evolution, modernity, truth, and sickness.

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It was on this issue of ugliness that eighty-seven professors of the university alighted as they formulated a petition aimed at preventing Klimt's *Philosophy* from reaching its intended destination. According to historian of Vienna Carl Schorske, although the protesting professors failed to identify explicitly that *Philosophy*'s pessimistic worldview was derived from Arthur Schopenhauer's philosophy, via Richard Wagner's famous essay on Ludwig van Beethoven (1870), they nonetheless "showed in their initial petition that they understood the meaning of Klimt's painting of Philosophy."⁵²

The principal spokesperson for the protesting professors was Friedrich Jodl, an empiricist and liberal professor of philosophical psychology and ethics and the leading

⁵¹ For more on this see Michael Hau, *The Cult of Health and Beauty in Germany: A Social History, 1890–1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

⁵² Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*, 232.

philosopher at the university after Ernst Mach's departure.⁵³ Jodl was also the doctoral supervisor of a young man named Otto Weininger who, in the form of a text published in 1903 as *Geschlecht und Charakter: Eine prinzipielle Untersuchung* [*Sex and Character: A Fundamental Investigation*], produced one of the most popular but egregiously antisemitic and misogynistic documents of Viennese modernism. Jodl, unlike his young student, "championed women's emancipation and civil liberties"; indeed Schorske opines that Jodl "represented in all its dimensions the progressivist phase of liberal rationalism at the turn of the century."⁵⁴ In order to distinguish himself and his coterie from the religious and otherwise socially conservative opponents of Klimt's work, Jodl framed their objection aesthetically rather than politically. Accusing Klimt of presenting "'unclear ideas through unclear forms (*Verschwommene Gedanken durch verschwommene Formen*)," they suggested that he "had produced an aesthetic failure."⁵⁵ The ugliness of Klimt's *Philosophy* was characterized as resulting not only from the deviation of its figures from classical ideals, but also from nebulous renderings of ambiguous

Ernst Mach (1838–1916) was an Austrian scientist and philosopher, a forerunner of logical positivism whose theories influenced figures as varied and significant as the Austrian writer Robert Musil, Viennese philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, German physicist Albert Einstein, and contemporary American behaviourist B.F. Skinner. From 1895–1901 Mach held the Chair for the Philosophy of the Inductive Sciences at the University of Vienna. He propounded an anti-metaphysical phenomenalism that rejected the concept of selfhood; instead Mach argued that only sensations really exist. He famously declared "Das Ich ist unrettbar" [often translated as "The I cannot be saved" or "The self is irretrievable"]. This single sentence proved to be tremendously influential on Mach's younger contemporaries in Vienna, as John T. Blackmore notes in his Ernst Mach: His Work, Life, and Influence (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972). Citing Bahr's discussion in the latter's Bilderbuch [Picture Book], Blackmore offers the following translation of Bahr's commentary: "'Mach's effect, especially on the youth, was very great at that time, and indeed, it was actually based only on a single sentence. Mach had asserted that Das Ich ist unrettbare [literally, "the I is unsavable," i.e. "unreal"]. With that even the ego was overthrown and the last of the idols seemed to be smashed, the last refuge fallen, the highest freedom won, the work of annihilation completed. There really remained nothing left." Blackmore, Ernst Mach, 155; orig. citation Hermann Bahr, Bilderbuch (Vienna: Wila, 1921), 37.

⁵⁴ Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*, 233.

⁵⁵ Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*, 228–32.

thoughts. In an interview in the *Neue Freie Presse* Jodl claimed that they protested, not against nude art nor against free art, but against *ugly* art. According to the professor if the Austrian government wanted to support the odd direction of twentieth-century art it should put these modern works in museums, not in universities. For Jodl a university was not an appropriate site for such new art, which – significantly – he strategically characterized as ugly.⁵⁶

Wickhoff, a founding member of the Vienna School of Art History who specialized in Roman art, objected to Jodl's characterization of Klimt's painting as ugly. Wickhoff spearheaded a counterpetition, submitted to the Ministry, denying that faculty members had the expertise to make judgments on aesthetic questions of beauty and ugliness. Although in Rome at the time, Wickhoff had already sent an emphatic telegram, when he first heard of the Klimt debacle, to the rector of the university – a theologian named Wilhelm Neumann – condemning the protest against *Philosophy* and censuring any personal support Neumann may have lent the protestors. Finally, in May 1900 Wickhoff delivered a lecture in defence of Klimt's painting.

Wickhoff's lecture was entitled "What is Ugly?" [Was ist hässlich], and newspapers condemned it in shockingly antisemitic terms. The Deutsches Volksblatt in particular referred to Wickhoff's argument as "yet another example of Jewish impudence" – despite the fact that

⁵⁶ Neue Freie Press article, containing the text of the petition, reproduced in Bahr, Gegen Klimt, 22–4.

⁵⁷ Schorske, Fin-de-Siècle Vienna, 234.

⁵⁸ Bahr, *Gegen Klimt*, 27.

⁵⁹ Wickhoff's lecture is unfortunately not included in his collected works; nonetheless, Bahr's *Gegen Klimt* reproduces a detailed account of the lecture that appeared in a Viennese daily newspaper (the *Wiener Fremdenblatt* of May 15, 1900), 31–4.

Wickhoff was a Gentile, not Jewish.⁶⁰ The insistent discursive conflation of modern art, ugliness, and Jewishness saturated Germanic culture and particularly Vienna in the early twentieth century; decades later during the Nazi period such rhetoric was used in indescribably nefarious ways, and art other than classically inflected kitsch was quelled.⁶¹

Refuting the idea that art can be judged according to its beauty or ugliness, Wickhoff's lecture also attests to an obsession with ugliness in contemporaneous Viennese discourse. In his lecture Wickhoff suggests that human beings were reacting to perceived beauty or ugliness long before they had invented the terms "beautiful" or "ugly." Historically, he claims, humans had rejected as ugly anything that they believed could be injurious to their own livelihood or to the perpetuation of the species. Ugliness was thus a matter of life and death, and according to Wickhoff this ancient association remained influential, if latent. Judgments regarding beauty and ugliness that had originated in reproductive drives came to determine aesthetic values as well, and classical artists began to produce images of beauty that were themselves based originally on sexual preferences. In Wickhoff's analysis, the model of beauty passed down from classical art became so hegemonic that anything other than classicized art was deemed ugly.

But both art and humankind have evolved beyond brute biological urges and according to the art historian while it was now anachronistic to demand that art follow the models of antiquity, the general public still rejected styles it could not yet understand. Wickhoff claimed more specifically that people feared that which they could not comprehend, and found that which they feared ugly. Now while artists looked ever forward, the public still looked to the

⁶⁰ Deutsches Volksblatt article reproduced in Bahr, Gegen Klimt, 36.

⁶¹ For more on the connections between early-twentieth-century Viennese culture and Nazism see, for example, Brigitte Hamann, *Hitler's Vienna: A Dictator's Apprenticeship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

past. By contrast, Wickhoff himself celebrated Klimt's vision of philosophy, even going so far as to describe its figure of knowledge as consoling.

The Vienna School's defence of ugliness was not monolithic, however; only three years later Wickhoff's colleague Alois Riegl, in his essay "The Modern Cult of Monuments," characterized the relationship between modern taste and ugliness somewhat differently than Wickhoff had in his lecture on the ugly. Riegl claimed that only "new and whole things tend to be considered beautiful" whereas "the old, fragmentary, and faded are thought to be ugly." 62 He furthermore emphasized that the spectators of modern art find wholeness pleasing and incompleteness displeasing; according to him, in "the new, signs of decay irritate rather than lend atmosphere."63 Wickhoff and Riegl's assessments of ugliness were not incompatible, but whereas Wickhoff chose to emphasize the public's tendency to valorize classical art Riegl instead focused on the modern desire for increasingly new, perfect, and whole objects. Both art historians, however, were deliberately opposing prejudices regarding ugliness that they encountered within the realms of art theory and practice, and in the general public. Wickhoff's and Riegl's different theories of ugliness notwithstanding, each scholar helped open up new ways of understanding the ugly and its place in modern life. Later Vienna School art historians such as Otto Benesch and Max Dvořák would build on Wickhoff's and Riegl's reconceptualization of ugliness as a strategy rather than merely an aesthetic failure,

⁶² Alois Riegl, "The Modern Cult of Monuments: Its Character and Its Origin," trans. Kurt W. Foster and Diane Ghirardo, *Oppositions* 25 (Fall 1982): 32. Originally published as *Der moderne Denkmalkultus: Sein Wesen und seine Entstehung* (Vienna: W. Braumuller, 1903).

⁶³ Riegl, "Modern Cult," 42.

characterize anti-classicism as an artistic response to eras of cultural chaos, and connect the purported ugliness of modern art to psychological and spiritual truth.

§

In the context of what aesthetic traditions did Vienna School art historians and contemporaneous Viennese artists build their defence of the ugly? In his recent text *On Ugliness*, Umberto Eco noted that there has historically been very little scholarly discussion of the ugly; rather it has been "relegated to passing mention in marginal works." Routinely glossed as simply the obverse of beauty, the antithesis of the classical ideal, or a symbol of moral failure or evil, philosophical and art historical analyses of ugliness have often been notably brief and unperceptive. Moreover this aporia has itself not been much remarked upon. So ugliness has been doubly discounted.

In modern Germanic philosophy, more mainstream discussion of ugliness began perhaps with Immanuel Kant's comments on the beautiful versus the ugly and art versus nature in *The Critique of Judgment* (1790). But philosopher and art critic Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's earlier text *Laocoön: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry* (1766) had already made contributions to theories of ugliness with a discussion of the unpleasant features of the classical sculpture *Laocoön and his Sons*. 65 Lessing was also friends with German Jewish philosopher

⁶⁴ Umberto Eco, *On Ugliness*, trans. Alastair McEwen (New York: Rizzoli, 2007), 8.

⁶⁵ For more on Lessing and ugliness see, amongst others, Gretchen E. Henderson's recent text *Ugliness: A Cultural History* (London: Reaktion Books, 2015).

Moses Mendelssohn, who likewise contributed to burgeoning contemporaneous theories of ugliness with his idea that ugliness in art and nature promotes progressive thought.⁶⁶

In *The Critique of Judgment* Kant made important observations regarding the difference between the ugly object in nature and in art; he noted that what is ugly in nature we may find beautiful in art, for example "the Furies, diseases, the devastations of war." Indeed for Kant it is the very fact that art can present what is naturally ugly as though it were beautiful that makes art superior to nature. The philosopher stipulated that there is "only one kind of ugliness which cannot be represented in accordance with nature, without destroying all aesthetical satisfaction and consequently artificial beauty" – the type of ugliness that "excites disgust." Two significant ideas emerge from Kant's view of ugliness, one of which is that ugliness should be grand rather than gross, regal rather than repellent. The other, even more important notion is that the determining factor in assessing whether a work of art is beautiful or ugly, pleasing or disgusting is spectatorial reaction.

The sensation of disgust may commonly be held – rightly or wrongly – to spoil aesthetic experience for the viewer of a work of art. But either way, such spectatorial disgust can evidently become a source of pleasure for a prickly artist making the work. In his autobiography Kokoschka recounts with apparent relish how disgusted the Viennese art-going public was by his *Self-Portrait as a Warrior* (Fig. 2). He claims boastfully that he found

⁶⁶ For more on Mendelssohn and his relationship to ugliness – including consideration of his own personal ugliness as a form of beauty – see Leah Hochman, *The Ugliness of Moses Mendelssohn: Aesthetics, Religion, and Morality in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

⁶⁷ Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgment*, trans. J.H. Bernard (New York: Prometheus Books, 2000), §48, 194–5.

⁶⁸ "Artificial beauty" is Kant's name for the beauty of art, as contradistinguished from "natural beauty." §48, 195, emphasis in original.

chocolates and garbage, deposited by offended viewers, in the sculpture's open mouth every day it was on display at the 1909 *Kunstschau*.⁶⁹ Notably less pleasing in its visual strategies than even Klimt's *Philosophy* or *Medicine*, Kokoschka's self-portrait bust is an amorphous, lumpy mass with inconsistent, anti-naturalistic colouring and an asymmetrical facial structure that suggests decomposition. Features seem to slide on nebulous, clotted surfaces of bone, tendon, and skin, and the facial expression itself is at once distorted and slack, giving an impression of physical trauma and subsequent death and decay. Archduke Franz Ferdinand, who vociferously opposed modern art, was purportedly so repelled by the self-portrait that upon seeing it he proclaimed that Kokoschka's bones should be broken.⁷⁰

Kant's observation that certain types of ugliness provoke spectatorial distaste as well as Kokoschka's ability to inspire antagonism with his art are both rooted in a recognition of negative identification and its effect on intersubjective aesthetic experience. The idea of aesthetic experience as reciprocal evokes the theory of *Einfühlung*, or empathy, which we will examine in detail in chapter 7. *Einfühlung* theory holds that aesthetic apprehension involves projecting ourselves into – identifying with – what we see. The argument is that we find beautiful what we love or what makes us feel free, and find ugly what we hate or what we resist. The former reaction is called *Einfühlung*, the latter, *negativen Einfühlung* [negative empathy]. This notion of *Einfühlung* constituted the dominant explanatory theory in nineteenth-century Germanic aesthetics. The wildly popular 1908 text *Abstraction and*

⁶⁹ Oskar Kokoschka, *My Life*, trans. David Britt (New York: MacMillan, 1974), 21.

⁷⁰ Edith Hoffmann, *Kokoschka: Life and Work* (London: Faber and Faber, 1947), 86, and Claude Cernuschi, *Re/Casting Kokoschka: Ethics and Aesthetics, Epistemology and Politics in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna* (London: Associated University Presses, 2002), 26.

Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style,⁷¹ written by a then-unknown doctoral student named Wilhelm Worringer, contains what is probably the most famous description of Einfühlung. Nevertheless this book and its wide dissemination ultimately sounded the death knell for Einfühlung as a universal aesthetic theory. But I would argue that the psychological dynamics that the idea of negative empathy addressed were still very much at work in early-twentieth-century Austrian artists' self-distortions, as well as in the intense reactions of disavowal that these strategies of ugliness provoked in some viewers.⁷²

Indeed Kant's idea that disgust destroys aesthetic satisfaction is interesting to us precisely insofar as the affect of disgust seems actually to have quite compelled the Viennese. I refer here to a range of cultural figures and activities, including contemporaneous critics with their pseudo-medical comments about degenerate artists and repulsive art as well as young artists who represented themselves with distorted grimaces, snarls, and abject laughter.

Schiele's Self-Portrait Grimacing (1910, Fig. 3) is an unsettling example. In this intimately abrasive self-representation Schiele's gaping red mouth opens wide to reveal one impossibly long tooth and a few tiny snaggleteeth. The image itself poses questions about disgust, and about aesthetic satisfaction: the artist pictures himself making an expression of disgust that may or may not be intended to create the same effect in the viewer. Regardless, Kant's advisories against aesthetic disgust and displeasure are clearly being roundly flouted.

 $^{^{71}}$ Abstraktion und Einfühlung: Ein Beitrag zur Stilpsychologie.

⁷² It is interesting to note that Schiele was given a copy of Worringer's text, which was deeply indebted to Riegl, by his patron Arthur Roessler. See Kimberly A. Smith, "Real Style: Riegl and Early 20th-Century European Art," *Centropa: Journal of Central European Art and Architecture* 5, no. 1 (January 2005): 19–20 and n. 19.

Kant's initial probing into the aesthetics of ugliness was continued by G.W.F. Hegel in his Aesthetics (1835). Hegel's aesthetic system holds many fascinations, not the least of which is its ambivalent attitude toward beauty and ugliness, as well as classical and non-classical art. While both Kant and Hegel represent a philosophical tradition of German idealism, there is a complexity to Hegel's idealism that stems in part from his conflicted attraction to realism and recognition of the necessity of ugliness. Hegel's entire philosophical system is meant to function as a foundation for the attainment of Absolute Spirit – not the acceptance of corporeal ugliness. Yet at the same time unlike Kant, who was concerned largely with transhistorical categories of aesthetic experience in nature, Hegel was quite concerned with art objects as concrete expressions of historical subjectivities. Thus on the one hand Hegel commends the Flemish school of painting, which was notoriously unpopular at the time, for its realism and truthfulness;⁷³ yet on the other hand Hegel also claims critically that it is impossible for physical details represented in art – such as "indentations, wrinkles, pores, small hairs, little veins, etc." – to meaningfully evoke the inner character, or soul, of a subject. Hegel also connects ugliness to evil and hate, and contrasts these with classical art, whose "religion of beauty does not satisfy the depths of the spirit."75 This is because classical art understands nothing of opposition. Because for Hegel subjectivity is achieved in part through the reconciliation of

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⁷³ See, for example, G.W.F. Hegel, *Hegel's Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. T.M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 158, 174, 882–7.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 146.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 436.

oppositions – including dark oppositions within the divided self – he is ambivalent about the place of "the ugly, the hateful, the repulsive" in art. ⁷⁶

The physical details that Hegel condemned as ugly and extraneous to the ideal in art are precisely the corporeal qualities that later became central to the iconography of artists including Gerstl, Kokoschka, and Schiele. We see the detailing of ugliness, for example, in the lumpy, putrid vegetality of Gerstl's facial skin and hair in his late *Self-Portrait, Laughing* (1908, Fig. 4). And we see such ugly details in many of Kokoschka's works around this time: not only in the distorted indentations in the skin of *Self-Portrait as a Warrior* (1909) but also in Kokoschka's painted portrait of *Der Sturm*⁷⁷ editor Herwarth Walden (1910, Fig. 5), with its conspicuous venation and use of the artist's own thumbprints, and in his double portrait of Vienna School art historians Hans Conrat and Erica Tietze-Conrat (1909; Fig. 6).⁷⁸ The electrified leg hair in Schiele's *Nude Self-Portrait, Grimacing* (1910; Fig. 7), as well as the charred arm and bandaged finger found in Schiele's representation of a gynaecologist (*Portrait of Dr. Erwin von Graff*, 1910, Fig. 8) likewise foreground the ugly particularities of corporeality that Hegel eschewed. These physical details were supposed to be idealized out of art and philosophy; to foreground and

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Der Sturm, a magazine covering avant-garde and especially expressionist art, was founded by Walden in Berlin in 1910 and ran at various rates of frequency until 1932.

⁷⁸ Catherine Soussloff has argued that this double portrait shows the direct influence of Riegl's theories on intersubjectivity and attentiveness in Dutch Baroque portraiture. According to Soussloff, there is a sense of intersubjective reciprocity in Kokoschka's double portrait – both between husband and wife and, more importantly, between sitters and viewer – that attests to Riegl's influence not merely on his own student, art historian Hans Tietze, but also on the young artist Kokoschka. See Soussloff, "Portraiture and Assimilation in Vienna: The Case of Hans Tietze and Erica Tietze-Conrat," in *Diasporas and Exiles: Varieties of Jewish Identity*, ed. Howard Wettstein (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 141–5, and, more recently, her *The Subject in Art: Portraiture and the Birth of the Modern* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), chapters 2 and 3.

emphasize them the way that Gerstl, Kokoschka, and Schiele did was usually interpreted (and often intended) as a major aesthetic affront.

But for Hegel insofar as the purpose of painting – as opposed to classic sculpture – was to reveal "living subjective character" rather than the beauty of the ideal, it could not "entirely dispense with the ugly." An increased concern with subjectivity necessitated a likewise-increased tolerance of ugliness. Hegel also suggested more specifically that Flemish and German art was intrinsically attuned to pain and "the ugliness of the world generally." This racialist conception of discrete classical and anti-classical artistic drives became increasingly influential, and by the early twentieth century the idea of a uniquely "northern" artistic sensibility – one that originated in an attempt to grapple with pain, ugliness, and fear and was expressed through so-called "gothic" style – had virtually become dogma.

The increasing interest in the theme of the ugly in Germanic culture also culminated in the first philosophy text focused entirely on ugliness. In *Aesthetics of Ugliness* (1853) Karl Rosencranz, a student of Hegel's, presented a view of the ugly as highly protean and defined by negativity – a deformed *Doppelgänger* of positive values like the sublime, "'the agreeable,'" and "'absolute beauty.'" According to Rosencranz the ugly "'transforms the sublime into the vulgar'" and "'absolute beauty into caricature.'" Thus for Rosencranz, caricature is "'the acme of formal ugliness but precisely because, thanks to its reflection determined by the positive image of which it is a distortion, it slips over into comedy."

⁷⁹ Hegel, Aesthetics, 864.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 884.

⁸¹ In Eco, *Ugliness*, 154.

In Hegel's view a focus on individual subjectivity was, increasingly, the essential characteristic of painting; modernization became associated with not just the more significant presence of ugliness, but also the more significant *need* for it – not unlike in Worringer later. Worringer, a German art historian who finished his PhD at the University of Bern in 1907, argued for a vision of human artistry suspended between empathetic naturalism (which for him defined classicism) and abstraction. According to Worringer abstraction best expressed the alienation of humanity and was an increasingly important expression of the modern spirit. *Abstraction and Empathy* was Worringer's dissertation-turned-trade-edition; he subsequently became a major theorist of expressionism as the visual articulation of spiritual necessity.

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While the art historians of the Vienna School did not represent a unified front when it came to theories of ugliness, they did represent an important new phase in the burgeoning Germanic interest in ugliness. The Vienna School's rejection of the classical imperative – indeed of all universalizing aesthetic categories – was certainly revolutionary, and led to further reassessments of the concepts of beauty and ugliness. Moreover the psycho-philosophical orientation of the Vienna School complemented extant philosophical approaches to ugliness, as well as reflecting the local Viennese tendency to psychologize everything. Riegl's views on ugliness changed over time; nonetheless in *Late Roman Art Industry* (1901) he went so far as to declare: "everything depends on understanding that the aim of the fine arts is not completely exhausted with what we call beauty ... the *Kunstwollen* may also be directed toward other

forms of objects."⁸² The concept of *Kunstwollen* [literally "artistic will"] is translated variably, and is cryptic enough that even Riegl scholars have not reached a firm consensus about its proper translation and exact meaning. Nevertheless, *Kunstwollen* can be understood as artistic "desire," "need," or "drive," and it is meant to refer to a historically specific artistic will that engenders the development of a particular visual style or form in a particular place and time. Whereas previous theorists had looked to the beauty of classical art as an expression of good society, Riegl's concept of a historically specific artistic will, or *Kunstwollen*, implied that all periods and types of art were worth studying. Schorske observes that Riegl and Wickhoff were "developing a new view of art history peculiarly suitable to creating understanding for innovation in art"⁸³; accordingly, their approaches to the question of aesthetic ugliness differed from those of both their philosophical ancestors and their classically oriented art historical peers.

At the time of the debacle over Klimt's university paintings art history had only recently grown out of philosophy and established itself as an independent academic discipline. And as Mitchell Schwarzer has noted, attempts by Heinrich Wölfflin, art theorist Konrad Fiedler, and sculptor and theorist Adolf Hildebrand to sever discussions of art from a tradition of German idealist aesthetic philosophy produced "largely ahistorical visual categories" that were clearly

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⁸² Alois Riegl, Introduction to *Late Roman Art Industry*, ed. and trans. Rolf Winkes (Rome: Giorgio Bretschneider Editore, 1985), 11.

⁸³ Schorske, Fin-de-Siècle Vienna, 234.

⁸⁴ Moshe Barasch, *Theories of Art, 2: From Winckelmann to Baudelaire* (New York and London: Routledge, 2000), 148.

⁸⁵ Mitchell Schwarzer, "Cosmopolitan Difference in Max Dvořák's Art Historiography," *The Art Bulletin* 74, no. 4 (December 1992): 673.

unsatisfying for Vienna School art historians. Great efforts have been made to identify Riegl's influences in particular: whereas Ernst Gombrich, Wolfgang Kemp, Michael Podro, Michael Ann Holly, and Margaret Iversen have all charted affinities between Hegelian thought and Riegl's art history, ⁸⁶ Moshe Barasch and Michael Gubser have both noted the anti-Hegelian mood in Vienna around 1900. ⁸⁷ Similarly, Diana Graham Reynolds has contested the idea that Hegel was a major source, documenting Schopenhauer's and Nietzsche's influence on Riegl instead. ⁸⁸ Nietzsche's own attitude toward the ugly is notably inconsistent: at times he condemns the ugly as a symptom of decadence and decline, and at other times he exalts ugliness under the banner of what he calls Dionysian man, for whom "what is evil, absurd, and ugly seems ... permissible, owing to an excess of procreating, fertilizing energies." ⁸⁹ Regardless of the difficulties in trying to secure which historical and philosophical traditions influenced the members of the Vienna School at this time, what remains significant is that in their turn from classicism they negotiated between tradition and innovation, combining emergent psychological and philosophical interest in ugliness with rigorous formal and historical analyses of works of art.

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See Gombrich's "In Search of Cultural History," in *Ideals and Idols: Essays on Values in History and in Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979); Kemp's introduction to *The Group Portraiture of Holland*, trans Evelyn M. Kain and David Britt (Los Angeles: Getty Research Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1999); Podro's *Critical Historians of Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982); Holly's *Panofksy and the Foundations of Art History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984) and "Spirits and Ghosts in the Historiography of Art," in *The Subjects of Art History: Historical Objects in Contemporary Perspectives*, eds Mark A. Cheetham, Michael Ann Holly, and Keith Moxey (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 52–71; and Iversen's *Alois Riegl: Art History and Theory* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993).

⁸⁷ Barasch, *Theories of Art*, 152, and Gubser, "Time and History, 453.

⁸⁸ Diana Graham Reynolds, "Alois Riegl and the Politics of Art History: Intellectual Traditions and Austrian Identity in *Fin-de-Siècle* Vienna" (PhD Thesis, University of California, 1997).

⁸⁹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), §370, "What is romanticism." All citations for Nietzsche's texts refer to sections, rather than page numbers, in accordance with standard practice in Nietzsche scholarship.

It is well understood that the formal terms Wickhoff used to describe the perceived quality of ugliness in modern art – he referred to blurriness, indistinct shapes, and a lack of clear lines – align more with Impressionism than any other modern style. 90 And although Wickhoff was clearly engaging with contemporary art in his defence of Klimt, he is most known as a historian of Roman and early Christian art. But later Vienna school art historians directly aligned their discussions of ugliness with contemporaneous local art. Notable examples include Egon Schiele's staunch supporter Otto Benesch, renowned for his work on Rembrandt and position as director of the famed Albertina museum in Vienna (1947–62), and Wickhoff's Vienna School successor Max Dvořák, whose enthusiasm for expressionism is well documented. Whereas Riegl and Wickhoff had defended the presence of ugliness in art with "arguments of historicism and scientific neutrality,"91 Benesch and Dvořák championed the ugly details of contemporaneous Austrian expressionist art in a more personal, even subjectivist, manner. The rise of ugliness in Viennese art and theory no doubt had many causes, including increasing anticlassicism, what Riegl scholar Margaret Iversen has called an "aesthetic of disintegration" at the Vienna School, and an atmosphere of alienation in Viennese culture and polemical public debate. And more and more ugliness was understood to represent something significant about the relationship between self and society.

90 Barasch, Theories of Art, 148.

⁹¹ Reynolds, "Alois Riegl and the Politics of Art History," 22.

Benesch commented consistently on ugliness and perceived ugliness in Schiele's work, and faithfully supported the young artist over the years. In 1915, when Benesch himself was only eighteen, he wrote a foreword for the catalogue published to accompany a Schiele exhibition at the Galerie Arnot. Focusing specifically on the ugliness of Schiele's expressionist turn, Benesch delineated Schiele's clear development from what he called "a proficient Klimt imitator" into an artist whose initially "sensuously pleasing colours" now "pass away into insensuous pallor." Likening Schiele's artistic breakthrough to spirit breaking through its own skin, Benesch represented Schiele as a child born to a new era to create pictures of and for that era.

Benesch also claimed that Schiele had an extraordinary gift for anatomical accuracy.

This gift allowed him to articulate, visually, insights about often-overlooked details – in particular the details of the insignificant, the unattractive, and the psychological. Therefore Benesch stressed that although a layperson might not recognize it, the distortions that Schiele imposed on the human body in fact revealed the "highest correctness and truth." Admittedly somewhat cryptic, Benesch's rhetoric seems to characterize the value of Schiele's strategies of

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⁹² Schiele was acquainted with Otto Benesch through the patronage of Otto's father Heinrich, and used him as a model for several of his works. The first was a double portrait of Heinrich and Otto, *Father and Son* (1913, Fig. 9). Frenetic geometrics animate the painting; the father blocks the son with his left arm while the son's hands are clasped rigidly in front of his groin area. The next year Schiele used Otto for a series of drawings beginning with *Young Man in Purple Robe with Clasped Hands* (Fig. 10). The mournful *Male Figure Bending Forward (Otto Benesch)* (Fig. 11) looks like Schiele himself, grieving or perhaps poised in monastic concentration.

⁹³ "Eines tüchtigen Klimt-Epigonen … sinnlich erfreuenden Farben … sie zu unsinnlicher Fahlheit erstarben," Otto Benesch, "Vorwort" [Foreword], in Christian M. Nebehay, ed., *Egon Schiele: 1890–1918: Leben, Briefe, Gedichte* (Salzburg: Residenz, 1979), 317. My translation.

⁹⁴ "Höchste Richtigkeit und Wahrheit," Benesch in Nebehay, ed., *Egon Schiele*, 318. My translation.

ugliness in almost heuristic terms, emphasizing how strategic ugliness can truthfully illuminate cultural and psychological problems.

Dvořák made comparable assessments in his foreword for Kokoschka's collection

Variationen über ein Thema [Variations on a Theme] (1921). Variationen consists of

photographs Kokoschka took of a selection of drawings he had made the previous year

depicting Vienna School art historian Karl Maria Swoboda's wife Kamilla listening to music.

Dvořák began his foreword with a discussion of Monet and Impressionism, and suggested that

art became soulless when it aimed at achieving the sensitivity of a camera without attending to
the real fountainhead of art, the spirit.

In contrast to art that treated the psychological as a

mere accessory to the physical, wrote Dvořák, in Kokoschka's works the physical was now being
used to represent the spiritual.

Indeed Kokoschka's works ostensibly heralded the approach
of a state that Dvořák described as "the future realm of the new German idealism."

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⁹⁵ Dvořák in Reinhold Graf Bethusy-Huc, *Oskar Kokoschka: Das Konzert: Variationen über ein Thema* (Salzburg: Galerie Welz, 1988), 29.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 32. The original passage reads: "Es ist das geistig transitorische und fluktuierende, dem Kokoschka darin mit fieberhafter Spannung nachgeht, wie einst die Künstler der Florentiner Renaissance in Reihenfolgen von Körperstudien die Gesetze der physischen Bewegung zu ergründen sich bemühten. Bei ihnen war das psychische nur akzessorisch, eine Erläuterung für den unkundigen Beschauer, in Kokoschkas Geistesstudien ist dagegen das körperliche nur eine Spiegelung des geistigen und deshalb ein unselbständiger und variabler Ausdruck des auf der geistigen Bewegung bestehenden und einzig entscheidenden Lebenstromes." N.B.: In German "geistig" can mean spiritual, mental, and/or intellectual, while "psychische" can mean psychological, mental, and/or emotional. Additionally the meanings of "seelisch," from the German "Seele" for soul, include those of both "geistig" and "psychische," and can even include psychic in the sense of telepathic. These irresolvable ambiguities of the German language, which often consternate non-native speakers, are actually valuable insights in and of themselves.

⁹⁷ "Das Zukunftsreich des neuen deutschen Idealismus," ibid.

Benesch's review of this foreword, written three years later, he referred to Kokoschka and Dvořák as "deeply related spirits." ⁹⁸

More than three decades after his Galerie Arnot catalogue essay, Benesch was still writing about Schiele. He was by then in a position to assess, with hindsight, important shifts in the theory and practice of ugliness since the time of the Klimt scandal, when Wickhoff had defended not only the painting of philosophy itself, but also the purportedly ugly style of modern art in general. In his 1950 essay "Egon Schiele as a Draughtsman" Benesch pronounced that the turn-of-the-century aesthetic "was more important for its outcome than for its own achievements. This outcome was Expressionism." Identifying Kokoschka and Schiele as the heirs of this legacy, Benesch stressed that what "distinguished the two young artists from the aesthetic culture of the world in which they grew up" was "the spiritual and therewith also the artistic importance of the acrid and the ugly" in their works. 99 In remarkably similar terms to those used in his 1915 catalogue foreword, Benesch again noted that the "intensified, exaggerated nature" and "withered surfaces" of Schiele's forms were nonetheless "anatomically and biologically correct." For Benesch "that bony, spiny, ugly and rather repellent world of forms ... intermingled ... with its graceful aspect" constituted the essence of early expressionism. ¹⁰¹ Ugliness was therefore redeemed not only by this "graceful aspect" but also by its essential role in the historical development of a new art.

⁹⁸ Otto Benesch, *Collected Writings*, vol. 4, ed. Eva Benesch (New York: Phaidon, 1973), 177.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 189.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 192.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 195.

Benesch also suggested that although Schiele's contemporaries saw his deformed figures in terms of "shocking caricature," in fact the artist's works "brought to light ... an almost oppressive effect of psychical reality." Both Schiele's and Kokoschka's art had "met with violent opposition on the part of the conservative majority of the Austrian public," Benesch claimed, with only a small minority of colleagues and "progressive art lovers" nourishing their artistic development. This recollection is consistent with the much more recent comment in *The Naked Truth: Klimt, Schiele, Kokoschka and Other Scandals* (2005) that Schiele's representation of his models was "for a long time interpreted as 'ugly'" because the artist "did not require his models to adopt classical poses or to simulate classical movement." For Wickhoff, Riegl, Dvořák, and Benesch, as for the artist himself, ersatz classicism was more disturbing than deformation and caricature, while the appearance of ugliness was somehow more modern than the appearance of beauty, and even more truthful.

In *The History of Art as the History of Ideas* (1924) Dvořák insisted that a "great artist never stands absolutely outside the spiritual and intellectual ferment of his time and if the threads binding him to it are invisible to us then it means that we have failed to look deeply enough either into his art or into the age in which he lived." Dvořák therefore sought to illuminate these invisible and multivarious ties that bind artist to culture and theory to practice. The way to do art history was to bring such ties to light – not to subject works of art, or artists,

¹⁰² Benesch, *Collected Writings*, 192.

¹⁰³ Tobias G. Natter and Max Hollein, eds., *The Naked Truth: Klimt, Schiele, Kokoschka and Other Scandals* (New York: Prestel, 2005), 213.

¹⁰⁴ Max Dvořák, *The History of Art as the History of Ideas*, trans. John Hardy (London, Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), 71.

to tendentious scrutiny under some arcane and arbitrary rubric of aesthetic rules. A historical artist like El Greco was thus understood, for example, as expressing a broader cultural turn from materialism to spirituality in a specific new pictorial form – a turn that necessitated the rejection of classical naturalism in favour of an anti-naturalistic style. Perhaps reflecting on the similarly anti-naturalistic style of contemporaneous expressionism, Dvořák explicitly compared the "apparent chaos" of El Greco's era to Dvořák's own age, which likewise appeared chaotic. 105

Vienna School historian Matthew Rampley has also stressed how an interest in contemporaneous art practice "distinguishes Viennese art historians of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries from their contemporaries in Germany or Switzerland," who preferred serene classicism and "remained ill at ease with contemporary art." The scholars of the Vienna School, by contrast, could invest themselves just as easily in the *Kunstwollen* of their own time as in that of late Roman antiquity or the Spanish Renaissance. And whether their objects of analyses came from the cultures of antiquity, the Renaissance, or early-twentieth-century Viennese modernity, the Vienna School historians discussed here evinced no aversion to the appearance of ugliness in art.

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Art historians of the second Vienna School did not necessarily maintain this early interest in and tolerance of ugliness, however. For example Hans Sedlmayr, in his 1948 *Verlust der Mitte* [Loss

¹⁰⁵ Dvořák in Rampley, "Max Dvořák: Art History and the Crisis of Modernity," *Art History* 26, no. 2 (April 2003), 227.

¹⁰⁶ Rampley, "Max Dvořák," 229.

of the Centre], translated into English as *Art in Crisis: The Lost Center*, followed Dvořák's view that art develops forms paralleling the forms of culture, but condemned the sense of chaos in modernity and expressionism alike. Unlike the other Vienna School art historians whose theories we have looked at Sedlmayr castigated expressionism, caricature, and any style that he believed expressed the sickness of the age through ugliness. Sedlmayr also claimed that representing circus folk, *or even refugees*, in art was pathological, as such images "cast a doubt on the true nature of man." So in spite of the "inhuman" visions of modern art – the "boiling chaos" of expressionism, the "deadness" of Cubism, or the "cold demonism" of Surrealism – "natural man," he said, was right to be disgusted by ugliness. ¹⁰⁸

Sedlmayr's trope of "natural man" here acts as an exact antithesis to Wickhoff's earlier notion of "historical man," who allowed changing cultural conditions to influence his understanding of beauty and ugliness. Whereas Wickhoff, Riegl, Dvořák, and Benesch all encouraged encounters with the ugly, in *Verlust der Mitte* Sedlmayr not only did not encourage such open-minded encounters, he also condemned visual ugliness as a sign of crisis. But by barring representations of ugliness, crisis, sickness, and other woes we in no way immunize ourselves against – much less cure or outright eradicate – such problems. The repressed will return, in outbreaks of social violence and unrest, in illness and malaise, in ugly art, writing, music, and more.

This chapter has highlighted certain key points of interest in the rich dialogue between art theory and practice in early-twentieth-century Viennese culture, noting in particular the

¹⁰⁷ Hans Sedlmayr, *Art in Crisis: The Lost Center*, trans. Brian Battershaw (Chicago: H. Regnery Co., 1958), 140–1.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 138–9.

strategic visual and discursive invocation of ugliness as a metaphor for other concepts and phenomena such as modernity, Jewishness, truth, and sickness. It should be emphasized that this image of Viennese theory and practice looks quite different from the dominant Schorskean paradigm, which argues that Vienna was fundamentally ahistorical and used aesthetics to retreat from public life. On the contrary, throughout these chapters we will see Viennese figures with a peculiar concern with the relationships between their own identities and history, aesthetics, and contemporaneity.

Chapter 2

Vienna's "Climax of Distastefulness" 109: The Explosive Popularity of Otto Weininger's Sex and Character

However deep he may delve into himself, he will find himself turbid and stained, and what he seeks will present itself to him nowhere in white, immaculate purity. And yet there is nothing that he needs more urgently, nothing that he longs for more fervently, than being *himself* and only himself.

- Otto Weininger

There are three possibilities for me – the gallows, suicide, or a future so brilliant that I don't dare to think of it.

- Otto Weininger

The choice that Weininger's theory offers is a bleak and terrible one indeed: genius or death.

- Ray Monk, Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius

Besides ugliness, hate became another important facet of Viennese public life in the early twentieth century. And there is one book in particular we should examine if we want to try to understand the importance of ugliness, hatred, and self-representation in Viennese modernity: Otto Weininger's Sex and Character: A Fundamental Investigation. Despite the tremendous impact of this book in early-twentieth-century European society – particularly Vienna – too often Sex and Character is passed over quite quickly. And often it is not examined at all. To discuss Sex and Character is, admittedly, doubly difficult: Weininger is voracious in his hatreds – infamously, misogyny and antisemitism – but also difficult to follow. His intellectual influences were almost impossibly varied: Weininger had an impressively thorough knowledge of the "history of research on sex-gland functions ... Kant's philosophy of self-consciousness ... the history of nineteenth-century European feminist movements ... [and] the psychological theories

¹⁰⁹ "The peculiarity of the Jewish nature attains for us its climax of distastefulness," Richard Wagner, "Jewishness in Music," 1850/69.

of Ernst Mach."¹¹⁰ What Weininger made of all this erudition was a boldly hateful document of Viennese modernism, at once a self-portrait of the author and a mirror reflecting the darkest currents of his culture.

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Born in 1880 in Vienna, Otto Weininger was the first son of Jewish parents Adelheid and Leopold. Leopold, a highly respected goldsmith with commissions from the aristocracy and exhibitions at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, ¹¹¹ was self-educated, severe, and antisemitic. But his antisemitism must have been at least somewhat ambivalent: according to Otto's older sister Rosa, Leopold was nevertheless "'angry when Otto wrote against Judaism,'" and likewise objected when his son wanted to convert to Protestantism. Information about Adelheid, whom Otto never referred to in letters, is more scarce; Rosa suggests that she was unhappy with her husband, who treated her like a servant and nanny, and that despite a "talent for languages" she lived "simply as a housewife." Brought up in a household steeped in ambivalent Jewishness and the music of flagrant antisemite Richard Wagner, ¹¹⁴ Weininger

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¹¹⁰ Chandak Sengoopta, *Otto Weininger: Sex, Science, and Self in Imperial Vienna* (Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 4.

¹¹¹ Daniel Steuer, Introduction: "A Book That Won't Go Away: Otto Weininger's *Sex and Character*" in Weininger, *Sex and Character: An Investigation of Fundamental Principles*, eds. Daniel Steuer and Laura Marcus, trans. Ladislaus Löb (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), xiii.

¹¹² Sengoopta, *Otto Weininger*, 13.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

converted to Protestantism and was baptized on 19 July 1902, the day he gained his doctorate. Barely over a year later he would be dead, killed by his own hand.

Weininger's life is poorly documented. Nevertheless it is reasonable to suggest that his story and oeuvre were – simultaneously – both discrete, individualized phenomena and representative products of the self in and as society. Like other figures discussed here, Weininger is therefore of interest both as an idiosyncratic individual and also as a producer and reproducer of contemporaneous Viennese culture. The very tension between trenchant individualism and the entropy of the collective is itself part of the tale of Viennese modernism, of which Weininger is a strange and strangely telling example. Daniel Steuer, in his introduction to the long-awaited 2005 translation of Weininger's infamous text Sex and Character, accurately and succinctly assesses the situation when he says that "Weininger's short life saw the end of a long phase of social and political stability, and the rise of a modernity which seems to be identical with its own crisis ... But ... [w]hile others around him wrote eloquent lamentations about their loss of trust in language 116 and discussed Mach's unsalvageable self, Weininger postulated the necessary conditions for establishing concepts, for having a self, and for making clear judgments."117 Yet despite attempts at originality – and, arguably, attempts to invent an escape from the paranoid prisons of his own self-image and Viennese culture at large - Weininger's case was actually uncannily common.

 $^{^{\}rm 115}$ Steuer, "A Book That Won't Go Away," xii.

¹¹⁶ This could refer to "The Letter of Lord Chandos," a fictional missive penned by Hugo von Hofmannsthal in 1902, written from the perspective of a writer named Lord Philip Chandos and addressed to Francis Bacon. This letter, fictionally dated August 1603, is perhaps the preeminent document representing the language crisis as it was understood and experienced in early-twentieth-century Vienna.

¹¹⁷ Steuer, "A Book That Won't Go Away," xii.

Indeed from his overweening obsession with Richard Wagner to his violent and symbolic 1903 suicide in the house where Beethoven had died (in 1827), to his concern with philosophy and psychology, and certainly in his antisemitism, Weininger was a young man disturbingly representative of his time and place. The painter Richard Gerstl (whose life is similarly illdocumented) was born only three years later than Weininger, was also obsessed with music, and killed himself only five years after Weininger. I do not want to flatten Weininger into a Doppelgänger of the visual artist, or even into a symbol of Viennese culture more broadly. But I do hope to show – through a closer and more extended examination of author and text than is conventionally undertaken in books on Vienna, either in art theory or in cultural history 118 – that Weininger and his *Sex and Character* can help illuminate darkly Vienna's obsession with different identities in the early twentieth century, including the identities of its artists. In fact I would argue that there might be no starker vision of the prevalence of ambivalent Jewishness, antisemitism, and a hostile, paranoid attitude toward self—other relations in the early twentieth

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¹¹⁸ Patrick Werkner, in *Austrian Expressionism: The Formative Years* (Palo Alto: Society for the Promotion of Science and Scholarship, 1993), mentions Weininger briefly, as an influence on Gerstl (31); in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture Carl Schorske does not mention Weininger at all; Peter Vergo, in Art in Vienna, 1898–1918: Klimt, Kokoschka, Schiele and their Contemporaries mentions Weininger once in the context of Vienna's extraordinary and appalling legacy of suicide; and Jane Kallir's Austria's Expressionism (New York: Galerie St. Etienne: Rizzoli, 1981) does not reference Weininger. On the other hand, Claude Cernuschi's more recent Re/Casting Kokoschka: Ethics and Aesthetics, Epistemology and Politics in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna discusses Weininger extensively, and Jacques Le Rider makes Weininger one of the main subjects of his book Modernity and Crises of Identity: Culture and Society in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna, trans. Rosemary Morris (New York: Continuum, 1993). Chandak Sengoopta's Otto Weininger: Sex, Science, and Self in Imperial Vienna (Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press, 2000) is the first and only monograph on Weininger, although Slavoj Žižek's The Metastases of Enjoyment: Six Essays on Women and Causality (London: Verso, 2006) includes a chapter on Weininger and a small handful of anthologies have been published addressing Weininger in relation to: Jews, gender, Wittgenstein, and Viennese intellectual history. Jane Kallir's most recent book on Schiele, Egon Schiele's Women (Munich: Prestel, 2012) mentions Weininger several times, which I believe reflects an increasing awareness of and interest in the problematic thinker. But even if scholars are beginning to take Weininger and his writing seriously as objects of cultural inquiry, he nevertheless remains extremely neglected in art history and theory.

see, central to the practice of ugly Viennese self-portraiture. Thus, envisioning Weininger and his opus will also help us read Vienna's paranoid predilection for ambivalent selfhood – as well as the ugly, hateful self-representational strategies to which such conflicted identities gave rise.

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Otto Weininger was the first member of his family to enter academic studies.¹¹⁹ The budding scholar had already penned an article on Homeric etymology at age sixteen, and by age eighteen he was studying in the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Vienna. During his first years at university Weininger focused at least as much on science as on philosophy; in addition to his classes in logic and the history of philosophy he took courses in physics, chemistry, botany, zoology, a number of medical subjects, and mathematics.¹²⁰

Weininger's epistemological orientation would change significantly in those first three years before he submitted a "first draft" of his dissertation, originally titled *Eros und Psyche*.

Eine biologisch-psychologische Untersuchung [Eros and Psyche: A Biological and Psychological Investigation] to the Archive of the Austrian Academy of Science in 1901. The next year Weininger submitted *Geschlecht und Charakter*. Eine biologische und psychologische Studie [Sex and Character: A Biological and Psychological Study] as the final draft of his doctoral dissertation. Both versions testify to the young scholar's rather triumphant transition from

¹¹⁹ Steuer, "A Book That Won't Go Away," xiii.

¹²⁰ Ibid., xiv.

¹²¹ The dissertation has not survived.

the Machian phenomenalism prevalent at the time to an out-of-favour Kantian idealism. In a letter of 2 March 1902 Weininger declared: "Most importantly, I have given up the epistemology of Mach-Avenarius completely. The self *is*, and it is not at all necessary to salvage it."

The book form of Weininger's work was published in May 1903 as *Geschlecht und*Charakter. Eine prinzipielle Untersuchung [Sex and Character: An Investigation of Fundamental Principles]. Initially it was received without much fanfare. But after the author's flamboyantly theatrical suicide the book gained very rapidly in popularity; it is truly difficult to overstate how popular Sex and Character became. The book went through twenty-five editions in the first twenty years after its publication, 123 and a new edition was published "almost every year between 1903 and 1932." To give just a few examples of the significant and wide-ranging nature of Sex and Character's influence: Freud read and commented on Weininger's text (he was quite skeptical of its value), Hitler read the text, too, and Sex and Character's influence on noted Austrian writer Robert Musil's modernist opus The Man Without Qualities has already been discussed in depth by other scholars. 125 In Hitler's Vienna Brigitte Hamann refers to Sex and Character as a testimony to "man's fear of woman" and to "a profound Jewish identity

 $^{^{\}rm 122}$ Steuer, "A Book That Won't Go Away," xvi.

¹²³ Toews, "Refashioning the Masculine Subject in Early Modernism," 31.

¹²⁴ Steuer, "A Book That Won't Go Away," xix.

¹²⁵ Cf. for example Gisela Brude-Firnau, "A Scientific Image of Woman? The Influence of Otto Weininger's *Sex and Character* on the German Novel," in *Jews and Gender: Responses to Otto Weininger*, eds Nancy A. Harowitz and Barbara Hyams (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), 178.

crisis in the gruelling battle between assimilation and Zionism."¹²⁶ Despite its notoriety, scholars often reference and refute Weininger's work without actually addressing the intellectual and cultural context for, or development of, the young scholar's ideas. When authors do deal with Weininger's opus, they tend to refer to an anonymous 1906 translation that was very poor – and was, until recently, the only available English version of the text.

Austro-American philosopher Allan Janik, known as one of the foremost global scholars on Viennese intellectual history, references a letter of 23 August 1931 from Wittgenstein to the English analytic philosopher G.E. Moore in which Wittgenstein, bemoaning this "beastly" translation of *Sex and Character*, says that the book's conclusions – though incorrect – are nevertheless great. Indeed, Wittgenstein states, if we simply bracket Weininger's entire work as a falsehood then we shall see that it also manages to speak a great truth. Having excerpted this letter for the reader Janik then opines rather disappointingly that it is "unfortunate that the complexities of Weininger's work are such that it is virtually impossible to obtain any clear idea of what Wittgenstein may have meant by negating the whole book." 127

My own argument is that Weininger exemplifies the Viennese tendency to insist on the primacy of selfhood yet nevertheless be drawn ultimately toward such gestures of radical selfnegation as suicide or exile. In life Weininger took the self-destructive path of suicide, but earlier, in his book, he advanced a kind of symbolic social exile instead. Weininger exiled the feminine, Woman and the feminine contagion within, and he likewise jettisoned – or tried to – the Jew within himself. Working from the established binary logic at play in heteronormative

¹²⁶ Hamann, *Hitler's* Vienna, 227.

¹²⁷ Allan Janik, *Essays on Wittgenstein and Weininger* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1985), 66.

gender roles and in discourses of Aryan superiority and Jewish degeneracy, he pushed it to a breaking point where difference became so rigid that it could do nothing but collapse in on itself. In this chapter I argue that Weininger's politico-philosophical strategy of absolutely separating Woman from Man and Jew from Aryan was a creative, if defensive and hateful, splitting manoeuvre that allowed him to both address and repress his ambivalence about his own identity and sexuality and the reputed threats of Jewishness and feminism. *Sex and Character* can thus be read as a grisly self-portrait: a portrait of what Weininger believed was best and worst in himself, expressed through a brutally nihilistic image of humanity "redeemed."

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In the recent Wittgenstein Reads Weininger (2004) authors Stern and Szabados, commenting on the reception of Sex and Character, describe the book as

a little like a highbrow version of *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus* for turn of the century Vienna, with a good deal of racism, homophobia, and sexism thrown in.

However, among Weininger's avid readers could be counted not only Wittgenstein, but also many of the leading literary figures of the years from 1903 to 1939, including such luminaries as Ford Maddox Ford, James Joyce, Franz Kafka, Karl Kraus, Charlotte Perkins-Gilman, Gertrude Stein, and August Strindberg.¹²⁸

¹²⁸ David G. Stern and Béla Szabados, *Wittgenstein Reads Weininger* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 8.

Precisely because of its logical fallacies and its ideological and affective distastefulness, and certainly in light of its immense popularity, Sex and Character can be read as a cultural Baedeker of sorts. Indubitably Weininger's text is a document of its time. The book is divided "between a first empirical-physiological and a second philosophical and psychological part." 129 The first part proceeds inductively, 130 with Weininger nevertheless following established scientific method. Sex and Character is perhaps representative of Viennese modernism in this respect, too, for several of Weininger's contemporaries would also use traditional methods to create eccentric new theories and practices. More significantly Sex and Character also attests to the precociously expansive intelligence but tragically limiting negativity of one of many young Jewish Viennese men. Of course there were many Gentile and Aryan readers of Sex and Character, but going through the literature I get the impression that Jewish thinkers were especially influenced by Weininger's condemnatory text. Schönberg praised Weininger's sincerity and encouraged members of his entourage like Gerstl to read Sex and Character. Karl Kraus championed Sex and Character tirelessly – even publicly defending Weininger from accusations that he had stolen his ideas about bisexuality. Adolf Loos was also a fan. And clearly Wittgenstein was still convincing people to read the book – reputedly one of his favourites – many years later at Cambridge. Part of Wittgenstein's enthusiasm for Weininger, whom he praised as a "'remarkable genius," was "because Weininger was one of the first

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Weininger's arguments are inductive in the sense that they lead only to conclusions that are probable, never certain – unlike deductive reasoning which, when valid, leads to conclusions that are definitely true.

¹³¹ For more on this see Sherry Lee, "A Florentine Tragedy: Woman as Mirror," Cambridge Opera Journal 18, no. 1 (2006): 37; Blackshaw, "The Jewish Christ," 21.

people outside Freud's inner circle to see 'the future importance of the ideas which Freud was putting forward.'"¹³² This is a particularly intriguing historical detail given Wittgenstein's well-known criticism of Freud and psychoanalysis. *Sex and Character* also exerted a more diffuse influence on Viennese, and, more broadly, Germanic culture in the early twentieth century, reflecting and extending major political and psychological debates of the time.

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The first, or so-called "preparatory," part of Weininger's book addresses the question of sexual diversity, and its introduction could surprise readers who know Weininger only as a misogynist or conservative: he begins by referring to the concepts "man" and "woman" as hopelessly inaccurate and in desperate need of reform. Finally he asks provocatively: "Might it perhaps be wiser in the end not to distinguish between men and women at all?" For Weininger not only individuals but even all *parts* of all individuals are constituted in an idiosyncratic relation to ideal masculinity and femininity, which he refers to as the poles of "M" and "W." On this basis Weininger makes the compelling conclusion, evoking Aristophanes' famous speech in Plato's *Symposium*, ¹³⁴ that all beings are ultimately searching for an exact and infinitesimally specific complement vis-à-vis a universal sexual spectrum.

¹³² In Stern and Szabados, *Wittgenstein Reads Weininger*, 8. Cf. also Wittgenstein's *Lectures and Conversations*, 25–6, 41–52.

¹³³ Weininger, Sex and Character: An Investigation, 11.

¹³⁴ Aristophanes attempts to explain, in the form of a somewhat comical "myth," why people claim a feeling of completeness when they fall in love, and also why there are different sexual orientations. According to Aristophanes' creation story once upon a time people had bodies double their current size, with two sets of faces, limbs, etc. Some were all male, some all female, and the androgynous beings were half male, half female. After Zeus split all of these beings in two to punish them for impudence, they were destined to forever roam in search of

"arrhenoplasm" and "thelyplasm." Arrhenoplasm, which represents the masculine, and thelyplasm, which represents the feminine, are neologisms Weininger invented in order to explain his idea that every single part of the body, literally "every single cell possesses a sexuality located at some point between arrhenoplasm and thelyplasm." Weininger goes on to clarify that the proof of this all-determining arrheno/thelyplasmic spectrum of sexuality "can easily be supplied through the fact that even in the same organism the sexual characteristics of the different cells are not always identical and very often differ in strength ... some cells of the same body may even be situated on different sides of the point of indifference between these poles." 135 These ideas may strike many contemporary readers as most implausible, nevertheless "Weininger's effort to ground sexuality in the cells ... was a legitimate scientific hypothesis by the standards of his era." 136 Weininger ensured that he knew the scientific methods of his time — and initially at least, he even adhered to them.

Weininger also insists, however, that "no science is bound to become shallow as quickly as psychology if it parts with philosophy" – hence the impoverishment of contemporary psychology. ¹³⁷ He presents his understanding of universal bisexuality, which got him into a

their missing half. We are those lost beings torn asunder. Creatures from an all-male being became homosexual men, those from an all-female whole became homosexual women, and the androgynous beings became heterosexuals. Only when you find your other half do you recover your true and complete nature, a state you never want to lose again. For this reason, Aristophanes cautions us, we must respect the gods – lest they punish us further.

¹³⁵ Weininger, Sex and Character: An Investigation, 20, emphasis in original.

¹³⁶ Sengoopta, Otto Weininger, 9.

¹³⁷ Weininger, Sex and Character: An Investigation, 71.

rather convoluted plagiarism controversy¹³⁸ with Freud and Freud's estranged friend Fliess – an otolaryngologist based in Berlin – then complains about "the slogan that 'everything' is nothing but 'sublimated sex drive,' which is so popular today."¹³⁹ This comment presumably alludes to the contemporaneous activities of Dr Freud and company, and foreshadows Weininger's aversion to sex.

Rejecting Freud's sex-drenched theory of subjectivity Weininger instead relies on a strategy of subjective splitting. He exiles undesirable sexual instincts onto Woman and pins humanity's ostensibly nobler qualities onto Man:

For Woman the state of sexual arousal only means the greatest intensification of her whole existence, which is always and absolutely sexual. W's existence revolves entirely around her sexual life, the sphere of copulation and reproduction, i.e. in her relationship with a man and with children ... While W, then, is fully occupied and absorbed by

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¹³⁸ I refer here to an infamous but complicated muddle of a story in which Fliess, estranged from Freud for years, resumed correspondence with his former friend only to accuse Freud of somehow imparting Fliess's own theory of universal bisexuality to Weininger, either directly or through Hermann Swoboda, a psychologist friend of Weininger's who was also one of Freud's patients. Freud admitted that the topic had come up in sessions with Swoboda, although he also pointed out that this theory, which Fliess claimed as his own but had yet to publish on, had in fact been circulating in various publications for years. Generously Freud even offered Fliess his own, not-yet-published "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality," which discussed bisexuality, in order that Fliess might be able to strike any passages that he felt infringed on his own theoretical territory. Freud also offered to delay publication so that Fliess might have the opportunity to publish his own work first. What Freud did not initially admit to, however, was the fact that he had indeed met with Weininger directly and read his dissertation manuscript. So desperate was Freud, it seems, to exonerate himself that he even wrote to Karl Kraus to ask for public support, a plea that – somewhat predictably given Kraus's skepticism toward Freud and psychoanalysis – backfired.

¹³⁹ Weininger, *Sex and Character: An Investigation*, 77.

sexuality, M knows a dozen other things: fighting and playing, socializing and feasting, discussions and learning, business and politics, religion and art. 140

Noting that Man has "an equal potential to be a Don Juan or a saint," Weininger clarifies that while Man, therefore "has the penis ... the vagina has Woman." 141

Such binaric bombast notwithstanding, Weininger is also fully committed to describing his theory of sexual diversity with obsessive specificity. Indeed at times Weininger's descriptions scale vertiginous heights of rococo detail. Certain passages are worth quoting at length for that very reason, so that – translation notwithstanding – one can get some taste of the real flavour of Weininger's speculative philosophy and his compulsive concern with pinning down the exact nature of sexual identity, and identity's relation to not only the "character" referred to in the book's title, but also appearance and representation. Weininger suggests the seemingly endless diversity of universal sexuality:

If, instead of always spelling out masculinity and femininity as such, we choose different algebraic signs for each and allocate, without any deeper and underhand ulterior motives at this stage, a plus to the male and a minus to the female, the proposition can be rephrased thus: the sexuality of the cells in the same organism may not only differ in absolute quantity but may also be positive or negative. There are some *otherwise* fairly distinctive males with quite weak beards and muscles, or almost typical females with small breasts, and, on the other hand, rather feminine men with strong beards and

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 79, emphasis in original.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 81.

women who have abnormally short hair and a clearly visible beard but at the same time well developed breasts and a spacious pelvis. 142

The author casually comes to the surreal conclusion that he even knows people "with a masculine thigh and feminine lower leg, or a feminine right hip and a masculine left." One likewise marvels at the paranoid inventiveness of his suggestion that in the event of a blood transfusion doctors should "demand that the degree of masculinity or femininity of any blood used should be as similar as possible."

Given this preoccupation with precision about sexual diversity it is perhaps not a surprise that Weininger has much to say about the laws of sexual attraction, including a consideration of beauty and ugliness that is of interest to us here. He notes how "often does one man happen to be completely enraptured by a certain woman ... beside himself over her 'extraordinary,' 'enchanting' beauty, while another man 'would like to know what he can see in her' because she is not also his sexual complement ... one may say that a person in love will regard as beautiful something that from the purely aesthetic point of view is not merely indifferent but downright ugly." Weininger apparently tested his sexual "law" that "It is always a complete Man (M) and a complete Woman (W) who strive to join in sexual union" to "conducting a survey based on a collection of photos of aesthetically impeccable women, each of whom corresponded to a certain W content ... presented to a number of

¹⁴² Weininger, Sex and Character: An Investigation, 20.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 23.

¹⁴⁵Ibid., 30, emphasis in original.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 29, all emphasis in original.

acquaintances," whom, Weininger gloats: "I deceitfully asked to 'choose the most beautiful.'" Apparently men always chose the woman Weininger expected them to, based on their own M-W content. What this obviously leaves unaddressed is the certainty of Weininger's own calculations (of relative beauty, ugliness, and M-W content) – but he is not the first philosopher to forget his own contributions to the phenomena under investigation. Perhaps in part because of his youth, though, Weininger's authorial voice is aggressively arrogant. His tone paints a picture of an ambivalent youth who sees himself as both above *and* below the people of whom he speaks – as though Weininger had an inferiority complex, and a sense of conceit about it.

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Weininger's sense of the divided subject is likewise apparent in his discussions of sexual orientation. Operating from the thesis that "the principle of intermediate sexual forms will provide the strongest support for the, as yet, unfulfilled scientific task of a characterology," his hope is that this principle will become a heuristic device for a more effective differential psychology, or "psychology of individual differences." By this Weininger means both the study of differences between individuals – known as differential psychology – and the different portions of male and female, heterosexual and homosexual, within each individual. When he discusses homosexuality and pederasty in the fourth chapter Weininger makes the pleasingly provocative statement that "just as all organisms are also heterosexual they are all also

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 31.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 47.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

homosexual." As Weininger explains it, the "connection between homosexual phenomena and the bisexual predisposition of every embryo in the animal or plant kingdom" has been accepted. The novelty of his own account stems from the fact that he "does not see homosexuality as a regression or an incomplete development." This conviction produces unexpectedly progressive conclusions, like Weininger excoriating the fact that as "late as 1900 a professor of psychiatry in a German university seriously recommended that homosexuals should simply be castrated." Weininger goes on to note wryly that many instances of good will in male relationships are actually unconsciously sexual in nature. But ultimately Weininger declares that the question his book is "above all else intended to solve in theoretical and practical terms" is "the woman question." This is in a chapter on "emancipated women," which ends the first part of Sex and Character.

It seems somewhat disingenuous, however, to consider differential psychology and "the woman question" compatible since the entire aim of differential psychology is to find differences between individuals, including between individuals of the same sex. Instead Weininger offers sophistries from the absurd: "Historical research is obliged to agree with the popular saying ... 'The longer the hair, the smaller the brain'"¹⁵⁴ to the enigmatic: "a homosexual love honors a woman, in particular, more than heterosexual relationships."¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 43, emphasis in original.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 45.

¹⁵² Ibid., 44.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 57.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 60.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 58.

Weininger's overarching argument rests on the presupposition that Woman, as such, neither wants nor needs emancipation; indeed, "all those women who really strive for emancipation, all those women who have some genuine claim to fame and intellectual eminence, always display many male properties, and the more perceptive observer will always recognize in them some anatomically male characteristics, an approximation to the physical appearance of a man." ¹⁵⁶ The enemy of women's emancipation is thus Woman herself. ¹⁵⁷ It is only the element of Man within Woman that compels her toward emancipation and achievement. ¹⁵⁸

§

It is in the second – or main – part of Weininger's tract that the dynamic of subjective splitting is most aggressively developed, and it is here, too, that his most distasteful observations are presented. *Sex and Character* was published in May 1903, Weininger shot himself in October, and in the public controversy that ensued Weininger's former doctoral supervisor Jodl felt it necessary to publish a statement, on 25 October in the *Neues Wiener Journal* ¹⁵⁹ clarifying that almost the entire main portion of *Sex and Character* had been added to the original submitted dissertation. Indeed Jodl stressed that Weininger's "academic teachers had no influence on most of the second part of *Sex and Character*." ¹⁶⁰ Jodl especially wanted to distance himself

156 Ibid., emphasis in original

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 65.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 60.

¹⁵⁹ A daily newspaper published in Vienna from 1893 to 1939.

¹⁶⁰ Steuer, "A Book That Won't Go Away," xiv.

and his colleagues from Weininger's comments on women and Jews,¹⁶¹ which he considered "monstrous."¹⁶² But it was that monstrous second part of Weininger's treatise that the author felt best represented him and his philosophy. Weininger himself was the monster Jodl descried and decried.

While contemporaneous Austrian intellectual culture embraced psychology, positivism, and language critique [*Sprachkritik*] over the tradition of Germanic idealism to which Kant belonged, Weininger audaciously insisted on the truth of the Kantian intelligible self – but only for Aryan Man. And yet Weininger knew he could not be this Aryan Man. Certainly, as Sengoopta notes astutely, Weininger's "Kantian salvage of the self was a political as well as an intellectual act" but it was also personal and performative. We have little biographical information about Weininger, but I think Sengoopta is right to propose that we read Weininger's philosophical and religious allegiance as grounded partly in his hostility to local culture: Weininger's espousal of Kantianism was "guided by his own chosen identity as an intellectual representative of a Greater Germany ... a gesture of defiance toward Austrian academic orthodoxy, just as his later adoption of Protestantism symbolized a defiance of Judaism as well as the Catholic culture of Vienna." At every turn Weininger contested his identity. How uncomfortable he must have been in his own skin!

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¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Sengoopta, Otto Weininger, 18.

¹⁶³ Sengoopta, Otto Weininger, 29.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

Discussing Kant's important influence on Weininger historian of science and medicine Chandak Sengoopta emphasizes that within Kant's philosophical system, "morally, women could not be their own masters." Weininger may have been influenced by Kant's misogyny in Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View (1796–97), in which the Königsbergian philosopher acknowledges woman's "loquacity and eloquence full of affect" but also declares that "regardless of age" woman is "immature in civil matters; her husband is her natural curator." For Weininger, Woman's nothingness and ontological subservience to Man actually define her humanity because humanity itself is composed of a complement of being and nonbeing: "only Man and Woman together constitute the human being." Who constituted a "real" subject in modern Vienna was as caustically contested as what counted as "real art," and obsessive self-representation and strategic ugliness became both aspects of and reactions to this cultural concern.

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¹⁶⁵ Sengoopta, *Otto Weininger*, 29. Weininger's discussion of memory, logic, and ethics posits Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788) as "the most sublime book in the world," 132. He explicitly rejects the psychological philosophies of contemporaneous Germanic psychologist-philosophers including Franz Brentano, Carl Stumpf, and Theodor Lipps in favour of Kant's transcendental critical thought, 124.

¹⁶⁶ Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, ed. Robert B. Louden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 205.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 103.

¹⁶⁸ Likewise Weininger may have been thinking of Kant's *Lectures on Metaphysics* – for example, by the ontology section of Kant's "Metaphysik Vigilantius" lecture (1794–95) and its discussion of nothingness – in his formulations of Woman's ontological nullity. He does read a bit like a nasty Kant when he asserts that whereas "unadulterated man is the image of God, of the absolute **something**," by contrast "Woman, including Woman in Man, is the symbol of **nothingness**: that is the significance of Woman in the universe, and that is how Man and Woman complement and condition each other," 268, all emphasis in original.

Despite the pains that the young philosopher took at the outset of his book to establish Man and Woman as absolute types only – and not representative of real people, who always combined masculine and feminine traits – Weininger now suddenly claims that one is "either a man or a woman." The problem was that while men could be psychically female, women could not be psychically male. So as it turns out, feminine evil is an encroaching threat for self and society alike.

Weininger's total denial of female intelligence, agency, or even a soul must be considered in the pernicious context of turn-of-the-century European misogyny, and alongside his insistence that no real individual was either an absolute Man or an absolute Woman. What was particularly paradoxical about the objections to and popular discourses around feminism was the pervasive quality of double bind in turn-of-the-century definitions of what it actually meant to be a woman: to be a woman was terrible, but to not be a real woman was really terrible. The woman who could transcend the designated boundaries and frailties of her sex was often even more reviled than the woman who could not. For example the notoriously hateful Möbius cautioned, in his tract *On the Physiological Feeble-Mindedness of Women [Über den physiologischen Schwachsinn des Weibes* (1900/1908)], that the creatively intelligent woman was degenerate, not gifted.¹⁷⁰

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¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 163, emphasis in original.

Not only philosophy and religion, but also feminism played out differently in Austria than in Germany: on the one hand, Germany had more feminist organizations, but on the other, women had earlier access to education in Austria – for example women were permitted to attend Austrian universities for arts degrees by 1897 and for medical degrees by 1900 whereas in Germany women were not permitted to attend university at all until 1901. In this regard both countries were conservative compared to the United States, where from its inception in 1833 Oberlin College in Ohio accepted female and/or black students. Moreover by 1864 a black American woman named Rebecca Crumpler had even attained a medical degree, whereas the University of Vienna, which opened its medical faculty to women thirty-six years later in 1900, did so only "after a protracted controversy." Ibid., 31–2.

By contrast Weininger's theories would even seem to predict later concepts of gender as symbolically and socially constructed. For example the youthful Viennese author seems to have articulated, avant la lettre, similar observations to French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan's dictum that "Woman does not exist." 171 Weininger asserts: "Woman is nothing, and that is the reason, the only reason, why she can become everything." He elaborates: "Women do not have this or that quality: their peculiarity is having no qualities at all." Despite the slip in the second part of the quotation into the general "women" rather than typical "Woman," Weininger like Lacan draws attention to the phantasmatic quality of "Woman" in the phallocentric cultural economy of Viennese modernity. Weininger notes that men create ideas of "Woman" to serve their own needs – specifically, their sexual needs – and then project these notions onto actual women, who are then expected to sustain and support such male fantasies. In the words of Lacanian philosopher Slavoj Žižek, "Weininger hauled into the light of day the 'sexist' phantasmatic support of the dominant ideology." ¹⁷³ Weininger details his views regarding man's relationship to woman's "ontological falseness," claiming for example that "by becoming sexual, Man posits Woman and calls her into being ... And she would be dead the moment man overcame his sexuality ... Woman, all the way through, is only an object created by the drive of man as its own goal, as a hallucination that his delusion is eternally laboring to

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¹⁷¹ First proposed in the seminar of 1970–71, and reformulated in the seminar of 1972–73 as "there is no such thing as Woman."

¹⁷² Weininger, Sex and Character: An Investigation, 265, all emphasis in original.

¹⁷³ Slavoj Žižek, "Otto Weininger, or, 'Woman Doesn't Exist,'" *New Formations: A Journal of Culture/Theory/Politics* 23 (1994): 97.

capture."¹⁷⁴ Weininger's obsessive reiteration of Man's all-consuming desire for Woman reads as a reaction to his own lack of it.

Paradoxically there is also a strong ethical component to Weininger's convictions regarding the war of the sexes. He views coitus as intimately related – psychologically, biologically, and ethically – to murder, ¹⁷⁵ and finishes his book advocating for universal abstinence. That this would prevent reproduction did not disturb Weininger, who declares that "fecundity is nothing if not disgusting." ¹⁷⁶

In keeping with his paranoid fear of femininity Weininger also sees femininity everywhere. Reminding the reader of Woman's "lack of intellectual conscience" and "deficiency in conceptual thinking" he explains that "this habit of wallowing in purely emotional resonances, of dispensing with conceptuality and comprehensibility, of *drifting* without *striving* for any depth, characterizes the iridescent style of so many modern writers and painters as an eminently *feminine* one. Male thinking fundamentally differs from female thinking by its desire for solid forms, and thus any 'atmospheric art' is necessarily a *formless* art." Such discourse strongly echoes the discourses regarding the formlessness of Klimt's *Philosophy* — which, according to Weininger's doctoral supervisor Jodl, had made Klimt's painting ugly.

Other contemporaneous commentators, including fans of Weininger's philosophy such as acerbic journalist Karl Kraus, also lampooned the purported femininity of Vienna's artists.

¹⁷⁴ Weininger, Sex and Character: An Investigation, 270, emphasis in original.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 223.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 311, emphasis in original.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 164, emphasis in original.

Kraus railed repeatedly against the femininity of the feuilleton culture in Vienna, and the socalled Jung Wien writers in particular. He felt that their impressionist, emotional styles were narcissistically self-indulgent and histrionically feminine. And despite the fact that Weininger garnered Kraus's – ostensibly austere, hyper-masculine – approval it is difficult not to find Weininger himself histrionic when he declares: "one looks in vain for thoughts in anything ever created by women artists," "the imagination of Woman consists of errors and lies," a "female philosopher is a most unlikely notion," and "it is entirely out of the question that a woman should *suffer from problems*." ¹⁷⁸

Conveniently, Weininger theorizes Woman as incapable of true nakedness – which is to say vulnerability, for example to attacks like his – because of her purported inability to feel shame. 179 Possibly picturing himself Weininger also goes on to assert that whereas an ugly man feels his own ugliness as "a painful reality," an ugly woman will "try to deceive herself and others about it till the very end."180 It is almost as though, for Weininger, Woman is ugly because she is nothing whereas a man such as himself might be ugly because he was too much: too much consciousness stained by too much Jewishness, femininity, confusion and desperation. "It has been comprehensively proven," Weininger declares, "that W is soulless and has neither self nor individuality, neither personality nor freedom, neither character nor will ... The psychic life of W can be described in purely empirical terms, while any psychology of M must

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 168–9.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., **173**.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 178.

target the self as the topmost gable of the building, as Kant realized."¹⁸¹ One can almost feel Weininger's desperation in constructing this towering yet flimsy edifice that is "Man." He shores up his hopeful conclusions with aggressive statements about the ineffability of Man's essence versus the aggregate quality of Woman, who can be dismantled. But as it eventually turns out – after three more chapters discussing woman's essential nonexistence as seen through the lenses of motherhood, prostitution, eroticism, and hysteria – Jewish men also lack the same core features absent from women.

Both "Jews and women *are* nothing and therefore can become *everything*." ¹⁸² It is this preoccupation with the notion of a lack of selfhood that prompts Weininger to comment suggestively: "a completely naked living woman gives the impression of being unfinished, of reaching for something *outside* herself, and this is incompatible with beauty ... and thereby causes the beholder displeasure rather than pleasure." ¹⁸³ Weininger goes on to strenuously disagree with Schopenhauer's claim that men regard women as beautiful only because they are blinded by their own sex drive. Were this true, Weininger claims, then female genitals would be considered gorgeous; yet on the contrary, he insists, "no man ... finds the female *genitals* as such beautiful ... every man actually finds them *ugly*." ¹⁸⁴ And yet a page later, apparently unaware of how he exposes himself with his developing commentary, Weininger notes how "*in* aesthetics, beauty is created by love ... just as ugliness derives from hate, beauty derives from

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 180, emphasis in original.

¹⁸² Ibid., 289, all emphasis in original.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 215, emphasis in original.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., emphasis in original.

love."¹⁸⁵ Perhaps the most striking aspect of Weininger's attitude toward sexuality in general is indeed its overall hatefulness. Nevertheless his ambivalence about his sexuality is such that a little later on in the book he also declares that the penis "makes a naked man ugly ... it represents the most unpleasant thing of all, in its erect state."¹⁸⁶ Thus does Weininger's analysis become strangely both ham-fistedly reductive and oddly complex, for his own theories seems to instantiate the very conflicts he writes about, and ultimately he perhaps reveals exactly what he means to conceal.

§

A chapter on male and female consciousness brings on topics that truly obsess Weininger: talent, genius, and the nature of – and difference between – the two. And here, too, the polyvalence of the ambivalent self will be maintained, even lionized. Weininger's arguments regarding endowment, genius, and memory are bizarre but compelling, and occasionally even convincing. He opines early on that the "ideal of a genius, in particular of the artistic kind, is to live in all human beings, to lose himself in all, and to *emanate* into the multitude, while the philosopher has the task of finding all the others again *in himself* ... to *absorb* them into a unity." Weininger asserts that the artistic genius, therefore, has many selves – selves who dominate at different times. Moreover, Weininger claims that when "Goethe once spoke of the

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 216, emphasis in original.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 228.

¹⁸⁷ Weininger, Sex and Character: An Investigation, 94.

'recurrent puberty' of artists" he was describing something very similar. One gets the strong impression when reading such passages that Weininger was drawn to theories that could help him make sense of, and perhaps redeem, his own conflicted impulses and contradictory self-perceptions.

Weininger's suicide is melancholically forecast in his conclusions about genius.

Weininger insists that the genius "comprehends things only through suffering *from* them, and he understands human beings only through suffering *with* them." Weininger notes, moreover, "he who feels his own personality also feels it in others." He then makes the alarming albeit somewhat enigmatic assessment that "he who kills himself kills the whole world at the same time." Weininger absorbed and refracted sex and gender panic, psychological ambivalence, and philosophical pessimism in a manner that at least in hindsight seems quintessentially Viennese — above all in its obsessive concern with the problem of self and the conviction that the self contains the whole world, all of its perils and possibilities, within it.

Weininger's idea that artists and geniuses were protean played a principal role in the larger drama of Viennese selfhood and representation. Whereas the dangerously labile qualities of modernity, hysteria, and Jewishness were denigrated in *Sex and Character* as feminine decadence or inherent inferiority, Weininger lauds the lability of the man of genius as a positive phenomenon of consciousness resulting from authentic selfhood and creativity – and this ambivalent dynamic played out in contemporaneous Viennese society as well. The same

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 157, emphasis in original.

quality – of changeability, multiplicity – was represented as negative or positive, depending who was embodying it. 190

The prevalence of ugly self-representation in Vienna attests, I think, to both the popular interpretation of inconsistency as a symptom of "pathology," and the interpretation of it as a sign of "genius." And regardless of the dubious veracity of his ideas, Weininger's theory regarding the changeability of the genius's face evokes the expressivity of Viennese selfportraiture specifically. For example when Weininger comments on the "striking phenomenon that the expressions on the faces of more endowed people change much more frequently than on that of people without any endowment, and indeed ... at different times they can have incredibly different faces," it is easy to picture the theatrical self-portrait grimaces of Weininger's contemporaries Gerstl, Kokoschka, and Schiele. Weininger even goes so far as to conclude that: "The number of faces an individual has can actually be regarded as a physiognomical indicator of his endowment." ¹⁹¹ So depending on who was doing – or discussing – the changing, the ability to mask, mute, and mutate one's identity could be viewed in early-twentieth-century Vienna as an exalted capacity of higher human beings or as part of the decadent degeneration of modern man into nervous weakness and effeminacy. Changeability was a highly charged concept, and the charge or cathexis in question was a deeply ambivalent one. The often-antagonistic diversity of the Empire mirrored the internal

¹⁹⁰ Yet in a moment of contradiction also Weininger claims – without elaboration or evidence – that "cases of 'duplex' or 'multiplex personality,' that is, a duplication or multiplication of the self, have been observed **only in women**," 185, all emphasis in original.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 95, emphasis in original.

squabbling of one's various selves – be they the levels of the Freudian psyche or Weiningerian "genius selves."

Throughout his discussions of genius Weininger invokes local luminaries such as Beethoven and canonical Germanic genius-types such as Kant, Goethe, Schopenhauer, Wagner, and Nietzsche, and in a typically Viennese fashion unites science, art, and philosophy.

Weininger insists that whereas talent is inherited (for example the Bachs), genius – in the form of total consciousness – is radically individual. He concludes the chapter with the observation that "woman lives unconsciously, man lives consciously, but a genius lives most consciously." ¹⁹²
This question of consciousness leads Weininger back around to once again lambaste modernity for its lability: the genius's absolute consciousness is what distinguishes his nobly protean aspect from the ignobly protean qualities of modernity, hysteria, and Jews. Weininger boldly and bizarrely states that "the human being is completely himself only when he is completely logical; indeed he does not exist until he is nothing but logic, throughout and absolutely." ¹⁹³
This absolute consciousness evidently also divides the self; according to Weininger duality "is always the prerequisite of noticing and understanding."

Weininger's oppositional logic, however culturally apropos, was not ultimately successful. He became bound by a binary from which there was no escape – certainly not in his major lifework, and evidently not in his own short life either. Yet at the same time I have no doubt that Weininger's paranoia, desperation, and ambivalence have contributed to his

¹⁹² Ibid., 100.

¹⁹³ Ibid., all emphasis in original.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 96, emphasis in original.

tremendous posthumous popularity. People are not just passively titillated by tragedy; we are also lost – haunted searchers desperate for answers ourselves.

Referring to "the birth of the Kantian ethic" – which he characterizes as the supreme and exclusive duty to serve oneself – as "the most heroic act in world history," Weininger elaborates: "*Truthfulness, purity, fidelity, sincerity toward oneself*: that is the only conceivable ethic. According to Weininger this existential state of affairs creates a "tremendous *loneliness*," which he characterizes as "so horrifying and at the same time so great." For Weininger the self-appointed duty to be "Kant's loneliest human being" precludes the freedom to laugh, to dance, to roar, to cheer; to say "yes" to this absolute sobriety is, according to Weininger, the Dionysian element in Kant. This kind of ascetic preoccupation with the self, which characterizes much Viennese cultural activity in the early twentieth century, is so austere that the austerity itself becomes decadent. And it is displayed at its fullest effect here, with Weininger styling himself as the loneliest man on the planet and implying that he has the fidelity to self required for such a monumental duty.

In a cultural milieu already preoccupied with precisely this topic, Weininger's discussion of the problems of self and genius no doubt made the strongest of impressions on his readers. He represents the reactionary idea that the self is not only real, it also determines the nature and degree of genius. Unlike the ugly self-representations in Vienna that foreground selfhood but highlight it as a fractured, incomplete, protean *process* – rather than a coherent, unified

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 141, emphasis in original.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 142. Unfortunately Weininger does not explain why such an affirmation is Dionysian nor what sense of the term he is relying on. Certainly Weininger's direct repudiation of dance, in particular, precludes the possibility that he is invoking any Nietzschean interpretation of the term here.

total being – Weininger attempts to assert the positive, formidable existence of absolute character. Such absolute character is also totally self-aware, which results in a phenomenon Weininger refers to as the "event of the self." This event of the self is the moment, which purportedly all exceptional people experience, when a man "becomes absolutely certain that he has a self of a higher kind." 197 Weininger opines: "the event of the self is the root of all Weltanschauung, that is, of all experience of the world as a whole, for the artist no less than for the philosopher." 198 Weltanschauung translates to a "world view" or "perspective," and for Weininger it is our personal stance toward the world—which results from how we see and experience ourselves, in particular, and also other people generally. Weininger insists that "great men enter into a more vital, more understanding relationship, not only with the people around them, but also with all the personalities in history who lived before them, and this is the only reason why the great artist can grasp historical individuality better and more intensively than the mere professional historian." 199 Viennese approaches to history already tended to emphasize idiosyncratic creative interpretation more than historical accuracy; such interpretations were often constructed in terms of a continuous lineage of exceptional men and their great acts, which transcended the otherwise mundane march of quotidian history. If not in his body then in his work, certainly, Weininger presents himself as heir to this greatness, and his philosophy of genius helped contemporaries paint themselves with a similarly grandiose brush.

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¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 144.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 146, emphasis in original.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 155.

In his infamous chapter on Judaism near the end of the book, Weininger attacks the ostensible Jewishness and effeminacy of contemporaneity at length. For Weininger, Germanic culture was mired in this "age which believes that its character is best expressed in vague, indistinctly shifting moods." In Weininger's view the ultimate error of the era is that it is "an age that has declared genius to be a form of madness, but which no longer has one great artist or one great philosopher." You can almost see his struggle vis-à-vis the possibility of his own genius, so palpable is Weininger's sense of being tainted, on the one hand, and gifted on the other. And as a reader one gets the strong but uncomfortable feeling that although in a way Weininger is coming to know himself through the writing of this book, he is nonetheless exactly mistaken about where his own beauty and ugliness lie. As he concludes a discussion of endowment Weininger takes a different pot shot, decreeing abruptly that "today the history of art is as full of the most erroneous evaluations as [is] the history of philosophy." 202

§

Every body of work, I would argue, is an attempt to solve some kind of creative problem – but Sex and Character is a particularly ardent, anxious body. What worried Weininger about femininity worried him even more about Jewishness. Together it was altogether too much to bear, and he declared that even "the most manly Jew is more feminine than the most feminine

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 104.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 299.

²⁰² Ibid., 123.

Aryan."²⁰³ For this troubled young man, as for several other assimilated Jewish figures now hailed as great luminaries of Viennese modernism, Judaism was "the hardest and most formidable enemy."²⁰⁴ Because of this Weininger goes on to opine that

one may almost say that the most important and most conspicuous question in the official forms that everybody is obliged to complete for public use today is that asking whether or not he is a Jew, and that this seems to have become the most common criterion of classification used by civilized people.²⁰⁵

This is a chilling comment not only in hindsight – that is, chilling in the context of the Nuremberg laws of 1935, which introduced new (and inaccurate) methods of identifying who was Jewish in order to facilitate the imposition of increasingly discriminatory policies towards German Jews. Weininger's approving observation is also distressing in the context of the contemporaneous antisemitic prejudice so prevalent in Vienna. With one tautology after another Weininger attempts to prove that "the more exceptional individuals have almost always been antisemites (Pascal, Voltaire, Herder, Goethe, Kant ... Schopenhauer ... Wagner)" – and this because "they also understand Judaism better." To know Judaism is to be repelled by it according to Weininger, taking a page out of Wagner's infamous "Jewishness in Music" essay. Yet with characteristically Viennese ambivalence Weininger also acknowledges that just as we "love in others only what we would like to be completely but never are completely," so, too, do

²⁰³ Weininger, *Sex and Character* (New York: Howard Fertig, Inc., 2003), 306. Reprint of 1906 translation published by G.P Putman and Sons. This quote does not appear in the new translation, which, while still virulently antisemitic and sexist, is significantly less so than this early-twentieth-century translation.

²⁰⁴ Weininger, Sex and Character: An Investigation, 273.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 274.

we "hate in others only what we never want to be, but always are in part."²⁰⁶ When we hate someone it is often because we recognize in them "ugly and mean features we have in ourselves."²⁰⁷ It's our own ugliness we often see in others, and our own fear and self-hatred we project onto others. This is why Jews themselves are often "the most rabid antisemites," according to Weininger. Showing some real insight into the nature of hatred, disavowal, projection, and prejudice, Weininger notes that the antisemitic Jew persecutes perceived Jewishness in the other in an attempt to remove that same Jewishness from himself.²⁰⁸ It is an idiosyncratic peculiarity of his intelligence that Weininger perceives this error while simultaneously also committing it himself.

Defining Jewishness as neither a race nor a nation but rather a psychic constitution – a type – Weininger trots out all sorts of prejudices of the age while simultaneously revealing insight into subjective ambivalence by claiming, as we have seen, that "the *aggressive* antisemite … always exhibits certain Jewish peculiarities." According to Weininger this can even include physiological manifestations of Jewishness when there is no actual Jewish heritage present. But Weininger did have real Jewish heritage – he is, in practice, the antisemitic Jew he himself theorizes. According to the monstrous psycho-philosophical edifice that he built, the self that Weininger loved but could never be was the Aryan, heterosexual subject "Man." Sengoopta discusses how although we "have no unequivocal proof, it is strongly likely" that

²⁰⁶ Ibid., all emphasis in original.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 275.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 274.

Weininger attempted to medically treat himself for homosexuality. 210 All of these aspects of selfhood represented abysses that, no matter how many times he might try to climb to that topmost Kantian gable, threatened to suck Weininger back down and swallow him in overwhelming, all-consuming darkness.

At the end of the book Weininger refers to himself as "cleansed and armed" 211; he seems to accept – with terrifying temerity – a self-appointed duty to sacrifice the monster within. He declares: "I cannot understand life as long as I live ... It is only when I have overcome it that I shall understand it, and therefore only death can teach me the meaning of life." 212 Yet Weininger was clearly ambivalent: before he could kill himself and learn this meaning of life, he first felt compelled to write a book – a book that does, in fact, present arguments about the meaning of life. Weininger's book documents a desperate striving to discern the dangerous nature of life and identity, of sex and character. Such is the paradox of life and especially selfhood: when one is this conflicted, this ambivalent about oneself and one's environment, one is compelled to represent it – to represent oneself no matter how contradictory, convoluted, or constantly changing the images might be. Weininger tried – but evidently failed - to define himself according to a rigorous Kantian intellectuality that might allow him to live, but every avenue of thought he pursued seemed to lead to necessary self-sacrifice. Weininger's strategic splitting of Woman from Man and Jew from Aryan was a form of

²¹⁰ Sengoopta refers to a letter Weininger wrote his friend Swoboda in April 1901, in which Weininger explains that his experimental cure for homosexuality – doses of male sex gland – was working so well that his "patient" was preparing for his first heterosexual coitus. Presumably this "patient" was Weininger himself. Sengoopta, Otto Weininger, 100.

²¹¹ Weininger, Sex and Character: An Investigation, 301.

²¹² Ibid., 255–6.

repression that, initially at least, gave him some space to pontificate – but the repressed will return. Thus I read *Sex and Character* as, amongst other things, the self-portrait of a man trying and failing to save his own life as a subject. On the surface, however, Weininger represents himself as strong enough to welcome death.

He marvels at humanity's "strange fear, which seems to suggest that the most horrifying thing would be the extinction of the *species*." By contrast, for Weininger such a fear "reveals an extreme lack of belief in *individual* immortality and in the eternal life of the moral individual," and "is also a sign of faint-heartedness and of the inability to live outside the *herd*." This "herd," for Weininger, turned out to be humanity as such. In writing *Sex and Character* Weininger represented, for posterity, the aspects of his identity that he had believed were beautiful and worthy of love, and in committing suicide he sacrificed the parts of his humanity that he felt were hateful and ugly. According to Weininger "love *itself* is only a desire for redemption, and any desire for redemption is immoral."

In Weininger's worldview not only is love impossible for Jewish people, any respectful, dignified social intercourse is impossible because "the genuine Jew is deficient in the inner nobility that generates the dignity of the self and respect for the self of another." He concludes with a bleak forecast of the global-historical role of Jewish people as not much more than a cautionary omen. For him the Jew is a true "monster," etymologically *monstrum*, from the Latin moneō meaning "to warn": the Jew warns the happy, healthy, beautiful Aryan what

²¹³ Ibid., 311, emphasis in original.

²¹⁴ Weininger, Sex and Character: An Investigation, 221, emphasis in original.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 278.

he must never become. According to Weininger "the world-historical significance and the immense merit of Judaism is perhaps none other than that it persists in making the Aryan conscious of his own individuality and reminding him of himself. That is what the Aryan owes to the Jew. Thanks to the Jew he knows what he must be aware of: Judaism as a possibility within himself." ²¹⁶ In Weininger's trenchantly individualistic worldview there was no hope to be gleaned from others, and certainly not from local Jewish community.

²¹⁶ Ibid., 276, all emphasis in original.

Chapter 3

"Our Loathed and Beloved Vienna": Ambivalent Jewishness in Antisemitic Vienna

Self-mirroring is allowed when the self is beautiful; it becomes a duty when the mirror is good.

- Karl Kraus

Oh no, I'm not a bellyacher. My hatred of Vienna is not love gone astray. It's just that I've discovered a completely new way of finding it unbearable.

- Karl Kraus

Having so closely attended to ambivalence and hostility in the mind of one man, it behoves us to now consider these themes in the larger context of metropolitan Vienna. An extremely ambivalent, often hostile attitude toward the native city – perhaps best exemplified by Schönberg's casual reference to "our loathed and beloved Vienna" in a 1910 letter to Mahler – was very common in the early twentieth century. Hatred of Vienna was often framed in terms of feelings of persecution, some of which were justified. In his letter Schönberg references not only Mahler's prior persecution in Vienna but also, and paradoxically, the Viennese citizens' ardent desire to have their esteemed composer (Mahler) back at home soon. Mahler had been driven from an antagonistic, antisemitic Vienna to New York in 1908.

Likewise, in a particularly embittered letter to Fliess Freud once exclaimed: "'Otherwise Vienna is Vienna, that is to say extremely revolting ... I hate Vienna with a positively personal hatred." Yet critics have nevertheless insisted that "Freud's frequent attacks on Vienna"

²¹⁷ Letter of 5 July 1910, in Stein, ed., *Arnold Schoenberg Letters*, trans Eithne Williams and Ernst Kaiser (New York: St Martin's Press, 1965, c1964), 296–7.

²¹⁸ Ernst A. Ticho and Gertrude R. Ticho, "Freud and the Viennese," *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 53 (1972): 303.

should not be interpreted in terms of "unmitigated hatred for the city." In fact, "expressing a critical attitude towards Vienna is a typical Viennese trait. The Viennese are known to both love and abominate their city." ²¹⁹ And in 1938, after Freud had found refuge from the Nazis in London, he said of Vienna and his sense of loss at leaving that "in spite of everything I still love the prison from which I have been released." Martin Freud, the psychoanalyst's son, even proclaimed in 1957: "I am not convinced that Sigmund Freud's often-expressed dislike of Vienna was either deep-seated or real.'"²²⁰ Martin Freud's comment highlights the potentially ambivalent nature of his father's hatred. A theatrical sense of hatred and love as emotions to be performed in the public sphere encouraged Viennese citizens to take dramatic attitudes toward local issues. Ambivalent, people nevertheless struck a pose on the stage of the city.

The theatricality of these poses probably resulted at least in part from a pervasive sense of lack: Vienna seems to have felt itself acutely as missing a worthwhile metropolitan identity in early-twentieth-century modernity. Cernuschi suggests that "the popularity of myth in Vienna 1900" was due at least in part to "myth's ability to alleviate Viennese cultural insecurities." 221 Part of the Viennese identity crisis certainly had to do with the fading glory of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and cultural rivalries played a role as well. In Hermann Bahr's 1923 autobiography – tellingly titled Self-Portrait [Selbstbildnis] – he said of Vienna's inferiority in the

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ In ibid.

²²¹ Cernuschi, *Re/casting Kokoschka*, 64.

face of neighbouring Berlin: "'They had [the Battle of] Sedan [1870], Bismarck and Wagner.

What did we have?"

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Another, and related, cultural identity issue in Vienna was that so-called "Jewish question." To understand the dynamics of Jewish self-perception and virulent antisemitism that characterized early-twentieth-century Vienna we must examine Jewish immigration to Vienna in the nineteenth century, as well as the economic crash of 1873 – which was widely blamed on "the Jews." As British literary critic John Carey explains in his introduction to Freud's *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*:

Jewish immigration from Eastern Europe was increasingly resented in the Vienna of Freud's youth. Between 1857 and 1880 the proportion of Jews in the city's population rose from 2 to 10 percent. The stock-market crash of 9 May 1873 ('Black Friday') led to an orgy of anti-Semitism. Jewish bankers were blamed for the catastrophe. A rash of anti-Jewish propaganda hit the popular press, with cartoons depicting hook-nosed financiers. This was the year Freud went up to university.²²³

This economic crash was only a generation after the revolutionary movements of 1848–49, which had threatened the Empire, and only a few years after Austria's decisive military defeat in the Austro-Prussian war of 1866 – which signalled the twilight of the Habsburg kingdom. First the faded glories of the monarchy, then the promise of liberal capitalism come to nought. Meanwhile in Vienna ambivalence and anxiety seem to have hardened into hostility and evergreater extremism, with burgeoning antisemitism a major source of motive power.

²²² In ibid.; orig. citation Hermann Bahr, *Selbstbildnis* (Berlin: S. Fischer, 1923), 127.

²²³ Carey, "Introduction," *The Joke*, xxvi.

It would be simplistic and inaccurate to equate a general Viennese hostility and ambivalence with the specific struggles of Jewish people – the intolerance they faced and the pressures they experienced to assimilate or disappear entirely. Likewise it would be false to reduce the Viennese preoccupation with ugliness to an aspect of or reaction to local antisemitism. For example we know that Kokoschka and Schiele, who were of Catholic extraction and are infamous for the ugliness of their art, both described feeling persecuted in – and by – Vienna, just like Jewish figures such as Schnitzler, Schönberg, and Freud. Nevertheless I do want to examine how in Vienna noxious antisemitism and ambivalent Jewishness both contributed to and exemplified the hostile tenor of the city, a paranoid obsession with conflict, and an ambivalent sense of local cultural identity. These phenomena in turn encouraged divisive theories and practices and extreme strategies of representation, including strategies of ugliness and discourses of hate.

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In his essay "Jewishness in Music" Wagner declares that he aims at "explaining that unconscious feeling which proclaims itself among the people as a rooted dislike of the Jewish nature." More specifically he wants to discuss the Germanic hatred of Jewishness in terms of the deleterious effect of Jewishness on Germanic art. But Wagner's essay is more accurately

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²²⁴ Richard Wagner, "Judaism in Music," in *Judaism in Music and Other Essays*, trans. William Ashton Ellis (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 79. I refer to the essay by the title "Jewishness in Music" in the main text because it is a more accurate translation, I think, of "Das Judenthum in der Musik" – but even more importantly, because it better captures the more psychological and not at all religious nature of Wagner's antisemitic understanding of Jewish identity. "Das Judenthum in der Musik" was first published under a pseudonym in September 1850 in Leipzig's *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* [*New Journal of Music*] and an expanded version was published under Wagner's own name in 1869.

described, I think, as his own articulation of the larger cultural phenomenon of *Verjudung*: "the fear of 'passing,' that these works of Jewish art may be mistaken for real, German artworks." ²²⁵

Wagner states: the "public Art-taste of our time" has been brought "between the busy fingers of the Jew."²²⁶ Indeed he claims aggressively that there is "no need to first substantiate the be-Jewing of modern art; it springs to the eye, and thrusts upon the senses."227 For Wagner, the Jew is an "unpleasant freak of Nature" whose outward appearance is so strikingly ugly that "instinctively we wish to have nothing in common with a man who looks like that." ²²⁸ Wagner is saying that Jews are monsters – freaks of nature who disgust and threaten other people, making them anxious about physical appearance and its relation to individual and collective identity. According to Wagner "a man whose appearance we must hold unfitted for artistic treatment — not merely in this or that personality, but according to his kind in general — neither can we hold him capable of any sort of artistic utterance of his [inner] essence."²²⁹ Such statements are patently offensive, but they had even more dire implications for the theory and practice of self-representation by any Jewish artist. It was damning enough if Jews were subjects whose physical appearance was so repulsive that it was somehow inappropriate – or even impossible – to represent it in art. Wagner goes on to suggest more specifically, though, that a Jewish person is incapable of artistically articulating any sense of essence, interiority, or

²²⁵ K.M. Knittel, *Seeing Mahler: Music and the Language of Antisemitism in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2010), 60.

²²⁶ Wagner, "Judaism in Music," 81.

²²⁷ Ibid., 82.

²²⁸ Ibid., 83.

²²⁹ Ibid., 83–4.

personal identity precisely insofar as his or her "exterior can never be thinkable as a subject for the art of re-presentment." ²³⁰

But interestingly, in his essay Wagner insists that the reader – presumed Gentile – should turn inward and get to know the source of his or her own "instinctive repugnance against the Jew's prime essence," in order to understand "what we hate in that essence." The specific logic of Wagner's antisemitism is deeply psychological and fundamentally intersubjective. According to Wagner what is particularly repulsive is contact with Jews, rather than any abstract notion of Judaism – which he claims can in fact marshal some sympathy. Wagner explains:

When we strove for emancipation of the Jews, however, we virtually were more the champions of an abstract principle, than of a concrete case ... we went for freedom of the Folk without knowledge of that Folk itself [or] any real sympathy; for, with all our speaking and writing in favour of the Jews' emancipation, we always felt instinctively repelled by any actual, operative contact with them.²³²

What Wagner aims to explore, then, is the "involuntary repellence" that a Gentiles ostensibly experiences in the face of a Jew. 233

Wagner's claims had extraordinary resonance, disseminating widely and diffusively in early-twentieth-century Vienna. Some who had not necessarily read "Jewishness in Music"

²³⁰ Ibid., 83.

²³¹ Ibid., 82, emphasis in original.

²³² Ibid., 80.

²³³ Ibid., emphasis in original.

could nevertheless be found reproducing its style of rhetoric. Others, including Weininger, were clearly influenced directly. And certainly Vienna's illustrious community of Jewish composers – Mahler, Schönberg, Alexander von Zemlinsky, etc. – knew this tract, too.

What an affront to be of Jewish descent reading that kind of vicious yet common and venerated commentary! What must it have felt like? In a famous passage Schnitzler – a gifted the novelist and playwright who was more outspoken than most about local antisemitism – describes the way that he experienced his own subhuman status as a Jew in Vienna, how utterly impossible it was to escape the effects of this atmosphere of hatred. He says that in Vienna a Jewish person

had the choice of being counted as insensitive, obtrusive and fresh; or of being oversensitive, shy and suffering from feelings of persecution. And even if you somehow managed to conduct yourself so that nothing showed, it was impossible to remain completely untouched; as for instance, a person may not remain unconcerned whose skin has been anaesthetized but who has to watch, with his eyes open, how it is scratched by an unclean knife, even cut into until the blood flows.²³⁴

And yet at the same time, antisemitism was such a pervasive part of quotidian Viennese life that it cropped up everywhere and was usually thoroughly normalized – and in a variety of pernicious ways.

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The consistent conflation of hatred and ugliness in antisemitic discourse also very much affected how people saw one another and themselves. Alma Mahler – a great source of

²³⁴ In Hannah S. Decker, *Freud, Dora, and Vienna 1900* (Toronto: Collier Macmillan Canada, 1991), 37.

historical information because of her voluminous diaries²³⁵ and correspondence – describes her own husband in atrociously antisemitic ways. She had also prevaricated prejudicially about dating Zemlinsky because of his Jewishness. Her antisemitic ambivalence regarding Zemlinsky included an obsessive concern with his so-called ugliness; she referred to him in her diary as "'dreadfully ugly, almost chinless.'" And, when contemplating their possible future marriage, declared: "'how ridiculous it would look … he so ugly, so small – me so beautiful, so tall.'" Later Alma decided not to marry Zemlinsky in part because of her horror at the idea "'of bearing his children – little degenerate Jew-kids [*kleine degenerierte*].'"²³⁶

Clearly the Viennese take on "Jewish ugliness" was paranoid, and saw things – including ugliness – that were not there. In *Seeing Mahler: Music and the Language of Antisemitism in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna* (2010) K.M. Knittel lists a variety of aspects of Mahler's corporeality that Alma obsesses over in her diaries, and discusses how distorted her descriptions can be. Enumerating the contradictory range of Alma's antisemitic concepts, Knittel concludes that what we are seeing "looks more like a laundry list of Jewish traits than a description, a way of voicing her own anxieties rather than necessarily describing Mahler himself." Such an analysis has much broader applicability. Indeed the circularity of hateful Viennese discourse we have seen thus far is striking: the paranoid person views the hated object – woman, Jew – as both everything and nothing, which hopelessly muddles questions of causality. Jews have taken over art, but not because they are creative, only because they are mimics; they are

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²³⁵ The diaries chronicle the years 1898–1902.

²³⁶ Knittel, Seeing Mahler, 39–40.

²³⁷ Ibid., 42. Cf. also pp. 35–46.

therefore a clandestine threat capable of "passing" and convincing us they are true Germans.

Except on the other hand you can spot a Jew because he is marked by inferiority both inside and out; his difference is repulsive and ugly because he is ignoble and incapable of the good. So he's ugly but so, so close, and you hate him like you hate the darkest parts of yourself.

This is a heady brew of hate here, presumably also a most disorienting draught for all—and not only those directly attacked. We have already seen that when Klimt's faculty paintings for the University of Vienna were thought to be too ugly, they were called "Jewish" — even though Klimt was not a Jew. We likewise know that Viennese art historian Franz Wickhoff was incorrectly identified as Jewish when he delivered his defence of *Philosophy*, Klimt's purportedly ugly painting. Caricature constituted a pervasive cultural representation of so-called "Jewish ugliness" in Vienna. The Viennese popular press in was saturated with vicious antisemitic sentiment, and caricature disseminated this message of hate — often with the strategic use of ugliness. Viennese caricature also evinced the circularity of local discourse; for example in the local humour magazine *Floh* a caricature titled "Lesson in Darwinian Evolution" showed the composer Wagner developing, in stages, out of a stereotyped Jewish man. The caricature barely makes sense: an unsympathetic —and evidently unimaginative — critic transforms Wagner, a virulent antisemite, into part of the Jewry simply as a form of attack that would be highly legible in contemporaneous culture.

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We have witnessed already the importance of Weininger's *Sex and* Character as a document of self-representation in Viennese modernism, especially with respect to anxieties about Jewish

and sexed identity. In his article "Refashioning the Masculine Subject in Early Modernism:

Narratives of Self-dissolution and Self-construction in Psychoanalysis and Literature, 1900–

1914," John E. Toews makes complex, insightful statements about *Sex and Character* that are quite relevant to my own analysis as well. Toews refers to *Sex and Character*'s "distorting and simplifying mirror," which he says "welded together" the following three issues: "the production of masculine identity out of universal bisexuality," "the definition of the boundaries of community or 'home' through the projection of psychic division on to the relations between social and cultural groups," and "the problematic resolution of the intractable polarities of historical existence in aesthetic or philosophical transcendence, in the translation of life into art, of impure material and historical existence into abstract, spiritual form." 238

That middle term – the boundaries of community or "home" being set through a splitting of the individual psyche and the projection of psychic divisions onto group identities and relations – proved to be a particularly problematic part of Viennese modernism. One solution to this problem was Zionism, a movement of Jewish renewal that began in Vienna and aimed at establishing an independent Jewish state. The artists, writers, and scientists discussed here were largely averse to Zionism; Martin Buber was one of few exceptions, and even he embraced Zionism in an individualistic and idiosyncratic way. Overall Zionism represented the imagined future-self of a people increasingly threatened with destruction. If we compare Buber's and Theodor Herzl's forms of Zionism we see two different visions of salvation.

²³⁸ John E. Toews, "Refashioning the Masculine Subject in Early Modernism: Narratives of Self-dissolution and Self-construction in Psychoanalysis and Literature, 1900–1914," *Modernism/Modernity* 4, no. 1 (1997): 32.

Buber was born in Vienna in 1878, eight years after Weininger. He was brought up in Lemberg (now Lviv, in the Western Ukraine), and returned to Vienna in 1897 to attend university. Unlike so many Jewish contemporaries we examine here, Buber was born into a family of observant rather than assimilated Jews. At the University of Vienna Buber worked under the same philosophy professors who had supervised Weininger's doctoral thesis.

Buber's choice to study philosophy was somewhat unusual (for an observant Jew), and reflected his intellectual precociousness and his early struggles with his Jewish heritage.

While at university Buber had aligned himself temporarily with the *Jung Wien* literary aesthetes who, influenced by impressionism, symbolism, and – locally – by Mach's theory of sensation and critique of the self, developed a form of literary modernism that questioned the nature of identity and reality. Karl Kraus was briefly associated with the group; its most well-known members are perhaps de facto spokesperson Bahr as well as Schnitzler, Peter Altenberg, Richard Beer-Hofmann, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, and Felix Salten. Buber and Kraus each declared their independence from the *Jung Wien* group in 1897, both in the form of an essay criticizing the group's psychology and style.²³⁹ Buber's essay, "On Viennese Literature," addressed a "crisis of personality" that he saw in Vienna – especially in the writings of Altenberg, von Hofmannsthal, Schnitzler, and Bahr.²⁴⁰ Buber wrote an article on Nietzsche in 1900, and was tremendously influenced by the German philosopher's ideas about self-

²³⁹ Kraus's satirical essay was titled "The Demolished Literature" [*Die demolirte Literatur*] and disparaged the group using the trope of the recent destruction of the Café Griensteidl where the members had coalesced. Kraus did not name the men he was mocking but they were readily recognizable. Edward Timm, *Karl Kraus, Apocalyptic Satirist: Culture and Catastrophe in Habsburg Vienna* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 5.

²⁴⁰ Gilya Gerda Schmidt, *Martin Buber's Formative Years: From German Culture to Jewish Renewal, 1897–1909* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1995), 6–7.

overcoming and self-creation. Although Buber shared the *Jung Wien* concern with the problems of selfhood and individuality – his dissertation was entitled "Contributions to the History of the Problem of Individuation" – Buber's solutions were dialogical rather than solipsistic, and ultimately he was community oriented. By 1902 Buber was editing *Die Welt*, the Zionist paper Austro-Hungarian writer Theodor Herzl had founded in 1897, in order to promote what Buber called a "Jewish renaissance."

Herzl, who was born eighteen years earlier than Buber into an assimilated Jewish family, had explicitly stated in his 1896 text *Der Judenstaat* [translated as *The State of the Jews* or *The Jewish State*] that he considered the Jewish question to be neither a social nor a religious question, but rather a national one. Whereas Herzl's political Zionism emphasized a separate Jewish state – Israel – over and above religious or cultural concerns, Buber's cultural Zionism did just the opposite: cultural Zionists were at least to some extent accepting of the reality of the Jewish diaspora, and emphasized common concerns (for example language and art) and religious identity as the foundation of Zionism. When Herzl died in 1904, Ahad Ha'am, representative of the cultural Zionist movement, took a leadership role in the World Zionist Organization and cultural Zionism gained in power and popularity.

In Buber's collected writings *The Jewish Movement – Collected Essays and Speeches*1900–1915 [Die jüdische Bewegung – gesammelte Aufsätze und Ansprachen 1900–1915],

published in 1916, the author jubilantly exhorts:

²⁴¹ Jacques Le Rider, *Modernity and Crises of Identity: Culture and Society in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*, trans. Rosemary Morris (New York: Continuum, 1993), 289.

Create! The Zionist who feels all the sanctity of that word, and lives by it, is a man of the highest stature in my eyes. To create new works out of the depths of an ancestral singularity, the unique and incomparable force of blood, so long in chains and reduced to unproductiveness, that is the ideal we must lay before the Jewish people.²⁴²

But Buber's positive vision of a collective affirmation of Jewish identity did not convince many Viennese Jews in the early twentieth century. On the contrary many Jewish figures represented themselves not jubilantly like Buber but rather with self-sacrificing tones, like Weininger – whom the Nazi politician Dietrich Eckart would later praise as the only decent Jew.²⁴³

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Some, like Freud, still hoped for the success of assimilation and the political liberalism of the past, despite the increasingly antisemitic and conservative climate. Karl Lueger, the insistent yet boldly inconsistent antisemite who infamously declared: "I decide who is a Jew," became the mayor of the city in 1897, the same year Herzl founded his Zionist paper *Die Welt*. In a classic instance of Viennese antagonism, Franz Joseph refused to ratify the 1895 vote for the antisemitic Lueger until 1897. Freud famously lit a cigar in celebration, but the future was bleak. When Lueger was finally ratified as mayor he described the Jewish threat to society by comparing Jewish people unfavourably to predatory animals: "'Wolves, lions, panthers, leopards, and tigers are human next to these beasts of prey in human form.'"²⁴⁴ And Hitler,

²⁴² In Le Rider, *Modernity and Crises of Identity*, 292.

²⁴³ Hamann, *Hitler's Vienna*, 230.

²⁴⁴ in Cernuschi, *Re/Casting Kokoschka*, 133.

who would later "credit" Vienna as the city that taught him how to be an antisemite, relocated to Vienna in 1905.²⁴⁵ In this hostile context, it was not only Weininger, who projected his own traumatic Jewish identity-as-destiny onto others, but also more ambivalently Jewish men such as Freud, Schnitzler, and Schönberg who eschewed Zionism.

It was not until 1926, in a famous letter to the Vienna Lodge of B'nai B'rith on the occasion of the psychoanalyst's seventieth birthday, that Freud finally explicitly addressed the issue of his Jewishness and his sense of the meaning of Jewish identity both personally and collectively. Rejecting a religious or national basis for his connection with Jewry, Freud claimed instead that what made Judaism and Jews "irresistible" to him was "the clear consciousness of an inner identity, the familiarity of the same psychological structure." And four years later Freud wrote a letter to Dr Chaim Koffler at the Keren Hayesod (the Foundation Fund for Israel) explicitly stating that he would not support political Zionism's goal to make Palestine a Jewish state. He stated that while he was "proud" of the establishment of the Jewish University of Jerusalem and "delighted with our settlement's prosperity," that he could "raise no sympathy at all for the misdirected piety which transforms a piece of a Herodian wall into a national relic, thereby offending the feelings of the natives." This comment makes clear that while Freud may have become sympathetic to Buber's notion of "ancestral singularity," he was not partial to

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²⁴⁵ Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998), 64.

²⁴⁶ Freud, *Standard Edition XX*, 271–4.

²⁴⁷ The letter (26 February 1930) is not in the *Standard Edition*, and has therefore been reproduced on the website of the Freud Museum, London: http://www.freud.org.uk/education/blog/40082/the-arab-israeli-conflict/. Accessed 28 December 2014.

By contrast Schnitzler's novel The Road into The Open [Der Weg ins Freie] "was immediately perceived as a 'Jewish' novel and appropriated for the Zionist cause." This was an ironically inappropriate appropriation in light of Schnitzler's at-best skeptical attitude toward Zionism. Schnitzler, whose father was a doctor and mother a doctor's daughter, was born in 1862, six years after Freud – who famously described Schnitzler as his own *Doppelgänger*. The young Schnitzler began studying medicine at the University of Vienna in 1879 at the age of seventeen, and by 1885 had received his doctorate of medicine and was working in the city's general hospital. Although they came from different class backgrounds and ultimately pursued different careers, there is much to link Schnitzler and Freud – not the least of which is their frank treatment of sexuality and pessimistic but penetrating insights into human nature. Schnitzler also read Freud avidly.²⁴⁹ Schnitzler's written works can be considered psychoanalytic documents in and of themselves, so richly detailed and insightful are his characters' psychological "case histories." Evidently Freud also read Schnitzler and noted this, as he ruefully commented that Schnitzler was instinctively aware of psychological principles that Freud himself had worked laboriously to bring to light. 250

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²⁴⁸ Iris Bruce, "Which Way Out? Schnitzler's and Salten's Conflicting Responses to Cultural Zionism," in *A Companion to the Works of Arthur Schnitzler*, ed. Dagmar C.G. Lorenz (Rochester: Camden House, 2003), 103.

²⁴⁹ Lorenzo Belletini, "Freud's Contribution to Arthur Schnitzler's Prose Style," *Rocky Mountain Review* 61, no. 2 (Fall 2007): 11.

²⁵⁰ In a 14 May 1922 letter Freud wrote to Schnitzler on Schnitzler's sixtieth birthday. In Ernest Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud, Volume 3: The Last Phase 1919–1939* (New York: Basic Books, 1957), Appendix A 443–4.

In The Road into The Open Schnitzler represents both self and society. Ostensibly the main character in *The Road into The Open* is Georg, a dilettantish Gentile composer who spends much of his time in the company of Vienna's artistic assimilated Jews. Georg is characteristically ambivalent about the Jewishness of his friends - as they very often are about their own Jewishness as well. Georg views his Jewish writer friend Heinrich, for example, with a mixture of "sympathy and revulsion." He is repelled by Heinrich's moments of emotional vulnerability, and his reactions are consistently inflected by an ambivalent antisemitism. This ambivalence is to some extent the corollary of Heinrich's own ambivalent Jewishness. Rather than rejecting his friend's prejudice, Heinrich internalizes Georg's feelings of disgust and lambastes himself intently whenever he feels he has betrayed his desire for acceptance. Heinrich constantly vacillates between trying to open up emotionally to his friend Georg, and rejecting his – and indeed, all – human fellowship. For both characters, the very question of who deserves to be loved and why, versus who deserves to be hated and why, is inextricably intertwined with the so-called Jewish question. In a long passage worth quoting in its entirety Heinrich muses to Georg on the nature of race itself, and insists:

"Every race as such is naturally repulsive. Only the individual is able sometimes, through personal strengths, to reconcile himself to the repulsiveness of his race. But that I'm particularly sensitive to the failings of Jews, I will not at all deny. Possibly it lies in the fact that I, we all, we Jews I mean, have been systematically raised with this sensitivity. From

²⁵¹ Arthur Schnitzler, *The Road into The Open*, trans. Roger Byers (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 43.

our youth on we have been driven to see precisely Jewish characteristics as especially comical or repulsive, which is not the case with regard to the equally comical or repulsive characteristics of others. And I won't conceal the fact that when a Jew behaves crudely or comically in my presence, sometimes such a painful feeling seizes me that I want to die, to sink into the earth ... Perhaps the whole thing is just egotism. It's exasperating that one is continually made responsible for the mistakes of others, that one must atone for every offense, for every crudity, for every thoughtless act that any Jew in the world makes himself guilty of. Naturally one easily becomes unjust. But this is just nervousness, sensitivity, nothing more. One comes to one's sense again. Once can't call that anti-Semitism. But there are Jews who I really hate, hate as Jews. They are those who behave in front of others, and sometimes among themselves, as if they weren't Jews at all. Who try to appease their enemies and despisers in a cheap, cringing manner and think they can ransom themselves like this from the eternal curse, which weighs on them, or from that which they only feel as a curse. They are, by the way, almost always the kind of Jews who go around with a feeling of their own highly personal worthlessness, and consciously or unconsciously want to make their race responsible for it. Naturally it doesn't help them in the slightest. What has ever helped the Jews at all? The good and the bad. Naturally I mean," he added quickly, "those who need something like outward or inward help." And with a deliberately light tone he broke off. "Yes, my dear Georg, the matter is rather complicated, and it's quite natural that all those who do not have to deal directly with the question lack the right understanding for it." 'Well, one may not so ... " Heinrich

interrupted him immediately. "One may indeed, dear Georg. That's the way it is. You don't understand us." 252

So sure is Heinrich that he cannot be understood and is not worthy of love that he decides it is better to seek "no one's trust, no one's sympathy." The points of resonance between Heinrich's description of ambivalent Jewishness in antisemitic Vienna and Weininger's discussion of Jewishness and society in *Sex and Character* are striking, and sad.

As Iris Bruce points out, in *The Road into The Open* the solution of radical individualism "may seem politically naïve for readers today in view of the Final Solution thirty years later."²⁵⁴ But failure – political and aesthetic, personal and collective – is part of the point, and "in the telling of this unresolved cyclical story Schnitzler also told a story of its cultural and social contexts, of the conditions which made the ambivalences and apparent failures of his characters understandable."²⁵⁵ Schnitzler also "clearly imagines [Georg] Wergenthin and [Heinrich] Bermann as two variations on modern art" in Vienna, although – notably – "he does not condemn or promote either."²⁵⁶ Georg, the musician, represents the unconscious aspect of art and culture that so consternates Weininger: his artistic consciousness is impressionistic, experiential, and his creativity is rooted in a "primordial, maternal sensuality."²⁵⁷ Heinrich lives in the world of *logos*, and is motivated by "incessant analysis," "total consciousness," and the

²⁵² Ibid., 114.

²⁵³ Ibid., 87.

²⁵⁴ Bruce, "Which Way Out?," 104.

²⁵⁵ Toews, "Refashioning the Masculine Subject in Early Modernism," 48.

²⁵⁶ Ibid., 52.

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 51.

"self-confidence [that] comes from the conviction that he is 'able to see into the human soul.'"²⁵⁸ Loosely speaking Georg represents the fin-de-siècle artistic style of the *Jung Wien* writers or, in visual art, of the Secession – the diffuse, "feminine" aspect of modernity – whereas Heinrich represents the critical focus and trenchant masculinity of figures like Weininger or Kraus. Schnitzler himself contained both kinds of impulse and ability, and this is perhaps the quality he does share with Buber: his dialogism.

Without being didactic *The Road into The Open* poignantly portrays how affected everyone was by Viennese antisemitism. Through his characters Schnitzler explores a variety of critical political positions in response to malignant Viennese modernism. Several different scenes in the novel detail impassioned arguments between Jewish protagonists about the rise of Zionism, and characters evince a real fear that Zionism will destroy what little liberty and tolerance they currently enjoy as Viennese Jews. Buber's joyful call for collective Jewish identity and community falls largely on deaf ears.

I want to underscore Toews's observation that "although Schnitzler's literary reputation in the early twentieth century had been built on his short stories and dramas," Schnitzler himself considered *The Road into The Open* "the culminating work of his literary career." Already in 1906, two years before he finished his novel, Schnitzler "imagined it as a representative epic of his age, a work that would take its place in the line of great German novels from *Wilhelm Meister* to *Buddenbrooks*." Apparently Schnitzler also became increasingly unable to separate his own identity from those of his characters, his own life from

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 43.

the life of the novel. "Reading parts of it in progress to his wife, he found himself choking back his tears, and when he was finished he noted not only his pride in his accomplishment, but also his yearning to 'return' to the novel, as if it was his only satisfactory home in a homeless world." Toews argues that "as in Freud's case studies," Schnitzler's identification with his subject "emerged from the attempt to work through and master his own experience." Toews concludes persuasively: "Schnitzler's autobiography and recently published diaries reveal remarkable personal analogies ... the writing of the novel worked, again like Freud's case studies, as a process of both therapeutic self-understanding and self-construction." 260

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In *Freud, Dora, and Vienna 1900* Hannah Decker emphasizes the local hostility to Zionism.

Decker repeats renowned Viennese writer Stefan Zweig's observations regarding "'the general astonishment and annoyance of the bourgeois Jewish circles of Vienna' at the publication of Herzl's *The Jewish State* ... It was labelled 'this piece of nonsense, this obtuse tract.'" According to Decker no fewer than 500 Austro-Hungarian Jewish communities even "petitioned the emperor to outlaw Zionism as a godless movement." In his autobiography *The World of Yesterday* Zweig also made notably nostalgic comments – comments that are now invoked repeatedly in debates about Vienna's antisemitism – that as a Jew he lived "well, lightly, and without a care" in the capital city. Some scholars hold such comments, as well as gestures like the aforementioned petitioning, up as proof that there was no antisemitism problem in Vienna.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ Decker, *Freud, Dora, and Vienna 1900*, 30.

And yet is it really that difficult to imagine such comments, and those 500 petitions, as gestures of self-protection? There is no doubt that these were dark days; Zweig began his autobiography in 1934, and he and his wife committed suicide the day it was posted to Zweig's publisher in 1942.²⁶²

Conflict and contradiction were inevitable in a city in which citizens frequently could not communicate. Indeed Allan Janik observes: "it is not wholly accidental that Franz Kafka's *The Trial* was written under the Dual Monarchy." The Austro-Hungarian monarchy of Habsburgs ruled over an "empire of fifty million speaking *eleven official languages*, not to mention dialects." And although Holy Roman Emperor Joseph II had "proclaimed German the universal language of the empire" in 1784, his "insistence that local languages disappear only guaranteed their survival." Yiddish was referred to as a "kitchen language," and Sander Gilman has pointed out that in Vienna specifically the slang term for clitoris was "little Jew" and the slang phrase for masturbation was "playing with the Jew." In both examples — Yiddish being referred to as a "kitchen language" and the trope of "the Jew" being used in sexual slang — we see the misogynistic feminization of Jewishness. The Viennese psychoanalyst Otto

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For more on Zweig and nostalgia see Steven Beller, "The World of Yesterday Revisited: Nostalgia, Memory, and the Jews of Fin-de-Siècle Vienna," *Jewish Social Studies* 2, no. 2 (Winter 1996): 37–53.

²⁶³ Allan Janik, Wittgenstein's Vienna Revisited (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2001), 3, emphasis added.

²⁶⁴ Johnston, *The Austrian Mind*, 17.

²⁶⁵ Cernuschi, Re/Casting Kokoschka, 133.

²⁶⁶ Sander Gilman, *Freud, Race, and Gender* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 39.

'strange,' but as a caricature, a ridiculing of his own language and dress.'" Indeed Fenichel said that Jewish language was viewed as "'German in an ugly disguise.'" ²⁶⁷

Without a common language or co-operation between government and monarchy in Vienna, parliamentary procedure became a bad joke. The cosmopolitan and diverse yet xenophobic and paranoid imperial capital became the base for an urgently needed language critique [Sprachkritik] — out of which Viennese figures such as Kraus and Wittgenstein made celebrated careers. And Freud made his vocation out of the Viennese identity crises that likewise resulted, in part, from all this chaotic diversity. But Freud usually refrained from referencing antisemitism directly in his works.

Nevertheless Freud's 1905 text *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious* functioned in significant respects as his covert response to the antisemitism of his native city. There is a notorious story from Freud's childhood in which he goes out for a walk with his father, who wants to convince him how much the situation has improved for Viennese Jews by way of a personal recollection of prior persecution. As a young man, Freud's father tells the young Sigmund, he set out on a Saturday walk with a new fur hat feeling very pleased with himself. But his ebullience was soon trounced when a Christian came up to him, knocked his hat off his head "into the muck," and yelled: "Jew, off the sidewalk!" Although this story was intended to be encouraging, it made a negative impact on Freud – and understandably so. Apparently as a boy Freud was repelled by his father's cowardice in this incident, and so the story is usually brought up in connection with Freud's own Oedipal struggles. But Freud's subsequent fantasies

²⁶⁷ In Cernuschi, *Re/Casting Kokoschka*, 134.

²⁶⁸ Peter Gay, *Freud: A Life for Our Time* (New York: Anchor Books, 1989), 12.

of revenge and omnipotence – fantasies that played important parts in the genesis of psychoanalysis itself – were also inextricably intertwined with his specific experience as an ambivalent Jewish person in antisemitic Vienna.

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Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious is the least known of Freud's books, as Freud's biographer Ernest Jones has noted.²⁶⁹ The book developed out of Freud's collection of Jewish jokes, and as a reaction to Fliess's complaint that the draft of *The Interpretation of Dreams* he was reading contained too many jokes. Fliess's comment spurred the contrarian Freud to devote an entire book to jokes. But it was a jocular sort of contrarianism because really, in a brilliant marriage of form and content, "Freud's theory of jokes is itself a kind of joke." Unlike many of Freud's other texts, *Jokes* was never significantly revised. In fact he returned to the topic only once more in his career, in a short 1927 essay on humour. Thus like Weininger's *Sex and Character* Freud's 1905 text serves as an interesting historical record of Viennese culture and society and gives us insight into contemporaneous associations between identity, hostility, humour, and ugliness.

John Carey says that Freud describes "humour as our way of obtaining pleasure despite distressing feelings." Actually Freud claims even more specifically that we produce humour "instead of getting angry." This psychological reaction is necessary, according to Freud, in a

²⁶⁹ Ernest Jones, "Editor's Preface," in *Standard Edition VIII*, 6.

²⁷⁰ John Carey, "Introduction," *The Joke and its Relation to the Unconscious*, trans. Joyce Crick (London: Penguin Classics, 2003), xii.

²⁷¹ Freud, Standard Edition VIII, 231.

civilization that is "more and more robbing us ... of the capacity for feeling angry." In response to antisemitic discourses about the parsimony of Jews, for example, "Freud's reply was to demonstrate that laughter is itself parsimony, a saving of the effort usually spent on emotions or inhibitions."

Jokes thus make "aggressiveness or criticism possible," and are to be counted as fundamentally rebellious gestures.²⁷⁴ The pessimist, individualist Freud links the whole idea of community to coercion and compromise in *Jokes*. He emphasized the importance of negative affects to identity formation even more clearly five years later, in a panel discussion of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society on the prevalence of student suicide. Here Freud bitterly blamed schools for punishing and repressing "individuals who cannot be denied a right to linger at certain stages of development and even at certain disagreeable ones."²⁷⁵

Acknowledging Freud's use of generally misanthropic and often specifically antisemitic jokes in *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, Carey reminds us that the jokes Freud collected were

from the outset ... jokes about Jews, and though he does not restrict his treatise to these, his specimen jokes reflect a society dominated by money, resentment, disparagement, scandal, insult, cruelty, social rank and – in its figuration of Jews – offensive racial

²⁷² Ibid., 102.

²⁷³ Carey, "Introduction," xxvii.

²⁷⁴ Freud, *Standard Edition VIII*, 105.

²⁷⁵ In Paul Friedman, ed., *On Suicide: Discussions of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society, 1910* (New York: International Universities Press, 1967), 61.

stereotypes. It is a living proof of the "saving of expenditure on feeling" that, in his theory, underlies humour – not least anti-Jewish humour.²⁷⁶

In addition to hate and hostility, physical ugliness is one of the most important factors Freud discusses in the production of laughter. Deformity, obesity, age, disability, and the exaggeration of other allegedly unappealing physical characteristics undergird Freud's entire joke theory.

Notably, many of his examples of ugliness parallel contemporaneous stereotypes regarding the ugliness of Jews. He states that

staring eyes, a hooked nose hanging down to the mouth, ears sticking out, a hump-back – all such things probably only produce a comic effect in so far as movements are imagined which would be necessary to bring about these features.²⁷⁷

In one discussion of caricature Freud even seems to be specifically referencing local antisemitic caricatures of Mahler, who was known (and ridiculed) for his physically dramatic conducting style: Freud claims that "the passionate movements of a modern conductor seem comic to any musical person who cannot understand their necessity."²⁷⁸ Mahler, whom Gerstl once approached as a total stranger asking to paint the composer's portrait (Mahler refused), was a local luminary. But despite his celebrated status as director of the Vienna Opera, Mahler was also the target of relentless antisemitic caricature. Many of the attacks on the composer

²⁷⁶ Carey, "Introduction," *The Joke*, xxviii.

²⁷⁷ Freud, Standard Edition VIII, 190.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

targeted his supposedly Jewish movements – an idea that was itself related to the ubiquitous belief that Jews were inherently more prone to madness and hysteria than Christians.²⁷⁹

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Caricature made visible — and accessible to the Viennese public — antisemitic discourse that was medically inflected, however unscientifically. The theory that Jews were "especially prone to hysteria and neurasthenia because of a weakening of the nervous system due to inbreeding appeared in canonical form in French neurologist and pathologist Jean-Martin Charcot's

Tuesday Lesson for 23 October 1888"²⁸⁰ and was perpetuated by the psychiatric community thereafter. The comparatively liberal Austro-German psychiatrist Richard Krafft-Ebing²⁸¹ discussed hysteria and connected it to Jewishness in his *Text-Book of Insanity* (1905). As K.M. Knittel notes in *Seeing Mahler*, so-called "'Jewish' movements" came to be interpreted as "visible signs of the wild, uncontrolled movements of the hysteric."²⁸² Thus, in Mahler's Vienna "charges of nervousness and overt references to gestures and movement were anything but neutral observations; rather, they were part of a complex network of stereotypes that ... defined the Jew's body as different."²⁸³ An undated caricature of Mahler by Fritz Gareis (Fig.

²⁷⁹ Cf. K.M. Knittel, "Ein hypermoderner Dirigent: Mahler and Anti-semitism in 'Fin-de-siècle' Vienna," *19th Century Music* 18, no. 3 (Spring 1995): passim.

²⁸⁰ Sander Gilman, *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race, and Madness* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1985), 154–5.

²⁸¹ Krafft-Ebing is famous for his text *Psychopathia Sexualis: eine Klinisch-Forensische Studie* (1886) – a clinical and forensic reference book noted now (and notorious at the time) for its vanguard discussion of such controversial topics as sadism, masochism, and homosexuality.

²⁸² Knittel, *Seeing Mahler*, 264–5.

²⁸³ Ibid., 258.

12) spares no effort making the composer look as ridiculous as possible: Mahler's kicks threaten to topple over the music stand, his long hair and glasses are all askew, his admittedly large forehead is nevertheless significantly exaggerated, his arms flail wildly and pointlessly.

Caricature functioned as a popular visual index of contemporaneous medical theories that were themselves influenced by the antisemitic prejudices of the populace.

Buttressed, no doubt, by the institutionalized antisemitism of the scientific community, antisemitic caricatures often used evolutionary discourse strategically and nonsensically – as we saw already with the Wagner caricature above. When the notoriously antisemitic *Kikeriki!*Vienna's Humorous People's Paper [Kikeriki! Wiener humoristisches Volksblatt]²⁸⁴ published a caricature with the figure of the Jew as a hydra-headed, world-conquering vampire, they referred to it as "Kikeriki's latest zoological discovery."²⁸⁵ But there is no zoological discovery here, only the familiar insinuation that Jews are predatory, enervating, and ultimately inhuman. Scientifically tinged discourse is again used to create a thoroughly unscientific image of Jewish identity as monstrous – just as it was in Weininger's Sex and Character.

In the tremendous influence of Wagner's "Jewishness in Music essay," in Alma Mahler's personal writing, and in caricatures of Mahler and pseudo-scientific caricature we have seen

²⁸⁴ Kikeriki's publication history is itself an object lesson in the vicissitudes of Jewish life and identity in latenineteenth and early-twentieth-century Vienna. Founded in 1861, Kikeriki was initially a socially liberal magazine; printed in Vienna, it was popular with a larger audience as well. In the late nineteenth century, however, the paper established a pernicious precedent, becoming the first publication known to focus on antisemitic caricature. Kikeriki circulated until 1933, when the German Nazis shut the magazine down – not because of any question of the magazine's liberality but rather due to its support for Austrian, rather than German, fascist Engelbert Dollfuss. Cf. Erez Uriely, "Jew-Hatred in Contemporary Norwegian Caricatures," Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, 1 November 2006. http://jcpa.org/article/jew-hatred-in-contemporary-norwegian-caricatures/. Accessed 29 December, 2014.

²⁸⁵ Kikeriki, 26 May 1898, 1.

how antisemitism encouraged discourses of hate in early-twentieth-century Vienna. We've also glimpsed some of the ways that ambivalence affected Jewish identity and practices self-representation, and contributed to larger social forces such as Zionism and local literary and psychoanalytic writing. The artists and thinkers I am considering here were bound both by their ambivalent perceptions of self and society and by the controversies in which they found themselves enmeshed. There is perhaps no better example of such existential bondage than the painter Richard Gerstl, who by turns disavowed then exaggerated his corporeal identity and ugliness, and who defined his artistic identity with discourses of hate and despair.

Chapter 4 Richard Gerstl, Ugliness, and "the Laughter of Despair"

He was conscious of his appearance and he laughed about it, but it was the laughter of despair.

- Viktor Hammer, Richard Gerstl's only friend

The little-known Viennese artist Richard Gerstl²⁸⁶ executed at least two laughing self-portraits during his short and unhappy life. Gerstl's oil-on-canvas-on-board painting *Self-Portrait,*Laughing (Fig. 4) is quite small (39 x 30.4 cm), and intimate not only because of its size but also because of its close foregrounding of the spotlighted subject. Yet the frenetic, dissonant image is too chaotic to present a clear, singular sense of identity. Instead we see a contorted visage with a cryptic laugh that arguably connotes monstrosity as much as mirth.

Particularly when viewing the painting up close – "in the flesh" – one of the most striking aspects of the work is its ambiguous representational and mimetic status. For example the application of impastoed green, yellow, and white paint initially looks like it is meant to represent facial hair, until one notices that paint is applied to the right side of Gerstl's chin²⁸⁷ but not the left. Another unsettling feature of the work is the notably asymmetrical eyes: his right eye is larger, light blue, and seems to be both higher and less deeply set than the grey left

Relationship (1906–1908)," completed in 2011, may facilitate a more rapid burgeoning of Gerstl's reputation, particularly in the English-speaking world where formerly there was no major source of information on Gerstl's life and work. Coffer's thesis employs new archival evidence to establish an amended chronology of Gerstl's works, one that differs importantly from that of Klaus Albrecht Schröder's earlier German-language catalogue raisonné for the exhibition *Richard Gerstl: 1883–1908* (Vienna: Kunstforum der Bank Austria, 1993), which has generally been considered the authoritative text on Gerstl. In deference to, and appreciation of, Coffer's extremely thorough primary research and detailed chronology, I have generally adopted or at least acknowledged his new dates for Gerstl's works here.

²⁸⁷ The artist's right, not the viewer's.

eye. The artist also depicts his neck as unnaturally long and lumpy, and one orange ear projects dramatically from his head. Seemingly frantic daubs, lines, and scribbles agitate the surface of the canvas, both in the background and on Gerstl's person. Light accents that would normally function as modelled highlights instead serve to fragment the face further here, rendering it as incoherent zones of thick, gooey messiness. Indeed Gerstl's whole face looks like it has been smeared with potentially noxious substances – which can induce a kind of self-protective anxiety in the viewer. It's almost as if a vegetal substance is growing on the surface of Gerstl's skin; this representational strategy effectively robs him of his humanity, as vegetal existence overtakes him.

While in *Self-Portrait, Laughing* Gerstl unpleasantly deconstructed his visage, in the other laughing self-portrait he defaced his own face (Fig. 4). Around 1904–05²⁸⁸ Gerstl painted a rather pleasing full-figure image of himself laughing, the reverse of which was later used to paint a portrait of Zemlinsky (Fig. 14). But at some point Gerstl attacked his own face with dark blue paint – an act that Klaus Albrecht Schröder, director of the Albertina museum, refers to as an "auto-aggression." Schröder also suggests that this auto-aggression foreshadows Gerstl's later suicide.²⁸⁹ Viktor Hammer, who was Gerstl's friend and colleague at the Academy of Fine Arts [*Akademie der bildenden Künste*] in Vienna and his studio-mate, also owned a self-portrait caricature by Gerstl. Hammer contextualized the themes of ugliness, self-caricature, and

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²⁸⁸ The *Stiftung Sammlung Kamm* [Kamm Collection Foundation] gives the date for the self-portrait known as *Fragment eines lachenden Selbstbildnisses in ganzer Figur* [*Fragment of a Laughing Self-Portrait in Full Figure*, referred to here as *Fragment of a Laughing Self-Portrait*] as 1904–05, which accords with Schröder's information in *Richard Gerstl: 1883–1908*. In his dissertation Coffer offers: "ca. 1904" for the work.

²⁸⁹ "Eine Autoaggression, die wie eine Vorahnung des späteren Selbstmordes anmutet," Klaus Albrecht Schröder, *Richard Gerstl: 1883–1908* (Vienna: Kunstforum der Bank Austria, 1993), 45.

laughter in Gerstl's life and work this way: "he was conscious of his appearance and he laughed about it, but it was the laughter of despair."²⁹⁰ Gerstl believed he was ugly.

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Gerstl scholar Raymond Coffer opines persuasively that Hammer's recollections are noteworthy because they reveal not only "Gerstl's apparent disaffection with his appearance, but that he may have represented ... [this disaffection] in caricature." 291 Coffer argues, moreover, that both Gerstl's "uneasy relationship with himself" 292 and the artist's frequent experiences of rejection haunt his body of self-portraiture. 293 Indeed Coffer devotes a chapter of his dissertation to the representation of rejection in Gerstl's early self-portraits, and emphasizes that the artist's biography "certainly appears to indicate that Richard's weak frame and physique may have been a source of insecurity from an early age." ²⁹⁴ Coffer buttresses this analysis of Gerstl's traumatic physicality with previously suppressed aspects of Gerstl's biography, ²⁹⁵ such as the fact that around age eighteen the artist was rejected from the army "because of physical weakness." ²⁹⁶

²⁹⁰ "Es war sich seiner Ersch.[einung] bewusst und er hat d[a]rueber gelacht, es war aber das Lachen der Verzweiflung," Hammer in Raymond Coffer, "Richard Gerstl and Arnold Schönberg: A Reassessment of their Relationship (1906–1908)" (PhD Thesis, University of London, 2011), 62. My translation.

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² Ibid.

²⁹³ Ibid., 75.

²⁹⁴ Ibid., 61.

²⁹⁵ Ibid., 64.

²⁹⁶ "Wegen Körperlicher Schuäche," 60–1.

Gemma Blackshaw, in her 2006 article "The Jewish Christ: Problems of Self-presentation and Socio-cultural Assimilation in Richard Gerstl's Self-portraiture," also examines Gerstl's self-portraits – but with a notably different focus. Blackshaw decries what she argues has been a trenchant scholarly "reluctance to bring the question of Jewish identity into an analysis of modernist art practice" in Vienna. ²⁹⁷ She is also interested in how Gerstl's own Jewish heritage "seems to be rejected by the artist in his *Self-Portrait against a Blue Background*, "²⁹⁸ which was originally titled *Lazarus* (Fig. 15). ²⁹⁹ The blue background in this self-portrait begins at the outer edges of the composition as a dark indigo or even blue-black and gradually lightens as it progresses toward the artist. Gerstl, pictured from approximately the knees up, wears only a white sheet and stands in a full frontal position. In effect the artist surrounds himself with a full blue halo. He represents his body as unrealistically attenuated, and his very pale skin has a slightly blue translucent luminosity to it. A strange marking that looks almost like the tip of a penis pokes out of the top of the sheet near the artist's left hip (Fig. 16). ³⁰⁰ He has no belly button, and his hands are barely there. The only part of Gerstl that is not ghostly and

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²⁹⁷ Blackshaw, "The Jewish Christ," 27.

²⁹⁸ Ibid, 28. Unfortunately this self-portrait has many titles, which risks further obscuring Gerstl's already neglected life and work. The painting, which is housed in the Leopold Museum in Vienna, is referred to there as both *Self-Portrait before a Blue Background* and *Semi-Nude Self-Portrait*, 1904–05, Inv. 637. Coffer refers to it with its German title of *blau/Selbstbildnis*. I will refer to the painting as *Self-Portrait before a Blue Background*.

²⁹⁹ Coffer, "Richard Gerstl and Arnold Schönberg," 71.

³⁰⁰ I am indebted to Peter Vergo for his observation and for our subsequent conversation. Coffer, disputing another scholar's suggestion that this wound is analogous to the wound in the side of the risen Christ, suggests that a similar mark "appears in a near-identical position" in Gerstl's naked self-portrait of 1908, and might therefore be considered a scar. (70) I find both of these interpretations somewhat unsatisfying, as the mark is actually very far from the traditional spot on Christ's side and likewise somewhat different from the placement of the mark in the naked self-portrait. Coffer, noting that Gerstl's father Emil had ordered Gerstl's naked self-portrait of September 1908 removed from Richard's brother Alois's bedroom, also considers the possibility that Gerstl may have originally painted himself naked in this picture and added a sheet later. (68)

insubstantial is his much darker and more realistically painted (albeit very small) face, which looks out at the viewer with a somewhat defiant expression. The effect of the work is somewhat uncanny but the artist nevertheless represents himself as more sacred than monster.

Coffer acknowledges that Blackshaw's article is "thought-provoking" but dismisses her arguments about Gerstl's Jewish identity. According to Coffer Blackshaw's "key findings ... often bear little relationship to the new biographical details" that Coffer himself has provided in his more recent 2011 text. Coffer repudiates the significance of Jewishness to Gerstl's life and work, generally, and to his practice of ugly self-portraiture in particular. Moreover, according to Coffer Gerstl's Self-Portrait before a Blue Background was produced in 1902 rather than the Leopold Museum's commonly reproduced date of 1904-05 or Blackshaw's date of 1905. If Coffer's 1902 date is correct then the semi-nude Self-Portrait before a Blue Background and Gerstl's naked self-portrait painting of 12 September, 1908 (Fig. 17) - which together constitute the artist's only known self-portraits in a state of undress – "can be seen as bookends in his apparently inveterate search for self-representation and exploration of sexual self-awareness." That is, if Coffer's date for the Self-Portrait before a Blue Background is correct then Gerstl's two naked or semi-nude self-portraits constitute his first extant independent – i.e., post-Academy – work, and his final work; Gerstl's artistic career thus begins and ends with a searching visual self-assessment. And in between, the laughter of despair.

³⁰¹ Coffer, "Richard Gerstl and Arnold Schönberg," 67.

³⁰² Ibid., 69.

Coffer also disputes the accepted dates for Gerstl's two laughing self-portraits; he provocatively insists, for example, that the artist's *Self-Portrait*, *Laughing*, which most scholars understand as having been executed shortly before Gerstl's suicide in the autumn of 1908, at the age of twenty-five, was actually painted in the summer—autumn of 1907. Yet despite the ostensible incompatibility of Blackshaw's arguments about Jewishness and Coffer's arguments about rejection and physical unattractiveness, I want to put them into dialogue here. I contend that we can indeed make productive and illuminating connections between Jewishness, rejection, and ugliness if, for example, we examine them through lenses of caricature and laughter. Even if they cannot be proven to obtain indisputably to Richard Gerstl's own life, such connections are nevertheless demonstrably relevant to Viennese artistic, cultural, and psychological discourses in the early twentieth century. In turn these discourses can help us make some sense out of practices of ugly self-representation in early-twentieth-century Vienna.

I want to examine Richard Gerstl's self-portraits with an eye to their attitude toward ugliness and in light of the recollection of Gerstl's "laughter of despair" at his own appearance – not to concur with or conclude either Blackshaw's or Coffer's line of interpretation, but rather to help keep the conversation about this under-discussed artist going.

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Gerstl was only one of many who might have been infected by the pernicious association, in discourse and visual culture, between hatred of Jews and hatred of bodies considered ugly in early-twentieth-century Vienna. Likewise his practice of self-portraiture may represent some of the many different ways that Viennese individuals, both Jewish and Gentile, tried to grapple

with their experiences of traumatic identity and corporeality. Whereas Gerstl's early Self-Portrait before a Blue Background implied an avoidance of corporeal substance, his later Self-Portrait, Laughing seems to focus on precisely those abject aspects of the ugly body, and specifically the ugly body coded "Jewish," that the earlier self-portrait disavowed. These different representational strategies may have been part of Gerstl's larger attempt to negotiate an identity he could live with, an attempt that evidently failed. While such subjective disturbances should not be entirely attributed to Vienna's rancorous antisemitism I would nonetheless argue that being surrounded by constant, vociferous hatred would likely exacerbate anyone's psychic struggles, and may have influenced Gerstl's increasing turn to distorted, abstract, and even ugly and monstrous imagery. For example Gerstl's stylistic trajectory might have begun with a disavowal of the "ugly" Jewish body, progressed to a strident display of precisely those ugly or Jewish qualities – be they corporeal or painterly – that were previously disavowed, and finally terminated with increasingly abstract images of identity dissolved, the absence of selfhood. Indeed I would argue that Gerstl's entire oeuvre and particularly his self-portraits evince an ambivalence about identity, especially corporeal identity, that may have been related to feelings about his Jewishness.

It was a decade after the crash of 1873 – that so exacerbated Viennese antagonism toward local Jewish people – and antisemitism was still on the rise when Richard Gerstl's Jewish father Emil married Maria Pfeifer in a Jewish ceremony after she converted from Roman Catholicism scant weeks before Richard's birth on 14 September 1883. Maria's conversion to Judaism was not required, and was atypical in an antisemitic city filled increasingly with Jewish people distancing themselves from their culture. Her conversion to Judaism could, therefore,

Suggest Emil's strong feelings about his own Jewishness and the Jewishness of his last son. But Gerstl's two older brothers August and Alois had been born prior to Marie's conversion, and in 1884 Maria separated again from the Jewish community – entering a 'konfessionslos,' or non-denominational, classification very common in Vienna at this time. Moreover, Gerstl – despite being born into this apparently Jewish marriage – was nonetheless baptized a Roman Catholic. The date of Richard Gerstl's baptism is not known, but in January 1904, when Gerstl was twenty years old, his father converted to Roman Catholicism and his mother was accepted back into the Church. Jewish Viennese identity at the time was generally characterized by a high degree of ambivalence, but the case of the Gerstl family was perhaps even more extreme in its vacillations than average.

As Hannah Decker has stressed in *Freud, Dora, and Vienna 1900*, in the years between 1890 and 1900 the number of Viennese Jews who formally renounced their legal Jewish affiliation doubled. And it was overwhelmingly the young who were repudiating Judaism — single men and women in their twenties and thirties. We have to linger for a moment on those facts and numbers to imagine the tumult and turmoil they imply. Gerstl's complex personal, cultural, and religious situation developed during a highly dynamic, troubling period in the history of Jewish Viennese modernity, with Gerstl coming of age at precisely the time young Jews were most likely to convert. ³⁰⁴ Indeed Blackshaw argues that Gerstl may have painted his *Self-Portrait before a Blue Background* to commemorate his family's conversion to Roman

³⁰³ For Gerstl's biography see Schröder, *Richard Gerstl: 1883–1908*, 173–8, and for details regarding the religious history of the Gerstl family see Blackshaw, "Jewish Christ," 27–8, and Coffer, "Richard Gerstl and Arnold Schönberg," 45 and passim.

³⁰⁴ Decker, Freud, Dora, and Vienna 1900, 152.

Catholicism. Blackshaw interprets Gerstl's self-representation as "the baptised, or perhaps newly resurrected, Christ." If that is the case, his treatment of the theme is quite different from cherished Germanic resurrection scenes such as Matthias Grünewald's exuberant Renaissance vision.

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Gerstl's self-representational strategies must also be sharply distinguished from those of contemporaries in Vienna such as Max Oppenheimer (aka "MOPP") who likewise had Jewish heritage and who used notably agonized and ugly Catholic imagery in his self-portraiture. In 1911 Oppenheimer created a lithograph poster of himself as a bleeding martyr for an exhibition of his work at Munich's prestigious Galerie Thannhauser. A swooning figure, with a visage perhaps more Frankensteinian than Christ-like, MOPP represents himself with a violently elongated torso that veers dangerously to the left – as though the artist might fall right out of the frame (Fig. 18). All grey, black, and red, the poster shows Oppenheimer bleeding profusely from a wound in his chest that he claws at as though trying to open it further.

Kokoschka, whose bellicosity could be counted as extreme even in the context of an always already hostile Vienna, condemned Oppenheimer's poster as an imitation of his own poster for *Der Sturm* the previous year. Kokoschka's poster was also a lithograph self-portrait and the artist had likewise shown himself bleeding from the chest and touching the wound (Fig. 19). But Kokoschka's face is even more monstrous than MOPP's, with a massive underbite, leering grin, bald head, and dark scars and blemishes. In order to buttress his accusation that

³⁰⁵ Blackshaw, "The Jewish Christ," 28.

Oppenheimer deliberately plagiarized him, Kokoschka mobilized other influential figures in Vienna and Berlin against MOPP as well. For example the noted poet Else Lasker-Schüler wrote a letter to Oppenheimer, which was published in *Der Sturm*, in which she accused MOPP of not only copying Kokoschka's imagery but also being "in love" with him. 306

The above information is reiterated frequently, especially in the Kokoschka literature. Less often noted is the fact that the year before Oppenheimer made that Galerie Thannhauser poster he had already created a self-portrait painting representing himself as the deposed Christ. Oppenheimer's *Deposition* (Fig. 20) – a group portrait featuring several local Viennese luminaries – borrows stylistically from visionary El Greco paintings such as *The Entombment of Christ* (c. 1567–70, Fig. 21) or *La Santísima Trinidad* (1577–79, Fig. 22), which was itself actually based on an engraving by Albrecht Dürer. So this work – Oppenheimer's *Deposition* that is so different from Kokoschka's *Der Sturm* image – suggests that Oppenheimer had his own interest in Christological self-portraiture. The style of MOPP's 1911 self-portrait lithograph (like Kokoschka's 1910 self-portrait for *Der Sturm*) is more comparable to Albrecht Dürer's iconic self-portrait *Christ as the Man of Sorrows* (Fig. 23). All three could be considered part of a Germanic tradition of grotesque self-representation as martyrs, and it seems like Gerstl specifically shied away from this tradition.

Gerstl's *Self-Portrait before a Blue Background* follows none of the iconographical precedents one might expect: his image lacks the vitality of Grünewald's resurrected Christ, the visionary mysticism of an El Greco scene, and the corporeal grotesqueness of Dürer's 1493 *Christ as the Man of Sorrows* – not to mention the self-assurance and beauty of Dürer's

³⁰⁶ Given that MOPP was gay Lasker-Schüler's approach seems strategic and quite possibly homophobic.

famously Christological self-portrait of 1500 (Fig. 24). Notably, unlike MOPP and Kokoschka Gerstl seems to present himself here as more spiritual than corporeal. In fact, although his body is distorted and unidealized he eschews the use of the viscerally ugly corporeality that his slightly younger peers would focus on so trenchantly – even obsessively – in their self-representations. If Gerstl's painting is indeed ugly, the ugliness seems due to crude and awkward handling not a histrionic and tormented self-representational stance. Gemma Blackshaw puts the matter succinctly when she notes that *Self-Portrait before a Blue Background* represents "a retreat from the body." Thus even if Gerstl shared with Kokoschka, MOPP, and other contemporaries the strategy of using the body to represent the psyche, there is nevertheless a stark contrast between Gerstl's retreat from the body in *Self-Portrait before a Blue Background* and the abject embodiment seen in martyrly self-portraits produced by Gerstl's peers shortly thereafter.

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Blackshaw regards different attitudes towards embodiment, ugliness, and self-representation as reflective of larger social issues around Jewishness and antisemitism. She notes: "Gerstl's rejection of the 'bodily' aspects of the body, in a socio-cultural context which clearly valued its devotional power, is therefore somewhat unusual. It can perhaps be explained by the fact that although Christ's wounded, bleeding, and peculiarly feminised body was revered in Roman Catholic visual culture, the same trope of the body – 'ugly,' 'distorted,' 'effeminate' – was used

³⁰⁷ Blackshaw, "The Jewish Christ," 38.

in Vienna's antisemitic rhetoric to denote the Jew."³⁰⁸ Referring to Mahler and Schnitzler, both of Jewish descent, Blackshaw insists

It is no coincidence that Gustav Mahler described his Jewish heritage as a condition akin to being born with an arm that was too short, and Arthur Schnitzler likened the experience of living as a Jew in Vienna to being given a local anaesthetic and asked to remain 'indifferent' as dirty knives scraped and cut your skin until the blood flowed. Their recourse to physical metaphors poignantly illustrates the impact of the city's virulent anti-Semitic discourse, which equated 'Jewishness' with the dirty, infectious and imperfect human body. ³⁰⁹

Coffer disputes Blackshaw's argument that Gerstl "constructed himself exactly as this new, peculiarly *contemporary* Christ as heralded by Weininger, purified of his (Jewish) body, a Christ who has truly transcended the flesh."³¹⁰ Not the least of Coffer's objections is his new dating of Gerstl's painting to before the publication of Weininger's book. But perhaps an even more important objection for Coffer is a visual one – according to him in Gerstl's *Self-Portrait before a Blue Background* "the androgynous, even asexual, exaggerated slimness of his waist, hips and wrists, purvey an almost effeminate sense ... bears little relation to the model blond, blue-eyed masculinity of 'a distinctly Aryan ideal' that Weininger demands and to which Blackshaw alludes."³¹¹

³⁰⁸ Ibid, 43.

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

³¹⁰ Ibid, 48. Emphasis in original.

³¹¹ Coffer, "Richard Gerstl and Arnold Schönberg," 69.

Coffer's line of inquiry into the probable meanings of Gerstl's self-representational strategies is more private and biographical than cultural, racial, or religious. He focuses on the artist's personal experiences of rejection and the potential impact of such experiences on Richard Gerstl's early self-portraiture. Indeed, Coffer largely dismisses the significance of Jewishness to Gerstl's Self-Portrait before a Blue Background, and instead emphasizes that this self-portrait was created in the wake of several personally significant rejections. These rejections include his expulsion from the Academy, his expulsion from Simon Hollósy's summer painting school in Nagybánya, Hungary after apparently (at the age of seventeen!) entering into a sexual relationship with his teacher's wife, and finally his rejection from the military. Based on these biographical findings Coffer suggests the following interpretation of Self-Portrait before a Blue Background: "about to enter manhood, Gerstl was exposing and exorcising his adolescent demons ... There is a sense, therefore, that even had he deliberately portrayed himself in an Ecce Homo pose, he did so, not for obvious iconographical purposes, but to sardonically symbolise his own mounting experiences of suffering." In conclusion Coffer opines that given Gerstl's insecurities and introversion we can understand how the artist's "restoration from such a potent combination of academic, sexual and physical despair would manifest itself in the defiant, proud and narcissistic restatement of self-worth that most characterises his first self-portrait."312

I think Coffer makes a convincing case in his argument about the significance of early experiences of rejection to Gerstl's strategies of self-representation. But could we not

³¹² Ibid, 71.

understand Blackshaw as likewise focusing on rejection when she argues for the impact of virulent antisemitism on this developing young man's self-perceptions and representations? Even Coffer acknowledges that Gerstl's adolescent demons "may, indeed, have included a religious dichotomy in his upbringing and an incertitude of identity within the context of antisemitic Vienna, both of which, of course, might later have found a ready affinity with Schönberg." Moreover Blackshaw and Coffer both discuss Gerstl's distorted, negative representations of his own body. So without denying the important differences between Coffer's and Blackshaw's perspectives, I nevertheless find constructive lines of continuity, too. Both lines of interpretation align with my own theories on ambivalent Jewishness in antisemitic Vienna and the links between rejection, corporeal insecurity, and distorted self-perception and representation. And both Blackshaw's and Coffer's arguments sustain my sense of connection between all of these factors and contemporaneous ideas of ugliness in Vienna.

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A contrasting yet oddly symmetrical interpretation, proffered by Schröder, is that Gerstl's first and last self-portraits both show the painter *laughing* – rather than being nudes as Coffer insists.³¹⁴ In its original incarnation, prior to its subsequent cropping by the artist, this full-figure laughing self-portrait showed Gerstl standing in a relaxed yet alert pose – his legs apart, one hand in the pocket of his suit, one hand hanging comfortably by his side – in a fairly spacious empty room (Fig. 25). The palette is dusky – grey-black, grey-gold, and grey-green

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ Schröder, *Richard Gerstl*, 45. These arguments co-exist because of different dating systems for Gerstl's paintings.

predominate – but the artist's own face is a merry golden tone livened further by generous highlights, ruddy cheeks and lips, and twinkling green eyes. Indeed Gerstl's eyes are exceptionally beautiful, and more realistically rendered than in any other self-portrait I discuss here. These eyes appear capable of sight, even replete with wisdom; in a photograph taken within about a year of this work's execution I see the same sense of sagacious circumspection in his eyes (Fig. 26). There is also a sadness to *Fragment of a Laughing Self-Portrait in Full Figure* (Fig. 13), though, that I think can be best approached with a combination of Blackshaw's and Coffer's notions about the artist.

Lovely, realistic eyes notwithstanding, compared to contemporaneous photographs

Gerstl's physiognomy in this laughing self-portrait seems slightly exaggerated – for example his
ears appear than in photographs, his nose longer and more curved. The artist's hair in

Fragment of a Laughing Self-Portrait in Full Figure is perhaps dark blonde, strawberry blonde, or
light brown, and sheared very short. One curiosity of the work is that Gerstl does not actually
seem to be laughing – at least not in a readily identifiable manner. He smiles broadly, a toothy
grin animating his entire face, but his jaw seems closed rather than mirthfully open.

Another slightly confounding element of this self-portrait is the discrepancy between the cheerful figure and the dark, oppressive room – which Schröder refers to as "gloomy." Indeed he comments the room is "more a cell than a studio." If Gerstl is a prisoner, there's a darkness to his "laughter" – and a sadness in the fact that the only people to whom he offers this laughter are destined to stay forever outside the frame. Meanwhile the rough lines

³¹⁵ "Düsterer"; "mehr eine Zelle als einem Atelier," ibid.

animating the dark space around the artist seem like they might reach out and consume Gerstl at any moment.

It is these conflicting visual elements – which Schröder calls "ambiguous" – that lead Schröder to conclude that the self-portrait is somewhat "grotesque" overall. ³¹⁶ I would concur with his conclusions but suggest that affectively what is being represented is ambivalence. Less ambivalent was Gerstl's subsequent act of somewhat shocking violence: he chose to deface his own visage with dark blue paint *and* subsequently cut the work into pieces. Although it might not yet be possible to confirm the exact facts around the production of *Fragment of a Laughing Self-Portrait in Full Figure*, nevertheless the work offers significant material for a discussion of ugliness. Such material could include both the antisemitic understandings of ugliness

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Certainly Gerstl seems to have not merely styled himself as, but actually been, a hostile recluse who rejected the counsel and community of others. Gerstl initially attended Vienna's Fine Arts Academy, but he and his teachers seemed unable to tolerate one another. The notoriously conservative professor Christian Griepenkerl, who taught Gerstl and later Schiele, apparently once told Gerstl angrily: "'the way you paint, I can piss in the snow.'"³¹⁷ After attending Academy classes between 1898 and the summer of 1901, for the next seven years of Gerstl's

^{316 &}quot;Döppelbodig"; "Selbstportrait Gerstls etwas beinahe Groteskes inne," ibid.

³¹⁷ Kallir, Austria's Expressionism, 24.

brief life his artistic studies were "primarily self-directed."³¹⁸ He did return to Griepenkerl's class briefly in 1904, but it seems he was expelled after two semesters.³¹⁹ Griepenkerl also apparently said that it was the Devil himself who brought Gerstl to his class.³²⁰

Gerstl eventually found a more progressive teacher, Heinrich Lefler, who supported the young artist's work. Nevertheless Gerstl alienated even Lefler – specifically, with his hostility toward Lefler's participation in the Festival Parade [Festzug] to celebrate Emperor Franz Joseph's Jubilee. Student and teacher fought, and Gerstl was asked to leave Lefler's studio permanently. And whereas Kokoschka deferentially dedicated *The Dreaming Youths* to Klimt before even meeting him, Gerstl backed out of an exhibition at Galerie Miethke because Klimt, whose art he despised, would also be showing works in the same room. 323

Another infamous example of Gerstl's hostility occurred when the director of Vienna's Museum of Fine Arts [Kunsthistorisches Museum] saw Gerstl painting at the museum and offered commentary on Gerstl's work. The artist's response was, apparently, to snarl "'Don't disturb me. What do you know anyway?'"³²⁴ Even today such behaviour would surely be provocative – but in Gerstl's time, when academic art still prevailed and the antagonistic attitude of the rock-star artist was not yet well developed, Gerstl's behaviour must have been

³¹⁸ Ibid.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

³²⁰ "[Richard] hat der Teufel zu mir auf die Akademie gebracht," Coffer, "Richard Gerstl and Arnold Schönberg," 52.

³²¹ Kallir, Schoenberg's Vienna, 25.

³²² Kallir, Schoenberg's Vienna, 38.

³²³ Kallir, Austria's Expressionism, 26–7.

³²⁴ Ibid, 24.

truly shocking. He was even known to destroy paintings if the wrong person complimented them.³²⁵ Kallir suggests that such antics indicate that the artist suffered from "deep-seated emotional problems."³²⁶ While Gerstl's extremism could certainly have been an indication of mental illness, I would propose that his hostile behaviour also represents quite typical strategies, in adolescence and early adulthood, to individuate at least in part by defining oneself against others. Like Weininger, Gerstl barely made it out of adolescence before killing himself.

Kallir insists, when discussing Gerstl's extreme isolation, that the young artist's "sense of disorientation was exacerbated by Adolf Loos's diatribes against the prevailing tendency to merge the fine and applied arts." She contends that Loos's hostility promoted Gerstl's own, that the young painter became antagonistic toward Klimt and the artists of the Wiener Werkstätte without having positive models to emulate, and that all of this contributed to Gerstl's alienation and exacerbated his self-destructive instincts. Werkner opines that it is "impossible to say with certainty" whether Gerstl's suicide was provoked more by disastrous events in his romantic life, "or whether it was primarily his isolation as an artist." There is no doubt, however, that Gerstl was a difficult, solitary young man – apparently he had only one visual artist friend, Viktor Hammer, and they were cordial but very formal.

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³²⁵ Ibid.

³²⁶ Ibid.

³²⁷ Ibid, 25.

³²⁸ Ibid.

³²⁹ Werkner, Austrian Expressionism, 40.

Coffer rejects Schröder's suggestion that Gerstl's defacing of the *Fragment of a*Laughing Self-Portrait in Full Figure foreshadows the artist's eventual suicide. Instead Coffer argues, now, for the artist's affinity with Weininger, suggesting that in this self-portrait Gerstl may have been deliberately referencing Weininger's suicide a few months earlier. And yet such possibilities are not mutually exclusive: Gerstl may have been alienated not only as an artist but also as someone of Jewish descent, and struggling with an ambivalent sense of his own Jewishness. It's impossible to know Gerstl's feelings; but if Weininger was a strong influence on Gerstl – as Werkner, Blackshaw, and Coffer all concur he was – then Weininger's theory and practice of Jewish self-sacrifice may have encouraged Gerstl's own. Weininger's arguments may have also affected Gerstl's self-perception, and perhaps even his self-representational choices.

In conclusion Coffer opines: "this uneasy self-image, and its subsequent disfigurement and disownment, could be seen to bear some relationship to Gerstl's discomfort with his appearance." Thus although at first glance *Fragment of a Laughing Self-Portrait in Full Figure* may seem cheerful, gazing at this mutilated fragment of a self-portrait we can almost see Gerstl's laughter morph morbidly from the sanguine expression of mirth into a laughter of despair. We may not have proof but we do have reason to believe that perceived ugliness was a cause of Gerstl's joyless laughter.

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³³⁰ Coffer, "Richard Gerstl and Arnold Schönberg," 74–5.

In 1906 Gerstl painted a skilled, realistic portrait of the assimilated Jewish composer Arnold Schönberg in a pointillist style. Schönberg had converted to Protestantism much earlier, on 25 March 1898. Despite Gerstl's conversion and possible identification with Roman Catholicism and Catholic imagery around 1904–05, by 1907 at the latest Gerstl was associating almost exclusively with the circle of musicians around Schönberg, who were mostly likewise assimilated Jews. Coffer acknowledges that "Schönberg, like Gerstl, may have faced religious stresses in his household," and that such ambivalent identification "may have contributed to the affinity that developed between them." Anxiety and ambivalence about Jewish identities in early-twentieth-century Vienna seems to have been such that even Jews who converted kept company mostly with one another rather than with other Gentiles.

Gerstl began giving Schönberg and his wife Mathilde painting lessons, and he spent the summers of both 1907 and 1908 with the Schönberg family in Gmunden on Lake Traunsee, a very popular spa destination in upper Austria. In the summer of 1907, when Gerstl was enjoying the company of perhaps the only community he would ever belong to, the artist painted his most upbeat self-portrait by far. *Self-Portrait in front of a Blue-Green Background* (Fig. 27) shows Gerstl from just below the groin up in a wide-legged stance. The artist's hands are on his hips in a somewhat cocky gesture of self-assurance; his smirking smile and clear, direct gaze reinforce this sense of self-confidence. Gerstl looks very sure of his place in the world here.

Liberated, perhaps, by a sense of existential security during this period, Gerstl's painting style changed rapidly as he explored increasingly dissonant and diffuse impasto techniques. For

³³¹ Ibid., 82.

example, in *Die Familie Schönberg* (late July 1908) the Schönberg family is barely identifiable (Fig. 28). Gerstl's technique at this time has garnered praise from art historians as an early and largely overlooked example of abstraction in early-twentieth-century European art.³³² But I am more interested in how his increasingly abstract style served to communicate ideas about subjectivity – specifically, the dissolution of idiosyncratic identity and resultant erasure of both self and society.

Eventually there was a radical split with the Schönberg family, provoked by the affair Gerstl had with Mathilde. Initially, however, Gerstl and Schönberg shared significant interests and supported one another staunchly. Gerstl was easily as knowledgeable about music as he was about visual art – he was even offered a job as a music critic³³³ – while Schönberg was for a time very invested in his practice of self-portraiture. Moreover Schönberg initially did not object to the friendship between his friend and his wife.

Mathilde, sister of composer Alexander von Zemlinsky, had married Schönberg in 1901, when she was twenty-four and he was twenty-seven. Four months later their first child, Gertrud, was born. In 1906 Gerstl painted the Schönbergs as a couple, but the following year he painted Mathilde alone more frequently than any subject other than himself. The lack of any documentation of Gerstl's thoughts and feelings (the young artist destroyed the papers in his studio after the end of the affair) means that we do not have any certain insight into his

³³² Jane Kallir, *Richard Gerstl, Oskar Kokoschka* (New York: Galerie St Etienne, 1992), 11. Kallir also notes Kokoschka's hostility toward abstraction – "a style he could neither understand nor condone." Noting that Kokoschka felt excluded by the rise of abstraction, she describes him as "an inveterate outsider" to the end of his life, and concludes: "he had worn the outcast's mask for too long, and in the end could not remove it," 19.

³³³ Werkner, Austrian Expressionism, 32.

state of mind during this final period of intimacy with another human being. Lacking written documentation, we have his self-portraits.

Gerstl's Self-Portrait, Laughing was – according to Coffer's new date – produced either during the young artist's first vacation with the Schönberg family in Gmunden (in summer 1907) or possibly shortly thereafter in autumn, after Gerstl's return to Vienna. 334 Addressing the effect of this summer on Gerstl's artistic development, Coffer opines: "the vacation appears to have been a revelatory experience, transforming his art in just a few weeks, from academic studies, through verdant landscapes to his manic Selbstbildnis/lachend [Self-Portrait, Laughing], and the evolving styles of late summer and early autumn." And yet it is difficult to imagine how an idyllic context would have led to the profoundly disturbing expressionistic work of Self-Portrait, Laughing. So Coffer's claims to the contrary notwithstanding, most critics have insisted that this manifestly miserable self-portrait was actually Gerstl's last work of art before his violent and untimely suicide. For example Schröder says that Self-Portrait, Laughing is Gerstl's last painted self-portrait, and records a disintegrating personality. 336 Werkner, after insisting that Gerstl's is "a classic case of 'neglected genius' with tragic consequences" 337 goes on to refer to Self-Portrait, Laughing as Gerstl's "last testament." Peter Vergo, who gives no date for Self-Portrait, Laughing, assesses astutely that the work is "one of the most striking, even haunting images of early Expressionist art" and simply refers to Gerstl's self-portrait as

³³⁴ Coffer, "Richard Gerstl and Arnold Schönberg," 152–3.

³³⁵ Ibid., 166.

³³⁶ "Einer zerfallenden Persönlichkeit," *Richard Gerstl: 1883–1908*, 166.

³³⁷ Werkner, Austrian Expressionism, 40.

³³⁸ Ibid., 45.

"one of his last paintings." Incredible as it may seem these listed comments represent the main English-language commentary on Gerstl's *Self-Portrait, Laughing* – and indeed until Coffer's dissertation there was not much more forthcoming on Gerstl's oeuvre as a whole, either.

Given this scarcity of commentary it is marvellous to see how rigorously Coffer reconstructs the historical and material context for Gerstl's disputed work³⁴⁰ – but also a bit disappointing that he barely discusses the visual content of *Self-Portrait, Laughing*. So brief is Coffer's visual exegesis and analysis that it can be reproduced in nearly its entirety here:

The work shows Gerstl using his flecking technique to new and dramatic effect, creating a fluid, agitated background that somehow amplifies the artist's nightmarish laugh and dishevelled look. He also deserts his typical piercing and disconcerting glare, leaving his eyes animated and uneven in a vulnerable, almost pleading gaze. In doing so, Gerstl portrays himself in direct contrast to the taciturn, tight-lipped image conveyed by many of his previous self-portraits. Indeed, here, this is displaced by a manic spontaneity that appears to anticipate the artist's mental frailties outlined by [attending physician] Gerber and confirm Hammer's recollection that Gerstl's mockery of his own appearance was "das Lachen der Verzweiflung" [the laughter of despair].

Brevity notwithstanding, Coffer's description certainly complements the one I offered in the opening pages of this chapter: the work's oppressively frantic ground, the physiognomic

³³⁹ Vergo, Art in Vienna, 201.

³⁴⁰ See Coffer, "Richard Gerstl and Arnold Schönberg," 152–5.

³⁴¹ Ibid., 154.

asymmetries and irregularities, and Gerstl's dark, gaping, abyssal mouth. It is so unfortunate that we don't have more incontrovertible information about *Self-Portrait*, *Laughing* and the context of its production. Despite such lack, Gerstl's laughter of despair in this ugly self-portrait is compelling. It echoes through the night of the world, and will continue to exert a pull on viewers for many years to come.

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Gerstl's oil-on-canvas self-portrait painting of 12 September 1908, executed less than two months before his suicide, is one of the precious few works from this ill-fated artist with a sure date. Like so much of Gerstl's art, though, it remains enigmatic in other respects. This *Self-Portrait (Full Nude)* shows the painter life-sized and projecting an assertive but ambivalent affect. Gerstl looks directly at the viewer, his white body surrounded by a protective, radiant nimbus of phosphorescent blue. One hand is on his cocked hip and the other is gripping a paintbrush; these two points, along with Gerstl's genitals, create a strong triangular compositional focus. The self-portrait could be interpreted as confident, as fragile, or as evincing a sort of manic bravado – a merely compensatory confidence.

As in the earlier *Self-Portrait before a Blue Background* Gerstl here depicts his face somewhat realistically and substantially, but his body is more abstract – almost dematerialized. The area above the artist's left knee – around his outer lower thigh – and along his upper right arms are translucent, as if the blue nimbus is literally eating through Gerstl's flesh, leaving behind only a ghost. Indeed although his right arm is crooked jauntily on his hip, recalling the self-satisfaction evinced in *Self-Portrait in front of a Blue-Green Background*, the confidence of

the pose is undermined by the fact that the artist's arm look like it's been stripped of its flesh.

All that remains is a yellowish-beige bone, with a scumbled wash of pinkish-white that suggests skin hanging from the forearm. The area around the head is covered and engraved with scribbled shapes and lines that seem frenzied and chaotic. But Gerstl stares out at us with a steady, unflinching gaze.

Coffer refers to Gerstl's "jagged, intense, elongated brushwork" in *Self-Portrait (Full Nude)* and also notes how "the sharper definition of his [facial] features suggests a momentary retreat from the developing abstraction that characterised his 'Gmunden portraits.'"³⁴² And yet other than the face the only part of Gerstl's body with any real sense of substance, gravity, or weight is the pelvic and groin area. Moreover the cropping of the picture, as Werkner has noted, "creates an effect of inescapable immediacy."³⁴³ Whereas in *Self-Portrait before a Blue Background* Gerstl was already thin, in *Self-Portrait (Full Nude)* Gerstl is positively "emaciated, his ribcage visible, his waist pinched and his arms spindly."³⁴⁴ In sum: we have here a ghostly portrait of a skeletal man who details only his face – with its steely stare – and the area around his penis.

The sexual emphasis is not accomplished merely by making the work a nude, nor even with the triangular compositional focus on the genitals created by the framing device of the artist's bent arms. Instead Gerstl visually foregrounds his sex in what seems to be nearly every possible way: elongating his legs, but then amputating them below the knee in order to force

³⁴² Coffer, "Richard Gerstl and Arnold Schönberg," 293.

³⁴³ Werkner, Austrian Expressionism, 42.

³⁴⁴ Coffer, "Richard Gerstl and Arnold Schönberg," 293.

the phallus into the centre of the work; giving himself plentiful, dark brown pubic hair that frames his likewise dark penis; and making both the ambiguous object he holds in his left hand (presumably a brush and/or palette) and his prominent nose a reddish brown colour like his penis. Taken together, these factors ensure that the viewer will really notice Gerstl's nakedness – and yet it is hard to say for certain what Gerstl hoped to achieve with this revelation.

Certainly *Self-Portrait* (*Full Nude*) lacks the slightly precious spiritualism of *Self-Portrait* before a Blue Background, and yet I think it is probably a mistake to assume that the artist intended this final nude as a carnally attractive self-representation. By contrast Coffer does seem to conclude that the work constitutes a kind of profane postscript to the earlier sacred self-portrait. Indeed Coffer theorizes that while Gerstl's phallic focus might be a crude homage to Weininger's aphoristic saying that 'The man has the penis, but the vagina has the woman,'³⁴⁵ more likely it is the product of sexual hubris. More specifically Coffer opines that "whilst some ... find pre-suicidal tendencies" in *Self-Portrait* (*Full Nude*), "the work may be better seen to represent the feelings of an artist crowing at his potency, having slept with the wife of a man who was not only his friend, but a father-figure, too."³⁴⁶

But just because a work of art shows sexuality does not mean that it is sexy, and just because someone is naked does not mean that they offer a real revelation. This trembling self-image, with so much bravado in its phallic focus and wide-legged stance and yet so little substance to this sanguinity, almost waxes and wanes before our very eyes. So I propose an alternate interpretation of this work, which Gerstl executed less than two weeks after Mathilde

³⁴⁵ "Der Mann hat den Penis, aber die Vagina hat die Frau"; Coffer, "Richard Gerstl and Arnold Schönberg," 293.

³⁴⁶ Coffer, "Richard Gerstl and Arnold Schönberg," 293.

had returned to her composer husband and very shortly before his own self-destruction. Gerstl is at once confident and fragile, desperately social yet misanthropic and alone. Robbed of a substantial body and a fully realized environment, arms and hands posed confidently but disintegrating into nothingness, with a realistic face and zones of reproduction and elimination, Gerstl's nude represents a profoundly ambivalent statement about selfhood and the struggle to create one's self out of desire and lack, out of the pain of rejection, out of emotional and physical ugliness.

§

Mere days after Gerstl signed *Self-Portrait (Full Nude)* he made a series of more disturbing – indeed, almost demonic – self-portrait drawings,³⁴⁷ one dated 15 September (Fig. 29) and two dated 29 September (Figs. 30–31). On the back (verso) of the 15 September drawing is another, undated, sepia-on-paper self-portrait (Fig. 32) in which Gerstl appears to still sport the longer hair of the painted nude self-portrait; the three dated drawings all show Gerstl with the close-cropped hairstyle of *Self-Portrait*, *Laughing*.³⁴⁸ Together the drawings have been interpreted as documenting a man's dizzying descent into despair, if not downright dementia.

The undated sepia-on paper self-portrait on the verso of the 15 September drawing is rendered entirely with frantic, rough black lines, and the artist has scratched over one side of

³⁴⁷ Coffer, "Richard Gerstl and Arnold Schönberg," 293–4, suggests that these drawings were in fact executed in summer/autumn 1907, rather than 1908.

³⁴⁸ Hence Coffer's suggestion that both this undated self-portrait drawing and *Self-Portrait, Laughing* were actually produced in 1907, not 1908. Coffer's arguments are reasonably sound, but the conventional view, that Gerstl had his hair cut shortly after completing *Self-Portrait (Full Nude)* and we see this shorn style in three self-portrait drawings plus *Self-Portrait, Laughing*, still has explanatory force.

his face again and again. This dissonant self-representational strategy evokes the autoaggression Gerstl committed against his own face in *Fragment of a Laughing Self-Portrait in Full Figure*. Moreover, the asymmetrical nature of the darkening creates a strange splitting effect in the sense of communicated identity. Indeed in this late, undated self-portrait drawing we glimpse a potentially monstrous sense of duality, as though the artist was divided into self and shadow-self, like the late-nineteenth-century literary characters Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde. Schröder, discussing this drawing, describes Gerstl's chaotic visual forms and hypnotically intense gaze, and suggests – as with *Self-Portrait*, *Laughing* – that psychologically the work foreshadows the artist's suicide. 349

The recto pencil-on-paper self-portrait drawing of 15 September functions in a way as the formal opposite of the verso image just discussed. Here the artist draws more careful, considered lines, his hair is smoothed down, and features are rendered individually. There is a great deal of outlining and even some modelling. Half of Gerstl's face is once again shrouded in darkness; this time, however, the shadows are rendered more naturalistically, less punitively. But surrounding half his head, opposite the shadowed side of his face, Gerstl has pencilled in a semi-circular nimbus of darkness. The disturbing effect of this darkness, enveloping his head on one side and staining his face on the other, is to suggest that the artist emerges from the shadows – and could pull back into the gloom at any moment. The self-image is disconcerting in several other ways as well. Gerstl's slightly mismatched eyes, for example, have been lined more and more widely open, with heavy circles inscribed beneath; the irises and pupils merge

³⁴⁹ Schröder, *Richard Gerstl*, 157.

together in leaden blackness, and are topped by very heavy, furrowed black brows. Gerstl's mouth is also downturned so gravely that it's instinctively somewhat unsettling.

Referring to not only this series of self-portrait drawings but also the painted Self-Portrait (Full Nude) of 12 September, Schröder insists on the extreme negative influence of Schönberg's 13 September birthday on the estranged young Gerstl's morbid state of mind. 350 Certainly Gerstl was excluded from the close-knit Schönberg circle by this point. And the fact that the alienated artist committed suicide after a musical performance from which he had been deliberately excluded (through the circulation of secret invitations) may corroborate Schröder's interpretation, too. Although the affair is widely thought to have been over by this point, Coffer observes that the clandestine concert performance by Schönberg's students "was scheduled for 3pm on 4 November [Gerstl's suicide was that night], and it can be imagined that Schönberg would have been embarrassed to attend without her, or, at least, knowing that his wife was with another man."351 Supporting this observation, Coffer notes evidence indicating that Richard and Mathilde actually renewed their affair briefly but Mathilde again left the artist to return to her husband, which suggests that Gerstl's suicide could perhaps have been the direct result of such double estrangement. 352 Gerstl, barred from Mathilde, from Arnold, from the circle of musicians surrounding Schönberg, already alienated from other artists, and with no work, school, or community to speak of, chose death. Despite all the turbulence in Gerstl's life between August and November 1908, and despite the disastrous conclusion, nevertheless in his

³⁵⁰ Ibid., 162.

³⁵¹ Ibid., 297.

³⁵² Coffer, "Richard Gerstl and Arnold Schönberg," 294–8 and passim.

self-portrait drawings the artist did not flinch. One can see the steeliness of his gaze as he documented what he saw in the mirror – however distorted into ugliness that image might have become by grief, hatred, and a sense of his own identity as traumatic.

§

In *The Broken Mirror: Understanding and Treating Body Dysmorphic Disorder*, professor of psychiatry and human behaviour (and director of The Body Dysmorphic Disorder Program at Rhode Island Hospital) Katharine A. Phillips highlights how the psychiatric disturbance now known as body dysmorphia disorder (BDD) is inseparable from the emotional and intersubjective nature of perceived ugliness. One patient told her "I look depressed ... I feel my mouth is unattractive and that I'm not likable because I look depressed. Looking depressed equals looking like something people don't want to see, which is distasteful." Another patient also connected ugliness with being bad and unlovable, saying "I feel like a freak, a bad person because I have a defect in my appearance. I fear that no one will ever love me – that I'll be an outcast." Phillips stresses that a tortured but ambivalent relationship with mirrors often underpins the entire disorder and not only do most people with BDD check their reflection far too often, "occasionally, mirror checking triggers a suicide attempt." Kallir notes that "Schiele and Gerstl both had ongoing relationships with the large mirrors that were

³⁵³ Katharine A. Phillips, *The Broken Mirror: Understanding and Treating Body Dysmorphic Disorder* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 63.

³⁵⁴ Ibid., 138.

³⁵⁵ Ibid., 92.

dominant fixtures in their studios,"³⁵⁶ and whereas, as we shall see, it is easy to imagine

Schiele's relationship with mirrors – while certainly obsessive – as positive, Gerstl's might have been traumatic.

while I am not suggesting that GerstI had BDD, nor do I make any claims to diagnostic expertise in general, I do find Phillips's observations relevant to my own consideration of ugliness. This is particularly so in light of her comment, with which I concur, that "body image is our internal self-portrait." Phillips also touches on connections between self-image, ugliness, and caricature when she observes that patients "use words like 'deformed,' 'monstrous,' or 'hideous.' They describe themselves as the Elephant Man or the wife of Frankenstein. One man said he looked like a cartoon character, and a woman said that she resembled a distorted figure from a Salvador Dalí painting." Phillips also stresses that people with BDD tend to be especially sensitive to criticism and rejection. That being said, presumably it is not only people with BDD but *all* people whose self-images are affected by the representations surrounding them and their interactions with others. Thus Phillips's investigations may have broader relevance than to just the tiny percentage of people with diagnosable BDD — estimated at about 1 per cent of the general population, but as high as 13 per cent in students.

Although his style changed significantly from self-portrait to self-portrait, Gerstl's self-representations were consistently ugly. That practice of ugliness becomes distressing if we

³⁵⁶ Kallir, Schoenberg's Vienna, 55, 57.

³⁵⁷ Phillips, *The Broken Mirror*, 191.

³⁵⁸ Ibid., 59.

³⁵⁹ Ibid., 175.

³⁶⁰ Ibid., 5.

consider that the artist may really have been trying to create himself, not just represent himself. At least one-fifth of Gerstl's artistic output seems to have been self-portraits, ³⁶¹ a number that – although not as overwhelmingly high as Schiele's – is quite exceptional. Compulsive self-documentation, rather than constituting the mere re-presentation of identity, is an attempt to establish and secure identity. Indeed even documenting the self *as* ugly, or *as* chaotic and protean, is a form of self-narrativization that itself bestows order – and order is, conventionally, associated with beauty. Paradoxically, by identifying ourselves as formless we form our selves; in presenting our ugliness we reveal our capacity for beauty; and in the very act of admitting our lack, and our loneliness, we offer ourselves as a gift, as a communication that could eventually become a basis for community. Given that Hermann Bahr went so far as to describe Vienna, in his 1906 text *Wien*, as a place where people "are always kept in the cage of an immense loneliness," ³⁶² these ugly moments of self-creation and self-offering were perhaps as needful as they were nerve-wracking.

§

The two graphic self-portrait drawings dated 29 September have, I would argue, a similar relationship to one another as do the self-portrait drawings discussed above. Whereas one self-portrait shows Gerstl in a demonic-looking process of dematerialization, the other displays the artist's face with unsettling detail and black outlining. The latter drawing, held in the print collection at the Albertina museum shows – overlaid on the washes that establish the

³⁶¹ Coffer, "Richard Gerstl and Arnold Schönberg," 45, offers this figure; others have suggested a greater number.

³⁶² "Immer im Käfig einer ungeheuren Einsamkeit gehalten"; Hermann Bahr, *Wien* (Stuttgart: Carl Krabbe, 1906), 40–1. My translation.

basic contours and features of Gerstl's face and head – dark scores that echo the more frantic scratches in the undated self-portrait discussed earlier. I am tempted to refer to the marks in this self-portrait as "scars." Gerstl's chin shows two sets of pencil marks, one below the lips and the other at the base, that look like the rough stitches associated with Frankenstein and other manufactured monsters. Over a faint but somewhat naturalistic-looking right ear the artist has imposed three different outlines, not at all contoured, only silhouetted, which renders the ear somewhat tumorous in appearance, and also pushes the drawing toward caricature. Moreover three spots on the inner eyes and on the artist's lower right cheek appear rubbed or materially damaged in some way.

This agitation of the various lines of pen, pencil, and ink wash contrasts very strongly with the static, even stoic mien to Gerstl's face and particularly his eyes, which stare out at the viewer with a chilling sobriety and directness. In this case that viewer is quite palpably himself. Gerstl's mouth is again set in an almost downturned expression of grim determination. Despite this determined expression, the self-portrait still bespeaks inner conflict through the obsessive reworking of not only the ears but also the eyes, nose, and mouth in black ink. This is an ambivalent self-representation of the first rank.

In a self-portrait drawing that Gerstl may have composed originally around 1906 or 1907 (Fig. 33) there is visible damage to the image – gouges in the crown of the head and violently destructive rubbing on the temple – that I suspect may have been an auto-aggression, perhaps made shortly before the artist's suicide while he was destroying personal effects and drawings

in his studio. In a series of articles on ugliness³⁶³ Mark Cousins stresses how normally the ugly object threatens by "eating up the space between it and the subject." In Gerstl's case, though, the object-self of the self-portrait and the viewer-self of the subject were both part of the same phenomenon of ugliness – an ambivalent experience of ugliness that was certainly corporeal, and may have been related to a sense of Jewishness. Originally in Judaism the concept of sin was related to a literal stain rather than an abstract notion of ethics, ³⁶⁵ and there are also sins that are not severe enough to be punishable but are still considered to stain the one's character. It is easy – and plausible – enough to imagine Gerstl feeling stained in this way. He courted controversy consistently, he had enemies and few friends, his sexual objectchoices were inappropriate and ultimately unavailable, he believed he was ugly and was evidently too weak for the army. Gerstl produced a small but powerful series of representations of the self as stained, ugly, but honest – and did so in the context of a modernity that Weininger, one of Gerstl's idols, had characterized as weak, Jewish, ugly, and false. Perhaps Gerstl felt himself "cleansed and armed" for death, like Weininger, through the life of the self-portrait.

The sense of dematerialization in the other 29 September self-portrait literalizes and concretizes, paradoxically, the actual social-existential dematerialization of Gerstl's own life. Pale ink washes and slight definitions in charcoal show this Gerstl as not much more than an accusatory apparition. While the body is torqued to the left, Gerstl twists his head to stare

³⁶³ Mark Cousins, "The Ugly," AA Files 28 (Autumn 1994): 61–4; AA Files 29 (Summer 1995): 3–6; AA Files 30 (Autumn 1995): 65–8.

³⁶⁴ Cousins, "The Ugly," AA Files 28 (Autumn 1994): 63.

³⁶⁵ Ibid.

unrelentingly out at himself, the viewer. Despite this dramatic gesture the artist appears enervated. The dark features in Gerstl's art and life, the intense impastos and antagonistic attitudes, have now vanished. Indeed the forebodingly dark eyes of the 15 September self-portrait have been replaced here by eyes so pale they seem not of this world, and in a way they probably are not: Gerstl here captures that "ethereally stark affect" which, as one palliative care provider reminded me, people often have shortly before they die. On the night of 4–5 November, Gerstl executed a final self-portrait of sorts: in front of his studio mirror he stabbed and hung himself – probably naked, and possibly castrated.

§

The ugly selves Gerstl left behind in his self-portraits could be considered at worst to represent traumatic identities, and at best an experience of ambivalent selfhood. Gerstl's ugly self-representational practices may have helped him to cathartically articulate traumatic identities—and he even tried, it seems, to laugh them off. But as both subject and object in this solitary comi-drama, Gerstl was caught—trapped in a deadly, closed system of self-creation and destruction. In the end it appears that his wish to permanently destroy the ugly object—this ugly self that produced only the laughter of despair, and which he captured again and again in the zone of self-representation—overcame Gerstl's will to live. In destroying that ugly object—himself—Gerstl made of death a theatre performed for an audience of one. His suicide was his ultimate self-portrait, and besides a modest extant oeuvre Gerstl has left us with not much

³⁶⁶ I am indebted to Laura Fairley, RN for both the observation and its formulation here.

³⁶⁷ Coffer, "Richard Gerstl and Arnold Schönberg," 298.

more than fragments and impressions. We might almost laugh at the ridiculous waste here – at how miserable and scanty are the remains of this first-born Austrian expressionist, at how promising his artistic development seems to have been, at how grotesque and premature was his death – but our laugh would also be a laughter of despair.

I believe that Gerstl's complicated, ambivalent religious background, his interest in selfhood and ugliness, and his existential alienation and violent suicide can and probably should all be understood as phenomena with both individual and collective causes and meanings.

Gerstl's tale is both painfully individual and uncannily representative of a dark facet of early-twentieth-century Viennese modernity. As scholars have noted, 368 late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century Vienna was the site of many identity crises. In his study of Weininger Chandak Sengoopta in particular explains that

many retreated into the self, even if Ernst Mach had argued that the self was a fiction, and even if life had shown there was no free will. The Kantian autonomous self ... was a myth one needed in order to live. For Arthur Schnitzler, it was artistic creativity that led inward; for Sigmund Freud, it was the elaboration of psychological theory; and for Otto Weininger, it was the philosophical validation (and cultural utilization) of Kant's concept of the intelligible self. 369

I have disagreed with Schorske that the Viennese retreated from politics – Jewishness alone was obviously a hugely important political issue. I do concur with Sengoopta and others, though, that a preoccupation with selfhood was often both a result of and an attempt to

³⁶⁸ See especially Le Rider, *Modernity and Crises of Identity*.

³⁶⁹ Sengoopta, Otto Weininger, 42.

grapple with the aesthetic, ethical, and epistemological aporias of modern life in Vienna.

Although admittedly still mysterious to us, Gerstl's practice of ugly self-portraiture seems perhaps paradigmatic of such a torturous preoccupation with selfhood.

Chapter 5 Arnold Schönberg's Practice of Ugly Self-Portraiture

I know that, being younger, I have a right to be different ... still, there is one thing to which I should have yielded absolutely ... that indefinable thing which I have so strongly sensed in your presence and which is for me the power of genius ... if I have nevertheless been at variance with you - I do not know why. Perhaps it was shortsightedness, perhaps contrariness? Perhaps too it was love, for with all this I have always venerated you awfully. It was flapperish: love that pursues with hatred.

- letter from Arnold Schönberg to Gustav Mahler, 5 July 1910

I don't want to be understood. I want to express myself, but I hope to be misunderstood. It would be terrible if someone could see through me.

- letter from Arnold Schönberg to Alma Mahler, 7 October 1910

Viennese composer Arnold Schönberg (1874–1951) began painting in 1906 and had one of his periods of greatest artistic productivity during and after the Gerstl affair³⁷⁰ in 1908. There is an early Schönberg self-portrait (c. 1908, cat no. 2³⁷¹) – a smallish work executed with pen and Chinese ink on paper – that shows Schönberg's upper torso and face, in which he looks somewhat slimmer than in other contemporaneous self-representations (Fig. 34). Moreover his suit, although hastily scrawled in, is crisply tailored. Schönberg's jaw is set and narrow, and his eyes glower slightly from under arched brows. They are animated by a youthful cunning absent from other, more somber self-portraits. The artist's signature is comparatively large and ornate, parallel to the left border. Shortly after he produced this slightly stylized and somewhat flattering self-portrait Schönberg turned to a practice of self-portraiture that was distinctly uglier.

³⁷⁰ By "Gerstl affair" I mean to refer here to Richard Gerstl's affair with Arnold's wife Mathilde, the dissolution of Richard and Arnold's friendship, and Richard's subsequent suicide.

³⁷¹ I refer here and throughout the chapter to the catalogue raisonné at the Arnold Schönberg Center in Vienna, the archive that houses the Schönberg *Nachlass*.

Known more for dissonant musical innovations, especially atonal and twelve-tone music, than for despondent visual art, Schönberg nevertheless produced a significant body of visual work: around two hundred drawings and watercolours and more than sixty oil paintings. The most striking thematic leitmotifs in Schönberg's oeuvre are hostile portraits of critics and abrasive self-portraits. Schönberg experimented with different visual genres, but on the whole his approach was dominated by self-portraiture in various forms: semi-realistic brush and ink on paper, naïve oil and watercolour on cardboard, sketches and caricatures, and the fantastical array of *Blicks* – Schönberg's spiritual but crude and unattractive self-portraits referred to in English both as *Visions* and as *Gazes*. And yet to date there is not a single monograph – or even a lengthy article – in German or English on the topic of Schönberg's self-portraits.

This chapter will just barely begin to redress such neglect, discussing different ways in which Schönberg's life and work produced and reproduced early-twentieth-century Viennese hatred, ugly representational practices, and solipsism. I refer to both public and private cultures – as well as their inevitable intertwining. I posit that Schönberg experienced crises of subjectivity that in turn led him to paint certain aspects of his identity – man, despised vanguard musician, altruistic and betrayed husband, truthful artist – as primary and maligned. Scholars have tended to take Schönberg's self-descriptions at face value and paint his suffering as heroic – a perspective that I will not so much negate as denaturalize.

I believe that Schönberg's ugly art, the culture in which it developed, and the commentary to which it gave rise can all be better understood if we approach the biographical

³⁷² According to Werkner, *Austrian Expressionism*, 157.

and broader cultural context with an eye to the affective bases of representational strategies of ugliness. Hating, being hated, representing oneself as ugly, representing others as ugly – these are both private and public, internal and external phenomena, and core components of Viennese modernity. And in all these respects – as well as, of course, in his creative accomplishment – Schönberg is an exemplary subject. Schönberg's self-portraits are often rough, pessimistic, and downright unattractive, but he consistently emphasized their importance, insisting that they arose from an inner need and were significant expressions of his core creativity. As Patrick Werkner notes, Schönberg was "an outsider and an amateur as far as painterly skills are concerned. But he is a key figure if his visionary paintings are seen together with his writings, his theory, and his contribution to a transformation of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*. His role is central to Viennese Modernism."³⁷³

§

The first public display of Schönberg's visual art was a solo exhibition at the gallery in the Hugo Heller bookshop in Vienna, in 1910. Schönberg scholar Eberhard Freitag³⁷⁴ opens his brief 1978 article "German Expressionism and Schoenberg's Self-Portraits" with the following assessment:

On October 19, 1910, an exhibit of forty-seven oil paintings, drawings, and water colors by Arnold Schoenberg was opened in a small room of the Viennese book and art dealer Hugo Heller ... The first invitations had hardly been sent out when members of the Court

³⁷³ Ibid., 168.

³⁷⁴ Freitag wrote a doctoral dissertation, "Schönberg als Maler," at the University of Münster (1973), which was followed immediately by the publication of Freitag's *Arnold Schönberg in Selbetzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten* (Reinbek/Hamburg: Rowolt Taschenbuch, 1973).

Opera began to circulate the cynical line: 'Schoenberg's music and Schoenberg's pictures

– that will knock your ears and eyes out at the same time!' As to be expected, the

criticisms in the press were devastating.³⁷⁵

And yet curiously, if we consult page thirteen of Vienna's *Neue Freie Presse* on 14 October, 1910 – five days before Schönberg's show had even started, according to Freitag's erroneous description³⁷⁶ – we find a brief review informing the reader of a general exhibition of Schönberg's works being held now at the art salon in Heller's bookstore. We are further told that the exhibition has so far enjoyed strong attendance and three oil paintings have already been purchased: a portrait of a doctor, one of the artist's wife, and a self-portrait.³⁷⁷ On 14 October, 1910 – the same day as the *Neue Freie Presse* review – Arthur Schnitzler wrote in his journal: "'in Heller's Art Salon saw the Arnold Schönberg pictures. Talent unmistakable.'"³⁷⁸ The *Neue Freie Presse* also ran a longer review of Schönberg's exhibition at the end of the month. Albeit slightly sarcastic, this review was by no means scathing, either.³⁷⁹

According to Werkner the art show contained fourteen so-called *Impressions and*Fantasies, eleven Portraits and Studies – five of these devoted to Mahler – plus three

Nocturnes, two self-portrait drawings, two caricatures, and five studies and figurines for

Eberhard Freitag, "German Expressionism and Schoenberg's Self-Portraits," *Journal of the Arnold Schoenberg Institute* II, no. 3: "Schoenberg as Artist" (June 1978): 164–72.

³⁷⁶ The exhibition actually opened on 12 October.

³⁷⁷ Anon., Neue Freie Presse, 14 October 1910, 13.

³⁷⁸ In Werkner, Austrian Expressionism, 170.

³⁷⁹ r. [Josef Reitler], "Schönberg-Abend im Kunstsalon Heller," Neue Freie Presse, 30 October 1910, 16.

Schönberg's musical drama *The Lucky Hand*. ³⁸⁰ So Werkner's account further contradicts Freitag's description. Schönberg's first exhibition is contested, an amply but inaccurately discussed cultural affair. Freitag contends that the show was surrounded contemporaneously with hostility, and I myself have read variations on Freitag's description of that reception many times. ³⁸¹ Looking at the situation from a different angle, however, the exhibition at the Heller gallery suddenly appears as one rather unremarkable art show amongst many – received, like so many other works of art in Viennese modernity, with theatrical reactions characterized by a high degree of ambivalence.

§

Implicitly and explicitly the figureheads of Viennese modernity – literary, political, artistic, even medical – seem to circle around the question, admittedly narcissistic but nonetheless dialogical: "how does how you see me affect how I see myself?" Schönberg's and Gerstl's respective ruminations on selfhood play out somewhat differently, however, from the more public performances of some of their peers: Gerstl's self-portraits feel more private, if likewise confrontational, compared to Kokoschka's, and Schönberg's art is aggressively isolationist compared to the sexual contact seen for example in Schiele's oeuvre. Thus as we shall see, whereas Kokoschka and Schiele's ugly self-representational strategies were often oriented around chiasmic lines of intersubjective attraction and repulsion – I draw you toward me with

³⁸⁰ Werkner, Austrian Expressionism, 169.

³⁸¹ For example Jelena Hahl-Koch, "Kandinsky, Schönberg and Their Parallel Experiments," in *Schönberg & Kandinsky: An Historic Encounter*, ed. Konrad Boehmer (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic, 1997), 80, references this lore without providing any further information or citations.

theatrical self-display then repel you with obscene ugliness – Gerstl and Schönberg both seem to represent solipsism in their art.

Such solipsism is clearly compensatory, however – Schönberg the angry, isolated artist still depends for this sense of anti-social selfhood on the recognition of others. In Schönberg's most unappealing self-representations, a palpable sense of loneliness often radiates. In his polemical 1949 publication *Philosophy of New Music* Theodor Adorno, discussing Expressionism generally and Schönberg in particular, refers to a pervasive "illusion of individuality." Adorno concludes that what is being unintentionally represented is actually "loneliness as a style." 382 Later in the same text Adorno reiterates that with Schönberg, "everything is based upon that lonely subjectivity which withdraws into itself." 383 This quality of loneliness in Schönberg's self-portraiture reveals a sensitivity to others that the rigidly individualistic self-portraits might otherwise conceal. One of Anton von Webern's 384 three daughters said, when describing her childhood: "Schönberg's pictures 'made an unpleasant impression on me. As a child I was literally afraid [of them]. It was positively spooky to go into the dining room of the Schönberg home,' where his pictures hung." And yet to the child apparently "Schönberg himself, in contradistinction to the impression created by his pictures, seemed 'friendly and quite

³⁸

Theodor Adorno, *Philosophy of Modern Music*, trans Anne G. Mitchell and Wesley V. Blomster (New York: Seabury Press, 1973), 46. I refer to this work as *Philosopher of New Music* for the reader's sake, because that is by far the more common title. *Philosophy of New Music* is also better translation of the German original, *Philosophie der neuen Musik*.

³⁸³ Ibid., 142.

³⁸⁴ Von Webern was a student and friend of Schönberg's, and is a noted composer in his own right.

natural.'" Werkner concludes that such a discrepancy ultimately "speaks for the 'psychotherapeutic' nature of those works." 385

An oil-on-board self-portrait dated c. 1910 (Fig. 35, cat. no. 10), which shows Schönberg from the neck up in a domestic environment (a blurry bookshelf is visible in the background), is comparatively recognizable but ugly if only because of the treatment of skin. Schönberg chose a cheerful red spectrum to create a decidedly disconsolate image: peach, salmon, and cherry skin tones here make Schönberg appear as though he has been burned. Besides rage, other associations with very flushed skin include sickness and shame. But the most interesting interpretive connection is to look at it as boiled skin, and compare it to a statement made by Schönberg himself about being boiled alive. In a now-famous analogy, the composer used the image of boiling water to explain the sense of persecution he felt while developing his artistic style and identity in the early years of the twentieth century. Schönberg also analyzes how this hostility ultimately affected him:

I had the feeling as if I had fallen into an ocean of boiling water ... and, not knowing how to swim or get out in another manner, I tried with my legs and arms as best I could. I did not know what saved me; why I was not drowned or cooked alive ... I have perhaps only one merit: I never gave up. But how could I give up in the middle of an ocean? ... There was nobody to help me ... I was always in the red ... it burned not only my skin, it also burned internally ... I see that I was always in the red ... Maybe something has been

³⁸⁵ Werkner, Austrian Expressionism, 164.

achieved but it was not I who deserves the credit for that. The credit must be given to my opponents. They were the ones who really helped me.³⁸⁶

In this self-portrait Schönberg stares intently outward, and both the angry flesh tones and his stare strike the viewer forcibly. But there is also a sense of calmness in Schönberg's visage here, and it is easy to imagine him glaring at real-life opponents with equal equanimity.

Schönberg's trenchant stare, seen throughout his self-portraits, is a testament to an indefatigable – if irascible – temperament.

For Werkner, it is truly vision at the heart of Schönberg's visual art practice; he claims that at least with respect to "the hallucinatory pictures that Schönberg described as *Gazes* ... which Kandinsky called *Visions*," what is being shown is "not faces, but the act of seeing." Werkner elaborates: "Schönberg's visionary painting is consequently more accessible to us in the context of the circumstances that gave rise to it than in terms of purely art-historical considerations." A key aspect of such "circumstances" is the affect of hostility. Tales of hate surround Schönberg's pictures: the hostility he claimed was directed at him, the hostility he is purported to have provoked in others. As the Viennese artist Albert Paris von Gütersloh concluded in his 1912 essay on Schönberg as a painter, "Very few trust these pictures. Most

³⁸⁶ Letter of 22 May 1947, in Stein, ed., *Arnold Schoenberg Letters*, trans Eithne Wilkins and Ernst Kaiser (New York: St Martin's Press, 1965, c1964), 245–6, emphasis added.

³⁸⁷ Werkner, Austrian Expressionism, 161.

³⁸⁸ Ibid., 164.

people hate them instinctively on first seeing them. So do the artists, who are frightened to death of the idea of having to paint like this themselves some day."³⁸⁹

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Before further examining Schönberg's hostile pictorialism it will be helpful to review certain biographical details leading up to and contemporaneous with his ugliest art practice, circa 1908–10. Gerstl's biography is likewise relevant, not only because of the purported influence, on Schönberg, of Gerstl's affair with his wife but also because Gerstl gave both Schönbergs painting lessons. He may therefore have influenced Schönberg's art directly via instruction in theory and technique and indirectly by further destabilizing the already tenuous marital relations between Arnold and Mathilde.

Kallir emphasizes that despite the fact that Schönberg had already been taking painting lessons from Gerstl since the year before, he actually dated his first painting six weeks after Gerstl's suicide. Kallir concludes that Schönberg "was unable to forget the young painter." "Within the next two years," she notes, "he would execute approximately two-thirds of a total oeuvre comprising about sixty-five oils." "390

Regarding the predominance of self-portraits in this oeuvre Werkner suggests that Schönberg produced self-portraits "as a kind of confirmation of his identity" during difficult times. As examples of such difficult times Werkner references Gerstl's suicide, Schönberg's marital problems, the hostility of Vienna toward Schönberg's musical innovations, and chronic

³⁸⁹ Albert Paris von Gütersloh, "Schoenberg the Painter," in *Arnold Schönberg: Das Bildnerische Werk/Arnold Schoenberg: Paintings and Drawings*, ed. Thomas Zaunschirm (Klagenfurt: Ritter, 1991), 427.

³⁹⁰ Kallir, Schoenberg's Vienna, 40.

financial difficulties. Purportedly these events contributed clearly to the artist's distress and subsequent self-representational strategies. ³⁹¹ It's natural enough, of course, to assume that negative events have negative effects – and I would not presume to suggest otherwise.

Nevertheless what I do suggest is that there are elements of the Schönberg story worth questioning. Several spurious details get circulated about the composer continuously, and taken together they threaten to obscure how dramatically constructed his negative narrative really was. By correcting a few common historical errors and at the same time looking carefully at Schönberg's self-representational strategies, I hope we can rethink his narrative of martyrdom a little.

Critics on all sides – art historians, music historians and musicologists, the many

Schönberg scholars, the few Gerstl scholars – tend to especially stress the deleterious effects of

Mathilde and Richard's affair on Arnold's mindset. While I would never claim to know

otherwise, I do suggest we more thoroughly circulate another, documented but under
discussed aspect of this psychosexual history. It is not often mentioned and sometimes

outright denied, 392 but Schönberg initially reacted casually to news of a romantic link between

his friend and his wife. When Schönberg's daughter told her father around May of 1908 1908 1908

she had seen Gerstl and her mother kiss, Schönberg wrote a letter to Gerstl assuring him that

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³⁹¹ Werkner, Austrian Expressionism, 161.

³⁹² Kallir, *Schoenberg's Vienna*, 26: "How long the affair went undetected is unknown. Certainly Schoenberg had no suspicions when, in the summer of 1908, he again invited Gerstl to join the family on holiday in Gmunden."

³⁹³ Bryan R. Simms, "'My Dear Hagerl': Self-Representation in Schoenberg's String Quartet No. 2," *19th-Century* Music 26, no. 3 (2003): 267.

two men should never let a woman come between them.³⁹⁴ Although decades later Schönberg was quite hostile in his passing comments about Gerstl, at the time of the indiscretions he "seems to have laid blame for them solely on Mathilde, not Gerstl."³⁹⁵ Meanwhile in a letter of 15 June Mathilde wrote to Arnold: "'What more do you want to know about Gerstl? I have already written to you very plainly that I long only *for you*. What still upsets you? Are you content with me now?"³⁹⁶ And more desperately, on 21 June, 1908: "'Am I really so disgusting to you? And you are always, always good to me. Sometimes you would like to beat me up (but I would fight back). You are always good and I am insufferable. That's the way it is and always has been. It upsets me so because I care for you so much. But you know I cannot tell you that and you should really know that I can't.'"³⁹⁷ Mathilde's ambivalence comes through here in the way that as she tries to split herself from her husband and good from bad absolutely – and take all the blame for the bad onto herself – her description comes off as almost sarcastic, presumably inadvertently.

Schönberg seemed to be ambivalent about the matter as well. He attempted, in a deeply confused and rather alarming statement notably reminiscent of Weininger's binary logic in *Sex* and *Character*, to explain his feelings about his wife at the time of her affair:

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³⁹⁴ "Er wollte sich erschießen, und Gerstl habe ihn (so hat er es dann den Bruder erzahlt) getröstet: Er (Schönberg) sei der größte lebende Kunstler, den er (Gerstl) kenne. Schönberg habe das damals zu schätzen gewußt. So habe es einen Brief von ihm an Richard Gerstl gegeben (offenbar geschrieben zu einer Zeit, als dessen Beziehung zur Frau Mathilde schon etliche Spannungen verursacht hatte), in welchem Schönberg in etwa gemeint haben soll, zwei sie wie beide sollten sich einer Frau wegen nicht entzweien." Verbal communication from Alois Gerstl, cited in Otto Breicha, *Gerstl und Schönberg: Eine Beziehung* (Salzburg: Galerie Welz, 1993), 14.

³⁹⁵ Simms, "'My Dear Hagerl," 269.

³⁹⁶ In ibid.

³⁹⁷ In ibid., 270.

I denied the fact that my wife betrayed me ... She lied – I believed her. If I had not believed her, would she have remained with me so long? Wrong! She did not lie to me. For my wife does not lie. The soul of my wife is so united with my own that I know everything about her. Consequently, she did not lie; or else she was not my wife. And so it is. The soul of my wife was so alien from mine that I could not arrive at either a truthful or a dishonest relationship with her. We never really spoke with one another – i.e., communicated – we just talked ... We never knew each other. I also do not even know what she looks like. I cannot conjure up her likeness. Perhaps she does not exist at all. She lives only in my imagination. 398

In pitting subjectivities against one another Schönberg's description evinces the Viennese preoccupation with hostile self/other relations. But the way he transitions from being intensely invested in his marital relationship to being unsure in the end whether or not his wife exists is more aggressive, even, than the objectification of the subject Freud instantiated in founding a system oriented around the individual "subject" with everyone else an "object." Schönberg demonstrates an obvious identity dysphoria here, and some sadistic desire to erase his wife's very being in order to protect his sense of his own.

In his article "'My Dear Hagerl': Self-Representation in Schoenberg's String Quartet No. 2," Bryan R. Simms attempts to right several scholarly wrongs in the extant histories of the doomed love triangle. Contemplating the common tale that Mathilde and Richard were caught in flagrante delicto, he suggests instead that the disastrous moment was perhaps being

³⁹⁸ In Kallir, Schoenberg's Vienna, 28.

discovered with Richard painting Mathilde in the nude. ³⁹⁹ Simms also negates "the often-stated assumption" that after Mathilde and Richard fled the scene she moved in with Gerstl in Vienna – noting that such conclusions are simply "not supported by the content of her letters," ⁴⁰⁰ which he reproduces in detail. According to Alexander Zemlinsky's second wife, ⁴⁰¹ who heard recollections of the whole torrid and tragic affair from her husband, when Mathilde heard of Gerstl's suicide she "'stopped speaking,'" and from that moment onward in life "'only spoke what was necessary." ⁴⁰² In a letter written to Gerstl's brother Alois after Gerstl's suicide Mathilde said that of her and Richard, Richard had taken the easier way out. ⁴⁰³

In *Arnold Schoenberg's Vienna* Kallir begins discussing the love affair with the comment: "of all the members of the Schoenberg circle, Gerstl found himself inexplicably attracted to the composer's wife." Mathilde is then described as "a cipher of a woman who seemed, more often than not, simply to fade into the background." Two pages later Kallir concludes, regarding the Schönbergs' eventual reconciliation: "fortunately, Webern came to the rescue, appealing to Mathilde's sense of motherhood." In stark contrast to Zemlinsky's wife's dire description of Mathilde as traumatized and henceforth nearly mute, according to Kallir after the reconciliation Schönberg's "wife resumed her role as companion and friend, someone whom he

³⁹⁹ Simms, "'My Dear Hagerl," 275.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁰¹ Née Luise Sachsel.

⁴⁰² In Lorraine Gorrell, *Discordant Melody: Alexander Zemlinsky, His Songs, and the Second Viennese School* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2002), 79.

⁴⁰³ Breicha, Gerstl und Schönberg, 24.

⁴⁰⁴ Kallir, Schoenberg's Vienna, 26.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid., 28.

could count on to sympathize with his problems and to supervise his correspondence."⁴⁰⁶ A reader could be excused for finding these different descriptions of the Schönberg reconciliation themselves hard to reconcile – and I hope my readers will excuse me if I reject the notion that a happy marriage is likely to include a mute wife-as-secretary.

In the article "Schoenberg on Holiday: His Six Summers on Lake Traun," Ena Steiner explains that

As late as 1948, in his essay "The Blessing of the Dressing," Schoenberg still distinguishes between "the masculine and the feminine way of thinking." Men, he says, at once conceive the future, the destiny of an idea; women see only the nearest result of a problem and fail to prepare for the more distant events. His reading of Otto Weininger's book *Geschlecht und Charakter*, where, among other extreme ideas, the author passionately proclaims the inferiority of women, helped confirm Schoenberg in an antifeminism that probably lay dormant since his experience of first love for his cousin Malva Goldchmidt ... By the time of his marriage in 1901 he seemed unable to make the transition from self-centered bachelorhood to the complexities of married life. 407

I find Steiner's observation apt, albeit somewhat ambiguously phrased. Unfortunately Steiner does not clarify or further detail this notion that Schönberg was somehow too self-centred to be a married man. But his claim recalls a passage in *Schoenberg's Vienna* that rankles.

Describing how "in a fit of madness" one of Schönberg's neighbours threatened to kill the

composer in August 1911, Kallir notes in Schoenberg's Vienna that without "any warning or

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid., 67.

⁴⁰⁷ Ena Steiner, "Schoenberg on Holiday: His Six Summers on Lake Traun," *The Musical Quarterly* 72, no. 1 (1986): 29–30.

preliminary preparations, Schoenberg suddenly turned up alone, on the Starnbegersee in southern Germany. Berg, Webern, and some other friends quickly took up a collection so that he could send for Mathilde and the children." Personally I am about as appalled that Schönberg left his family to this murderous neighbour as other scholars seem to be that Mathilde shared a kiss and perhaps more with her husband's friend. And yet the former anecdote is barely mentioned in the literature, much less with censure.

What kinds of personal and political, ethical and aesthetic differences undergird such discrepant scholarly accounts? My feeling is that some of the differences could be traced back to preconceived notions – often unconscious, but prejudiced and tenacious – about gender and genius. Misogyny was endemic to and therefore largely unsurprising in early-twentieth-century Vienna; more surprising, though, is the apparent repetition of such prejudicial notions in more or less contemporary scholarship. Whereas a wife and mother provides comfort to her husband and should not want to live without her children, a genius cannot live without his art – and will fight for his right to create more than he will for anything, or anyone, else. A man needs art like a woman needs love. I seek to denaturalize such discourses wherever I encounter them – to acknowledge these notions explicitly in order to return them to the level of interpretation rather than an implied fact of nature.

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Besides relationship problems, hostility toward the composer's music is a major theme in the literature on Schönberg, while Schönberg's own hatred of critics is a major theme in his visual

⁴⁰⁸ Kallir, Schoenberg's Vienna, 68–9.

art. Mahler had left Vienna the year before, on 9 December 1907, a consequence of which was that the *Society of Creative Musicians* [*Vereinigung schaffender Tonkünstler*] disbanded. And as the more or less direct result of that rupture, Schönberg's local musical career was threatened. Mahler, the honorary head of that organization, had promoted performances of Schönberg's music. Without him there was but one Schönberg concert in Vienna the following year. Thus Schönberg scholars conclude that the negative experiences of 1908 "completely changed his relation to reality – and to himself." Schönberg's persona was now understood as that of someone "fighting almost alone against a world of enemies." Adorno goes so far as to praise Schönberg for his spirit of renunciation, his antipathy toward reconciliation, and his "inhuman coldness."

In reality, however, Schönberg was conflicted. Dümling notes that as Schönberg "confessed in a letter to Karl Kraus, his attitude to the public was ambivalent." While Schönberg rightly refused to write for the audience, he nevertheless "envied other artists their positive reviews." Dümling explains further that Schönberg "did not want to consider the listeners, who he believed were mostly incompetent, and yet he needed their response." Ultimately Schönberg "explained away his lack of success in concert life and the accompanying scandals as confirmation of his lonely way."

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⁴⁰⁹ Albrecht Dümling, "Public Loneliness: Atonality and the Crisis of Subjectivity in Schönberg's Opus 15," in *Schönberg & Kandinsky: An Historic Encounter*, 111.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid., 130.

⁴¹¹ Adorno, *Philosophy of Modern Music*, 109.

⁴¹² Dümling, "Public Loneliness," 130.

Freitag's reference to Schönberg's music and art assaulting both ear and eye, which we encountered at the beginning of this chapter as a line ostensibly circulating in the Court Opera, reflects a none-too-kind review that appeared in the *Illustrirte Wiener Extrablatt* on 13 October 1910. Schönberg's Rosé Quartet was played at his own vernissage, and the review states that the music was the perfect accompaniment for the composer's art: both eyes and ears were ravished. In both creative spheres, the reviewer concludes sarcastically, it's now apparent that truly anything is possible. Even in translation we can clearly tell that this is meant as a bad thing.

In Schönberg's visual art, the critic is "presented as a personification of ignorance." Schönberg even intimated in an aphorism published in 1912 in *Der Ruf* that journalists were not human beings. Really the critics included the public at large – those who apparently coughed, laughed, whistled, and stamped at Schönberg's shows, those who understood neither the man nor his art. That whole narrative is buttressed by the hostility and ugliness in Schönberg's art. In *Satire*, an oil-on-board painting dated 1910 (Fig. 36, cat. no. 111), Schönberg presents us with a greenish-beige imbecilic face, very crudely executed. Small dark brown eyes with yellow pupils stare out at us blankly, like the eyes of a puppet or rag doll. There are greenish-black lines accenting the oversize nose and scoring the cheeks. A strange red band, wider at the base than the tip, runs across the satirical puppet-figure's forehead. The wide, gash-y grin seems to be smeared with – possibly leaking – red. Is this meant to represent

⁴¹³ Reproduced in Werkner, *Austrian Expressionism*, 169.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid., 161.

⁴¹⁵ Ibid.

blood, a counter-attack on the vampiric, creatively enervating Viennese public, whose hostile reactions to Schönberg's work made him flee to Berlin in 1901 and again ten years later in 1911 – only to return to Vienna both times?

Referring to Schönberg's "almost pathological hatred of critics," Kallir notes that they were "the subject of some of his most biting caricatures." 416 Schönberg also "banished all newspaper criticism from his house, even going so far as to cancel two magazine subscriptions because their reviewers were hostile to his music." The artist's oil-on-wood Critic I (Fig. 37, cat. no. 112), painted with hues of brown, purple, pink, and red, pictures a masculine figure with a mask-like face. This critic's head is shaped like an inverted triangle; he has extremely large, pointed, red-tipped ears filled only with pools of dark purple, and a prominent beard. His stupid grin is filled in with dark purple, just like the ears – and as in Satire the eyes, now pupilless and blind, stare out blankly. As many of us might like to, Schönberg here represents the critic as a moron. Finally, in the oil-on-board Critic II (Fig. 38, cat. no. 113) of 1909–10 a broadfeatured and brightly coloured face reminiscent of those seen in Emil Nolde's Christ scenes (Fig. 39), hovers in profile. A huge splotch of dirty-centred rouge on the side of the second critic's face dominates the composition. Parted fleshy lips sit dumbly atop a recessive chin and beneath a monstrously misshapen and oversized nose. Anti-naturalistic colour accents serve to emphasize the countenance as unappealing. It is a strong statement of hostility to local critics, and its legibility results in large part from the artist's strategies of ugliness.

⁴¹⁶ Kallir, Schoenberg's Vienna, 82.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid.

Despite the entrenched narrative of Schönberg's life as a tale of woe, he had very staunch supporters and experienced extraordinary windfalls, too – even during the worst of times. For example when Schönberg reluctantly asked Mahler for a loan during a period of financial struggle in 1910, Mahler's response was to give Schönberg a far larger loan – enough for a whole year's worth of rent. From his art we get pictures of foes, but Schönberg did have loyal friends. From an art historical point of view at least, Schönberg and Kandinsky's friendship is particularly significant.

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Apparently Schönberg and Kandinsky met in person for the first time on 14 September 1911, but had been corresponding since the beginning of the year. Initially Schönberg and Kandinsky were inspired to some extent by their agreement that painting should not aim to depict material reality. They shared other areas of common interest and agreement, too – for example they considered themselves "spiritually sympathetic." In a letter of 18 December 1911 Schönberg even wrote to Kandinsky: "I have just read your book from cover to cover, and I will read it once more. I find it pleasing to an extraordinary degree, because we agree on nearly all of the main issues." Kandinsky's book was *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1911) and the feeling was mutual – Kandinsky was very taken with his new Viennese composer friend around

⁴¹⁸ Letter of 2 August 1910, in Stein, ed., *Arnold Schoenberg Letters*, trans. Eithne Wilkins and Ernst Kaiser (New York: St Martin's Press, 1965, c1964), 297.

⁴¹⁹ Klaus Kropfinger, "Latent Structural Power versus the Dissolution of Artistic Material in the Works of Kandinsky and Schönberg," in *Schönberg & Kandinsky: An Historic Encounter*, 9.

⁴²⁰ Ibid., 16.

the time *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* was published. Indeed Kandinsky praises Schönberg in that text, emphasizing how "alone" he was "in severing himself from conventional beauty."

In an often-overlooked footnote in *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* Kandinsky explains his position on the relationship between inner need, ugliness, and the "spiritually unsympathetic":

The term "outer," here used, must not be confused with the term "material" used previously. I am using the former to mean "outer need," which never goes beyond conventional limits, nor produces other than conventional beauty. The "inner need" knows no such limits, and often produces results considered "ugly." But "ugly" itself is a conventional term, and only means "spiritually unsympathetic," being applied to some expression of an inner need, either outgrown or not yet attained. But everything which adequately expresses the inner need is beautiful.⁴²²

What exactly Kandinsky means by "spiritually unsympathetic" here is not totally clear — unsympathetic to whom, for example? It seems that Kandinsky is saying that representations of spiritual states that we find sympathetic will appear beautiful, while representations of spiritual states that we find unsympathetic will strike us as ugly. He does explain that for "those who are not accustomed to it the inner beauty appears as ugliness because humanity in general inclines to the outer and knows nothing of the inner." For the *Blaue Reiter* artist ugliness was

Wassily Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, trans. Michael T.H. Sadler (Boston: MFA Publications, 2006), 35. I would disagree with Kandinsky here, and would date a Viennese engagement with ugliness at least as far back as the debacle around Klimt's Faculty paintings – if back further to the expressive, often bizarre characterological busts of court-artist-turned-paranoid-recluse Franz Xaver Messerschmidt (1736–1783). Nevertheless, it is useful to know that Kandinsky viewed Schönberg as more deeply concerned with the rejection of beauty than other artists of the time.

⁴²² Kandinsky, Concerning the Spiritual, fn. 2, 70–1.

⁴²³ Ibid., 34–5.

a superficial aesthetic misapprehension of a more fundamentally misunderstood spirituality.

Thus ugliness was apparently permissible precisely insofar as it was not actually regarded – by

Kandinsky at least – as ugliness.

In Schönberg's *Theory of Harmony*, which like Kandinsky's book was published in 1911, Schönberg comments similarly on misunderstandings of ugliness. He insists that although Mozart was chastised for being "a dissonance chaser," the composer obeyed a sense of inner necessity. According to Schönberg, too often people thought that Mozart "gave in to the passion to write something ugly," and would admonish him, saying that with talent like Mozart's ugliness was unnecessary. Schönberg avers: "it seems, though, that [composers] do find it necessary ... to write just what the aestheticians do not like, just what these people declare to be ugly. Otherwise we should not see that happening over and over throughout history. But if it is really ugly, then who is right?" For Schönberg the answer is clear: "history leaves no doubt whatsoever about it," he declares, "he is right who will always be right: he who creates even when it is ugly." Schönberg restates these views of ugliness several times throughout the text. Later he comments:

The artist's creative activity is instinctive ... He is merely the instrument of a will hidden from him, of instinct, of his unconscious. Whether it is new or old, good or bad, beautiful or ugly, he does not know ... Right or wrong, new or old, beautiful or ugly – how does one know who only senses the instinctual urge. Who would dare to differentiate right from

⁴²⁴ Arnold Schoenberg, *Theory of Harmony*, trans. Roy E. Carter (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 324.

⁴²⁵ Ibid., 325.

⁴²⁶ Ibid.

wrong in the instinct, in the unconscious, to keep separate the knowledge inherited from predecessors and the intuitive power granted by the spirit.⁴²⁷

Schönberg and Kandinsky's artistic accord stemmed in part from their shared interest in spirit [*Geist*] and belief in the spirit's "needs" and its heuristic qualities.

Schönberg "developed the aesthetics of truth" as a reaction "against the aesthetics of the beautiful and of the ornament." In his 1911 essay "Problems of Art Instruction" Schönberg "mentioned truthfulness as the highest criterion of art." Schönberg claimed that this principle "was personified in his drama "Die glückliche Hand," where the beautiful woman "cannot have the least understanding for the lonely man, the truthful artist." As Dümling notes: "strangely enough Schönberg related truthfulness no longer to artistic subjectivity but to the subconscious." For Schönberg the unconscious was indeed the repository of instinct and "inner necessity," and was in that respect at least our best path to truth.

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Kallir argues that insofar as Schönberg actually focused most ardently on his painting practice immediately after his wife's affair with Gerstl and the artist's suicide, "the composer may subconsciously have turned to painting as a way to confront and overcome his anguish." She expands her argument about the therapeutic nature of Schönberg's painting practice by

⁴²⁷ Ibid., 416.

⁴²⁸ Dümling, "Public Loneliness and Atonality," 132.

⁴²⁹ Ibid.

⁴³⁰ Kallir, Schoenberg's Vienna, 40.

explaining that artists "frequently turn to an unfamiliar medium when their own work has reached a moment of crisis or transition." Moreover, as Viennese modernism developed it increasingly became "standard practice for avant-garde artists to dismiss the validity of formal education. This being the case, it was easy to assume that a painter was no more or less qualified to write plays than a playwright, or that a composer, given the inclination, could paint just as well as a school-trained artist. It even seems that in certain avant-garde circles in Vienna works by those considered "outsiders" were understood as more authentic than works by trained artists — because a lack of training and technique was equated with greater immediacy of expression. Just as the conventions of visual ugliness were used strategically to communicate a purportedly more honest — i.e. less prettified — vision of self and society, so experimentation with different media and genres was perceived as a radical act containing a kernel of raw truth. Kandinsky shared these interests, but favoured artists who rejected the base body in favour of exalted spirit. Whereas Kandinsky saw beauty in truth, Schönberg used ugliness to connote truth.

These kinds of artistic strategies and perspectives tend to be framed (both at the time and in much of the literature) as manifestations of strength, but I suggest we also assess them as artefacts of anxiety. As Kropfinger notes bluntly, in the early twentieth century "the new possibilities of material, structure, and artistic configuration constituted an artistic and historical challenge that could drive artists crazy." In one of Schönberg's better-known images, an oil-on-cardboard painting dated May 1910 and entitled *Red Gaze* (Fig. 40, cat. no.

⁴³¹ Kallir, Schoenberg's Vienna, 40–1.

⁴³² Kropfinger, "Latent Structural Power," 26.

61, as *Gaze*), a distorted and misshapen head is painted in the left middle ground, and emerges from an ambiguous crevasse in an unmodelled and largely unmodulated field of beige paint.

The flat head stares out at us with gaping mouth and yellow-pupiled, black-irised eyes that are ringed with bright red. Schönberg has applied the paint messily to the cardboard surface.

Although the figure does not really appear human, the gaping mouth and red-rimmed eyes communicate some kind of distress. The affect of Schönberg's *Red Gaze* is one of privation and desperation.

In the catalogue raisonné published by the Arnold Schönberg Center we find imagery as bizarre in the category of "self-portraits" as in that filed under "impressions and fantasies." And no matter how inhuman some of the imagery may be, the heads and silhouettes in Schönberg's self-portraits and other works are nearly always the same shape – and palpably his own. In the catalogue commentary on Schönberg's *Paintings and Drawings* Thomas Zaunschirm says, regarding the artist's *Visions* and *Gazes*, that it is "a smooth transition from the *Self-Portraits* to the *Visions*," and cites letters in which Schönberg refers to works as "self-portraits" that show "no physical resemblance" to Schönberg. 434

One self-portrait work that can easily be related to another of Schönberg's visions or gazes is the oil-on-canvas *Brown Self-Portrait* (Fig. 41, cat. no. 12), dated 1910, which resembles the artist's *Red Gaze. Brown Self-Portrait* also features an unfinished and largely unmodelled face – only slightly more human-looking – floating in a sea of flat beige tones. Now instead of being open wide in some kind of cry or protest the mouth is downturned in an obviously

⁴³³ See http://www.schoenberg.at/index.php?option=com_joomgallery&Itemid=339&lang=en for a complete online catalogue.

⁴³⁴ Zaunschirm, *Arnold Schönberg: Das Bildnerische Werk/Arnold Schoenberg: Paintings and Drawings*, 369.

melancholic manner, as are the eyebrows. Yellow eyes rimmed with red and black look clownishly sad, while clumsily applied whitish paint at the outer corners might be a botched attempt at tears. A bulbous chin, large green nose, and long, droopy eyebrows all look weak, dumb, and a little foul.

Somewhere between fantasy and realism is Schönberg's oil-on-board *Green Self-Portrait* (Fig. 42, cat. no. 15) dated 23 October 1910. His ghostly head hovers insubstantially in a greenish-beige field and he winces out at the viewer with a downturned, slightly pouting mouth and asymmetrical brown eyes accented by red, green, and yellow colour blocking. In *Tears*, an oil-on-canvas work completed before October 1910 (Fig. 43, cat. no. 77), Schönberg presents an ethereal, inhuman face that consists largely of eyes – articulated only by red pupils with green outlines – and a shadowy suggestion of a nose and mouth behind lines that seem vaguely to indicate streaming light or gushing water. The ugliness of Schönberg's self-portraiture is thus attributable to a number of discrete factors: his awkward handling of the materials and lack of technical skill, his tendency even in more realistic self-representations to eschew self-flattery in favour of austerity, and his nightmarish, angry, and lonely expressionist style.

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Perhaps it was in part because his art was so very personal that Schönberg significantly overestimated its commercial value. For example, in early 1910 when Schönberg was in the midst of his most prolific period of creative productivity – but also in dire financial straits – he doggedly pursued an income from his portrait painting practice. Schönberg first wrote to

⁴³⁵ Cf. Letter to Emil Hertzka, 7 March 1910, in Stein, ed., *Schoenberg Letters*, 25–6.

Emil Hertzka, the president of Universal Edition (a classical music publishing firm in Vienna) to advertise his skills as a visual artist:

You know that I paint. What you do not know is that my work is highly praised by experts.

And I am to have an exhibition next year. What I have in mind is that you might be able to get one or another well-known patron to buy some of my pictures or have his portrait done by me.

He insisted:

You must not tell people that they *will* like my pictures. You must make them realise that they cannot but like my pictures, because they have been praised by authorities on painting; and above all that it is much more interesting to have one's portrait done by or to own a painting by a musician of my reputation than to be painted by some mere practitioner of painting whose name will be forgotten in 20 years ... For a lifesize portrait I want from 2 to 6 sittings and 200 to 400 kronen. That is really very cheap, considering that in 20 years people will pay ten times as much and in 40 years a hundred times as much for these paintings. I am sure you quite realize this, and I hope you won't make any feeble jokes about a matter as serious as this, but will take it as seriously as it deserves. ⁴³⁶
By way of comparison, around this time Schiele was asking for anywhere between 60 and 150 kronen for an oil painting, and although Kokoschka tried to insist that he should be given 200 kronen for a portrait, it is well known that his sitters balked at those prices and often outright

refused to buy their own portraits. Moreover, when the increasingly renowned Schiele did

raise his prices, in 1912, to 300-400 kronen "he was reproached for exceeding the limits of the

⁴³⁶ Ibid.

market."⁴³⁷ The avant-garde vogue for intermedial experimentation notwithstanding, for a composer to be demanding, in 1910, prices comparable to Schiele's 1912 ones is very striking indeed.

Carl Moll was Schönberg's next target. Moll was a founding member of the Secession, the composer's friend, Alma Mahler's stepfather, and an artistic advisor for the Galerie Miethke (where Gerstl had backed out of an exhibition when he discovered that Klimt's work would also be on display). Schönberg asked Moll to arrange a solo show for him at the Galerie Miethke, a proposition that Moll rejected tactfully but decisively. While acknowledging Schönberg's strong expressive drive, Moll opined that the public was not prepared for Schönberg's representational strategies, and even observed that the composer's "manner of artistic expression ... appears ... to be very much in the beginning stages."

Later in life, living in the United States, Schönberg valued his paintings more highly than his musical compositions – at least in financial terms. While he offered to sell the score of his melodrama *Pierrot Lunaire*, one of his most famous musical works, for \$1,500 in the mid-1940s, for the painting *Tears* Schönberg wanted \$3,500. At this time in the US Schiele's work could be purchased for around \$1,500, Kokoschka's for slightly more, and a painting by Renoir generally commanded between \$2,000 and \$4,000. Just as they had in Vienna decades earlier, Schönberg's prices for his paintings seem implausibly inflated here. So it's odd to read Adorno's claim that "even in his Expressionistic phase Schoenberg, who composed frantically, was a

⁴³⁷ Kallir, Schoenberg's Vienna, 43.

⁴³⁸ In ibid., 42.

⁴³⁹ Ibid., 43.

radical opponent of the market." In a perhaps somewhat similar vein, conductor and Schönberg scholar Leon Botstein argues that "despite Schönberg's dismissal of his own work as a painter as that of an 'amateur,' he produced an impressive output between the years 1908 and 1912." This statement is arguably somewhat misleading: Schönberg's self-effacing (and much-touted) description of himself as an amateur came out first in a famous letter to Kandinsky written on 8 March 1912, and then again many years later in a 1950 interview with Halsey Stevens. The 1912 letter was written at a time when Schönberg was finally despairing of finding paying customers for his visual art, and the other recorded instance of Schönberg describing himself as an amateur was about four decades after the composer's most active period as a painter. But we have seen definitively that around 1910 Schönberg not only took his painting very seriously, he also repeatedly sought exhibitions for, and income from, his visual artwork.

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The self-images Schönberg produced in and around Vienna in the early twentieth century were very important to the composer and remained so for the rest of his life. I have tried to show how this attachment may have had something to do with the valuable function of self-imaging during times of crisis. I have also considered how Schönberg's artistic practice pictured angst and hostility in pictorial form, and used strategies of ugliness. Schönberg felt persecuted in

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⁴⁴⁰ Adorno, *Philosophy of Modern Music*, 107.

⁴⁴¹ Leon Botstein, "Egon Schiele and Arnold Schönberg: The Cultural Politics of Aesthetic Innovation in Vienna, 1890–1918," in *Egon Schiele: Art, Sexuality, and Viennese* Modernism, ed. Patrick Werkner (Palo Alto: The Society for the Promotion of Science and Scholarship, 1994)," 102.

Vienna and yet the city seems to have been as much a source of inspiration as frustration. Freud likewise referred to Vienna as the object of his unmitigated hatred at times but at other times acknowledged his more complex relations with the city, including feelings of love. In "a perverse way," Kallir suggests, "Schoenberg was grateful to Vienna for the ordeal of his earlier years." She notes in particular how the struggles he endured in Vienna were "certainly preferable to the sybaritic ease of American life." Whereas the Viennese "had opposed his compositions because music mattered to them," in the US "nothing mattered – the sense of urgency was lacking. Schoenberg came to believe that conflict had actually been a necessary stimulus to his work."442

Nevertheless Schönberg's comments about the early years in Vienna remained acerbic. According to Kallir the "love he felt for the Austrian capital made that city's rejection almost impossible to forgive or forget." ⁴⁴³ In 1934 Schönberg wrote a very short piece, "About Kandinsky," whose sole purpose seems to be demonstrating that Kandinsky had not influenced him. After sketching out a creative timeline to that effect, Schönberg concludes: "This is as much nonsense as my being supposedly influenced by Kokoschka. Everything important had been done before Kokoschka emerged(!) I am also not influenced by another painter who, on the contrary, claimed to have learned painting through me (which I never really understood) as my Gazes prove which are unique in their way. True, I am presumably in some way connected with contemporaries but hardly with these."

⁴⁴² Ibid., 88.

⁴⁴³ Kallir, Schoenberg's Vienna, 70.

That "other" painter is of course Gerstl. Werkner notes: "Schönberg referred to the influence of Gerstl on his painting very occasionally in retrospect, and then only in a contemptuous manner." Four years after the biting commentary of "About Kandinsky," in Schönberg's 1938 essay "Painting Influences," he spitefully summarizes his entire relationship with Gerstl using fewer than ten sentences:

if one thinks of this certain Mr. Gerstl then the matter stands thus. When this person invaded my house he was a student of Keffler⁴⁴⁵ [sic] for whom he supposedly painted too radically. But it was not quite so radical, for at that time his ideal, his model, was [Max] Liebermann. In many conversations about art, music and sundry things I wasted many thoughts on him as on everybody else who wanted to listen. Probably this had confirmed him in his, at that time, rather tame radicalism to such a degree, that when he saw some quite miscarried attempts of mine, he took their miserable appearance to be intentional and exclaimed: "Now I have learned from you how one has to paint." I believe that Webern will be able to confirm this. Immediately afterwards he started to paint "Modern." I have today no judgment if these pictures are of any value. I never was very enthusiastic about them.⁴⁴⁶

Schönberg was a complex, controversial figure, and it is probably not a surprise that a man of such stature should so remain. It appears as well that he may have courted controversy at times – I have deliberately presented contradictory accounts here in part in order to highlight

⁴⁴⁴ Werkner, Austrian Expressionism, 157.

⁴⁴⁵ Schönberg means to refer here to the Viennese art teacher Heinrich Lefler.

⁴⁴⁶ Arnold Schönberg, "Painting Influences," *Journal of the Arnold Schoenberg Institute* 2, no. 3 (June 1978): 238.

such possibilities. Despite ambiguities surrounding issues in his personal life as well as the reception of his artistic work, links between visual ugliness and interpersonal and cultural hostility are clear. Likewise evident are extreme and often competing ideas about identity, art, and truth. In the next chapter we will examine local enmities and representational practices in light of the Viennese conflation of aesthetics and ethics. Indeed Vienna in the early twentieth century aesthetic and ethical enemies were often one and the same.

Chapter 6

Enemies!

Representations of Honesty and Hostility in Viennese Aesthetics and Ethics

Music should not be decorative but true.

Arnold Schönberg

Lack of ornamentation is a sign of intellectual strength.

Adolf Loos

Ethics and aesthetics are one.

Ludwig Wittgenstein

Leon Botstein, in his essay "Egon Schiele and Arnold Schönberg: The Cultural Politics of Aesthetic Innovation in Vienna, 1890–1918," discusses the tremendous influence of Karl Kraus, Adolf Loos, and Otto Weininger on Schönberg. Botstein proposes that these figures along with Wittgenstein together form an "axis" of Viennese modernism. Explicitly following Schönberg's own discourse, Botstein concludes: "in Arnold Schönberg's later terminology, the battle within the new movements of art was between 'style' and 'idea.'"⁴⁴⁷ According to Botstein, two oppositional artistic axes advocated two likewise opposing sets of values, both of which flourished in Vienna and represent "two competing trends … within modernism itself."⁴⁴⁸ Botstein presents the latter – "idea-driven" – set of values, associated with the putative "Kraus-Loos axis," as more iconoclastic, more critical, and also more honest than the former – "style" – set, which Botstein associates with Gustav Mahler, Gustav Klimt, Arthur Schnitzler, and Egon

⁴⁴⁷ Botstein, "Egon Schiele and Arnold Schönberg," 107.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid., 106.

Schiele. Acknowledging the polemical nature of his approach, Botstein states that his discussion is intended as "a modest provocation." But he also insists that his more scholarly aim is "to refine the methodology by which one seeks to explain shifts in aesthetic practice and values within biographical frameworks and within ... a particular historical environment."

I share Botstein's intellectual goal to refine the tools we use to illuminate and understand aesthetic, historical, and biographical phenomena. However for me an essential component of such a process of methodological refinement would be the denaturalization of contemporaneous discourses. By contrast, Botstein's essay is characterized not so much by refinement of methodology as by the pervasive recapitulation of certain specific Viennese discursive tropes. Generally such tropes – which characterize the writings of Weininger, Schönberg, Kraus, and Loos – include the elevation of austerity, formalism, and so-called purity and the denigration of the decorative, the psychological, and the feminine or sexual in art.

In this chapter I highlight the hostility of Viennese interlocutors, examining enmities and in the process questioning certain tenacious discourses around Viennese aesthetics and ethics. Indeed scholars have tended to rely on a representational style promulgated by the Viennese "axis of ideas." Both then and now hostility is persistently linked to honesty and aesthetics and ethics are conflated. For example according to Janik and Toulmin, whereas Viennese aesthetes

Botstein insists that Schönberg "never attended secondary school and was self-taught as composer, painter, and writer," and refers to him as "an outsider triumphing over the reigning networks of professional training and advancement." Botstein then contrasts this outsider's triumph favourably to Schiele's apparently unfairly advantageous situation: first Botstein refers to Schiele's formal education at the Fine Arts Academy from 1906–09 (in fact the adolescent artist's attendance was spotty at best), then he notes that three Schiele paintings were included in the 1908 Kunstschau (without making mention of the reviews), and finally Botstein concludes that Schiele's fame is aesthetically impure, 102–3.

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid., 101.

sought to cover over ugliness with a false beauty that reflected merely their own narcissism, more critical thinkers found radically honest solutions to ethical and aesthetic problems.⁴⁵¹

More recently however Claude Cernuschi has disagreed, arguing – throughout his *Re/Casting Kokoschka: Ethics and Aesthetics, Epistemology and Politics in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna* – that these kinds of divisions between style and idea, narcissism and critical thought, cannot themselves be separated from "the Jewish question." For Cernuschi the very aesthetic discourses and strategies that Janik and Toulmin, Botstein, and others have praised as critical, ethical, and honest are in fact predicated on antisemitism and associated misogyny. Cernuschi demurs, for example, that Kraus "assumed that supporting Expressionism would convince both anti-Semites (and himself) that he was patronizing an antidecorative art form that conveyed psychological truth – i.e. an art form that embodied the very characteristics that had often been denied to Jews." Concurring with Cernuschi, I want to focus more specifically in this chapter on the ways in which aesthetic and ethical discourses were conflated and tied up with representational strategies – including self-representational strategies – focused on honesty and hostility. Ugliness, radically reconfigured as it opposite, would play a critical part in these new discourses.

Viennese modernists pursued aesthetic and ethical enmities with single-minded hatred.

One's choice of friends, of aesthetic theories, one's manner of dress and decoration or lack thereof – all of these things apparently had not only crucial aesthetic but also ethical implications. Self-representational strategies were essential for men trying to live out their

⁴⁵¹ Janik and Toulmin, Wittgenstein's Vienna, 66.

⁴⁵² Cernuschi, Re/Casting Kokoschka, 147.

own theories in practice – to make their ethical and aesthetic existences *exemplary*. For these Viennese cliques, ethics were inextricable from aesthetics because lies in art reflected lies in life. Certainly an essential part of the group identity and image for men including Schönberg, Kraus, Loos, and Wittgenstein was the notion that authenticity and truthfulness were themselves established through unflinching critique of more spurious forms of expression. But in fact these critiques were often characterized less by honesty than by hostility.

Effeminate and decorative forms were censured with peculiar prejudice. The war against decoration was not only tied up with issues of antisemitism: it also paralleled a war against women insofar as Woman – as per Weininger's ever-popular philosophy – was deemed incapable of honesty or truthfulness. The argument put forward by the putative axis of ideas was that decorative forms aimed at an ersatz beauty, which these men considered the real ugliness. Deliberately choosing formal and expressive tools that the deluded aesthetes would consider ugly thus became an essential aspect of enacting an ethical identity. Feuds were, moreover, a prideful extension of ethics – indeed, as one scholar says succinctly of Kraus, mouthpiece for the so-called axis of ideas: "it would be hard to think of an author more feud-prone than Kraus. It would be even harder to think of one who did as much boasting about the size of his various 'hatreds.'" By reversing the terms by which ugliness should be understood and defending their hostile aesthetic and ethical theories with discursive violence, figures like Kraus created uniquely hateful forms of representation.

Kraus, a famously irascible writer and journalist who single-mindedly headed the publication of his own newspaper, Die Fackel [The Torch], from 1899–1936, is also known more broadly for his language critique. According to Janik and Toulmin, "when Kraus called for a critique of language, as the crucial instrument of thought, he did so with a moral hatred for that slovenliness in thought and expression which is the enemy of individual integrity."453 At stake in such critiques was more than merely proper language use: also at stake were aesthetics, ethics, representation, and the relations therein. Consult almost any source on Kraus and you will read that the man regularly spent agonized hours debating the proper placement of a comma. In his recent book The Anti-Journalist: Karl Kraus and Jewish Self-Fashioning in Fin-de-Siècle Europe Paul Reitter insists that Kraus "was never the narrow, conventionally elitist advocate of 'good German' that he has been repeatedly made out to be"; on the contrary Kraus saw a "'connection between mistreated words and mistreated bodies." Kraus "believed that deliberating carefully over words is the best practice for ethical deliberating" - "his Sprachkritik serve[d] as a moral mirror."⁴⁵⁵ Yet despite his concern for the connection between mistreated words and bodies, Kraus chose carnally violent metaphors to describe the ethical nature of truth and language use. "The closer I come to a word," Kraus noted, "the more it bleeds, like a corpse in the presence of a murderer." ⁴⁵⁶ Kraus also sarcastically opined: "that one is a

⁴⁵³ Janik and Toulmin, Wittgenstein's Vienna, 30.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁵ Paul Reitter, *The Anti-Journalist: Karl Kraus and Jewish Self-Fashioning in Fin-de-Siècle Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 20.

⁴⁵⁶ Karl Kraus, *Half-Truths & One-and-a-Half Truths*, ed. and trans. Harry Zohn (Montreal: Engendra Press, 1976), 58.

murderer does not necessarily tell us something about his style. But his style can tell us that he is a murderer.'"⁴⁵⁷ With such high stakes – life itself – self-definition was of paramount importance, perhaps especially for assimilated Jewish figures like Kraus.

Reitter refers to Kraus's style of "self-portraiture," explaining: "we are dealing with a writer who was ... intensely and literally concerned with his image. Kraus printed in *Die Fackel* a professional photographic portrait of himself – using it, after he had been caricatured, as a kind of visual refutation." It's not that it was important to Kraus to prove that he was not ugly; rather, it was crucial for him to show what was correct – to be honest about what he looked like, and to demonstrate that others should be likewise honest. And yet Kraus's attitudes about honesty were anything but straightforward, for they were also closely tied to his own ambivalent Jewishness.

Reitter observes, in his nuanced, thoughtful analysis, that while Kraus "seems to have employed certain grotesque stereotypes" about Jewishness "because he subscribed to them," he "also appropriated antisemitic rhetoric in a wilfully contradictory process of self-fashioning." In such a scenario honesty itself is contested, and hostility becomes a core component of self-creation. When Kraus's colleague Franz Werfel wrote a play entitled *Mirror Man* [*Spiegelmensch*, 1920], for example, that lampooned Kraus using Jewish stereotypes, Kraus's response was to strategically embrace precisely these stereotypes in his counter-attacks

⁴⁵⁷ In Reitter, *The Anti-Journalist*, 90.

⁴⁵⁸ Reitter, *The Anti-Journalist*, 106.

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid., 75.

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid., 26.

against Werfel. Werfel accused Kraus of Jewish self-hatred and caricatured Kraus's capacity for mimicry – as mobilized, for example, in Kraus's "Demolished Literature" essay where he had imitated the style of the despised *Jung Wien* group. In response Kraus noted that the very accusation of Jewish self-hatred can itself be anti-Jewish, and that likewise the denigration of mimesis is a questionable – and potentially antisemitic – manoeuvre.⁴⁶¹

Kraus's attitude toward Jewishness – both his own and others' – was so "wilfully contradictory" in part because for Kraus in antisemitic Vienna "establishing a truly radical position" required a likewise "radical performance of German-Jewish identity." The importance Kraus placed on radical originality, on crafting an aesthetic identity that was also ethical, and on honesty – all were tied to his hate for the *Jung Wien* writers. The "thrust of his criticism is that these would-be iconoclasts form a coterie whose members have the same affected feelings and opinions, which they write about in the same affected way ... He skewered modernist critics like Salten and Bahr because, in his opinion, they lacked the very radical energy that they themselves celebrated." For Kraus this herd mentality constituted a weakness of character, a flaw with both aesthetic and ethical implications. Being derivative was incompatible with being authentically oneself, and precluded proper aesthetic and ethical engagement.

Evincing, perhaps, anxiety about the contemporaneous association between hysteria, Jewishness, and ersatz identity Kraus declared: "nothing is more horrible than my self in the

⁴⁶¹ Ibid., 157.

⁴⁶² Ibid., 29.

⁴⁶³ Ibid., 75.

mirror of hysteria. Nothing is more vulgar than my style in the hands of another. To imitate me is to punish me."⁴⁶⁴ Ultimately Reitter concludes in *The Anti-Journalist* that Kraus was "not alone with his complex Jewish antisemitism. Many Germanic Jews – for example, Weininger – availed themselves of antisemitic language with evident and grim sincerity. However, others ... used provocatively anti-Jewish tropes as Kraus did, at least some of the time: in *an ugly yet* often trenchant mode of self-representation that remains to be integrated into our map of *German culture*."⁴⁶⁵ I would add that we can enrich our picture of Germanic culture generally and Viennese modernity especially if we integrate Reitter's specific insight about antisemitism and ugly self-representation into our larger discussions of the contemporaneous cultural dynamics of ugliness, hatred, and self-representation.

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Janik and Toulmin, who characterize the Krausian approach as "critical modernism," represent it as an appropriately aggressive response to cultural decadence and insincerity. According to them "the Viennese form of alienation was intimately tied to what was basically an uncritical fixation on culture with its extreme fondness for theatricality as well as an obsession with one's identity in a social situation where one's public persona often had precious little in common with one's private thoughts." They go on somewhat dramatically themselves: "what we have termed critical modernism was one peculiar Viennese response to this situation of being

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⁴⁶⁴ Kraus, Half-Truths, 38.

⁴⁶⁵ Reitter, *The Anti-Journalist*, 72, emphasis added.

alienated with society, which seems to be the destiny of Western society."466

Certainly such alienation was the destiny of the rapidly burgeoning and diversifying Vienna. From 1857 to 1910 the population of Vienna more than quadrupled with a massive influx of heterogeneous immigrants. As we have seen, this explosive growth contributed to cultural and creative alienation and attack. Although Janik claims, in his *Wittgenstein's Vienna Revisited*, that it is a notorious eccentricity of Viennese modernity that "gifted individuals often chose *not* to know each other when it was easily possible to do so, if there was a danger that originality might be compromised," People did not so much avoid contact altogether as pursue it in the form of public sparring. Aesthetics, ethics, and representational strategies both produced and reproduced the hostility of local culture. Janik glosses the Xenophobic underpinnings of this situation thus: "however much the native Viennese might resent the Czech, the Dalmatian, the Magyar, or the Galician Jew, he was familiar with all of them. That familiarity bred a cosmopolitan wit – even if it were to have scurrilous, racist, and sardonic overtones."

Reiterating the familiar trope of the persecuted artist, Janik also insists that in order to understand Viennese creativity "it is of paramount importance that we recognize the role that *Vienna's almost incredible hostility* to her *most* illustrious sons played in forming that milieu." ⁴⁶⁹ He concludes: "It is not difficult to see how cynicism about public life and a certain fatalistic

⁴⁶⁶ Janik, Wittgenstein's Vienna Revisited, 13.

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid., 2–3.

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid., 5.

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid., 1–2, emphasis added and in original

alienation with respect to ethical matters could come to go hand in hand in Vienna." Janik refers to three possible reactions to this kind of alienation: to join in the corruption, to disconnect from society, or to attack. This last option Janik characterizes as a "mode of social criticism, which is distinguished by its efforts to turn Viennese *obsession with style* against itself." Janik and Toulmin note, for example, that the turn-of-the-century "conception of the artist as the consummate stylist was the exact opposite of Kraus's own." But perhaps the most pugnacious representative of this kind of attack on Viennese style was architect and theorist Adolf Loos. Specifically Loos attacked ornament – decorative style – as corrupt and degenerate.

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Before the turn of the century, Loos had triumphantly announced: "the old styles are dead, long live the new style!" Ushering in modernity with the bold claim that "those who have trodden the thorny path of the artistic trailblazer will not be denied the wider recognition that is their due," Loos opined triumphantly: "the courage to assert the truth has emerged victorious." This "truth" was that beauty was no longer necessary. Loos complained, however, that Austria lagged behind other countries, and more generally he bemoaned the value still placed on beauty in classically oriented Germanic culture and aesthetics. An extreme

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid., 9.

⁴⁷¹ Ibid., 8.

⁴⁷² Janik and Toulmin, Wittgenstein's Vienna, 80.

⁴⁷³ Ibid., 134.

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid., 27, emphasis added.

Anglophile, Loos insisted that the "English laugh at the Germans' obsession with beauty," claiming approvingly that the "best people in Germany go along with the English. They can manage without beauty." Although Loos retained his preoccupations with progress and aesthetic honesty, he turned to a more actively hostile, negative form of critique in the coming years. The most egregious example, and also his most well-known text, is no doubt the lecture "Ornament and Crime," which Loos wrote in 1908 and delivered in Berlin on 21 January 1910.

As Loos made infamously clear in this lecture, he hated ornament. 476 Loos argued that ornament represented not merely an aesthetic but also an ethical ill, and likewise that ornament was fundamentally contrary to the spirit of modern times. He compares children, tribal Papuans, and criminals under the rubric of the decorative and using the pseudo-scientific evolutionary notion of ontogeny recapitulating phylogeny. The urge to decorate everything – including oneself – is for Loos deeply sexual, and an essential feature of children and savages, whom Loos construes as non-ethical entities. Ultimately the will to decorate is an impulse that should be overcome. For a modern adult to embrace ornament is criminal, degenerate, and unethical. Therefore "people with tattoos not in prison are either latent criminals or degenerate aristocrats."

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⁴⁷⁵ Ibid., 39.

⁴⁷⁶ When Loos referred to ornament he meant something quite exaggerated and anachronistic as well as unnecessary – not simply beautiful craftwork. His Café Museum, considered austere enough at the time to garner the well-known epithet "Café Nihilism," would quite likely strike most of us now as "decorative" simply in the sense that it was filled with the elegant touches of fine handicraft. But when Loos refers to ornament and crime he means ornament as something imitative and non-utilitarian; ornament was, ostensibly, dishonest about both the object and the times.

⁴⁷⁷ Adolf Loos, *Ornament and Crime: Selected Essays*, ed. Adolf Opel and trans. Michael Mitchell (Riverside: Ariadne Press, 1998), 167.

Loos censured the fact that while "in the past the artist was a healthy, vigorous figure," the degenerate ornamental artist of contemporary times "lags behind or is a pathological case." He also diagnosed Viennese applied artists as particularly pathological, arguing angrily that applied artists in contemporary Vienna mistakenly aimed to clothe craft in the lies of fine art, and were "stuffed full of wrong ideas." He mocked the effeminate, affected archaisms of craft students who valorized the Middle Ages and Renaissance at the expense of contemporaneity. Satirizing, for example, the desire for "jewels and colors and fluttering plumes," and the belief that the present times were "simply horrible," Loos lampooned those who clung to ornament and rejected what they falsely considered "the ugly hustle and bustle of modern life." Loos imagines such aesthetic imitation and ornament as nothing less than a "monster threatening to sap the very foundation of our handicrafts."

As with Kraus, Loos's – often virulently sexist and racist – discourse suggests that the health and future of self and society alike is at stake. He says: "To prefer ornamentation is to put oneself on the level of the Red Indian. But we must seek to overcome the Red Indian within us ... The goal toward which the whole of mankind is striving is to see beauty in form alone, and not to make it dependent on ornament and decoration." And while Loos insisted: "the evolution of culture is synonymous with the removal of ornamentation from objects of everyday

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⁴⁷⁸ Ibid., 171.

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid., 145.

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid., 19.

⁴⁸¹ Ibid., 77.

use,"482 Kraus declared of literature: "the face of the feuilleton has smeared itself with blood. Ornaments on worthless prose now mock endless human hardship." Where earlier commentators referred to Klimt's ornamental painting style as Jewish and ugly, Loos and Kraus used similar rhetoric to claim that ornament conventionally understood as beautiful was actually ugly because it was primitive, dishonest, and therefore not befitting modern Germanic culture. This strategic discursive use of different concepts of ugliness then allowed Viennese modernists to further emphasize their aesthetic iconoclasm: beauty became ugliness, and insofar as it was honest ugliness became beautiful. A modernist concern with innovation and honesty, combined with a Viennese obsession with selfhood and hostility, created an aspirational oppositional persona. Although such a pugnacious performance of self was actually fairly common, it tended to be represented in almost messianic ethico-aesthetic terms in early-twentieth-century Vienna. Kraus and Loos continue to be understood by many as warriors for truth – warriors living and dying for their vanguard ideas. Of the interdependence of Kraus's life and work Walter Benjamin insists that Kraus "never offered an argument that has not engaged his whole person."484

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Significantly less hostile but every bit as concerned with honesty, representation through language use, and the relationship between aesthetics and ethics was Kraus's contemporary

⁴⁸² Ibid., 167, emphasis in original.

⁴⁸³ In Reitter, *The Anti-Journalist*, 22.

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid., 248.

and fellow ambivalent, assimilated Jew Ludwig Wittgenstein. Indeed Wittgenstein is also linked to Kraus (as well as Weininger) by shared concerns regarding Jewishness and selfrepresentation. Ray Monk's definitive biography, Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius, begins with an epigraph from Weininger (the titular "duty of genius" is also a reference to Weininger). Monk's first chapter, moreover, is named "The Laboratory for Self-Destruction" in direct homage to Kraus's famous dictum that Vienna was the laboratory for world destruction. As Monk summarizes: "it was no doubt through Gretl [Margarete, Wittgenstein's elder sister] that Wittgenstein first became aware of the work of Karl Kraus. Kraus's satirical journal Die Fackel ('The Torch') first appeared in 1899, and from the very beginning was a huge success among the intellectually disaffected in Vienna. It was read by everyone with any pretence to understanding the political and cultural trends of the time, and exerted an enormous influence on practically all the major figures ... from Adolf Loos to Oskar Kokoschka."⁴⁸⁵ But in Vienna influence could easily become ambivalent, or worse: so close were Wittgenstein and Loos's concerns regarding aesthetics and ethics that "Loos himself is reported to have exclaimed on meeting Wittgenstein: 'You are me!'"486 Yet apparently after the war Wittgenstein "denounced Loos as a charlatan."487

Honesty was supremely important to Wittgenstein, and he was constantly revisiting and revising his own assumptions and ideas. Monk emphasizes that Wittgenstein's autobiography, planned but never published, was intended to "reveal his essential nature without any kind of

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid., 16–17.

⁴⁸⁶ Ray Monk, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 108.

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid., 110.

explanation, justification or defence." Bizarrely – for a person who lived such a virtuous and ascetic existence – Wittgenstein apparently "took for granted that what would be revealed [in such an autobiography] would be an 'unheroic,' perhaps even 'ugly' nature." Wittgenstein was very hard on himself (though he would disagree with that assessment), so it is perhaps not surprising that he believed that confessing to his true nature would be tantamount to revealing an inner ugliness. And indeed confession is exactly what is at stake here, particularly because "for Wittgenstein, *all* philosophy, in so far as it is pursued honestly and decently, begins with a confession."

As we have seen, such obsession with the duty of genius and the honest expression of internal states can exacerbate alienation and solipsism. After he left Vienna Wittgenstein became increasingly aware of exactly this problem – in both his life and his work. Monk concurs: "taken to its extreme," he says "the view that the 'internal' has priority over the 'external' becomes solipsism ... much of Wittgenstein's later philosophical thinking about the self is an attempt once and for all to put to rest the ghost of this view" inherited from his early years in Vienna. Monk himself opines that of all the books that Wittgenstein "read as a schoolboy which influenced his later development," the doctrine of destructive solipsism "finds its most startling expression in *Sex and Character*." At least as late as 1931 Wittgenstein still made Weiningerian comments about how the Jewish mind can only be "reproductive," never original. It behoves us to acknowledge how issues of antisemitism and ambivalent Jewishness

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid., 311.

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid., 366.

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid., 19.

were at play in even the most exalted products of Viennese modernism. For example, according to Wittgenstein even "the greatest of Jewish thinkers is no more than talented." In his category of reproductive Jewish thinking – which according to the philosopher precluded "genius" – Wittgenstein included not only himself but also Freud and Breuer, amongst others.

Like Kraus, and like Wittgenstein's Vienna Circle contemporary Karl Popper, 492
Wittgenstein delivered quite damning – if compelling and considered – critiques of
psychoanalysis. Vocal about the fact that he did actually respect Freud, Wittgenstein was
nonetheless sharply critical of the epistemological assumptions of psychoanalysis – and found
psychoanalysis's claims to scientific status dishonest. For example, Wittgenstein lambasted
Freud's conflation of psyche and soma as a rhetorical trope rather than a scientifically or
epistemologically valid tenet. Wittgenstein argued, instead, that psychoanalysis was closer
to philosophy than to science; according to him the honest truth was that psychoanalysis
offered merely one interpretation amongst many. And the problem was that Freud and the
psychoanalysts argued for absolute veracity. Wittgenstein was more a critic of psychoanalysis
than an enemy of it like Kraus, who infamously claimed that psychoanalysis "is that disease of

⁴⁹¹ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, trans. Peter Winch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 18.

The so-called "Vienna Circle" was a group of philosophers inspired by Ernst Mach's philosophy and Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Most of the members of the group propounded forms of logical positivism, which they claimed was taken from Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*. Nevertheless, Wittgenstein himself insisted that the Vienna Circle philosophers had radically misinterpreted his work, which was not so much for logical positivism as against it. Wittgenstein did associate with the philosophers but insisted on reading poetry at their meetings. This strategy underscored the philosopher's point, made in the last few and routinely ignored pages of his *Tractatus*, that philosophy can only speak about the least important aspects of existence. The most important things must be passed over in silence.

⁴⁹³ Cernuschi also notes that Wittgenstein's "objections to connecting soma and psyche recall Breuer's objection that Freud was being 'tricked' by his 'own figures of speech' when he described the mind in spatial terms," *Re/Casting Kokoschka*, 170.

the mind for which it believes itself to be the cure." But Wittgenstein and Kraus shared a deep and impassioned concern for truth and language use that prompted both men to look at psychoanalysis askance.

Wittgenstein's admittedly worthwhile critiques of psychoanalysis have not usually been considered alongside the more problematic aspects of his assessments of the so-called "Jewish mind." When Wittgenstein commented that Freud was only clever, never wise, ⁴⁹⁵ he could have been talking about any Jewish man – including himself. That's how neatly he was reproducing his culture's antisemitic prejudice. Moreover in Vienna at the time psychoanalysis was referred to spitefully as "the Jewish science." Freud expressly sought an Aryan crown prince of psychoanalysis who could erase such Jewish taint – and found it, for a time, in the young Swiss doctor Carl Jung. Locally, however, an atmosphere of insecurity and ethnic antagonism contributed to Freud's domineering attitudes about sexuality, Kraus's various enmities, and Wittgenstein's skepticism and solitude.

Over the years many members of the Wittgenstein clan committed suicide; but it is worth noting in particular that Ludwig's homosexual brother Rudi, who sought treatment for his "perversion" in Berlin, killed himself (in a manner as theatrical as Weininger and Gerstl) in May 1904, one year after *Sex and Character* was published and six months after Weininger had killed himself. Both self and society imposed punitive restrictions on acceptable masculinities. Enemies were everywhere – including within. Comparing Weininger, Kafka, and Freud, Wittgenstein defended his utmost respect for Weininger by representing the three men thus:

⁴⁹⁴ In Reitter, *The Anti-Journalist*, 126–7.

⁴⁹⁵ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*, ed. Cyril Barrett (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 41.

Freud worked on the problems of others, Kafka gave himself a great deal of trouble not writing about his troubles, and Weininger took the high road of honesty by actually trying to work on his own problems.⁴⁹⁶

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Thus the rejection of ornament, of the ornate craftwork of the Wiener Werkstätte for example – indeed, of the basic decorative impulse itself – was merely an aesthetic aspect of what was understood as a larger, ethical commitment to representational honesty, to clarity of thought through clarity of expression. And although Wittgenstein certainly changed some of the ideas he inherited from his early years in Vienna, he never abandoned his position against decoration – much to the consternation of baffled fellows at Cambridge later. Apparently Wittgenstein "chose the furniture for his rooms with great care." Wittgenstein's close companion David Pinsent recalls: "I went out and helped him interview a lot of furniture at various shops ... It was rather amusing: he is terribly fastidious and we led the shopman a frightful dance, Vittgenstein [sic] ejaculating 'No – beastly!' to 90% of what he shewed us!'"⁴⁹⁷ Monk continues: "[Bertrand] Russell, too, was drawn into Wittgenstein's deliberations on the matter, and found it rather exasperating. 'He is *very* fussy ... He gave me a lecture on how furniture should be made – he dislikes all ornamentation that is not part of the construction, and can never find anything simple enough." In the end, apparently, Wittgenstein gave up and had all

⁴⁹⁶ Monk, Ludwig Wittgenstein, 498.

⁴⁹⁷ In Monk, *Ludwig Wittgenstein*, 55.

his furniture custom made.⁴⁹⁸ Monk concludes that neither Pinsent nor Russell could understand Wittgenstein's ethical concern for aesthetics because to truly understand the urgency of these issues for the philosopher, "one would have to have been Viennese; one would have to have felt, like Karl Kraus and Adolf Loos, that the once noble culture of Vienna, which from Haydn to Schubert had surpassed anything else in the world, had, since the latter half of the nineteenth century, atrophied into ... its opposite, misused as ornament and mask."⁴⁹⁹

This notion of the mask also has broader resonances with Viennese culture; the image of the mask evokes the struggles we've seen with failed narcissism and traumatic identity, both within and beyond categories of antisemitism and ambivalent Jewishness. In his 1909 essay "Self-Mirroring" [Selbstbespiegelung] Kraus insisted that the self should "transform itself completely after the object it represents." Meanwhile Reitter asks poignantly: would Jewish "minds be so much oriented toward incessant 'summarizing' and 'breaking down' if they could create positive representations of their own peculiarities? Would the parallel between journalists and Jews work if Jews could achieve the kind of self-representation without which, by Weininger's standards, there is no self – only the 'nichts' of Judaism and femininity?" For me at least, it is heartening to know that eventually Kraus stopped censuring Jewish people who did not "redeem themselves through 'total assimilation,'" and beginning "around 1910, in

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⁴⁹⁸ Ibid., 56.

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁰ Reitter, *The Anti-Journalist*, 38.

⁵⁰¹ Ibid., 37.

fact, he became an enthusiastic advocate of Yiddish culture." 502 Kraus became a regular at the comic Yiddish theatre, the Budapester Orpheumgesellschaft, and often brought Loos and Kokoschka. Reitter notes that this newfound practice "corresponds to a larger pattern of behavior ... Kraus championed 'minor' forms." 503

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Nevertheless the drive to distinguish such "good" minor forms from the "bad" ones of the decorative artists gave rise to some truly extreme discourses. Loos may have drily observed that "'style,' style in quotation marks, is no longer necessary" ⁵⁰⁴ as early as 1898, but the hostile discourses he and his cohorts developed around honesty, aesthetics, and ethics actually constituted a style of rhetoric. Moreover despite Loos's contempt for the painter who expressed his individuality through fancy clothing and an affected demeanour, Loos's own antagonistic anti-style was also a style of self-representation. Loos's discursive strategies have been very effective – he was intelligent, a keen observer, and there's an almost undeniable seduction to his sophistry. A pithy line like "woe to the painter who can express his individuality through a velvet jacket"505 is clever enough to seem convincing – until we remember the sheer inaccuracy of such hyperbole.

⁵⁰² Ibid., 92.

⁵⁰³ Ibid., 112.

⁵⁰⁴ Loos, *Ornament and Crime*, 57.

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid., 158.

Indeed despite the passionate paeans to progress, these men were far more constrained by the prejudices of the age than they admitted. Still, a surprising number of scholars have succumbed to Loos's self-representational style; less surprising is Loos's contemporaneous influence in early-twentieth-century Vienna. Certainly Loos had a tremendous influence on Kokoschka, although it was only after seeing Kokoschka's ugly *Self-Portrait as a Warrior* (Fig. 2) that Loos sought an association with the artist. 506

When Loos decided that he wanted to support Kokoschka's less than realistic style of portraiture, his – and Kraus's – discursive cunning was more than up to the task of how to cast Kokoschka's work in terms of honesty and accuracy. Using their "characteristic wit, Loos and Kraus suggest that, insofar as Kokoschka's portraits were concerned, absence of likeness was more than compensated by psychological truth." Kokoschka painted portraits of both Kraus and Loos during this period. Of his own portrait Kraus famously commented that while those who knew him might not recognize him in Kokoschka's representation, those who didn't were sure to. Loos declared pithily of Kokoschka's portrait of him that it was a better likeness than Loos himself was.

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Loos comments, in his essay "Oskar Kokoschka," that when he saw Kokoschka's art and learned that the young artist was toiling over at the Wiener Werkstätte making decorative objects, it was "immediately clear" to him that "one of the greatest crimes against the Holy Spirit was

⁵⁰⁶ Cernuschi, Re/Casting Kokoschka, 31.

⁵⁰⁷ Cernuschi, *Re/Casting Kokoschka*, 56.

being committed."⁵⁰⁸ With characteristic aggressiveness Loos got Kokoschka to agree to leave the Wiener Werkstätte on the condition that he, Loos, find a steady stream of portrait commissions for the young artist. Carl Schorske describes Loos and Kokoschka's aesthetic affiliation in psychological terms, claiming that

in a partnership of opposites, Kokoschka and Loos in effect assaulted the Kunstschau's aesthetic synthesis of painting and architecture on both flanks. Loos banished the decorative elements from architecture in favor of severely neutral rationality. Kokoschka, on the other hand, proceeded from the abstract explorations of the erotic life of his Kunstchau works to concretely characterological painting ... Kokoschka hurled himself with the caricaturist's passion into a new kind of psychological portraiture. He would capture the spirit of his subjects through dialogue. By thus penetrating deeply into another's soul, he aimed to 'find through painting a basis of self-knowledge.' 509

Cernuschi, however, concludes censoriously:

political and cultural allegiances were so intertwined in Vienna that intellectuals readily used terms of political invective ('feminized' or 'Judaicized') to denigrate works of art.

Kokoschka's work may have seemed shocking and radical at first, but Kokoschka and his patrons were no different than those same Viennese intellectuals. They held similar beliefs, and, against similar interpretive assumptions, they also construed the meaning of Kokoschka's Expressionist idiom in direct opposition to what the culture saw as 'feminine' or 'Jewish.' Their strategies were intentionally conceived to endow style with political

⁵⁰⁸ Loos. *Ornament and Crime*, 191.

⁵⁰⁹ Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*, 340.

connotations and to permit politics to determine the ultimate morality of style. The declaration that ethics and aesthetics are one and the same thus had both remarkable rhetorical power and nefarious consequences in a cultural landscape as politically divisive as that of turn-of-the-century Vienna. It inspired artists to argue for the morality of art while allowing them to ignore the art of morality. 510

Loos's discourse has played a decisive role in consolidating and securing Kokoschka's reputation as an artist with preternatural insight – not only psychological, but also somatic. It was Loos who first famously commented that Kokoschka had X-ray eyes, a comparison that – as Cernuschi discusses extensively – has persisted incredibly literally in the literature. And when, in 1910, Loos secured a portrait commission for Kokoschka from renowned psychiatrist Auguste Forel, Forel and family felt that the resultant portrait depicted the doctor as though he had suffered a stroke, and declined to purchase the work. But because the doctor subsequently had a stroke – two years later – that affected him physically the way that Kokoschka had represented him earlier, Kokoschka's diagnostic abilities are forever trumpeted by subsequent commentators. And Kokoschka himself tells this story in his autobiography: "For one early number of the magazine [*Der Sturm*] I designed a poster, a self-portrait with a red background ... The poster shows me with head shaven, like a convict, and pointing at a wound in my chest; it was intended as a reproach to the Viennese, but a few years later, in the

⁵¹⁰ Cernuschi, Re/Casting Kokoschka, 18.

⁵¹¹ For more on this cf. Cernuschi, *Re/Casting Kokoschka*, 37–40.

There is even an article on this topic in the journal *Stroke*: Veronica Huf and Desmond O'Neill, MD, "Oskar Kokoschka and Auguste Forel: Life Imitating Art or A Stroke of Genius?," *Stroke* 36 (2005): 2037–40.

war, a Russian bayonet went through my lung at exactly that place."⁵¹³ In the next chapter we will take a closer look at Kokoschka's reputation, in particular by examining his selfrepresentations and confabulations.

⁵¹³ Kokoschka, *My Life*, 62.

Chapter 7

I'm Ugly Because You Hate Me:

Ugliness and Negative Empathy in Oskar Kokoschka's Early Self-Portraiture

I want to make a nerve-mad portrait.

- letter from Oskar Kokoschka to Emma Bacher, 27 April 1909

My whole life is a hell.

– letter from Oskar Kokoschka to Lotte Franzos, 24 December 1910

My electricity ... needs to be discharged if I am to keep lucid control of my nerves.

- letter from Oskar Kokoschka to Alma Mahler, 29 April 1912

There is an anecdote about the reception of the young Oskar Kokoschka's work that is often repeated and will be familiar to anyone who has studied the Viennese artist. Apparently, upon seeing Kokoschka's art for the first time Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to Emperor Franz Joseph's throne, proclaimed that "this fellow's bones ought to be broken in his body." The legendary moment is purported to have occurred in 1911, in the context of a group exhibition at Vienna's *Hagenbund* where Kokoschka showed twenty-five paintings and drawings. His works were also lambasted belligerently in the press. Critics singled out Kokoschka's pieces, which were mostly portraits, for their displeasing, even threatening aspects. But in *Die Fackel*, Kraus's notoriously iconoclastic and abrasive journal, a review was published that noted that "'the way in which Kokoschka attains the effect of his pictures is not one that also leads to the beautification of his subjects: another goal is aimed at by another means." 515

[&]quot;Dem Kerl sollte man die Knoche im Leibe zerbrechen," in Edith Hoffmann, *Kokoschka: Life and Work* (London: Faber and Faber, 1947), 86.

⁵¹⁵ In Hoffmann, *Kokoschka*, 87. The original review by Franz Grüner ran in *Die Fackel* on 28 February 1911 under the title "Oskar Kokoschka."

In the early years of the twentieth century Kokoschka, himself in his early twenties, alighted on a self-representational strategy that would serve him well for decades to come – indeed, that would buttress the artist's subversive reputation even after his death. Kokoschka seems to have decided that in order to be a successful artist in competitive Vienna he had to cultivate a highly negative persona and represent himself as a pariah, hated and attacked. In a letter written in late 1907 Kokoschka complained to a friend: "If I could only get away somewhere ... to Africa, or England or anywhere, it might save my life. Here you use all your energy creating resistance and friction for yourself." A few months later in another letter to the same friend – fellow artist Erwin Lang – Kokoschka insisted: "I can't stand it here any longer, it's all ossified as if the screaming had never been heard." This image of himself screaming apparently appealed to Kokoschka; he later produced a self-portrait bust that he described as a warrior with its mouth opened in an "impassioned cry." Self-Portrait as a Warrior (Fig. 2) was one of a series of self-portraits Kokoschka made that relied on strategies of ugliness to produce and reproduce a theatrically negative persona: the artist as avant-garde antagonist.

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The link between hatred and ugliness can be better understood with reference to the role of negative *Einfühlung*, or negative empathy, in the aesthetic theory of German professor of philosophy and psychology Theodor Lipps. Lipps (1851–1914) was the leading aesthetic

⁵¹⁶ Oskar Kokoschka, "Letter to Erwin Lang [late 1907]," in *Oskar Kokoschka Letters 1905-1976*, trans. Mary Whittall (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992), 15.

⁵¹⁷ Ibid., 16.

⁵¹⁸ Kokoschka, My Life, 21.

theorist of his time: his *Einfühlung* theory dominated the Germanic understanding of aesthetic experience until the early twentieth century. I will first offer a brief account of Lipps's theories of positive and negative empathy, and then touch on the broader history of the concept of *Einfühlung*. I propose that Kokoschka, with his apparent desire to provoke hatred and his strategic use of ugliness to both provoke and connote that hatred, developed his own practice of negative empathy.

Lipps developed a new scientific field of "psychological aesthetics," which sought to bridge psychology and philosophy; the linchpin of this emergent discipline was Lipps's theory of empathy. Lipps described *Einfühlung* as "not a sensation in one's [own] body, but feeling something, namely, oneself, into the [a]esthetic object." Speaking first in terms of an appreciation of beauty, he emphasized that this psychological process of projection was involved in all intersubjective encounters, not merely in the apprehension of aesthetic objects. ⁵²⁰

Within Lipps's theory negative empathy plays the role of empathy's ugly counterpart. In his 1903 *Leitfaden der Psychologie* [*Guide to Psychology*] Lipps stated explicitly that the object of negative empathy is ugly, and he returned to his theory of negative *Einfühlung* in at least four texts published between 1903 and 1906.⁵²¹ But these discussions notwithstanding, Lipps's

⁵¹⁹ Theodor Lipps, "Empathy, Inner Imitation, and Sense-feelings," in *A Modern Book of Aesthetics: An Anthology*, ed. Melvin Rader, 5th ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1979), 377.

⁵²⁰ Ibid., 371.

Theodor Lipps, Leitfaden der Psychologie (Leipzig: Wilhelm Engelmann, 1903), 200: "Den Gegenstand der negativen Einfühlung bezeichnen wir als häßlich." See also Lipps, "Einfühlung, innere Nachahmung, und Organempfindungen," Archiv für die gesamte Psychologie, vol. 1 (1903): 185–204, Ästhetik: Psychologie des Schönen und der Kunst, vol. 1: Grundlegung der Ästhetik (Hamburg: Leopold Voss, 1903) and vol. 2, Die ästhetische Betrachtung und die bildende Kunst (Hamburg: Leopold Voss, 1906).

idea of negative empathy seems to have remained largely undeveloped – the dark, bleary reflection of his more substantive theory of positive *Einfühlung*. In his article "Theodor Lipps and the Shift from 'Sympathy' to 'Empathy'" Gustav Jahoda – psychologist born and educated in Vienna – acknowledges that Lipps's notion of negative empathy is "rather an elusive concept." Jahoda explains that Lipps's concept can be "tentatively summarised as … the effect of someone behaving in an offensive and hurtful way." And although "the unpleasant behaviour is said to 'penetrate' the observer or victim, it produces inner rejection." The idea here is that aesthetic encounters are predicated on the introjection of an object of contemplation that can potentially threaten or even hurt us. According to Lipps, when this happens we hate the object we have temporarily identified with, rejecting it and considering it ugly.

Even Lipps's theory of positive *Einfühlung* can be difficult to define clearly, as he modified it several times. In his 1903 article "Empathy, Inner Imitation, and Sense-feelings" Lipps first proposed a theory of *Einfühlung* as "inner imitation," and in his *Guide to Psychology* he indicated that the manifestations of life were based in a drive toward imitation. But he rejected his own terminology and understanding later that year in *Aesthetics: The Psychology of Beauty and Art [Ästhetik: Psychologie des Schönen und der Kunst*]: "I described *Einfühlung* also with the name 'inner imitation.' This naming we must … completely abandon." Some

⁵²² Gustav Jahoda, "Theodor Lipps and the Shift from 'Sympathy' to 'Empathy,'" *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 41, no. 2 (Spring 2005): 158.

⁵²³ Lipps, "Einfühlung, innere Nachahmung, und Organempfindungen" and *Leitfaden der Psychologie*: "Mein Verständnis der Lebensäußerungen hat seinen Grund im instinktiven Triebe der Nachahmung," 193.

⁵²⁴ In Jahoda, "Theodor Lipps ,"155. Originally in Lipps, Ästhetik, vol.1, 127. See also Ästhetik, vol. 2, 414, where Lipps affirms that while the idea of inner imitation is "ultimately justified," the term is misleading.

elements of Lipps's theory of *Einfühlung* remained constant, however, and we will focus on these below. Even if he abandoned the rubric of imitation Lipps certainly retained the general notion of identification; moreover he also consistently associated the positive experience of *Einfühlung* with beauty, harmony, freedom, and pleasure, and negative *Einfühlung* with dissonance, hatred, conflict, and ugliness.

Concepts of *Einfühlung* had a rich history in German thought even before Lipps adapted the idea for his theory of aesthetic response. The noun *Einfühlung*, which literally means "infeeling" and refers to an instinctive form of psychological projection, a "feeling oneself into," was coined by Robert Vischer⁵²⁶ in his 1873 dissertation *On the Optical Sense of Form: A Contribution to Aesthetics*. Vischer's development of the concept of empathy had been influenced in part by Karl Albert Scherner's 1861 text *The Life of the Dream*, ⁵²⁸ and in turn Vischer's own discussion subsequently influenced Johannes Volkelt's notion of empathy in Volkelt's 1876 text *The Symbol Concept in the Newest Aesthetics*. Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams* reflects the very deep impression that Volkelt's 1875 text *Dream-Phantasy*, ⁵³⁰ and

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⁵²⁵ Johann Gottfried von Herder, for example, used the neologism "sich einfühlen" in the eighteenth century.

⁵²⁶ Vischer (1847–1933) was a German philosophy student whose work in aesthetics influenced the development of the discipline of art history, and specifically the approach of Vienna School art historians such as Riegl. Vischer died in Vienna.

⁵²⁷ Über das optische Formgefühl. Ein Beitrag zur Ästhetik.

⁵²⁸ Das Leben des Traums. Like Lipps, Scherner (1825–1889) was a German philosopher and psychologist.

Der Symbol-Begriff in der neuesten Ästhetik. Johannes Volkelt (1848–1930), educated in Jena, Leipzig, and Vienna, became professor of philosophy and pedagogy at Leipzig University in 1894.

⁵³⁰ Die Traumphantasie.

through it Scherner's *Life of Dreams*, made on the Viennese psychoanalyst; Freud cites both thinkers throughout his text. ⁵³¹

Lipps himself was also a major influence on Freud – as anyone familiar with Freud's early writings knows, he cited Lipps repeatedly and even bemoaned the degree to which his own work in psychoanalysis simply re-stated Lipps's earlier insights. Freud first cites Lipps's 1897 conference paper about the unconscious in *The Interpretation of Dreams*; he then acknowledges at the outset of *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* that Lipps's 1898 book *Komik und Humor* inspired Freud to write his own study of humour. Moreover, Freud takes the important economical notion of "psychical damming-up" (cathexis) directly from *Komik und Humor*. S33

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Perhaps either directly or indirectly following Lipps's psychological theory, Kokoschka seemed to believe that we find ugly what we hate. His innovation was to use this insight to deliberately portray himself as hated and ugly. Indeed, hostile intersubjective processes that provoke a reaction of negative empathy are central to Kokoschka's early work. Passed over in the literature on modern Viennese art, Lipps's concept of negative empathy provides a compelling

Freud writes that Scherner's attempt to explain dreams is "the most original and most comprehensive," but also that the reader will "gladly resort to the clearer and conciser presentation of Scherner's theories made by the philosopher Volkelt." "The Interpretation of Dreams," in *The Major Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. Robert Maynard Hutchins (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1952), 172.

For example in a letter written to Fliess on 31 August 1898, *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess 1887–1904*, ed. and trans. J.M. Masson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), 325.

⁵³³ Freud, Standard Edition XIII, 118.

basis from which to examine and interpret strategies of ugliness – in Kokoschka's early selfportraiture specifically, and in Viennese modernity more generally as well.

I argue that Kokoschka deliberately baited the public with arrogant, off-putting behaviour, represented himself with abrasive, alienating techniques, and produced and reproduced a discourse that represented him as repeatedly arousing hostility through radical artistic originality. "I'm ugly because you hate me" Kokoschka's early self-portraits proclaim, linking what might otherwise be two discrete phenomena. The ugly self-portraits do not aim to give an accurate sense of Kokoschka's physical appearance as a young man; instead they offer opportunities to learn more about how and why Kokoschka used corporeal ugliness very effectively to represent hostile feelings the public purportedly had toward him, and he toward them. This success of this approach, I argue, helped Kokoschka to create a memorable artistic identity and reputation.

A clue to how this unfolded may be found in Lipps's own description of negative empathy in action:

I see ... a person looking, not proudly but arrogantly. I experience within myself the arrogance contained in that look. It is not just that I imagine this inner conduct or inner condition; it is not just that I know about it; rather, it obtrudes, forces itself into my experience. But within myself I work against it. My inner being objects; I feel in the arrogant look a life-denial or life-inhibition affecting me, a denial of my personality.

Because of that, and only because of that, the arrogance can hurt me. My feeling of discomfort rests on that negative [empathy]. 534

Not only in self-portraits produced around 1909–10, but also in his autobiography – another kind of self-portrait – Kokoschka attempted to create a narrative of alienation in which he and his art occupy precisely the position of the negative, arrogant, ugly person whom Lipps had so memorably described. More than merely a stance of youthful rebellion, Kokoschka's embodiment of the theory of negative empathy clearly inspired him to be productive; he used hatred and ugliness to create new, confrontational art. Before finally turning to Kokoschka's works, however, we must briefly situate Lipps's *Einfühlung* theory in relation to broader philosophical and psychological questions.

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Contemporary psychologists and neuroscientists are well aware of the significant cross-fertilization between early psychoanalytic ideas and *Einfühlung* theory. ⁵³⁵ But this awareness does not seem to have extended substantially to art theory yet. ⁵³⁶ Given that psychoanalytic

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Lipps in Jahoda, "Theodor Lipps," 158. The original reads: "Ich sehe ... einen Menschen nicht stolz, sondern hochmütig blicken. Auch den in diesem Blick liegenden Hochmut erlebe ich in mir, Ich stelle mir dies innere Verhalten oder diese innere Zuständlichkeit nicht nur vor; ich weiss nicht nur davon; sondern sir drängt sich mir auf, drängt sich in mein Erleben ein. Aber ich arbeite innerlich dagegen. Mein inneres Wesen widersetzt sich; ich fühle in dem hochmütigen Blick eine eigene innere Lebensnegation oder Lebenshemmung, eine Verneinung meiner Persönlichkeit. Darum und nur darum kann mich der Hochmut verletzen. Mein Gefühl der Unlust is begründet in dieser negativen Einfühlung." Lipps, Ästhetik, vol. 1, 139–40.

⁵³⁵ For more on this see 233.

⁵³⁶ Einfühlung theory does play an important role in architectural studies, however. Juliet Koss, whose work straddles art and architectural theory, has written extensively about empathy. See for example Koss, "Empathy and Abstraction at the Munich Artists' Theatre," in *The Built Surface, Volume Two: Architecture and the Pictorial*

approaches to art are quite common, and in light of the growing interest in ugliness, negativity, and intersubjective dynamics in art, the art historical neglect of *Einfühlung* theory – and specifically, of negative empathy – is unfortunate. It is interesting to note, though, that this disregard is consistent with the comparatively marginal status of negative *Einfühlung* in Lipps's own aesthetic theory, where empathy rather than negative empathy is the focal concept.

Just as love rather than hatred has been the focus of poetry and poetics, beauty rather than ugliness has dominated aesthetic discussion. In Lipps's 1903 Ästhetik, aesthetics is defined classically as "the science of the beautiful." Insofar as aesthetics was the science of the beautiful, and Einfühlung referred to a compulsion to imagine ourselves in the place of what we see, Lipps's focus on positive Einfühlung – purportedly a harmonious feeling of love, freedom, and confidence in the face of a beautiful person, object, or work of art – made sense. In such a context, ugliness and negative empathy threaten not only the aesthetic participant, but the optimism of Einfühlung theory itself.

According to Lipps, aesthetic experience is an "activity of the self" meant to be pleasurable or at least to produce a feeling of self-worth [Selbstwertgefühl]. He elaborates that although we value our own life force, this is not considered an aesthetic value. But when we encounter another's life force, or even their potential for it, not only do we value it – this

Arts from Romanticism to the Twenty-First Century, eds Christy Anderson and Karen Koehler (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 98–119; Koss, "On the Limits of Empathy," Art Bulletin 88, no. 1 (March 2006): 139–57.

Lipps in James H. Tufts, "Review of: *Aesthetik: Psychologie des Schönen und der Kunst*, by Theodor Lipps," *The Philosophical Review* 13, no. 6 (November 1904): 677. Lipps, *Ästhetik*, vol. 1: "Die Ästhetik ist die Wissenschaft vom Schönen; implicite auch vom Hässlichen," 1. The final chapter of the work treats ugliness, at less than ten pages of the total 600.

⁵³⁸ In Tufts, "Review," 679.

valorization is also "the essence of aesthetic feeling" and the essence of the feeling of empathy.⁵³⁹ Yet Lipps's description applies only to positive *Einfühlung*. He clarifies by differentiating between beauty and ugliness, arguing that "all enjoyment of beauty is an impression of the quality of life, actual or potential, which lies in an object; and all ugliness is in its ultimate nature, negation, defect of life, obstruction, pining away, destruction, death."540 Lipps argues that beauty represents the power of life, whereas ugliness represents the forces of death. Indeed as early as 1883 Lipps was describing death itself as the ultimate form of ugliness. 541 He claims that when we encounter ugliness, it "'obtrudes, forces itself" into our experience and we instinctively "'work against it" because our "'inner being objects." The young Kokoschka portrayed himself as this threatening, objectionable phenomenon, and in his self-portraits he also represented himself as defective or even dead. The uncanny effects of such "self-portraits as a dead man" are consistent with Lipps' account of the initial identification and subsequent repulsion of negative Einfühlung. Creating works of art that both attracted and repelled the viewer was an essential facet of Kokoschka's self-constructed persona as a hated, infamous, and ugly outsider.

Kokoschka probably did not encounter Lipps's ideas directly until after the publication of Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy* in 1908, but he was familiar with other thinkers who had

539 Ibid.

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁴¹ Theodor Lipps, *Grundtatsachen des Seelenlebens* [*The Basic Facts of Mental Life*] (Bonn: Max Cohen, 1883): "Nennen wir die absolute Gehemmtheit und Negation des Lebens Tod, so können wir kurz den Tod als höchsten Inhalt des Hässlichen bezeichnen," 691.

⁵⁴² Lipps in Jahoda, "Theodor Lipps," 158.

developed or were developing similar notions, including Schopenhauer and Freud. Although he did not discuss Lipps's theory of negative empathy explicitly, Freud did address issues of *Einfühlung* and ugliness in *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*. And like Lipps, Freud emphasizes the ways that we resist empathetic identification with the ugly and use humour as a form of defence. Although he does not always use the specific terms "ugliness" or "the ugly," nevertheless physical deformity, obesity, age, disability, and the exaggeration of all kinds of ostensibly undesirable physical characteristics underpin Freud's joke theory. In fact, ugliness is one of the most important factors Freud discusses in the production of laughter. Caricature, intimately related to the ugly, is one of the main themes in Freud's analysis of humour. For Freud the entire structure of humour depends not only on ugliness but also on *Einfühlung:* "we take the producing person's psychical state into consideration, put ourselves into it and try to understand it by comparing it with our own. It is these processes of empathy and comparison that result in the economy of expenditure which we discharge by laughing." Thus in addition to hatred, laughter is another way that we disavow empathetic identification with the ugly.

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Kokoschka himself alludes to a possible connection between physical deformity and *Einfühlung* in his autobiography, noting that one of his sitters was a hunchback with "an extraordinary capacity for empathy."⁵⁴⁴ But whereas Lipps believed that ugly art and hostile affects should be generally avoided, by contrast Kokoschka seems to have been attracted to precisely such

⁵⁴³ Freud, Standard Edition XIII, 186.

Kokoschka, *My Life*, 42. For the German original, "*Einfühlungsgabe*," see Kokoschka, *Mein Leben*, Vorwort und dokumentarische Mitarbeit von Remigius Netzer (Munich: Bruckmann, 1969), 83.

phenomena. In his autobiography Kokoschka consistently frames his artistic training and development in terms of dramatic feelings of alienation, hostility, and even horror. He notes that he did not attend the Vienna Fine Arts Academy but rather the School of Arts and Crafts [Kunstgewerbeschule] because – he claims – "[i]t never entered my head to go" to the Academy "and pass myself off as an artist in a velvet jacket and beret." Even at the Kunstgewerbeschule Kokoschka soon distinguished himself by his negativity. He apparently hated the "tedious instruction," and pointedly drew life models tiny in protest against the distance – in a large studio full of other students– between the artist and his model. As a result he was given what he refers to as a "solitary cell," his own small studio at the school. 546

Not only did Kokoschka disapprove of the local art schools, he apparently also eschewed local art and museums – claiming, for example, that he almost never visited the famed *Kunsthistorisches Museum* in Vienna. Fascinated instead by the ethnographic collection at the Natural History Museum, the young artist was drawn to the expression of pain he supposedly saw on the face of a tattooed Polynesian mask – a theme to which I shall return. In his autobiography the elderly Kokoschka immediately subverts this elective affinity, however, by insisting that actually he had no interest in imitating primitive art because, he declares: "I was not a savage." And not only did the young artist not imitate primitive art or appreciate the old masters in the *Kunsthistorisches* collection, he also claims not to have attended any of the exhibitions of the Vienna Secession.

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⁵⁴⁵ Kokoschka, *My Life*, 17.

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid., 19.

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid., 19–20.

Yet immediately after these attempts to convince the reader of his absolute originality and total lack of artistic influences or community, Kokoschka has to explain how and why he came to be included in Vienna's 1908 Kunstschau, an exhibition of national and international art timed to coincide with the Sixtieth Crown Jubilee celebrations for the ruler of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Emperor Franz Joseph. Kokoschka states that the artists "invited were chosen from among those who were still not fully understood or appreciated in their own countries," and notes appreciatively that he was not only invited to participate but even given a small room to himself. S48 Warming up to his topic, a reminiscence of youthful precocity over sixty years old at the time of the autobiography's publication in 1971, Kokoschka describes his deliberately defiant performance as an avant-garde antagonist at the Kunstschau, insisting that:

When you strive to create what people are not yet prepared to understand, you are bound to suffer the consequences. Their incomprehension turns to laughter, and they feel superior because your effort to solicit their attention has failed. I feared this would be my fate. So, when Klimt came to my room, flanked by [Ferdinand] Hodler in top hat, frock-coat and sash, with the other gentlemen of the jury following behind, I refused to let them in. 'I won't open the door,' I said, 'until you promise to show my work to the public, whatever the jury thinks.' They were furious; but Klimt, though a little taken aback, did not stay to bandy words with me. Goodnaturedly, he motioned the group on,

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid., 20.

and said only: 'Let the fellow get himself torn apart by the press, if that's what he wants.'549

Kokoschka was not, in fact, torn apart by the press that year.

This image of the young artist as a provocateur who inspired the fury of the Viennese has been circulated tirelessly, however. It behoves us to remember, though, that the evidence that gave rise to this artistic reputation was related largely by the artist himself. That Kokoschka's artistic identity developed from negative perceptions and affects is more than likely, but what might we learn by calling into question his oft-repeated narrative of exclusion? That is: what if that negativity originated largely in the artist himself and he projected it onto others, creating ugly images of himself – the hated artist – to correspond to that projection? What might we learn about the construction and performance of artistic identity in Vienna circa 1908–10, after which Kokoschka left Vienna for Berlin? Gemma Blackshaw has noted that attacking one's competitors was a central feature of early-twentieth-century Viennese culture, "with character defamation practically constituting its own literary genre." 550 She argues that in such a hostile atmosphere, "[f]riendships had to be strategised and alliances carefully forged in order to grasp and maintain a position within the city."551 As we shall see, Kokoschka managed to forge very strategic friendships and alliances while simultaneously portraying himself as loathed.

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid., 21. For more information on Kokoschka at the Kunstschau see Vergo's *Art in Vienna*, and for an in-depth analysis of Kokoschka's play see Peter Vergo and Yvonne Modlin, "Murderer Hope of Women: Expressionist Drama and Myth," in *Oskar Kokoschka* 1886–1890, ed. Richard Calvocoressi (London: Tate Gallery, 1986), 20–31.

⁵⁵⁰ Blackshaw, "The Jewish Christ," 35–6.

⁵⁵¹ Ibid., 36.

At the 1908 Kunstschau the young artist displayed a tapestry cartoon entitled *The Bearers of Dreams* [*Die Traumtragenden*] (Fig. 44). This work related to lithographs Kokoschka had created at the Wiener Werkstätte for his art book *The Dreaming Youths* [*Die träumenden Knaben*], which explores adolescent anxiety, lust, and violence – all written in the first person and based loosely on Kokoschka's actual relationship with a young woman named Lilith Lang. Although in his autobiography Kokoschka insists that he was impervious to the influence of other artists at this time, his art teacher Otto Czeschka recalls that when Kokoschka entered Czeschka's class he immediately started to emulate another student, Rudolf Kalvach's *Indian Fairy Tale* [*Indisches Märchen*], for example (Fig. 45). Another influence on the skeletal *Dreaming Youths* seems to have been the attenuated figures of Belgian sculptor George Minne (Figs. 46–8), despite Kokoschka's claims not to have seen Minne's art until the 1909 Kunstschau the following year.

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⁵⁵² Lang was a fellow student at the Kunstgewerbeschule, and Erwin Lang's younger sister.

⁵⁵³ Werkner, Austrian Expressionism, 66.

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid. Cf. Kokoschka, *My Life*, 21. Note that Minne's *Fountain*, a circle of five identical figures of the *Kneeling Youth*, was first exhibited in Vienna at the eighth Secession Exhibition, 3 November – 27 December, 1900.

An additional example of Kokoschka's unreliability is his claim that *Self-Portrait as a Warrior* was shown at the 1908 Kunstschau, when in fact it was exhibited at the Kunstschau of 1909. Kokoschka explains that both the work and the artist were despised:

As far as the Viennese public was concerned, my room became 'the Chamber of Horrors', and my work a laughing-stock. Every day I found bits of chocolate and other debris in the mouth of my bust, probably put there by girls as a further expression of the scorn they felt for the Oberwildling, the 'Chief Savage,' as I had been dubbed by the critic Ludwig Hevesi. 556

The portrait is certainly ugly according to Lipps's comment that the ugly is that which is defective, destructive, or evokes death. Facial features are mangled as if by major trauma, and the whole visage looks as if it is in the process of collapsing after putrefaction. The nose is crushed and irregular, the bright blue eyes are asymmetrical, look blind, and a flattened, floppy eyelid covers the left eye. The entire surface of the face is ridged with concave and convex lines resembling scars. Kokoschka's left ear seems cauliflowered, and examined closely from certain angles his lumpy neck can provoke visceral horror.

The Polynesian mask at Vienna's Museum of Natural History may have inspired Kokoschka, but the self-portrait he produced under that influence looks like the decomposing corpse of a bruised and battered boxer. This is appropriate perhaps for a work entitled *Self*-

This discrepancy has been discussed repeatedly, although some ambiguity remains. For discussions that cite the work's correct date as 1909 see for example Frank Whitford, *Oskar Kokoschka* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1986), 30–4; Cernuschi, *Re/Casting Kokoschka: Ethics and Aesthetics*, 28, and n. 28, 198; Museum of Fine Arts Boston, Oskar Kokoschka, *Self-Portrait as a Warrior*, http://www.mfa.org/collections/object/self-portrait-as-a-warrior-64963.

⁵⁵⁶ Kokoschka, My Life, 21.

Portrait as a Warrior – but who was Kokoschka fighting, and why? Kokoschka's description of his encounter with the Polynesian mask evokes Lipps's account of the basic structures of empathy: "Seeing a Polynesian mask with its incised tattooing, I understood at once, because I could feel my own facial nerves reacting to cold and hunger in the same way."557 Kokoschka notes that his understanding of the mask was empathetic, stemming from his own similar physiological reactions to cold and hunger. Nevertheless, Kokoschka's sentiment is ambiguous. As we have seen, he emphasizes that he was sympathetic to primitive art but did not imitate it. But it is not clear to me whether Kokoschka means to indicate that he was actually cold and hungry while he was looking at the mask itself, or that the mask triggered an embodied memory of his previous experiences of cold and hunger – or indeed if the mask was in fact intended to represent cold and hunger at all. There is, moreover, an oscillation between imitation and rejection in Kokoschka's account, a fundamental ambivalence around identification and disavowal. This ambivalence is an indication of how seriously he took not only his own artistic persona, but also the public's perception of it. Kokoschka's account of his encounter with the Polynesian mask, and the affinity he felt with it, also clearly highlights the physical and emotional intersubjectivity upon which – both he and Lipps argue – all aesthetic experience is based.

I have suggested that in his autobiography Kokoschka instigates a number of falsehoods, related insofar as they all pertain to the artist's radical originality – his ostensible lack of artistic influences – and his tendency to provoke hatred. But I have pointed mostly to chronological errors that might be simple mistakes. There is a more significant fiction, however, that is

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid., 20.

repeated frequently and has often remained unquestioned in discussions of Kokoschka's life and work. At the 1909 Kunstschau, as well as displaying *Self-Portrait as a Warrior* and several other painted and graphic works, Kokoschka also staged his play *Murderer the Women's Hope* [*Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen*], frequently referred to now as the first expressionist drama. Below I will first recount certain salient details of the artist's view of his play, and then turn to what I believe is Kokoschka's significant distortion regarding the actual reception of *Murderer*. Not surprisingly Kokoschka makes himself and his play out to be far more controversial – and hated – than was actually the case.

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In his autobiography Kokoschka offers the reader a description of not only *Murderer* itself but also the public reaction to its premiere. His description is quite titillating, involving multiple violent disputes between actors, audience members, and nearby soldiers – and culminating in a fracas serious enough to draw the Viennese police to the scene. Kokoschka describes the content of his play, its *mise-en-scène*, reception, and subsequent place in the history of expressionist theatre for several pages, and it is clear he believes the dramatic work has an important place in his *oeuvre*. Equally clear, I would argue, is how important it is to Kokoschka to frame the entire episode in terms of a fraught relationship between artist and public. We have seen that Lipps described as ugly that arrogant person whose look we cannot successfully empathize ourselves into, instead feeling "inwardly unfree, inhibited, subjected to a

constraint," which produces a reaction of hatred.⁵⁵⁸ Kokoschka's alienating arrogance produced an emotional ugliness akin to the ugliness Lipps describes, in which pleasurable feelings are indicators of aesthetic quality or at least beauty and people reject artworks and artists that make no attempt to please them.

Both highly personal and highly allegorical, *Murderer the Women's Hope* reflects

Kokoschka's view that the sexes are fundamentally antagonistic. Like Weininger, Kokoschka refers in his play not to specific men and women but rather to archetypes of "Man" and "Woman." Textually *Murderer* is very short, with a script of only a few pages. Set at night in a landscape dominated by a foreboding tower, the protagonists are surrounded by a chorus of likewise unnamed "Men" and "Women." Like *The Dreaming Youths* the play is obviously somewhat biographical, however symbolically represented, and it repeats specific motifs taken from Kokoschka's earlier text – for example references to the "red fish" that in *The Dreaming Youths* the artist's first-person narrator stabs to death with a triple-bladed knife, then rends in two with his hands. The action of the play revolves around the interplay of sexualized violence between Man and Woman: Man orders other men to brand Woman with a hot iron, Woman stabs Man with a knife, and Man is then imprisoned in a cage within a tower by three masked men. Finally Man breaks out of his literal and metaphorical cage and kills everyone "like mosquitoes, leaving red behind." 559 In the distance, cocks crow.

⁵⁵⁸ Lipps in Wilhelm Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, trans. Michael Bullock (New York: International Universities Press, Inc., 1963), 7.

Oskar Kokoschka, *Murderer the Women's Hope*, in Henry I. Schvey, *Oskar Kokoschka: The Painter as Playwright* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1982), 140.

Referring to a "savage review in the *Neue Freie Presse*" printed on 5 July 1909, the day after the first performance, Kokoschka describes the context of this performance and the reaction it supposedly elicited from the audience:

A flimsy barrier separated the stage from the rows of seats, which were full to bursting-point. The garden was too small to hold the throng of society, intellectuals, and the merely curious, all of whom had come to see what outrage this bull in a china shop was about to commit. The audience maintained a chorus of catcalls throughout the play, but my actors were not deterred. Eventually, as all foot-stamping, scuffling and chair-brandishing increased in pitch, the soldiers stormed in and a free-for-all followed between them and the audience. In the tumult the police had to be sent for. Fortunately for me, Adolf Loos and his friend, the satirical writer Karl Kraus, knew the chief of police, Dr Schober, and arranged for him to come with a squad of men and restore order. Only the personal intervention of this senior official saved me from being arrested for a breach of peace. 560

But the review Kokoschka refers to not only is *not* savagely critical – as the artist claims– it also mentions nothing about a significant squabble, much less the full-scale riot that Kokoschka implies took place. In fact, although the review does acknowledge that Kokoschka had incited some public debate, it also claims that the audience "accepted this certainly jovially-intentioned drama" [*gewiß heiter gemeinte Drama*] with "understanding cheerfulness" [*verständnisvoller Fröhlichkeit*]. So violence is mentioned – certainly nothing to corroborate Kokoschka's claim

⁵⁶⁰ Kokoschka, *My Life*, 29.

⁵⁶¹ Neue Freie Presse, 5 July 1909, 8.

that some of the actors "emerged bloodied and bruised" – nor is there any mention of the police. ⁵⁶²

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Scholars have tended to repeat Kokoschka's story concerning *Murderer* as if it were the proverbial naked truth, although certainly some have commented on the "blatant degree of revisionism" in Kokoschka's autobiography. For the most part, however, Kokoschka's negative self-representation – as a hated outsider, a loner whose artistic provocations were brilliant but misunderstood and under-appreciated – is reproduced in the literature on Viennese modernism. In *Avant Garde Theatre*, *1892–1992*, Christopher Innes claims regarding *Murderer* that: as "a gesture of defiance the performance was undoubtedly successful. It caused a riot, order had to be restored by force and the reviews were vicious, calling Kokoschka a 'criminal,' a 'degenerate,' a 'corrupter of youth.'" Interestingly, however, although the citation Innes offers for this claim refers the reader to the rather positive *Neue Freie Presse* review described above, the words are actually taken verbatim from Kokoschka's own autobiography. S65

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⁵⁶² Kokoschka, My Life, 29.

⁵⁶³ Cernuschi, *Re/Casting Kokoschka*, 118. Werkner also refers to "the distortions so seductively offered by hindsight (one thinks of Kokoschka's Autobiography)," *Austrian Expressionism*, 3. Schvey, *Oskar Kokoschka*, 31, among others, takes Kokoschka at his word.

⁵⁶⁴ Christopher Innes, *Avant Garde Theatre* (London: Routledge, 1993), 55.

⁵⁶⁵ Innes, *Avant Garde Theatre*, n. 36, 237. In his autobiography Kokoschka notes that after the performance of his play he was "was called a 'degenerate artist,' 'bourgeois-baiter' (Bürgerschreck), 'corrupter of youth,' and 'common criminal' by the press," *My Life*, 31.

I would argue, moreover, that Kokoschka's self-creation as an ugly, hated outsider has also helped to determine his legacy as an artistic "genius" – and was meant to. If according to empathy theory people love what pleases them, and what pleases them is beauty, then the strategic use of pictorial ugliness – as that which is unpleasing – signalled vanguard values in the arts. While Kokoschka's strategies of ugliness might indeed have struck some conservative viewers as degenerate, others championed his work as visually displeasing but also uniquely truthful – as though the two phenomena were connected. In *Wittgenstein's Vienna* Janik and Toulmin invoke this rhetoric, referring to Kokoschka as a "controversial and self-taught painter" and emphasizing his "independence and genius." This is inaccurate insofar as Kokoschka was neither self-taught nor even particularly independent: he attended the School of Arts and Crafts, made decorative art for the famous Wiener Werkstätte, and curried favour with a variety of artists, historians, and critics including Klimt and, later, Loos and Kraus.

In fact Gerstl is probably a better example of an independent and largely self-taught artist. More than a true outsider, Kokoschka seems to have been a canny self-promoter who simultaneously fostered notoriety and nepotism with those in a position to help him. That Kokoschka's reputation as a "controversial, independent, and self-taught genius" is more tenacious than Gerstl's no doubt mostly results from the embarrassment of biographical riches concerning the former artist and the paucity of documents pertaining to the latter.

Nevertheless, the fact that Kokoschka's art is also more public, more confrontational, and more explicitly and thematically "ugly" than Gerstl's may have also contributed to Kokoschka's greater reputation for provocation.

⁵⁶⁶ Janik and Toulmin, Wittgenstein's Vienna, 101.

Kokoschka certainly caused some real contemporaneous hostility with his strategic use of ugliness and negative empathy, but he especially pointed the historical discourse in this direction. For example, in an exhibition catalogue revealingly titled The Naked Truth: Klimt, Schiele, Kokoschka, and Other Scandals, the authors – describing Kokoschka's play Murderer – assert that "from the start, both the text of the play and Kokoschka's own illustrations to it proved extremely controversial."⁵⁶⁷ Peter Vergo and Yvonne Modlin have questioned this, however, noting that there is no record in the newspapers of any riot after the performance of Murderer. Citing their article, Jane Kallir claims that the desire to paint everything as a scandal was actually a post-War impulse on Kokoschka's part. Kallir argues that "had such a riot actually taken place in 1909, it would have been emotionally devastating; after World War I, the story was proof positive of the play's artistic merit."568 In contrast to Kallir I suggest that constructing a negative reputation became absolutely crucial to Kokoschka's artistic practice even before 1909, and intentional visual ugliness was a major facet of this practice of negativity. Indeed nearly all of Kokoschka's representational strategies at this time seem to be inextricably intertwined with fear or hatred.

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Describing the costume design for *Murderer* in his autobiography Kokoschka writes:

I dressed them in makeshift costumes of rags and scraps of cloth and painted their faces and bodies, where exposed. In this, I had been helped by my visits to the ethnographical

⁵⁶⁷ Tobias G. Natter and Max Hollein, eds, *The Naked Truth: Klimt, Schiele, Kokoschka and Other Scandals* (New York: Prestel, 2005), 150 (catalogue entry by Berud Apke).

⁵⁶⁸ Kallir, Schoenberg's Vienna, 78.

museum. There I had learned how primitive peoples, presumably as a reaction to their fear of death, had decorated the skulls of the dead with facial features, with the play of expressions, the lines of laughter and anger, restoring to them the appearance of life. In a similar way I decorated the actors' arms and legs with nerve lines, muscles and tendons, just as they can be seen in my old drawings. ⁵⁶⁹

The artist's illustrations to accompany the play, in which he pictures himself as the male protagonist, do not seem constructed to show the appearance of life but rather sickness and death (Figs. 49–52). Their animated linearity and the exposed nerve lines, muscles, and tendons that Kokoschka mentions evoke the medical imagery that interested him at the time. Moreover his first poster advertising the play was a large lithograph, in which he pictures himself as a flayed Jesus in a Pietà image (Fig. 53). One of the few artistic influences Kokoschka does acknowledge in his autobiography is Johann Amos Comenius, and Comenius's 1658 text *Orbis Sensualium Pictus* contains medical imagery strikingly similar to the tradition of *écorché* images that represent the human body flayed and in agony, such as Nicolas Beatrizet's *Anatomia* engraving from 1556 (Figs. 54–55). In turn these images resemble the wax anatomical models at the medical history museum in the University of Vienna, which Kokoschka probably visited (Fig. 56).

Kokoschka insists that the tickets for *Murderer* "were sold out a week before the performance," but only, he says, "thanks to the notoriety of my pictures." "As I had intended,"

⁵⁶⁹ Kokoschka, *My Life*, 28–9.

⁵⁷⁰ Kokoschka published several of these accompanying illustrations, in which he pictures himself as the male protagonist from the play – note also his signature, OK, branded onto the woman's leg.

the artist gloats, "it sent the Viennese into paroxysms of rage." Having just acknowledged that he had deliberately provoked a strong negative reaction in the public, Kokoschka nevertheless goes on: "I was angry at the insults I read every day in the Press where I saw myself treated as a criminal. So I had my head shaved in order to look the part, and in my drawings for the play, and in a second poster, I showed myself in this guise to the public." This image of himself, with a brutish, enlarged jaw, massive under-bite, leering grin, mismatched eyes, and a nipple placed like a giant hairy mole near the armpit, has become one of the most ugly and recognizable of Kokoschka's early self-portraits (Fig. 19). He returned to it not only in 1912, to advertise a lecture (Fig. 57), but again in a 1923 double self-portrait (Fig. 58) – claiming with now-familiar rhetoric that when the work, *The Painter and His Model II*, was exhibited in 1924 at the Vienna Secession it provoked "caricatures and malicious comments in the Viennese newspapers."

I have thus far considered several different falsehoods that Kokoschka perpetuated about himself, his art, and the Viennese art-going public. In his letter to Erwin Lang Kokoschka claimed that in Vienna, one wasted energy trying to "create friction" – but it seems clear that such friction was not so much a waste of energy as a resource for Kokoschka. He was celebrated as well as denigrated by the Viennese, and even though his works were often perceived as ugly, they were also at times commended for that very quality of ugliness. The strategic positioning of himself as an avant-garde antagonist, arousing the wrath of an ignorant public, was and is central to Kokoschka's legacy. And to the extent that a theory of negative

⁵⁷¹ Ibid., 28.

⁵⁷² Kokoschka in Natter and Hollein, *The Naked Truth*, 125.

empathy was at play in Kokoschka's art, his social provocations actually constituted an essential component of his art production.

I have examined the ways that Kokoschka's self-representational strategies in life and in art were related, focusing especially on those practices that depended on affects of hate or produced an effect of ugliness. By putting Kokoschka's early works, particularly his ugly self-portraits, in dialogue with the contemporaneous theory of negative *Einfühlung*, or negative empathy, we can not only broaden our perspectives on the artist himself but also deepen our understanding of the important imbrications between negativity and ugliness in Viennese aesthetic theory and practice at the end of the first decade of the twentieth century. In her 2008 dissertation, "The Aesthetics of Ugliness," Anna Elizabeth Baker notes that the *Deutsches Wörterbuch* defines hässlich, the German word for ugly, "in terms of inducing hostility (feindselig) and being unlovable. The etymology of hässlich is derived from the verb 'to hate,' hassen, implying that something (or someone) ugly also contains something inherently dislikeable." ⁵⁷³ In such a context the connection in the theory of negative empathy between ugliness and hatred seems almost unavoidable.

Causality admittedly remains somewhat ambiguous in this analysis of ugliness and negative empathy: does ugliness cause hatred, or does hating someone make us see them as ugly? The answer may well be both; although contemporaneous commentators like Lipps were unclear about the exact nature or trajectory of our intertwined experiences of hatred and ugliness, nevertheless it seems plausible to suggest that causality here might be more circular than linear. We not only hate something because we find it ugly, but also then hate it all the

⁵⁷³ Anna Elizabeth Baker, "The Aesthetics of Ugliness," (PhD Thesis, University of California, 2008), 5.

more because of this aesthetic repugnance, which then makes the despised object even uglier, and so on.

The ideas that ugliness causes displeasure and that experiencing the emotion of hatred might heighten our perception of ugliness both seem to be supported by contemporary neuroscience. In The Age of Insight: The Quest to Understand the Unconscious in Art, Mind and Brain From Vienna 1900 to the Present, neuroscientist Eric Kandel explains that although beauty and ugliness are both represented in the same part of the brain, we interpret pleasurable images as beautiful and displeasing images as ugly.⁵⁷⁴ Kandel was born in Vienna in 1929 and left with his family after the Anschluss in 1938. Discussions of beauty versus ugliness run throughout The Age of Insight, in chapters on unconscious emotions, conscious feelings, and their bodily expression, as well as biological responses to beauty and ugliness in Viennese art. Kandel also explains that emotion is actually a form of cognition, that we respond to threatening facial expressions with increased activity in the amygdala – a region of the brain that plays an important part in the experience and memory of negative emotions like hatred and fear – and that cues from the amygdala "boost the visual processing of emotionally charged stimuli, which presumably explains why such stimuli, as used by Klimt, Kokoschka, and Schiele sharpen our attention." Some might say that Kokoschka's facial expression in Self-Portrait as a Warrior represents fear, while others might demur that it provokes it; but it is important to note that such interpretations are not mutually exclusive. We are operating to some extent from a shared pool of emotions, and the boundaries between individuals are leaky. As we are

⁵⁷⁴ Eric Kandel, *The Age of Insight: The Quest to Understand the Unconscious in Art, Mind and Brain From Vienna 1900 to the Present* (New York: Random House, 2012), 373–4.

⁵⁷⁵ Ibid., 343, 346, 347.

dependent on other's perceptions of us for our own self-understanding, so too do feelings of anxiety, hatred, and ugliness all seem to be deeply intermeshed. Most interesting is the ambiguous nature of these interrelations between negativity and ugliness, and the fact that what one person finds displeasing, threatening, and ugly, another person may find pleasing, liberating, and beautiful. Indeed where Kokoschka used ugliness and negativity in order to bolster an aggressively antagonistic persona, Schiele had a different artistic agenda. Two of Schiele's more famous observations are first, that everything is living dead, and second, that everything is sacred – including so-called sexual profanity. Taken together these observations suggest the artist's dialectical perception, where everything contains its opposite.

Chapter 8

From Dionysian Ugliness to Radical Beauty: The Kindred Visions of Friedrich Nietzsche and Egon Schiele

People will be seized with terror at the sight of each of my works of "living" art.

- Egon Schiele

We negate and must negate because something in us wants to live and affirm.

- Friedrich Nietzsche, The Gay Science

I want to tear into myself so that I may create again ... I am so rich that I must give myself away.

- Egon Schiele

Schiele's reputation as a sex-obsessed artist precedes him. Indeed those less familiar with him – who know Schiele's life and work indirectly, through other artists or scholars – may think of Schiele as a primarily erotic or even pornographic artist. People who don't even know where Schiele was from know or when he was alive know that he was imprisoned for something dirty. Kokoschka infamously referred to Schiele as a "crook" and "pornographer," and his descriptions seem to have become almost as influential as they are inaccurate. Pornography is by its very nature compensatory and superficial; by contrast, those who look can find in Schiele's oeuvre a critical, even alienating, but ultimately very profound picture of human sexuality.

We have seen how dramatic, controversial – flamboyantly theatrical, even – early-twentieth-century Viennese discourse could be. And whether the topic of discussion was art, sexuality, Jewishness, or even modernity itself, questions of identity, truth, and self-

For a full account of the artist's twenty-four days of imprisonment see Alessandra Comini's excellent *Schiele in Prison* (Greenwich: New York Graphic Society, 1973). Comini also authored the definitive text *Egon Schiele's Portraits* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), which was reissued in 2014 by Sunstone Press, and edited the catalogue accompanying the exhibition *Egon Schiele: Portraits*, which ran at the Neue Galerie in New York from 9 October, 2014–20 April, 2015.

representation have consistently been at stake. Although we've seen real tragedy, we've also seen how "outsider" status could be as contrived as it was coveted in early-twentieth-century Vienna. Yet much of the rhetoric of angst and alienation employed to champion aesthetic — and ostensibly ethical — causes in early-twentieth-century Vienna still enjoys great currency in current commentary. Thus the divisive vicissitudes of modernist Viennese theory and practice persist, with specialist scholars and other interlocutors often positioning themselves antagonistically along the same basic fault lines now that were originally created quite self-consciously by the historical figures themselves.

In his efforts to divide and conquer Viennese modernism, Leon Botstein claims dismissively that Schiele "benefited from a reasonably stable pattern of external support and patronage throughout his short career, despite public scandals and imprisonment. *Schiele's notoriety stemmed less from the formal innovations of his art and more from its explicit imagery – its suspect moral character and susceptibility to being labeled as pornography.*" ⁵⁷⁷

It seems doubtful, however, that Botstein is genuinely interested in Schiele's art, especially since there are biographical blunders and art historical aporias in his essay ⁵⁷⁸ that suggest Botstein was not too familiar with Schiele's oeuvre when he wrote the essay. What Botstein does do is use Schiele as a kind of straw man for arguments about the superiority of the Kraus-Loos axis over the Mahler-Klimt axis. "Kraus, Otto Weininger, and Loos were certainly the key

⁵⁷⁷ Botstein, "Egon Schiele and Arnold Schönberg," 103, emphasis added.

For example Botstein claims that Schiele never felt compelled to leave Vienna, when in fact the young artist's antipathy toward the city – not to mention his travels out of it – are well documented; Botstein also refers to a "second phase" of Schiele's work from 1907–17, which suggests a fundamental misunderstanding because there is no significant oeuvre before then (the artist was born in 1890), 103–4.

figures," Botstein decrees in his description of the "divergent direction in fin-de-siècle Viennese modernism."

Botstein claims approvingly that for these heroic men the "essential objective was to strip art of a philosophical narcissism and to reaffirm art as a redemptive project. That project was ultimately ethical. Art needed to exert a purifying influence on a corrupt culture." And yet we've clearly seen how concerned these men were with themselves, and with self-fashioning and representation. Moreover I would question whether or not Weininger, Schönberg, Kraus, and Loos actually purified Viennese culture – more importantly, though, I would question what sort of purification of self and society is truly worth striving for.

Having relegated Schiele to the inferior style camp of Viennese modernism, Botstein goes on to explain that even Schiele's relentless focus on sexuality must be viewed as merely a matter of style. In Botstein's view, Schiele merely

toyed with, and manipulated, the well-known Viennese taste for pornography and eroticism. Depictions of genitalia, sexual poses, and masturbation are devoid of a critical dimension associated with ... Kraus and Loos. Schiele's pictures exploit the fact of mere shock. They play with and ultimately profit from the most superficial level of ambivalence and hypocrisy regarding sexuality and intimacy on the part of the audience. Narcissism and a coy attitude toward candor, rather than interior distress and angst (as in Kokoschka and Gerstl), emerge. 580

⁵⁷⁹ Ibid., 107.

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid., 110–11.

I will argue instead that we should understand Schiele's examination of human sexuality as a legitimate psycho-philosophical concern.

Botstein concludes his essay, written at the end of the twentieth century, with this hope and plea for a return to the ideas of this Kraus-Loos axis — the dissemination of which is clearly one of the main goals of his article. He suggests: "perhaps before the century draws to a close the critical possibilities inherent in the aesthetic modernism explored in fin-de-siècle Vienna will find an echo once again." For my part I hope Botstein's wish remains unfulfilled. Though I would never deny the interest of Krausian, Loosian, Schönbergian, Wittgensteinian, or even Weiningerian discourse, nor would I ever want to see the world structured according to their strictures.

Instead I would argue for precisely the critical, redemptive element Botstein repeatedly insists is lacking in this other, purportedly lesser strain of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century Viennese culture: the ostensibly coy, narcissistic, style-obsessed group of Mahler, Schnitzler, Klimt, Schiele, and others. Indeed by putting Egon Schiele's early self-portraits in dialogue with Nietzsche's philosophy, particularly his dynamic, ever-evolving philosophy of the Dionysian, I hope to review and recoup precisely those elements in Schiele's oeuvre that Botstein so trenchantly decries as lacking. Botstein states that for the Kraus-Loos axis – and thus for him as well – artists like Schiele "merely celebrated decoration and ornament and threw themselves into a race for fame and material success that deprived art of its necessary function as an instrument of philosophical and cultural critique." By contrast I argue that we

⁵⁸¹ Ibid., 117.

⁵⁸² Ibid., 106–7.

can discern in Schiele's early, ugly self-portraits precisely the tools for, and indeed evidence of, the kind of philosophical and cultural critique that Botstein apparently finds lacking. Even the basic skeleton of Schiele's life story nudges us toward cultural critique, while his artistic self-representational style suggests surprisingly sophisticated philosophical visions.

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Like other precocious artists, philosophers, and prolific self-portraitists, Egon Schiele favoured the metaphor of "giving birth to oneself." His true origins were almost as striking: Schiele's mother Marie met her future husband when she was a mere twelve-year-old, conventeducated little girl. Adolf Schiele was twenty-three and apparently vowed on the spot to make this child his wife. Five years later, in 1879, Marie married Adolf – only to be infected by the deadly syphilis her husband carried silently within him.

Less than three years after Adolf and Marie were married, Friedrich Nietzsche penned these words in the aphorism "On female chastity":

There is something quite amazing and monstrous about the education of upper-class women. What could be more paradoxical? All the world is agreed that they are to be brought up as ignorant as possible of erotic matters, and that one has to imbue their souls with a profound sense of shame in such matters ... they are supposed to remain ignorant even in their hearts; they are supposed to have neither eyes nor ears ... for this –

For a sustained investigation of Schiele's self-portraiture as an integral aspect of his overall project of self-creation, see Danielle Knafo's wonderful work *Egon Schiele: A Self in Creation: A Psychoanalytic Study of the Artist's Self-Portraits* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1993). Although in her book Knafo does not discuss Nietzsche, my Nietzschean reading here certainly complements Knafo's earlier interpretations in many respects.

their "evil"; and mere knowledge is considered evil. And then to be hurled, as by a gruesome lightning bolt, into reality and knowledge, by marriage ... In sum, one cannot be too kind about women. 584

The reality of the Schiele wedding night – gruesome or otherwise – may never be known, but Egon's brother-in-law later claimed that the adolescent Marie ran away from Adolf in terror. Her retrospective diary entry, however, reads like the polite reminiscence of a proper young lady. After the wedding began a series of pregnancies and miscarriages that while common enough at the time, could nevertheless have been very traumatic – Marie's body was dedicated to a dance of death masquerading as the cycle of life. By the time she bore Egon Marie had already given birth to no fewer than four babies, only one of whom would survive beyond childhood. Egon, the male heir, was brought into a world in which sexuality, disease, and death were not only inextricably intertwined but also oppressively omnipresent.

§

Initially allied with Klimt and the Secessionists, by 1910 Schiele was creating original works that focused on themes of sexuality and death, ugliness, masking, and sickness and transformation.

Although he had earlier favoured melancholic allegorical landscapes, in 1910 Schiele turned primarily to the human body as a vehicle to examine these themes, which share a kinship with

⁵⁸⁴ The Gay Science, §71.

⁵⁸⁵ Anton Peschka, Jr., *Die Wahrheit über Egon Schiele* (unpublished manuscript), 15; cited in Jane Kallir, *Egon Schiele: Life and Work*, 27. Lewis Crofts's novel *The Pornographer of Vienna* also begins with a lurid fictionalization of this purported event.

⁵⁸⁶ Christian M. Nebehay, ed., *Egon Schiele: 1890–1918: Leben, Briefe, Gedichte*, 12; cited and translated in Kallir, *Egon Schiele: Life and Work*, 38n7.

Nietzsche's philosophy – particularly his later concept of the Dionysian. While we have no reason to imagine Schiele as a reader of Nietzsche, Vienna was saturated both with Nietzsche's actual writings and with multiple and various Nietzscheanisms. Already by 1876, at a time when Nietzsche had few readers in Germany, university students in Vienna had formed a Nietzsche society known as the Pernerstorfer circle and written to the philosopher to express their admiration for his work. 587 Gustav Mahler originally intended to name his Third Symphony (completed in 1896) "Meine fröhliche Wissenschaft" in homage to Nietzsche's book Die fröhliche Wissenschaft [The Gay Science (1882/87)], and incorporated Nietzsche's "Night Song" from Thus Spoke Zarathustra (1883–85) into the fourth movement of that symphony. 588 Max Burckhard, who directed the Burgtheater – the national imperial theatre in Vienna – from 1890–98, apparently worshipped Nietzsche. 589 The Vienna Psychoanalytic Society discussed the philosopher frequently. 590 Adolf Loos named *Trotzdem* (1931), a collection of his writings from 1900–30, after Nietzsche; in Nietzsche's autobiography Ecce Homo (completed 1888) he uses the term "trotzdem" in a claim that can be translated as "everything decisive comes into being 'nevertheless' [trotzdem]." 591 Loos paraphrases this passage as the epigraph for his Trotzdem. Klimt's Secession-era work, for example his Beethoven frieze for the Vienna Secession's

⁵⁸⁷ William J. McGrath, *Dionysian Art and Populist Politics in Austria* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), 218.

⁵⁸⁸ Ibid., 226–7.

⁵⁸⁹ Clare A.P. Willsdon, "Klimt's Beethoven Frieze: Goethe, Tempelkunst and the Fulfilment of Wishes," *Art History* 19, no. 1 (March 1996): 45.

⁵⁹⁰ See, for one example: Friedman, ed., On Suicide: Discussions of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society, 1910.

⁵⁹¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols, and Other Writings*, eds Aaron Ridley and Judith Norman, trans. Judith Norman (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005),124.

Beethoven exhibition of 1902, shows the influence of a contemporaneously popular, romantic synthesis of the ideas of German Goethe, Wagner, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche. 592

Thus there were certainly myriad different manifestations of the Viennese Nietzsche cult. Nevertheless Nietzsche's first book *The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music* (1872/86) was particularly influential in artistic and literary circles, and his iconoclastic ideas regarding Classical culture, the Dionysian, music, poetry, the visual arts, the higher man, embodiment, and the unconscious were widely discussed. In an oft-quoted passage from *Gustav Klimt, The Beethoven Frieze: History, Function, and Meaning* (1980) author Marian Bisanz-Prakken states succinctly: "every educated person was familiar with Nietzsche's philosophy." Indeed, the ubiquity of Nietzschean influences in Schiele's Vienna can barely be overstated.

In such a cultural context it is not surprising that Schiele developed a visual vocabulary well suited to Nietzschean interpretation. Nietzsche's philosophical and psychological themes are admittedly prolific and protean: those most fruitful when put into dialogue with Schiele's oeuvre include his notions of embodiment and his Dionysian perspectives on beauty and ugliness, transformation and masking, health and sickness (including his "great health," which incorporates sickness) and self-creation. Schiele's art highlights the emergence, from pathology and paroxysm, of a philosophy of embodiment as the source of a Dionysian power, and his

⁵⁹² Willsdon, "Klimt's Beethoven Frieze," passim.

⁵⁹³ 52; cited in Willsdon, "Klimt's Beethoven Frieze," 50.

profoundly anti-classical presentation of the body, especially the naked body, continues to have radical⁵⁹⁴ implications for our understanding of aesthetics and existence today.

§

In *The Birth of Genius (Dead Mother II)* (Fig. 59), which Egon painted at the age of twenty-one, we are confronted by an emphatic declaration of self-creation. Here, Schiele pictures a living baby, an expression of shock consuming his round face, who struggles against his containment within his dead mother's torso. The dead mother's head slants horizontally in one direction at the top of the image while her long, bony fingers splay outward, in the opposite direction, at the bottom; this visually frames the baby, who pushes against his enclosure with eerily adult hands. One digit extends beyond the border. This image of a baby struggling for life, trapped within the womb of a dead mother, is in keeping with Egon's frequent complaints about Marie's cold, unloving nature – her deadness, essentially – and his descriptions of himself as a self-generated genius.

However, one can plainly see that, regardless of what Egon's conscious intentions were, the artist has given the dead mother the features he normally gives himself: his own face and hands as pictured in many contemporaneous self-portraits. This, arguably, bespeaks apprehension about the Schiele family stain and the terrifying possibility that he himself might also be a "dead mother." Paralyzed into deadly inertia by congenital sickness, then resentment, a "dead-mother Schiele" might never be able to breathe life into the potential creations

⁵⁹⁴ Meaning both "fundamental" and "extreme."

gestating within.⁵⁹⁵ Artistic anxieties regarding fecundity are common: Cecile Nebel asserts that "self-doubt, a sense of impotence, anguish, inadequacy, uncertainty have more often than not accompanied artistic creativity."⁵⁹⁶ The ambivalent visual treatment of sexuality, creation and death in *The Birth of Genius* exemplifies not only Schiele's own idiosyncratic turmoil but also his ability to refract the larger dramas of human existence through extreme representations of the human body.

As Sigmund Freud examined his own psyche during self-analysis, so Schiele looked at his own body as an object of and tool for experimentation. Nietzsche did both; he referred to the history of philosophy as that of a grand misunderstanding of the body, and philosophers as thwarted men who mistook their symptom for a system. Nietzsche's radical originality – his self-designations included philologist, philosopher, psychologist and anti-Christ – was due in no small part to the way in which he turned this misunderstanding of the body on its head by striving to articulate and legitimate precisely a philosophy of the body. In *The Gay Science*, a book written after convalescence from a lengthy and harrowing illness, Nietzsche declares his aim explicitly: "To what extent can truth endure incorporation? That is the question; that is the experiment." This evokes both gleaning the truths of the flesh and making truth something

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In *Egon Schiele: A Self in Creation*, psychoanalyst Knafo persuasively opines that "Schiele's fascination with sickness and death, especially as concerned babies, was most certainly related to the deaths of his [siblings]. During the years 1910 and 1911, Schiele became fixated on the fact that his mother's pregnant state had repeatedly led to dead babies ... Schiele's sense of himself included the notion that he too should be dead ... Repeatedly returning to the birth experience, Schiele confronted the survivor's dilemma. On the one hand, he is the special child, the 'genius' who makes it but, on the other hand, he is ridden with guilt and feels that he too must die," 95.

⁵⁹⁶Cecile Nebel, *The Dark Side of Creativity: Blocks, Unfinished Works and the Urge to Destroy* (Troy: The Whitston Publishing Company, 1988), 1.

⁵⁹⁷ Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, §110, "Origin of knowledge."

lived corporeally – truth is now of, and in, the body. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, conceived while Nietzsche was writing *The Gay Science*, he discusses the embodied self, which controls the ego self, as the "it" – the same "das Es," in German, that later, English readers would encounter in Freud's work as "the Id." That this "it" rules over our egos and minds should in fact inspire joy, because the body is the source of the soul and of our most valuable forms of knowing:

'I,' you say, and are proud of the word. But greater is that in which you do not have faith – your body and its great reason: that which does not say 'I,' but does 'I' ... Behind your thoughts and feelings, my brother, there stands a mighty ruler, an unknown sage – whose name is self. In your body he dwells; he is your body. There is more reason in your body than in your best wisdom ... I want to speak to the despisers of the body. It is their respect that begets their contempt. What is it that created respect and contempt and worth and will? The creative self created respect and contempt; it created pleasure and pain. The creative body created the spirit as a hand for its will. ⁵⁹⁸

Unsympathetic critics have lambasted Schiele for his adolescent portrayals of the self controlled and tortured by the pains and pleasures of the flesh; from a Nietzschean perspective, however, Schiele shows great wisdom. He, too, experimented to see how he could represent the experiences and knowledges of the body – truth incorporated, pain and pleasure, indivisible, creative and willed to power.

⁵⁹⁸ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, First Part, "On the Despisers of the Body." Cf. *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin Books), 146–7.

In Schiele's works around 1910–11, especially, the creative and destructive forces of this corporeal self – the "it" – are pictured provocatively in various stages of sexuality, sickness, and death. Schiele objectified and amputated sexualized bodies, both as life-giving vessels and as corpses, in Nude Pregnant Woman, Reclining (1910) (Fig. 60), Female Nude (1910), and Male Lower Torso (1910). In Nude Pregnant Woman, Reclining we already see him ruminating visually on the same thematic question that still clearly occupied him a year later in The Birth of Genius (Dead Mother II): what are the relations between sexuality, reproduction, and death – between creation and destruction? But Nude Pregnant Woman, Reclining is less allegorical, more gynecological. On 18 May 1910, the gynecologist Dr. Erwin von Graff wrote to the artist regarding a woman whom Schiele had apparently impregnated and subsequently deserted, leaving her with the doctor. 599 The doctor allowed Schiele to paint a portrait of him and granted the artist access to pregnant patients and babies for the same creative purpose. Even within an artistic corpus known for its tendency toward the macabre, the portraits Schiele created in this context are notably morbid. Schiele insisted that "everything is living dead," 600 and almost none of his other works capture this philosophy as vividly and aggressively as his pictures of rigid, discoloured babies and limp, forlorn pregnant women – who look more like cattle doomed for slaughter than powerful, creative vessels.

⁵⁹⁹ Christian M. Nebehay, ed., *Egon Schiele: 1890–1918: Leben, Briefe, Gedichte*, 102; cited in Stephanie Auer, "Egon Schiele's Image of Woman: Between Saint and Whore?," in *Egon Schiele: Self-Portraits and Portraits*, eds Agnes Husslein-Arco and Jane Kallir (Munich: Prestel, 2011), 49.

⁶⁰⁰ For example in his poem *Tannenwald* [*Fir Woods*], translated into English in *Egon Schiele*: *Letters and Poems* 1910–1912 from the Leopold Collection, eds. Elizabeth Leopold, Rudolf Leopold, and Sandra Tretter (Munich: Prestel, 2008), 37.

Unlike some of the other pregnant women Schiele portrayed, whose very misery denotes them as alive, the subject in *Nude Pregnant Woman, Reclining* could easily be a corpse. The work is unfinished, and Schiele has chosen to represent the pregnant woman's body with a dark rusty red resembling dried blood. Her face is like a smooth clay mask – a mask of death—with holes for eyes and a mouth and no nose. Arms and legs are spread akimbo, arms amputated at the wrist and legs at the knee. We see engorged nipples like ripe plums, a hugely swollen belly on a body that, otherwise, is typically Schielian in its emaciation, thick pubic hair and the tops of dark knee stockings, which remind us of the subject's origins in the profane real world.

Schiele's striking *Female Nude* (1910) (Fig. 61) embodies the sinister complicity between sex and death. This nude, unlike the pregnant one, seems individual, animated, even alluring: her eyes wink, her body seems to undulate toward us and her hair – a rose, blue, and mauve nimbus – is like a seductive halo. At first glance she looks like someone we might want to touch; at second glance we notice that she may in fact be a corpse, that asymmetrical eyelids hang loosely over empty eyes, that she is missing her arms and legs. The hand that seemed a moment ago to be caressing her torso suggestively now looks rigid and claw-like from rigor mortis. Thus whereas in *Nude Pregnant Woman, Reclining* Schiele pictures the sexual, pregnant woman as dead, in *Female Nude* he represents a dead woman as desirable. In Schiele's visions we see that death may be not only the result but even the object of the sexual drive.

Schiele shows dangerous sexuality in *Male Lower Torso* (Fig. 62) as well. Discolouring naked flesh, which we see only from the waist down, with a wounded palette of indigo, violet and magenta, Schiele paints legs splayed exaggeratedly outward, which emphasizes the

subject's thinness and creates a large 'V' shape. The focus on the male lower torso could have been meant to represent the full force of male sexuality, but instead Schiele's battered and emaciated flesh looks juvenile and flaccid. A profusion of long abdominal hair dwarfs a genital area that is small, limp and ill defined – like empty little flesh bags. Thus the sexual body is here threatened with pain and castration. While Schiele virtually collapses the genital organs in on themselves he by contrast takes care to represent the fibula, or calf bone, which he paints with a lighter rose wash that darkens into fuchsia and magenta at the base. This representational strategy makes the bone look like it is resting in a pool of blood. In an image that, compositionally, foregrounds the sexual organs Schiele shifts focus to the skeleton, which threatens to burst through translucent flesh across which bruises bloom like dark flowers.

Schiele pictures himself doomed by Eros and Thanatos together, coiled tightly like a snake about to execute a lethal strike in *Self-Portrait* (1911, Fig. 63), where he appears as a kind of neutered vampire; and in *Self-Portrait in Black Cloak, Masturbating* (1911, Fig. 64), he likewise looks unsexed and inhuman. In this image of onanism Schiele's hand completely covers his penis and with the position of his fingers makes the scrotal sack into a kind of labial fold. The paint application itself is streaky and scatological, and Schiele shows himself with an ominous blankness of mien.

§

One way of understanding Schiele's tendencies toward inconsistent application of paint, aggressively anti-classical cropping and composition, the representation of pervasive skin diseases, misshapen or missing genitalia and amputated limbs is as a strategic use of visual

ugliness. Schiele's specific approach to ugliness can best be understood alongside Nietzschean thought, especially Nietzsche's redemptive philosophy of Dionysian ugliness.

In his late notebooks Nietzsche opined that the "nihilist's eye idealizes in the direction of ugliness"⁶⁰¹ – but what does this mean? For Nietzsche there are two different types of nihilism, which in turn dictate two types of ugliness. He says: "Nihilism. It is *ambiguous*. A. Nihilism as a sign of increased power of the spirit: as *active* nihilism. B. Nihilism as decline and recession of the power of the spirit: as *passive* nihilism."⁶⁰² Each form of nihilism has a corresponding kind of ugliness based on either a lack or a surplus of power; whereas passive nihilism is decadent pessimism, and pessimistic ugliness signals a hatred of life itself, for Nietzsche active nihilism is Dionysian affirmation – and Dionysian ugliness is part of the highest affirmation of life and its powers.

In *Twilight of the Idols* (1889) Nietzsche noted that "the tragic artist is *not* a pessimist: it is precisely he who *affirms* all that is questionable and terrible in existence, he is *Dionysian*." Whereas Nietzsche has great contempt for those who would make of existence something small and ugly, the Dionysian person, and particularly the artist, overcomes the preoccupation with superficial beauty to instead pay homage to something more profound than pretty: the creative will itself. In this view ugliness, sickness, disaster and decay are all simply transitory phases of the total, timeless, protean power that is life itself. Nietzsche saw that the art of becoming often requires us to embrace ugliness, pain and destruction on the path to richer

⁶⁰¹ Nietzsche, The Will to Power, §21.

⁶⁰² Ibid., §22, emphasis in original.

⁶⁰³ Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, §6, "'Reason' in philosophy."

existence and greater truth. He declared both that truth was ugly and that art saves us from perishing of the ugly truth. Schiele shows us his ugly truths, but with artful style.

In the 1909 *Nude Self-Portrait with Ornamental Drapery* Schiele had subtly evinced a turn from conventional beauty toward the possibility of Dionysian ugliness. Using an attenuated vertical composition, metallic paint and a sultry gaze out at the viewer, Schiele seems to have constructed a typically pleasing image. He shrugs his shoulder out of the ornamental drapery, which shrouds his genitals. His thin moustache and eyebrows are precisely groomed. But ugliness is creeping in here: in the strange way Schiele purses his mouth, in the use of agitated, curved lines, in the dark plants encroaching upon the image from the frame.

In his *Seated Nude (Self-Portrait)* (Fig. 65) of the following year Schiele alights on the combination of Dionysian ugliness and radical beauty that characterizes his most impressive work. In this large, oil-on-canvas self-portrait Schiele's whole body, which is painted in greenish-yellow hues, seems as though it is being blown up and backward. He leans to one side; his raised arms cover his mouth and frame his face; his hair streams out behind him. But Schiele's eyes, which glow vivid red like his nipples, are wide open – he stares down this unseen force with a power of his own. There is a marvellously precise linearity to this and much of Schiele's other work, but what those deft lines are used to represent is often rather horrible. The artist's raised left arm in this painting, for example, shows extremely distorted edges and warps that in real life would signal a serious sickness. But Schiele's disturbed and disturbing imagery of sickness takes on a different cast – albeit perhaps a no less dramatic one – if we consider it alongside Nietzsche's notion of the artist's practice as an embodied Dionysianism.

Selfhood involves constant becoming and periodic sickness; practicing selfhood in art involves moments of monstrousness. Indeed Nietzsche suggests that it is "exceptional states that condition the artist – all of them profoundly related to and interlaced with morbid phenomena – so it seems impossible to be an artist and not to be sick." Schiele's black chalk and gouache paint *Nude Self-Portrait in Grey with Open Mouth* (1910, Fig. 66) shows the artist himself as the morbid phenomenon: his mouth slack and open, his limbs and penis amputated, with proliferating hair, jutting cheek and hip bones and blank eyes, Schiele's self-image here is dreadful and deathly. This is a cruel and ugly self-portrait of the artist as a dirty corpse.

Schiele's *Self-Portrait, Nude* (1910, Fig. 67) is similarly cadaverous and frightful. His flesh, rendered loosely in shades of brown, orange and red, appears to be decomposing, his arms are amputated and he is exceptionally skeletal, a mere sliver of a being. Paint drips from eyes of different colour and size and the nose is flat and unmodelled, halfway between a nose and an alarmingly empty pit. Thin and brittle bones jut out painfully. The neck is very unsightly: it is excessively long, has lumps near the base and shows exposed sinews and folds of flesh that furthermore suggest organic decay. But perhaps the most striking element of Schiele's self-presentation is the castration; he not only amputates his image right at the genitals, but also scoops out the entire pelvic area, revealing only a shadowed hollow and some spidery lines in a shaft-like area beneath his hips. While it would perhaps be understandable to

⁶⁰⁴ Nietzsche, The Will to Power, §811.

regard such relentlessly grisly imagery as an indication of Schiele's hateful nihilism, Nietzsche's portrait of the Dionysian being suggests we interpret otherwise. He insists:

He that is richest in the fullness of life, the Dionysian god and man, cannot only afford the sight of the terrible and questionable but even the terrible deed and any luxury of destruction, decomposition, and negation. In his case, what is evil, absurd, and ugly seems, as it were, permissible, owing to an excess of procreating, fertilizing energies that can still turn any desert into a lush farmland ... The desire for *destruction*, change, and becoming can be an overflowing energy that is pregnant with future. 605

Schiele's early nudes indubitably make deliberate use of visual strategies of ugliness; nevertheless both the cause and effect of such ugliness may look less unattractive if we frame our looking with radical, Nietzschean ideas about beauty and Dionysian ugliness.

Regarding the tragic Dionysian artist's embrace of precisely those aspects of life that offend weary nihilists, who hate existence itself, Nietzsche suggests that

It is a question of *strength* (of an individual or of a people), *whether* and *where* the judgment 'beautiful' is applied. The feeling of plenitude, of *damned-up strength* ... applies the judgment 'beautiful' even to things and conditions that the instinct of impotence could only find *hateful* and 'ugly' ... It is a sign of one's *feeling of power and well-being* how far one can acknowledge the terrifying and questionable character of things ... 'Love of beauty' can therefore be something other than the *ability* to *see* the beautiful, *create* the beautiful; it can be an expression of the very *inability* to do so. ⁶⁰⁶

⁶⁰⁵ Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, §370, "What is romanticism?," emphasis in original.

⁶⁰⁶ Nietzsche, The Will to Power, §852.

As a symptom of strength, love and life, Dionysian ugliness can therefore be considered a form of radical beauty, originary and potent. Art, likewise, is "an excess and overflow of blooming physicality into the world of images and desires" it represents our animality, and excites those impulses.

This understanding of the impulse toward and function of art actually sees pleasure in the ugly insofar as it "still communicates something of the artist's victorious energy which has become master of this ugliness." For Nietzsche such mastery can include "even a desire to harm *ourselves*, self-violation – and thus the feeling of power over ourselves." Moreover the transformation toward animality and artistic self-mastery is individual, and beauty looks different to everyone because everyone experiences it differently. Nietzsche concludes: "The beautiful exists just as little as does *the* good, or *the* true. In every case it is a question of the conditions of preservation of a certain type of man: thus the *herd man* will experience the value feeling of the beautiful in the presence of different things than will the *exceptional* or over man." The exceptional person pushes past conventional understandings to perceive ugliness and beauty in their own exceptional way.

§

Could Schiele's art, which actually aims at ugliness, also save us from its threatening grasp?

Yes, in a manner of speaking, because it is only by accepting the negativity of our ugly selves

⁶⁰⁷ Ibid., §802.

⁶⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁹ Ibid., §804.

that we can hope to transform into creatures of radical beauty. And as readers of Nietzsche or viewers of Schiele we are invited to do just this kind of self-overcoming. In *The Gay Science*, in the aphorism "In favor of criticism," Nietzsche tries to convince us of the value of negation, or criticism. He explains: "When we criticize something, this is no arbitrary and impersonal event; it is, at least very often, evidence of vital energies in us that are growing and shedding a skin. We negate and must negate because something in us wants to live and affirm – something that we perhaps do not know or see as yet. – This is said in favor of criticism." Ont only does Schiele picture precisely this kind of skin shedding in his art, he also articulated himself in poems and letters using similar imagery. Indeed Schiele could have been responding to Nietzsche rather than his patron Dr Oskar Reichel when he wrote:

I bring forth out of myself always more, always something further, an endlessly brighter shining, as far as love, which is everything, enriches me ... I want to tear into myself so that I may create again a new thing which I, in spite of myself, have perceived. My existence, my decay, transposed to enduring values, must sooner or later bring my strength to other strongly or more strongly developed beings ... I am so rich that I must give myself away. 611

By exposing – spotlighting – the ugliness, sickness, and negativity he saw both within himself and in those around him, Schiele was in fact practicing an art of revelation, catharsis and overcoming that is likewise central to Nietzsche's philosophy.

⁶¹⁰ Nietzsche, The Gay Science, §307.

⁶¹¹ In Comini, *Schiele in Prison*, 35.

According to Nietzsche, the power of these transforming and transformative relationships between the forces of destruction and creation, ugliness and beauty, negation and affirmation, the death of an old self and the birth of a new one, compels artists to mask themselves and their creative concepts. He explains that "every profound spirit needs a mask; more, around every profound spirit a mask is continually growing, thanks to the constantly false, namely *shallow*, interpretation of every word, every step, every sign of life that he gives." Thus for the sake of self-protection the tragic Dionysian artist "finds all forms of disguise necessary."

Schiele's *Sneering Woman* (1910, Fig. 68) masks herself, perhaps, as armament and protection in a gambit to wage war; as Nietzsche notes, free spirits are warriors. 614 Importantly, while the woman's breasts are exposed above her crossed and folded arms, they are not arranged "on display," nor does she look vulnerable. This sneering young woman seems almost to have torn off her shirt in a moment of mischievous antagonism; she gives the definite impression of belonging to a social class of proper ladies (indeed the subject is Schiele's younger sister Gerti) and of rejecting this legacy unashamed. The overriding sense of hostility is pictured most clearly in her facial expression – her scornful mask of disgust is simultaneously a frown, a sneer and an open-mouthed, tongue-lolling and abject objection to the world outside the frame.

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⁶¹² Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, "Part Two: The Free Spirit," §40.

⁶¹³ Ibid., "Part Nine: What is Noble?," §270.

⁶¹⁴ Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, "Expeditions of an Untimely Man," §38, "My conception of freedom."

This mask, then, both signifies her own criticism and protects her from others' as she transforms herself into something greater than negation. In this respect she is an embodiment of Nietzsche's "imperious and domineering" free spirit who, with a "not altogether innocent readiness ... to deceive ... and to dissemble ... enjoys the cunning and multiplicity of its masks ... for it is precisely through its protean arts that it is best concealed and protected!" Further forms of masking and transformation include the uneven washes of white paint applied to the surface of Gerti's skin, which give her a sickly appearance, the giant orange protuberance above her head, which distorts hair and hat, and the haunting hint of a shin bone Schiele leaves unpainted – another in his myriad reminders that life itself is merely a mask for death. With these tokens Schiele's sneering woman also opposes the misogyny of her culture, which tells her that her fundamental impulse is toward self-adornment – for although she masks herself, she does not thereby seek the "appearance and beauty" to which Nietzsche, too, in his less Dionysian moments, reduces women. 616

§

In *Self-Portrait Grimacing* (1910, Fig. 3) the paint itself, viscous and erratically applied, becomes a kind of disguise, as does the use of distorted and often unappealing details such as purple ribs and mismatched eyes and teeth. Schiele presents an unforgettable grimace, an alarmingly hideous mask of rejection that functions both as an attack against a society that viewed this art and artist as ugly and sick, and as an attack against himself insofar as he exaggerates just those

⁶¹⁵ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, "Part Seven: Our Virtues," §230.

⁶¹⁶ Cf., for example, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 'Part Seven: Our Virtues,' §232, where he says of woman: "her great art is the lie, her supreme concern is appearance and beauty."

qualities decried by the conservative viewer. The artist described his frustration with the moral majority in Nietzschean terms: "The 'many' are those who are dependent upon each other, — the people. — The 'few' are the direct leaders of the world because they introduce only that which is new and are therefore repugnant ... it is tactless to hold accountable a person with a free soul and to level 'moral' charges against him ... whatever desires to hinder ... development is possessed by evil intentions." ⁶¹⁷ At times Schiele felt constrained by such evil, as in 1910 when he wrote to his friend and future brother-in-law Anton Peschka: "I wish to leave Vienna, very soon. How ugly it is here. Everybody is envious ... and deceitful ... there is only shadow ... I have to see new things and learn about them ... [I] want to see light, the sun."

Self-Portrait with Hand to Cheek (1910, Fig. 69), which could almost form a diptych of dissatisfaction with Self-Portrait Grimacing, also captures this tension impressively. Schiele tugs at his face with palpable weariness and dismay; he looks infinitely disappointed but still takes care to offer the viewer interesting and attractive visual elements – like the spiky pink, purple and blue hair, or the flaming lines on ears, eyes and finger. Schiele was, as he himself reiterated frequently, able to "see beauty in everything in the world" paradoxically, the ugliness he saw and reflected in his art was part of this fundamental beauty.

Nietzsche observed that for the "eternal child," even "the most solemn concepts which have occasioned the most strife and suffering" become material for play and experimentation.

⁶¹⁷ Schiele, *Letters and Poems*, 127.

⁶¹⁸ Ibid., 13.

⁶¹⁹ Ibid., 127.

Remarkably, in his own writings Schiele likewise referred to himself as an "eternal child." 620 What mattered for both was not the fact of suffering but how it could be transformed — moreover both Nietzsche and Schiele approached this question with a stance of childlike experimentation and a focus on the body. Nietzsche explains that "every art, every philosophy may be viewed as a remedy and an aid in the service of growing and struggling life; they always presuppose suffering and sufferers." Thus for the Dionysian artist suffering, sickness, ugliness and death can all be transformed into art, and thereby redeemed — as a revelation of life itself. It is this embrace of the art of becoming, this eternal affirmation of eternal transformation, that produces what Nietzsche refers to as "the great health."

Nietzsche describes those who suffer from this "more audacious" kind of health as "premature births of an as yet unproven future." In "a world so overrich in what is beautiful, strange, questionable, terrible, and divine," such new beings can become "dangerously healthy, ever again healthy." This is "the *great health* – that one does not merely have but also acquires continually, and must acquire because one gives it up again and again, and must give it up." Nietzsche likens himself and other such premature births to Dionysus, as "Dionysus cut to pieces is a *promise* of life: it will be eternally reborn and return again from destruction." The vision of wellbeing that Schiele offers ultimately resembles Nietzsche's great health: his oeuvre

⁶²⁰ For example in his poem *Ich, ewiges Kind* [*I, Eternal Child*], translated into English in *I, Eternal Child*: *Paintings and Poems*, trans. Anselm Hollo (New York: Grove Press, 1985), 6, 8.

⁶²¹ Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, §370, "What is romanticism?"

⁶²² Ibid., §382, "The great health."

⁶²³ Nietzsche, The Will to Power, §1052.

enacts a process of becoming, often destructive, that concretizes the sacred in the representation of the profane.

Seen from this perspective, the stark image of a twisted body in one *Male Nude* (Fig. 70), the spastic contortions in the self-portrait in prison *For Art and for My Loved Ones I will gladly endure to the End!* (1912, Fig. 71) and the frenzied Dionysian dance of *Nude Self-Portrait, Grimacing* (1910, Fig. 7) all document stages in the eternal cycles of great health. Like Nietzsche, Schiele embodied an amor fati in his creative work that was absent from his life. The work itself becomes the highest affirmation of existence; along the way every tragedy may become joyous, every ugliness beautiful. For both Nietzsche and Schiele the "deification of the body" leads to a state in which "the most sensual functions are finally transfigured by a symbol-intoxication of the highest spirituality"; indeed, the "highest and most illustrious human joys" are those in which "existence celebrates its own transfiguration." The creation of a corporeal art is therefore a form of reverence toward the inherent divinity of the body. Through repeated acts of such reverence Schiele, the Dionysian artist, becomes himself: he becomes himself by creating himself anew, again and again.

Schiele's self-portrait *Kneeling Male Nude with Raised Hand (Self-Portrait)* (1910, Fig. 72) is an eloquent testament to such deification of the body, symbol intoxication, and continual self-creation. In an unusual frontal pose that is half defensive, half vulnerable Schiele paints himself with a palette that, although characteristically anti-naturalistic, is more rainbow-than wound-toned. His face, raised leg and hands are a feverish red, his torso is a gangrenous

⁶²⁴ Ibid., §1051.

yellow, pubic hair, a rich, deep blue and his face has green and blue accents that appear as an enigmatic eye-mask around closed eyes.

§

Schiele's fears of death, sexuality and disease, his ambivalence about beauty and ugliness, both his own and that of the world he was part of – all of these conflicts play out across the surface of the skin and are transformed in Schiele's radical nudes. Reinhard Steiner proposed that the nude self-portrait was, for Schiele, "the most radical form of self-expression not because the body is exposed but because the self is grasped entire." I would suggest that what we see in Schiele's naked self-portraits is the self not grasped but rather *created* – and through the body. Being is not penetrated; becoming is embraced, in the form of a Dionysian dance of joyful nihilism and self-creation.

Such embodied Dionysianism is the basis for the great health that results when we "become those we are – human beings who are new, unique, incomparable, who give themselves laws, who create themselves." Such health is often misidentified, according to Nietzsche, "because we ourselves keep growing, keep changing, we shed our old bark, we shed our skins every spring, we keep becoming younger, fuller of future, taller, stronger, we push our roots ever more powerfully into the depths – into evil – while at the same time we embrace the heavens every more lovingly, more broadly, imbibing their light ever more thirstily." Schiele

⁶²⁵ Reinhard Steiner, Egon Schiele: The Midnight Soul of the Artist (Cologne: Taschen, 2000), 12.

⁶²⁶ Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, §335, "Long live physics!," emphasis in original.

⁶²⁷ Ibid., §371, "We incomprehensible ones."

uses this same metaphor of thirst in his poem *A Self-Portrait*, in which he declares: "I am for me and those to whom the thirsty drunkenness for freedom presents everything with me, and for everyone as well, because everyone I love as well ... I am among the most noble ... I am human, I love death and love life." 628

In *Self-Portrait with Splayed Fingers* (1911, Fig. 73) we glimpse the promise of health and beauty contained in these acts of becoming and self-creation. The work shows Schiele looking back over his left shoulder, his right arm raised with his hand in a characteristically ambiguous and stylized gesture. Complex shades of forest green, rust, purplish-brown, indigo and light yellow are scattered so gently over the body that the figure itself appears almost gossamer. Schiele's look contains both haughtiness and vulnerability, and the white outlining he used so frequently appears here more than ever as a halo. The Dionysian god and man tears into himself so that he can recreate himself, eternally. Schiele here shows us one moment, in the blink of an eye, of his becoming: he looks back briefly at what has been destroyed in creation, before continuing his demiurgic odyssey.

For Nietzsche, writing was a way to metabolize the circumstances of his life; through writing he could plumb his own depths and transform sickness into health, doubt into faith.

Writing allowed him to move from the passive nihilism he abhorred to the active nihilism of the Dionysian artist. Schiele offers us similar experiments with his art and so, too, are their Dionysian visions related. Both succumbed to sickness at a tragically early age, but their oeuvres live on as a testament to the greatest health.

⁶²⁸ Schiele, Ein Selbstbild [A Self-Portrait], Letters and Poems, 53.

By moving past his own most superficial beauty and past the clever aesthetic formulas around him into vital, transformative zones of powerful, pulsating and chaotic ugliness Schiele created himself continually in the image of a far more radical beauty. By 1914 Schiele finally smiles at his reflection (Fig. 74). Even before that, though, during the years of great ugliness, what he was really sketching out was love – for himself, for the world, for life itself. He created his ugly art out of his love for life and its beauty. And in so doing he also created himself, as the Dionysian artist whose affirmative gaze sees the power and possibility of life in death, health in sickness, and beauty in ugliness.

Conclusion

The monster stands among us as the messenger of a more real humanism

— Walter Benjamin, "Karl Kraus"

The confessional dynamic of Viennese psychology, art, and culture correlated with a larger Germanic tradition of confession; indeed "Goethe, one of Freud's favorite German authors, famously referred to his own lifework as the 'fragment of a great confession.'" Micale relates this Germanic culture of confession to the medical history of hysteria, noting that "with Freud's early writing as well, autobiography ... makes a dramatic reappearance." This notion of a Germanic tradition of confession is another way to link figures discussed here, particularly the self-portraitists. In Vienna the compulsion to confess — an urge stained by its association with sin — formed the foundation of what have turned out to be enduring aesthetic, psychological, and philosophical investigations. Early-twentieth-century Viennese self-representational practices, particularly those that relied on strategies of ugliness and discourses of hate, seemed to have had a cathartic function for those who were or felt persecuted, for those struggling with a traumatic sense of identity, and for those lingering — as Freud framed it in his discussion of the local suicide epidemic — at unpleasant stages of development.

We know that catharsis – from the Greek verb καθαίρειν, or kathairein, which means "to purify, purge" – was originally a medical term. It became a theatrical term in the theory of tragic drama Aristotle presents in his *Poetics*; when it was transformed again, in Vienna, into a *new* medical practice, the underlying theoretical framework was itself inflected with dramatic

⁶²⁹ Micale, *Hysterical Men*, 257.

and aesthetic influences. Thus the concept of catharsis has an uncannily circular history, replete with suggestive connections between medicine and theatre, embodiment and performance.

Martha Nussbaum argues that Aristotle's theory of catharsis was actually a critical response to Plato. Nussbaum notes that Aristotle "does not employ the word in any technical sense," but rather as a "'getting-clear' or 'an improvement in understanding by the removal of some obstacles to understanding." Nussbaum explains further that Aristotle's new contribution was the idea that pity and fear produce a cognitive clearing-up or cleaning-up; this contradicts the stance taken by Plato, for whom – following Socrates – "emotions such as fear and pity are inherently messy and are the antithesis of cleanliness." 631 "Socrates points out that tragic poetry leads to fellow feeling (sumpaschontes) and 'nourishes the element of pity [to eleinon] in us, making it strong." But for Socrates and Plato the right response to such fellow feeling is "not enthusiasm, but disgust." 633 In this harsh and punitive schema the correct way to be is rational, autonomous, and unmoved by the suffering of others. To be irrational or uncertain, emotionally vulnerable, or empathetic (the "fellow feeling" of sumpaschontes) is in fact disgusting. Nussbaum concludes: "the idea of a catharsis produced, as in the Poetics, 'through pity and fear' would have been deeply repellent to Plato. Indeed, it would sound to his ears close to an oxymoron ... tantamount to saying 'cleaning by mud,' or 'clearing up through disgusting mess." By contrast, Nussbaum emphasizes, for Aristotle pity and fear "can

⁶³⁰ Freeman and Nussbaum in Freeman, Art's Emotions, 45.

⁶³¹ Freeman, Art's Emotions, 45.

⁶³² Nussbaum and Socrates in Nussbaum, "Tragedy and Self-sufficiency," 269.

⁶³³ Ibid.

be genuine sources of understanding, showing the spectator possibilities that are there for good people."⁶³⁴ Indeed "the dramatic experience of these emotions" in tragedy "has a therapeutic value in that it allows the audience to understand better its own experiences of fear and pity in their practical life."⁶³⁵

Moreover "just as Plato's commitment to the self-sufficiency of the good person led him to reject tragic pity, so Aristotle's commitment to the real importance of *philoi* [those to whom we are related in some way] and … *eudaimonia* [happiness] leads him to restore these reactive emotions, and the belief structure that underlies them, to a place of honor." Mystery and uncertainty may forever surround Aristotle's *Poetics* – obscuring, too, the exact history of this concept of catharsis. Nevertheless it is clear that unlike Socrates and Plato, Aristotle places a high value on intersubjectivity as the basis for an ethics of empathy.

We have seen how hysteria – the somatization of psychic distress – is deeply intersubjective, and some of the ways that hysteria relates to ambivalent, hateful, and ugly Viennese representational practices in the early twentieth century. In both contexts we see the intertwining of the physical and psychological and the representation of internal states through corporeal exteriority, especially gesture and skin. While hysteria sustains cathexis in the form of an illness, self-portraiture can express it in a process more akin to catharsis. In his essay "Attitudes and Gestures as Reflections of the Conception of Gender," Alexander Klee considers the significance of the hysterical inversion and dissolution of masculinity in Schiele's practice of

⁶³⁴ Ibid., 281.

⁶³⁵ Freeman, Art's Emotions, 45.

⁶³⁶ Nussbaum, "Tragedy and Self-sufficiency," 276.

self-portraiture. Klee argues that "Schiele's portraits do display a new self-image, a new comprehension of sexuality ... it is almost possible to speak of an ironizing and inversion of the image of manhood." He continues: "an ambivalent conception of gender can be discerned, in which Schiele leaves open the disposition of his own sexuality." On the one hand, Schiele's self-portraits "are symptoms of the bourgeois image of manhood disintegrating between decadence and modernity." More profoundly, however, "in the impartiality and openness of his representational form and his unsparing self-examination," Schiele created "a new image of masculinity, released from the conventional ideas of gender roles."

These possibilities for catharsis, for release, for new representations and self-images are crucial, for at its most extreme the experience of traumatic identity, of socio-somatic meaninglessness or unbearable meanings, may lead to suicide. "The human subject always maintains a relation of love (or hate) towards its own body because it must always maintain a certain level of psychical and libidinal investment, or more technically, cathexis." Flesh is significant, matter matters. Moreover while art alone may not be able to save people – such as Gerstl – who are struggling with the unbearable weight of their own subjectivity, representational practices do have great power, and with great power does come great responsibility. Classical culture may have produced democracy but it also inspired Hitler's nightmarish fantasy of a thousand-year *Reich* of beauty – a politico-aesthetic vision that was explicitly based on Hitler's belief that a regime of classical art could not merely reproduce but actually produce healthy bodies, clean minds, and a beautiful self and society. He marshalled a

⁶³⁷ Klee, "Attitudes and Gestures as Reflections of the Conception of Gender," in *Egon Schiele: Self-Portraits and Portraits*, 41–2.

⁶³⁸ Grosz, "Psychoanalysis and the Imaginary Body," 185.

great deal of the antisemitism and hate we have seen here – recall how Hitler claimed that he learned his future in Vienna – to create a doomed template for a supposedly "pure" society in which weakness and ugliness would be tolerated in neither art nor life.

So when we talk about catharsis, hate, and ugly self-representational practices it is essential to distinguish between different notions of purity and purification. For the Nazis with their cult of health and beauty, purity was considered to be the absence of racial corruption, physical and ideological infection, or modern degeneracy – the absence of ugliness. For Aristotle and for the purposes of our discussion, however, the usefulness of purification lies precisely in this idea of cleaning through mud or disgusting mess. Which is to say, this is a purification that leaves us decidedly dirty – it is overcoming through sharing, health through compassion, including compassion toward the hateful and ugly parts of each other and ourselves.

Nussbaum emphasizes how "Aristotle also insists that the goodness of the person (to spoudaious einai) is very important in inspiring pity." The greater the person, and their compassion, the greater their belief "that suffering is undeserved." Aristotle suggests that all of the following impediments and misfortunes may inspire such sentiment: "death, bodily assault or ill-treatment, old age, illness, lack of food, lack of friends, having few friends, separation from one's friends, ugliness (which impedes philia), weakness, being crippled, having your good expectations disappointed, having good things come too late, having no good things happen to you, having them happen but being unable to enjoy them." Nussbaum concludes that "just as Plato's commitment to the self-sufficiency of the good person led him to reject tragic pity, so

⁶³⁹ Nussbaum, "Tragedy and Self-sufficiency," 274.

Aristotle's commitment to the real importance of *philoi* and other external goods for *eudaimonia* leads him to restore these reactive emotions, and the belief structure that underlies them, to a place of honor."⁶⁴⁰ My own investigation of ugliness, hatred, and self-representation in Viennese modernity has led me to similar conclusions regarding fear, fellow feeling, catharsis, and compassion. We are all bound to linger at certain unpleasant stages of development now and again, and our unpleasantness will inevitably leave its mark upon the world. But such ugly marks represent an opportunity for love as much as for hate. Indeed Nussbaum asks, regarding the "clearing up" of negative emotions through the "sharp experience of pity and fear": "is there anyone so good as not to need such reminders, such an emotional house-cleaning? I do not think so."⁶⁴¹ I don't think so, either.

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⁶⁴⁰ Ibid., 276.

⁶⁴¹ Ibid., 282–3.



Fig. 1. Gustav Klimt, *Philosophy*, 1900, oil on canvas, 430 x 300 cm, destroyed. Available from: Wikipedia, "Klimt_University_of_Vienna_Ceiling_Paintings," https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Klimt_University_of_Vienna_Ceiling_Paintings (accessed October 30, 2015).



Fig. 2. Oskar Kokoschka, *Self-Portrait as a Warrior*, 1909, unfired clay painted with tempera, 36.5 x 31.5 x 19.5 cm, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Available from: Museum of Fine Arts Boston, http://www.mfa.org/collections/object/self-portrait-as-a-warrior-64963 (accessed October 30, 2015).

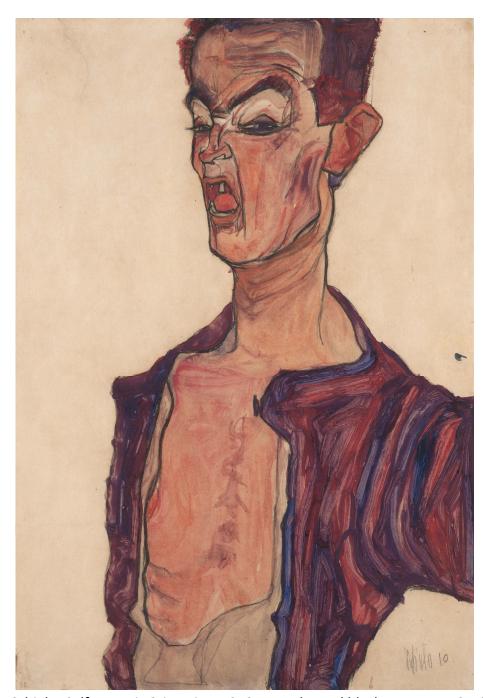


Fig. 3. Egon Schiele, *Self-Portrait Grimacing*, 1910, gouache and black crayon, 45.3 x 30.7 cm, Leopold Museum, Vienna. Available from: Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Egon_Schiele_-_Self-Portrait,_Grimacing_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg (accessed October 30, 2015).

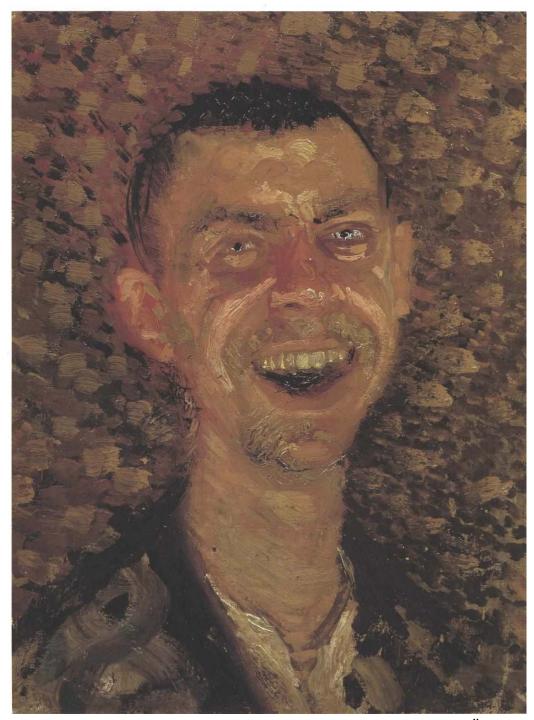


Fig. 4. Richard Gerstl, *Self-Portrait, Laughing*, 1908, oil on canvas, 39 x 30.4 cm, Österreichische Galerie Belvedere, Vienna. Available from: Wikipedia, "Richard_Gerstl," https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Gerstl (accessed October 30, 2015).

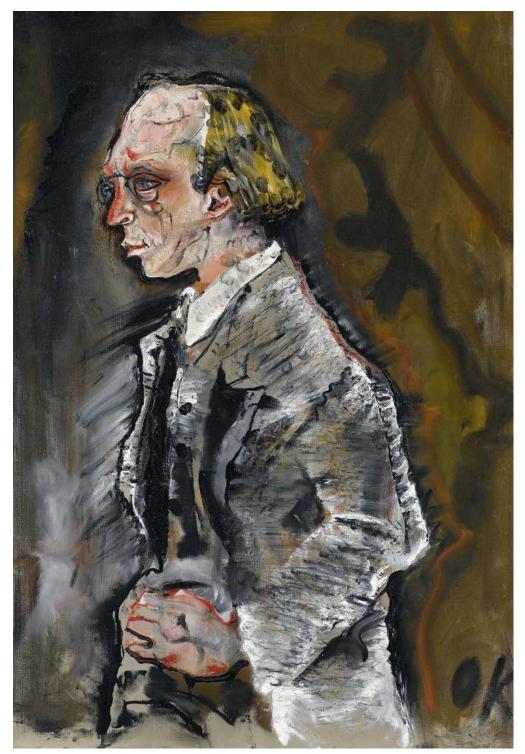


Fig. 5. Oskar Kokoschka, *Portrait of Herwarth Walden*, 1910, oil on canvas, 100.6 x 69.3 cm, Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart. Available from: Pinterest, https://www.pinterest.com/pin/87398048993422013/ (accessed October 30, 2015).



Fig. 6. Oskar Kokoschka, *Hans Tietze and Erica Tietze-Conrat*, 1909, oil on canvas, 76.5 x 136.2 cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York. Available from: The Museum of Modern Art, German Expressionism, http://www.moma.org/collection_ge/object.php?object_id=80190&curated=1 (accessed October 30, 2015).



Fig. 7. Egon Schiele, *Nude Self-Portrait, Grimacing*, 1910, gouache, watercolour, and pencil with white heightening, 55.8 x 36.9 cm, Albertina, Vienna. Available from: Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Egon_Schiele_-_Nude_Self-Portrait,_Grimacing_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg (accessed October 30, 2015).

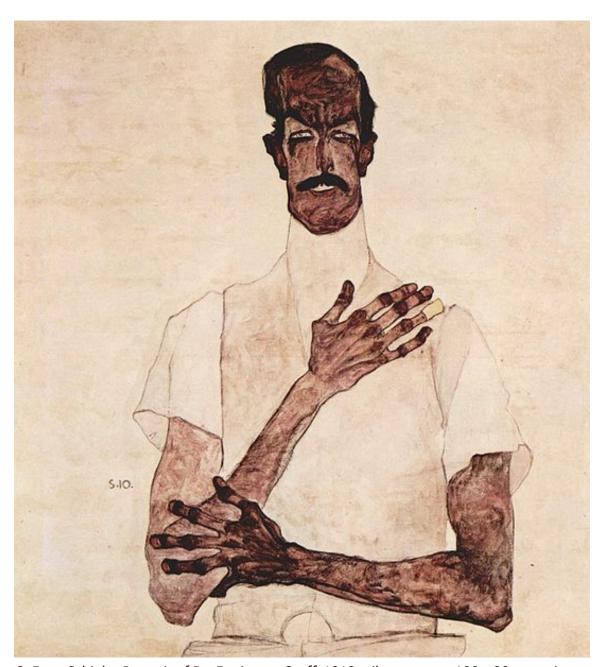


Fig. 8. Egon Schiele, *Portrait of Dr. Erwin von Graff*, 1910, oil on canvas, 100 x 90 cm, private collection. Available from: Wikipedia, Egon Schiele, https://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/Egon_Schiele (accessed October 30, 2015).



Fig. 9. Egon Schiele, *Father and Son* (double portrait of Heinrich and Otto Benesch), 1913, oil on canvas, 121 x 130 cm, Kunstmuseum, Linz. Available from: Lentos Kunstmuseum Linz, http://www.lentos.at/html/de/366_373.aspx (accessed October 30, 2015).



Fig. 10. Egon Schiele, *Young Man in Purple Robe with Clasped Hands*, 1914, gouache and pencil, 48.3 x 30.5 cm, private collection. Available from: Neue Zurcher Zeitung, Kunstler und Propheten, http://www.nzz.ch/feuilleton/bildstrecke/kuenstler-und-propheten-1.18546572 (accessed October 30, 2015).



Fig. 11. Egon Schiele, *Male Figure Bending Forward (Otto Benesch)*, 1914, gouache and pencil, 46.5 x 30.8 cm, Georg Waechter Foundation, Winterthur. Available from: Museuma Art Images http://www.museuma.com/egon-schiele/man-bencind-down-deeply.html (accessed October 30, 2015).



Fig. 12. Fritz Gareis, "Karikatur Mahlers am Dirigentenpult" [Caricature of Mahler at the Podium], Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna (Bildarchiv 12881682). Available from: Bayerischer Rundfunk, Gustav Mahler, http://www.br.de/radio/br-klassik/themen/gustav-mahler-lebensbilder126~_image-5_-9c6161500b35e0212ab78451135c1de70c63511f.html (accessed October 30, 2015).

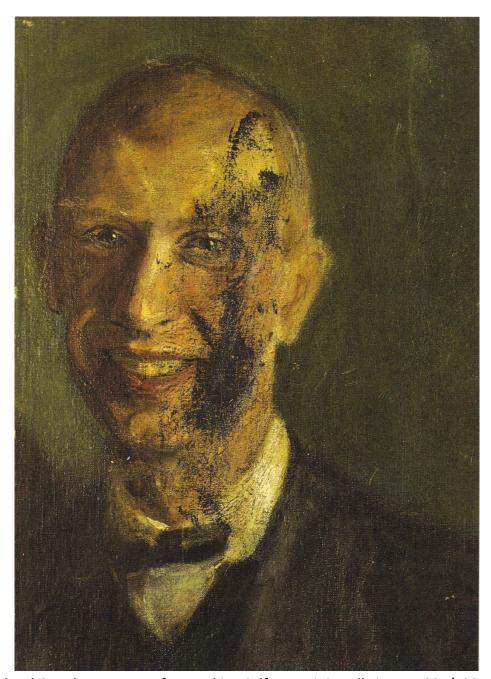


Fig. 13. Richard Gerstl, *Fragment of a Laughing Self-Portrait in Full Figure*, 1904/1905, oil on canvas, 170 x 74 cm, private collection. From: Klaus Albrecht Schröder. *Richard Gerstl: 1883–1908*. Vienna: Kunstforum der Bank Austria, 1993. Page 45.



Fig. 14. Richard Gerstl, *Portrait of Alexander von Zemlinsky*, July 1908 (in Gmunden), oil on canvas, 170 x 74 cm, Stiftung Sammlung Kamm – Kunsthaus Zug, Switzerland. Signed: "Richard Gerstl" Inscribed verso: "Richard Gerstl, IX, Nußdorferstr. 35." From: Klaus Albrecht Schröder. *Richard Gerstl: 1883–1908*. Vienna: Kunstforum der Bank Austria, 1993. Page 109.

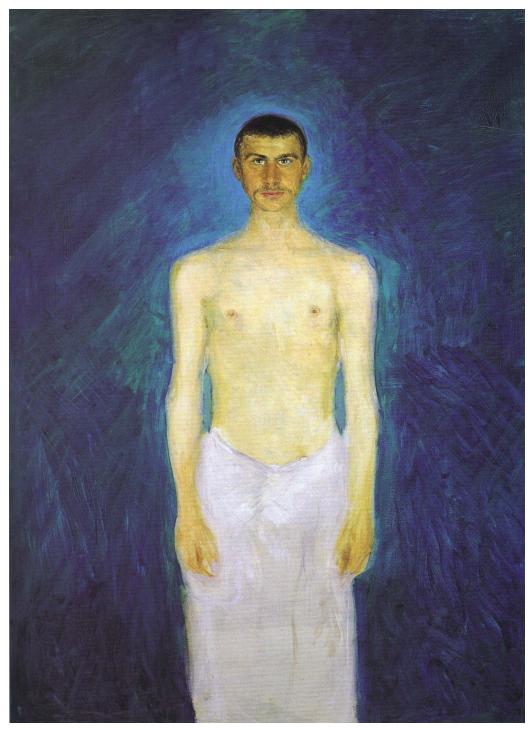


Fig. 15. Richard Gerstl, *Self-Portrait before a Blue Background*, 1905, oil on canvas, 159.5 x 109 cm, Leopold Museum, Vienna. From: Klaus Albrecht Schröder. *Richard Gerstl: 1883–1908*. Vienna: Kunstforum der Bank Austria, 1993. Page 49.



Fig. 16. Richard Gerstl, *Self-Portrait before a Blue Background* [Detail], 1905, oil on canvas, 159.5 x 109 cm, Leopold Museum, Vienna. From: Klaus Albrecht Schröder. *Richard Gerstl:* 1883–1908. Vienna: Kunstforum der Bank Austria, 1993. Page 49.

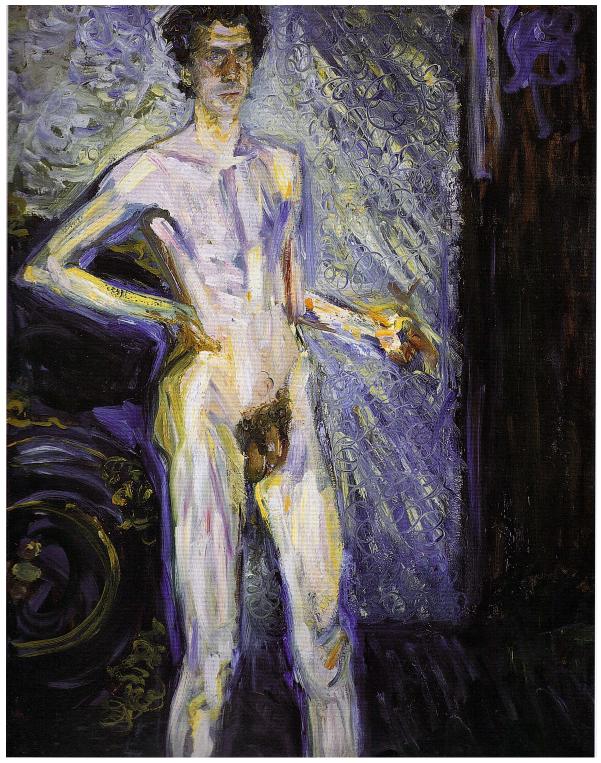


Fig. 17. Richard Gerstl, *Self-Portrait (Full Nude*), 12 September 1908, oil on canvas, 140.5 x 110.5 cm, Leopold Museum, Vienna. From: Klaus Albrecht Schröder. *Richard Gerstl:* 1883–1908. Vienna: Kunstforum der Bank Austria, 1993. Page 159.

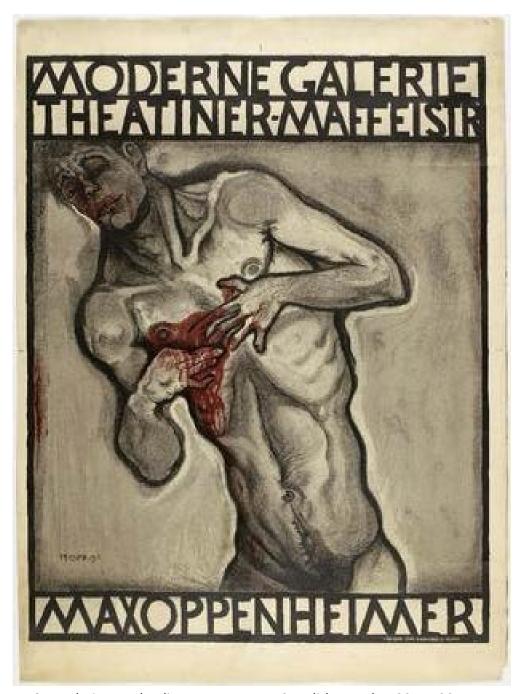


Fig. 18. Max Oppenheimer, *Bleeding Man* poster, 1911, lithograph, 122.5 x 90.5 cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York (804.1983). Gift of the Lauder Foundation, Leonard and Evelyn Lauder Fund. Available from: The Museum of Modern Art, Max Oppenheimer, https://www.moma.org/collection_ge/artist.php?artist_id=4073 (accessed October 30, 2015).

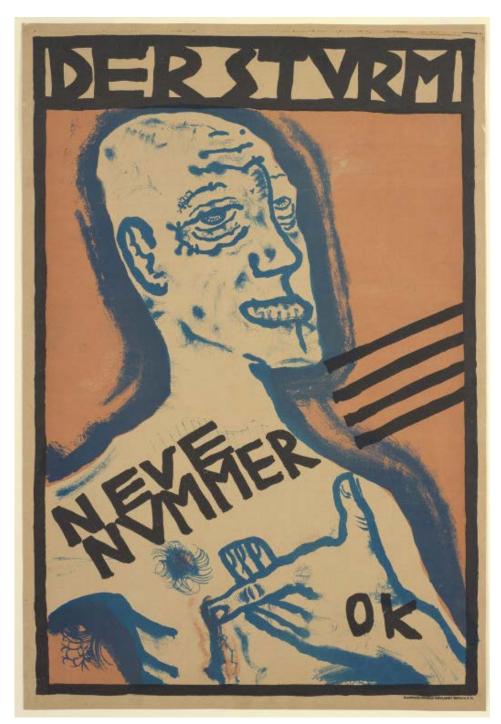


Fig. 19. Oskar Kokoschka, *Der Sturm* poster, 1911 (original version 1910), colour lithograph, Albertina, Vienna. Available from: Art Institute Chicago, http://www.artic.edu/aic/collections/artwork/26757 (accessed October 30, 2015).

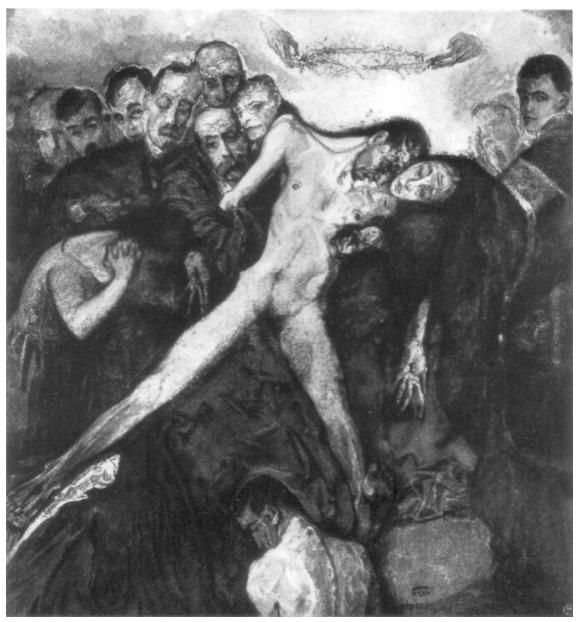


Fig. 20. Max Oppenheimer, *The Deposition*, 1910, oil on canvas, present whereabouts unknown (formerly in the collection of Dr Oskar Reichel, Vienna). From: Gemma Blackshaw. "The Pathological Body: Modernist Strategising in Egon Schiele's Self-Portraiture." *Oxford Art Journal* 30, no. 3 (2007): 377–401. Page 397.



Fig. 21. El Greco, *The Entombment of Christ*, late 1560s, oil and tempera on panel, 51.5 x 43 cm, National Gallery – Alexandros Soutzos Museum, Athens. Available from: Wikipedia, National Gallery (Athens), https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Gallery_(Athens) (accessed October 30, 2015).



Fig. 22. El Greco, *La Santisima Trinidad*, 1577–79, oil on canvas, 300 x 179 cm, Museo del Prado, Madrid. Available from: Museo Nacional del Prado, https://www.museodelprado.es/typo3temp/pics/aab50f0a98.jpg (accessed October 30, 2015).



Fig. 23. Albrecht Dürer, *Christ as The Man of Sorrows*, c. 1493, oil on panel, 30 x 19 cm, Staatliche Kunsthalle, Karlsruhe. Available from: Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe, http://www.kunsthalle-karlsruhe.de/en/the-collection/gothic-and-renaissance-painting.html (accessed October 30, 2015).



Fig. 24. Albrecht Dürer, *Self-Portrait*, 1500, oil on wood panel, 67.1 cm \times 48.9 cm, Alte Pinakothek, Munich, Inv. Nr. 537. Available from: Pinakothek Museums (Alte Pinakothek), http://www.pinakothek.de/en/albrecht-duerer/self-portrait-fur-trimmed-robe (accessed October 30, 2015).



Fig. 25. Reconstruction of Gerstl's *Laughing Self-Portrait in Full Figure*. From: Raymond Coffer. "Richard Gerstl and Arnold Schönberg: A Reassessment of their Relationship (1906–1908)." PhD Thesis, University of London, 2011. Page 73.



Richard Gerstl, um 1905

Fig. 26. Photograph of Richard Gerstl, c. 1905, in Schröder, *Richard Gerstl: 1883–1908*. From: Klaus Albrecht Schröder. *Richard Gerstl: 1883–1908*. Vienna: Kunstforum der Bank Austria, 1993. Page 172.

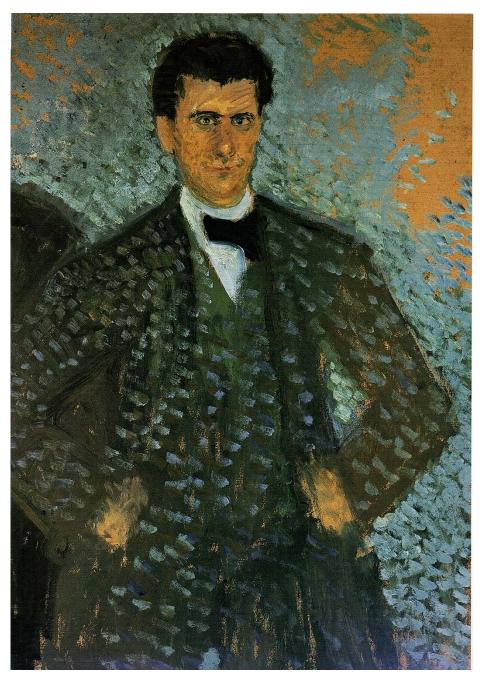


Fig. 27. Richard Gerstl, *Self-Portrait in front of a Blue-Green Background*, summer 1907, oil on cardboard, 100 x 72 cm, Tyrolean State Museum [Tiroler Landesmuseum/Ferdinandeum], Innsbruck (Inv. No. Gem. 3112). From: Klaus Albrecht Schröder. *Richard Gerstl: 1883–1908*. Vienna: Kunstforum der Bank Austria, 1993. Page 95.



Fig. 28. Richard Gerstl, *Die Familie Schönberg*, late July 1908 (in Gmunden), oil on canvas, 88.8 x 109.7 cm, MUMOK Stiftung Ludwig, Vienna. Signed: "Richard Gerstl." Available from: Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien, https://www.mumok.at/de/familie-schoenberg (accessed October 30, 2015).

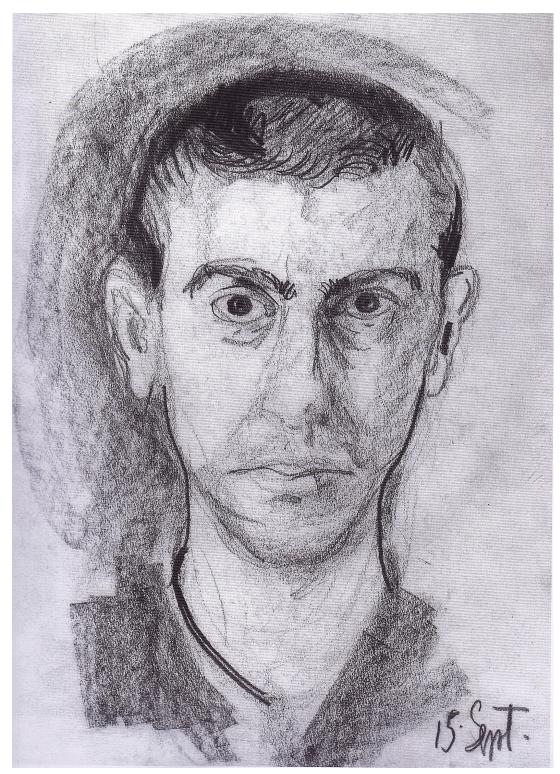


Fig. 29. Richard Gerstl, *Self-Portrait*, 15 September 1908, pencil on paper, 40 x 29.9 cm, Vienna Museum Karlsplatz [Historisches Museum der Stadt Wien]. From: Klaus Albrecht Schröder. *Richard Gerstl:* 1883–1908. Vienna: Kunstforum der Bank Austria, 1993. Page 163.

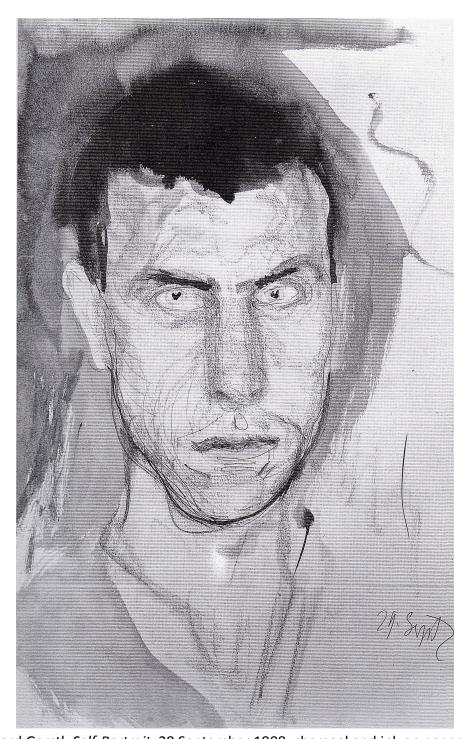


Fig. 30. Richard Gerstl, *Self-Portrait*, 29 September 1908, charcoal and ink on paper, 40 x 29.5 cm, Galerie St. Etienne, New York. From: Klaus Albrecht Schröder. *Richard Gerstl:* 1883–1908. Vienna: Kunstforum der Bank Austria, 1993. Page 165.

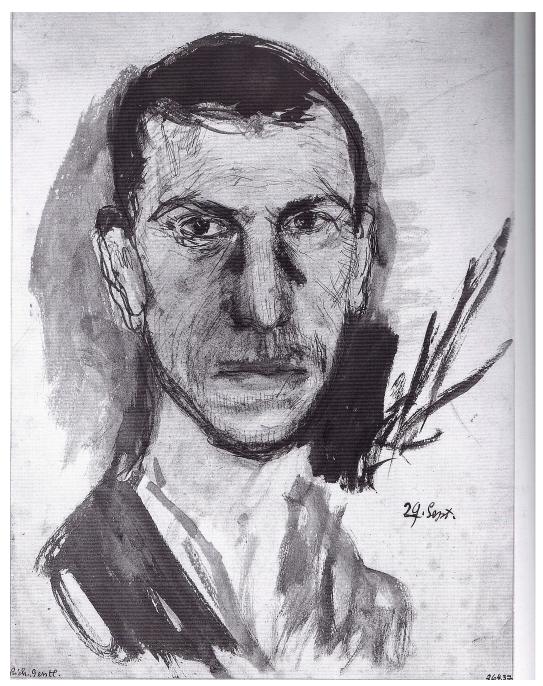


Fig. 31. Richard Gerstl, *Self-Portrait*, 29 September 1908, ink on paper, 38.6 x 28 cm, Albertina, Vienna (Inv. 26.437). From: Klaus Albrecht Schröder. *Richard Gerstl: 1883–1908*. Vienna: Kunstforum der Bank Austria, 1993. Page 164.

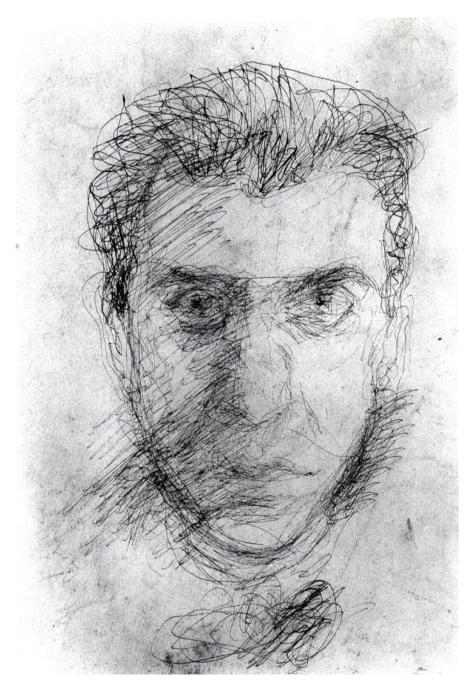


Fig. 32. Richard Gerstl, *Self-Portrait*, no date (verso of 15 September *Self-Portrait*), sepia on paper, 40 x 29.9 cm, Vienna Museum Karlsplatz [Historisches Museum der Stadt Wien] (Inv. 115.288). From: Klaus Albrecht Schröder. *Richard Gerstl: 1883–1908*. Vienna: Kunstforum der Bank Austria, 1993. Page 156.

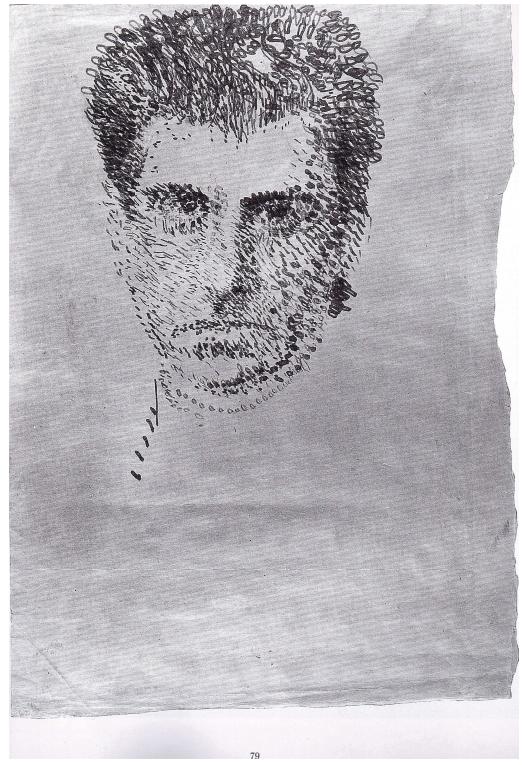


Fig. 33. Richard Gerstl, *Self-Portrait*, possibly 1906 or 1907, ink on paper, 44.9 x 31.4 cm, Albertina, Vienna (Inv. 41363). From: Klaus Albrecht Schröder. *Richard Gerstl: 1883–1908*. Vienna: Kunstforum der Bank Austria, 1993. Page 79.

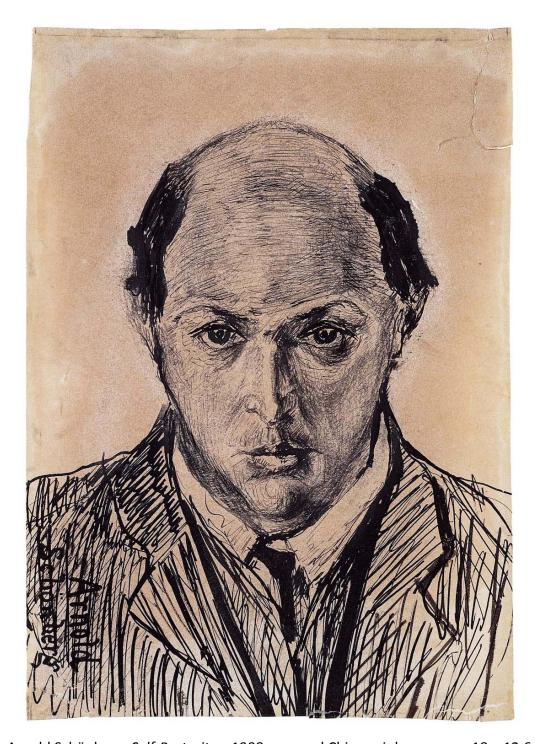


Fig. 34. Arnold Schönberg, *Self-Portrait*, c. 1908, pen and Chinese ink on paper, 18 × 12.6 cm, Arnold Schönberg Center, Vienna (cat. no. 2). Available from: Arnold Schönberg Center, http://www.schoenberg.at/index.php/en/schoenberg-2/bildnerischeswerk/selbstportraits/002-9 (accessed October 30, 2015).

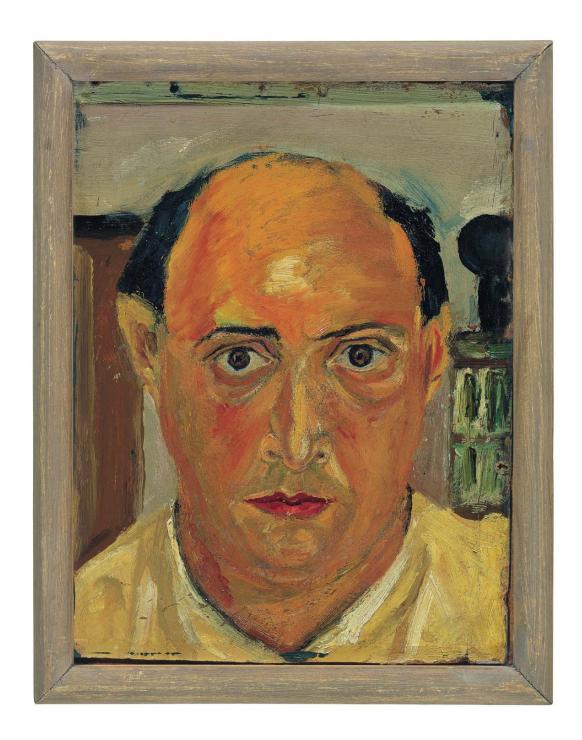


Fig. 35. Arnold Schönberg, *Self-Portrait*, c. 1910, oil on board, 23 × 17 cm, Arnold Schönberg Center, Vienna (cat. no. 10). Available from: Arnold Schonberg Center, http://www.schoenberg.at/resources/pages/view.php?ref=8607 (accessed October 30, 2015).

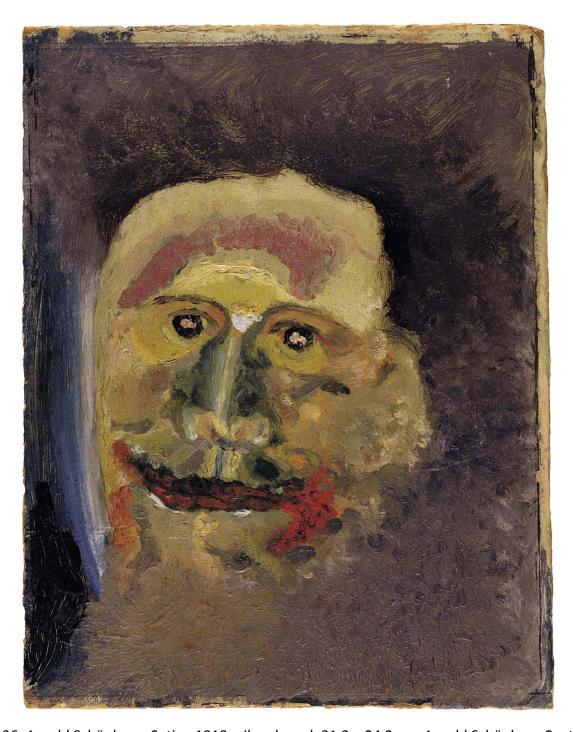


Fig. 36. Arnold Schönberg, *Satire*, 1910, oil on board, 31.3 × 24.2 cm, Arnold Schönberg Center, Vienna (cat. no. 111). Available from: Arnold Schonberg Center, http://www.schoenberg.at/resources/pages/view.php?ref=8874 (accessed October 30, 2015).

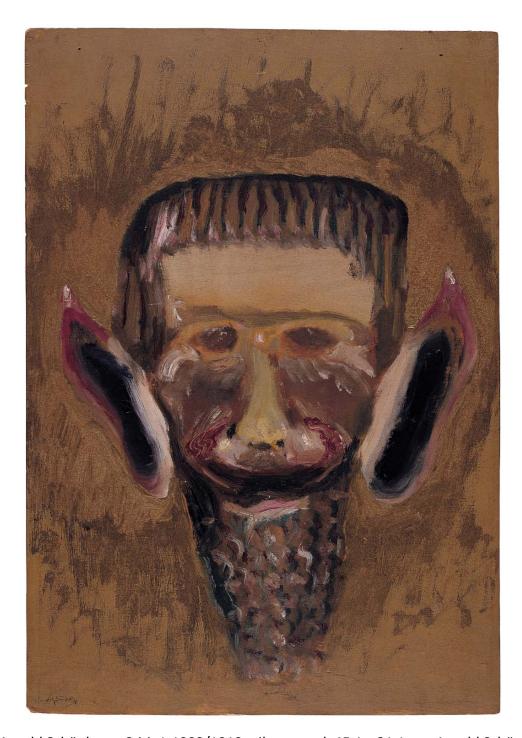


Fig. 37. Arnold Schönberg, *Critic I*, 1909/1910, oil on wood, 45.1 x 31.1 cm, Arnold Schönberg Center, Vienna (cat. no. 112). Available from: Arnold Schonberg Center, http://www.schoenberg.at/resources/pages/view.php?ref=8875 (accessed October 30, 2015).

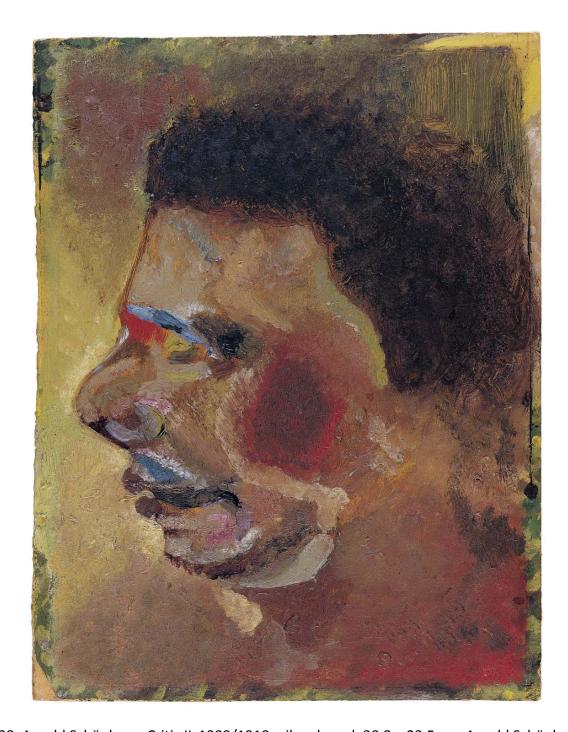


Fig. 38. Arnold Schönberg, *Critic II*, 1909/1910, oil on board, 30.8 × 23.5 cm, Arnold Schönberg Center, Vienna (cat. no. 113). Available from: Arnold Schonberg Center, http://www.schoenberg.at/resources/pages/view.php?ref=8876 (accessed October 30, 2015).

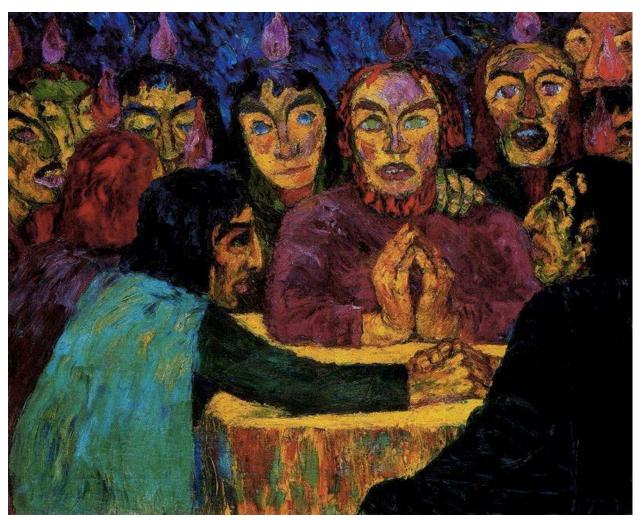


Fig. 39. Emil Nolde, *Pentecost*, 1909, oil on canvas, 107 x 87 cm, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Neue Nationalgalerie. Available from: The Red List, http://theredlist.com/wiki-2-351-861-414-1293-401-304923-view-expressionism-profile-nolde-emil.html (accessed October 30, 2015).



Fig. 40. Arnold Schönberg, *Red Gaze*, May 1910, oil on cardboard, 32.2 x 24.6 cm, Arnold Schönberg Center, Vienna (cat. no. 61). Available from: Arnold Schonberg Center, http://www.schoenberg.at/resources/pages/view.php?ref=8823 (accessed October 30, 2015).

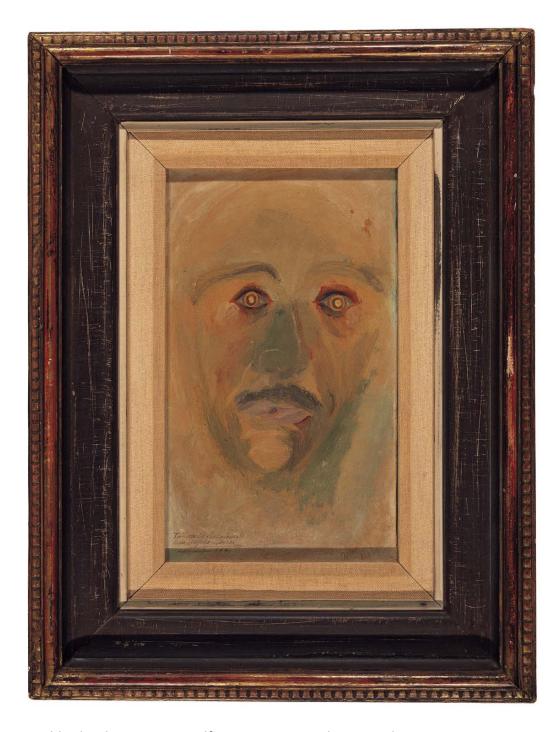


Fig. 41. Arnold Schönberg, *Brown Self-Portrait*, 16 March 1910, oil on canvas, 32 × 20 cm, Arnold Schönberg Center, Vienna (cat. no. 12). Available from: Arnold Schonberg Center, http://www.schoenberg.at/resources/pages/view.php?ref=8609 (accessed October 30, 2015).

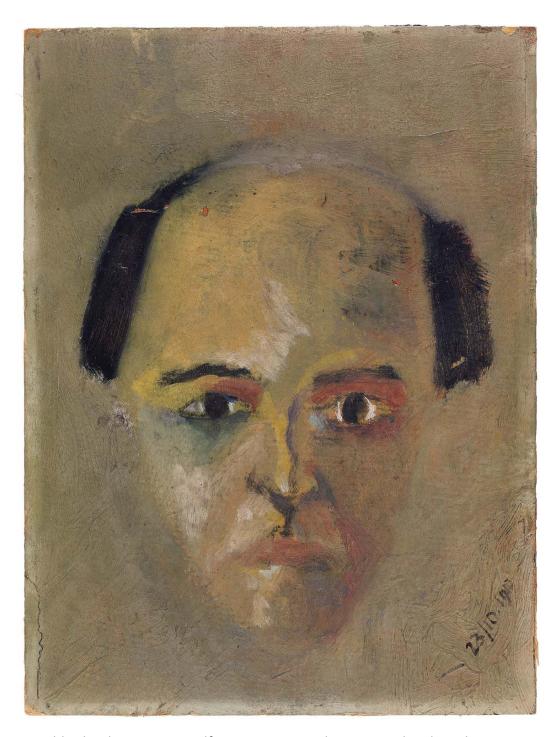


Fig. 42. Arnold Schönberg, *Green Self-Portrait*, 23 October 1910, oil on board, 33.2 x 24.7 cm, Arnold Schönberg Center, Vienna (cat. no. 15). Available from: Arnold Schonberg Center, http://www.schoenberg.at/resources/pages/view.php?ref=8612 (accessed October 30, 2015).



Fig. 43. Arnold Schönberg, *Tears*, 1910, oil on canvas, 29.3 × 23.4 cm, Arnold Schönberg Center, Vienna (cat. no. 77). Available from: Arnold Schonberg Center, http://www.schoenberg.at/resources/pages/view.php?ref=8839 (accessed October 30, 2015).

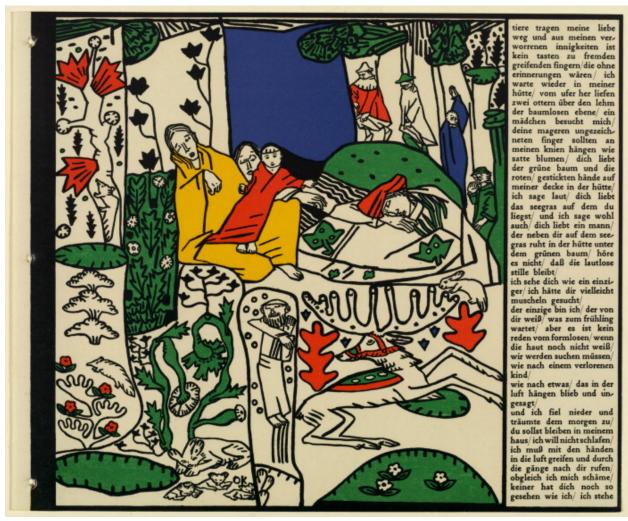


Fig. 44. Oskar Kokoschka, *The Bearers of Dreams*, colour lithograph from *The Dreaming Youths*. 1907, 24 x 29.3 cm, The Courtauld Gallery, London (G.1978.PG.88.8). © The Samuel Courtauld Trust, The Courtauld Gallery, London/DACS 2003. Available from: The Courtauld Institute of Art, Art and Architecture, http://www.artandarchitecture.org.uk/images/gallery/78a9c007.html (accessed October 30, 2015).



Fig. 45. Rudolf Kalvach, *Indian Fairy Tale*, c. 1910/12, oil on wood, 60 x 59.3 cm, private collection. Available from: Leopold Museum, http://www.leopoldmuseum.org/en/exhibitions/44/fantastic-rudolf-kalvach (accessed October 30, 2015).



Fig. 46. George Minne, *Adolescent I*, c. 1891, marble, 43 x 33.5 x 14.3 cm, The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles. Available from: The J. Paul Getty Museum, http://www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects/103998/george-minne-adolescent-i-belgian-about-1891/ (accessed October 30, 2015).



Fig. 47. George Minne, *Kneeling Youth*, 1896, dated 1905, pencil on paper, 34 x 19.1 cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York (293.1978). © 2015 George Minne / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / SABAM, Belgium. Available from: The Museum of Modern Art, http://www.moma.org/collection/works/36048 (accessed October 30, 2015).



Fig. 48. George Minne, *Kneeling Youth*, 1898, plaster, 80.8 x 19.8 x 45.2 cm including base, Museum of Modern Art, New York (232.1962). © 2015 George Minne / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / SABAM, Belgium. Available from: Shepherd Galleries, http://www.shepherdgallery.com/view_image.html?image_no=187 (accessed October 30, 2015).

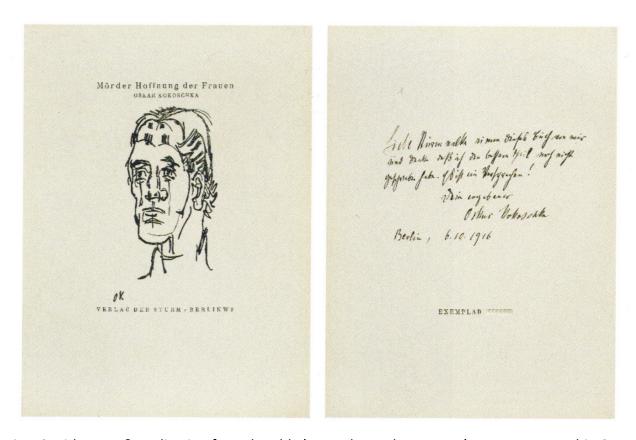


Fig. 49. Title Page & Dedication for Kokoschka's *Murderer, the Women's Hope.* From: Tobia G. Natter and Max Hollein, eds. *The Naked Truth: Klimt, Schiele, Kokoschka and Other Scandals.* New York: Prestel, 2005. Page 156.



Fig. 50. Oskar Kokoschka, illustration of *Murderer, the Women's Hope*, page 155 of *Der Sturm* no. 20, July 14, 1910, Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco. Available from: Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco, https://art.famsf.org/oskar-kokoschka/morder-hofnung-der-frauen-der-sturm-no-20-july-14-1910-200011973a-b (accessed October 30, 2015).

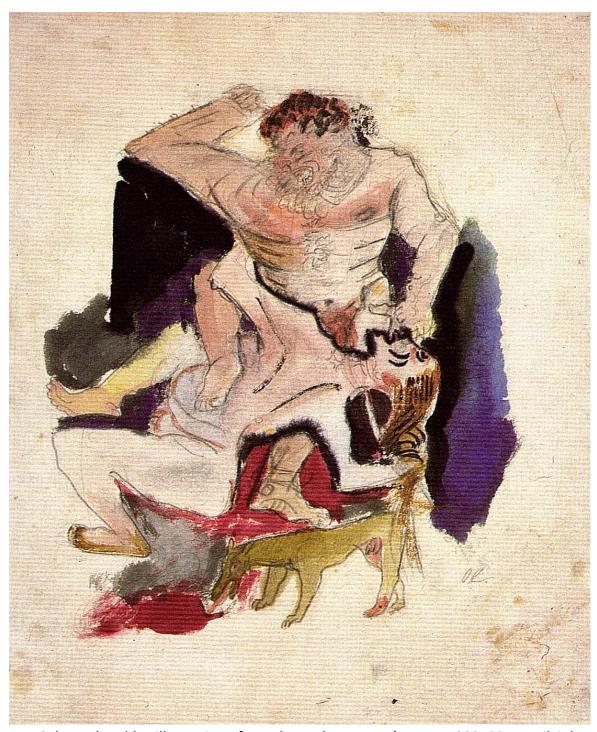


Fig. 51. Oskar Kokoschka, illustration of *Murderer, the Women's Hope*, 1908–09, pencil, ink, watercolour, Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Available from: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, http://collections.lacma.org/node/177832 (accessed October 30, 2015).



Fig. 52. Oskar Kokoschka, illustration of *Murderer, the Women's Hope*, Stiftung Sammlung Kamm – Kunsthaus Zug, Switzerland. Available from: Stiftung Sammlung Kamm, http://www.stiftungsammlungkamm.ch/katalog_k.html (accessed October 30, 2015).



Fig. 53. Oskar Kokoschka, *Poster for* Murderer, the Women's Hope (*Pietà*), 1909, colour lithograph, 122.7 x 78.6 cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York (343.1966). © 2015 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / Pro Litteris, Zurich. Available from: The Museum of Modern Art, http://www.moma.org/collection/works/6395 (accessed October 30, 2015).

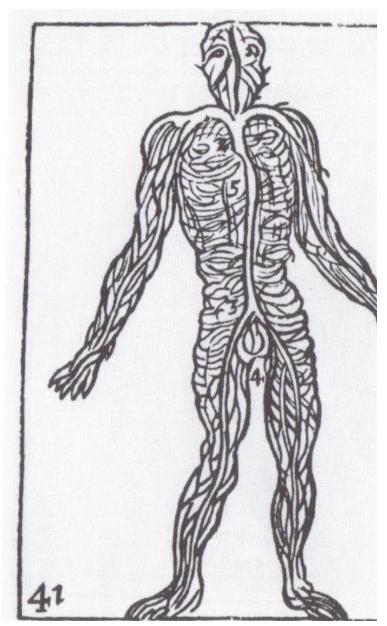


Fig. 54. Johann Amos Comenius, "Channels and Bones," woodcut illustration from *Orbis Sensualium Pictus*, 1658. From: Claude Cernuschi. *Re/Casting Kokoschka: Ethics and Aesthetics, Epistemology and Politics in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*. London: Associated University Presses, 2002. Page 36.



Fig. 55. Nicolas Beatrizet, *Anatomia*, copperplate engraving from Juan de Valverde de Hamusco's *La anatomia del corpo humano*, 1556. Available from: Der Neue Physiologus: Enzyklopädie der Erfahrungen (website), http://www.physiologus.de/selbsthaeut.htm (accessed October 30, 2015).



Fig. 56. Eighteenth-Century Wax Anatomical Model from the Josephinum, the medical history museum at the University of Vienna, which has been open to the public since the early nineteenth century. Available from: Medical History Museum at the University of Vienna, http://www.josephinum.ac.at/collections/wax-models/?L=1 (accessed October 30, 2015).



Fig. 57. Oskar Kokoscha, *Self-Portrait, Hand on Chest (Selbstbildnis, Hand auf der Brust)* [Poster Advertising a Lecture at the Academic Union for Literature and Music, Vienna, 26 January 1912], 1911–12, colour lithograph, 92.4 x 55 cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York (378.1954). © 2015 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / Pro Litteris, Zurich. Available from: The Museum of Modern Art, German Expressionism,

https://www.moma.org/collection_ge/browse_results.php?criteria=O%3AAD%3AE%3A36737&page_number=1&template_id=1&sort_order=1 (accessed October 30, 2015).

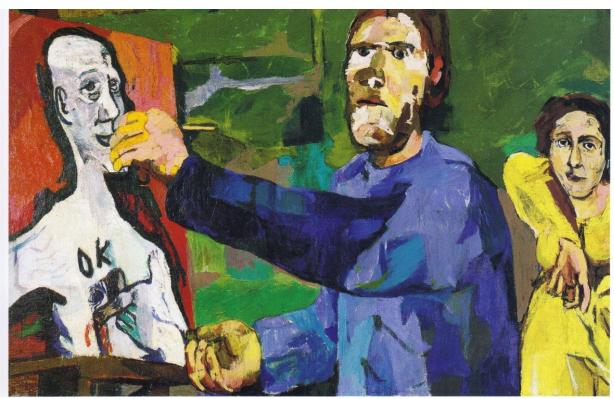


Fig. 58. Oskar Kokoschka, *The Painter and His Model II* (with *Der Sturm* Poster), 1923, oil on canvas on board, 85.1 x 130.2 cm, Saint Louis Art Museum (910:1983). Bequest of Morton D. May. Available from: Saint Louis Art Museum, http://slam.org:8080/emuseum/view/objects/asitem/13738/55/displayDate-

desc;jsessionid=5D52015365FB11538953CD4D3E29F2F8 (accessed October 30, 2015).



Fig. 59. Egon Schiele, *The Birth of Genius (Dead Mother II)*, 1911, oil on wood, 32.1 x 25.4 cm, presumed destroyed. From: Peter Vergo and Barnaby Wright, eds. *Egon Schiele: The Radical Nude*. London: The Courtauld Gallery in association with Paul Halberton Publishing, 2014. Page 53.

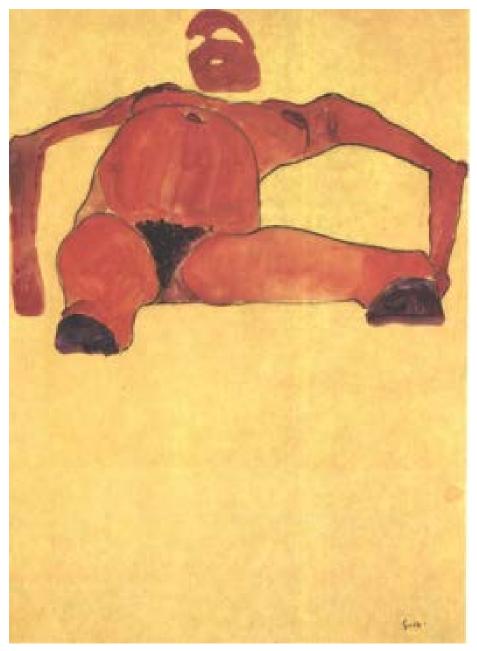


Fig. 60. Egon Schiele, *Nude Pregnant Woman, Reclining,* 1910, black chalk and gouache, 43 x 30.7 cm, Leopold Museum, Vienna. From: Peter Vergo and Barnaby Wright, eds. *Egon Schiele: The Radical Nude*. London: The Courtauld Gallery in association with Paul Halberton Publishing, 2014. Page 80.



Fig. 61. Egon Schiele, *Female Nude*, 1910, India ink, tempera, and watercolour, 44.3 x 30.6 cm, Albertina Museum, Vienna. From: Peter Vergo and Barnaby Wright, eds. *Egon Schiele: The Radical Nude*. London: The Courtauld Gallery in association with Paul Halberton Publishing, 2014. Page 55.



Fig. 62. Egon Schiele, *Male Lower Torso*, 1910, black chalk and gouache, 44.8 x 28.1 cm, Leopold Museum, Vienna. From: Peter Vergo and Barnaby Wright, eds. *Egon Schiele: The Radical Nude*. London: The Courtauld Gallery in association with Paul Halberton Publishing, 2014. Page 113.

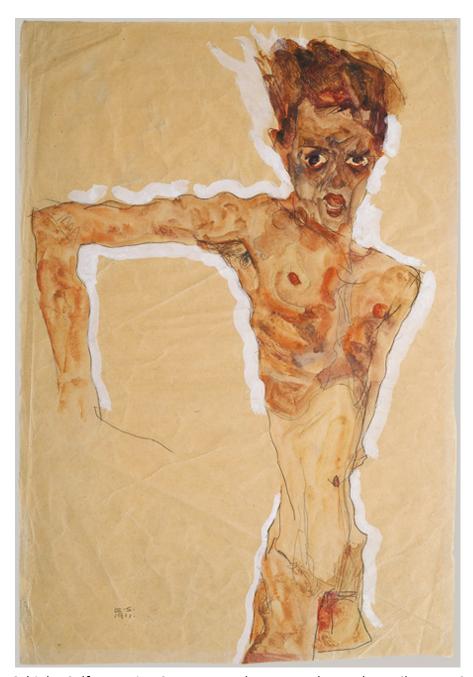


Fig. 63. Egon Schiele, *Self-Portrait*, 1911, watercolour, gouache, and pencil, 51.4 x 34.9 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Available from: Metropolitan Museum of Art, http://www.metmuseum.org/collection/the-collection-online/search/483438 (accessed October 30, 2015).



Fig. 64. Egon Schiele, *Self-Portrait in Black Cloak, Masturbating*, 1911, gouache, watercolour, and pencil, 48 x 32.1 cm, Albertina, Vienna. From: Peter Vergo and Barnaby Wright, eds. *Egon Schiele: The Radical Nude*. London: The Courtauld Gallery in association with Paul Halberton Publishing, 2014. Page 56.



Fig. 65. Egon Schiele, *Seated Nude (Self-Portrait)*, 1910, oil on canvas, 152.5 x 150 cm, Leopold Museum, Vienna. From: Peter Vergo and Barnaby Wright, eds. *Egon Schiele: The Radical Nude*. London: The Courtauld Gallery in association with Paul Halberton Publishing, 2014. Page 58.

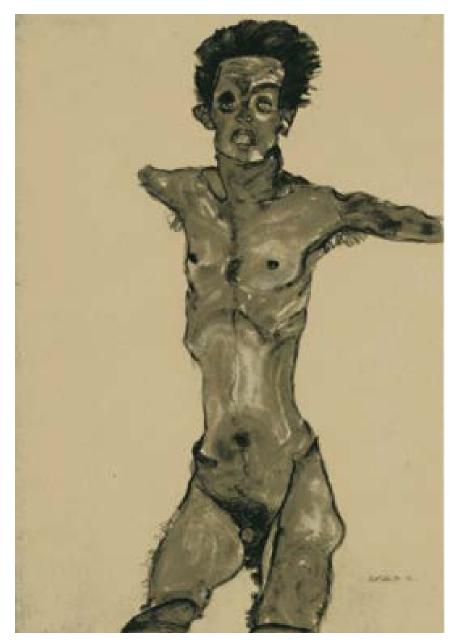


Fig. 66. Egon Schiele, *Nude Self-Portrait in Grey with Open Mouth*, 1910, black chalk and gouache, 43.8 x 30 cm, Leopold Museum, Vienna. From: Peter Vergo and Barnaby Wright, eds. *Egon Schiele: The Radical Nude*. London: The Courtauld Gallery in association with Paul Halberton Publishing, 2014. Page 108.

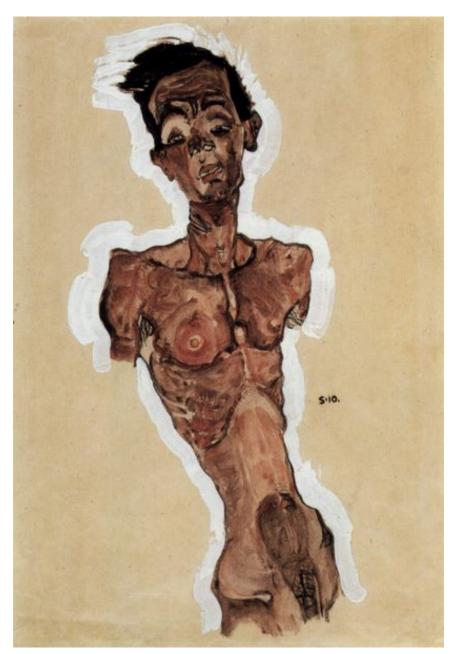


Fig. 67. Egon Schiele, *Self Portrait, Nude*, 1910, crayon and gouache, 44.5 x 31 cm, Leopold Museum, Vienna. From: Peter Vergo and Barnaby Wright, eds. *Egon Schiele: The Radical Nude*. London: The Courtauld Gallery in association with Paul Halberton Publishing, 2014. Page 109.



Fig. 68. Egon Schiele, *Sneering Woman*, 1910, gouache, watercolour, and charcoal with white heightening, 45 x 31.4 cm, Wien Museum, Vienna. From: Peter Vergo and Barnaby Wright, eds. *Egon Schiele: The Radical Nude*. London: The Courtauld Gallery in association with Paul Halberton Publishing, 2014. Page 103.

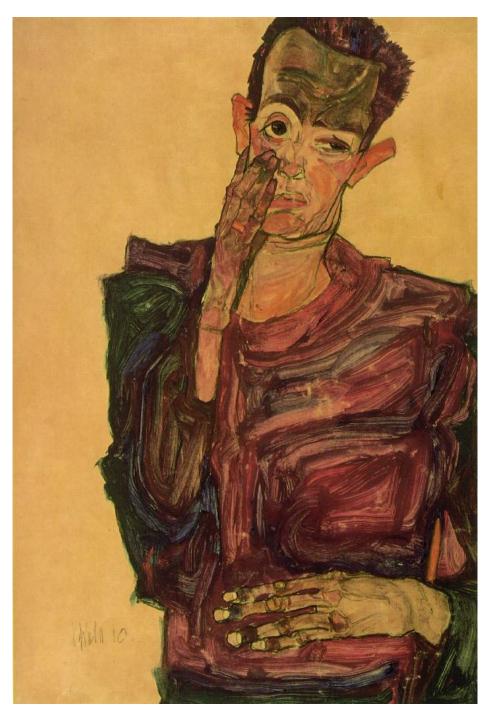


Fig. 69. Egon Schiele, *Self-Portrait with Hand to Cheek*, 1910, chalk and watercolour, 44.3 x 30.5 cm, Albertina Museum, Vienna. From: Reinhard Steiner. *Egon Schiele: The Midnight Soul of the Artist*. Cologne: Taschen, 2000. Page 6.

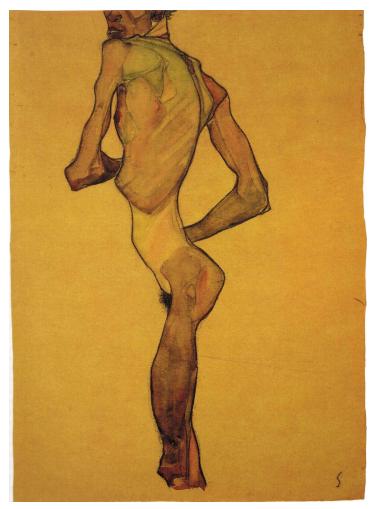


Fig. 70. Egon Schiele, *Male Nude*, 1910, watercolour and charcoal, 44 x 31.5 cm, private collection (Kallir D. 687). This drawing is categorized as a self-portrait in Jane Kallir's catalogue raisonné of Schiele's works, but without further comment. From: Jane Kallir. *Egon Schiele: The Complete Works*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1998. Page 425.



Fig. 71. Egon Schiele, For Art and for My Loved Ones I will gladly endure to the End!, 1912, watercolour and pencil, 48.2 x 31.8 cm, Albertina Museum, Vienna. From: Peter Vergo and Barnaby Wright, eds. Egon Schiele: The Radical Nude. London: The Courtauld Gallery in association with Paul Halberton Publishing, 2014. Page 62.

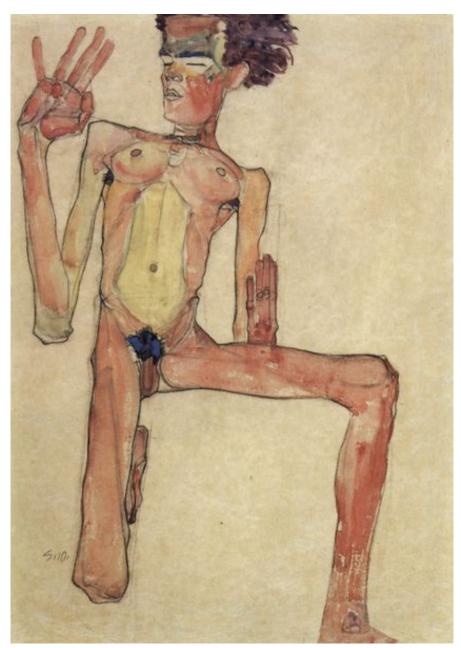


Fig. 72. Egon Schiele, *Kneeling Male Nude with Raised Hand (Self-Portrait)*, 1910, black chalk and gouache, 62.1 x 44.1 cm, Leopold Museum, Vienna. From: Peter Vergo and Barnaby Wright, eds. *Egon Schiele: The Radical Nude*. London: The Courtauld Gallery in association with Paul Halberton Publishing, 2014. Page 93.



Fig. 73. Egon Schiele, *Self-Portrait with Splayed Fingers*, 1911, pencil and gouache, 53 x 29.1 cm, Leopold Museum, Vienna (Inv. 1383). From: Peter Vergo and Barnaby Wright, eds. *Egon Schiele: The Radical Nude*. London: The Courtauld Gallery in association with Paul Halberton Publishing, 2014. Page 64.



Fig. 74. Egon Schiele in front of a mirror (double self-portrait), c. 1914, photograph, Egon Schiele Archive, Albertina Museum, Vienna. From: Peter Vergo and Barnaby Wright, eds. *Egon Schiele: The Radical Nude*. London: The Courtauld Gallery in association with Paul Halberton Publishing, 2014. Page 6.

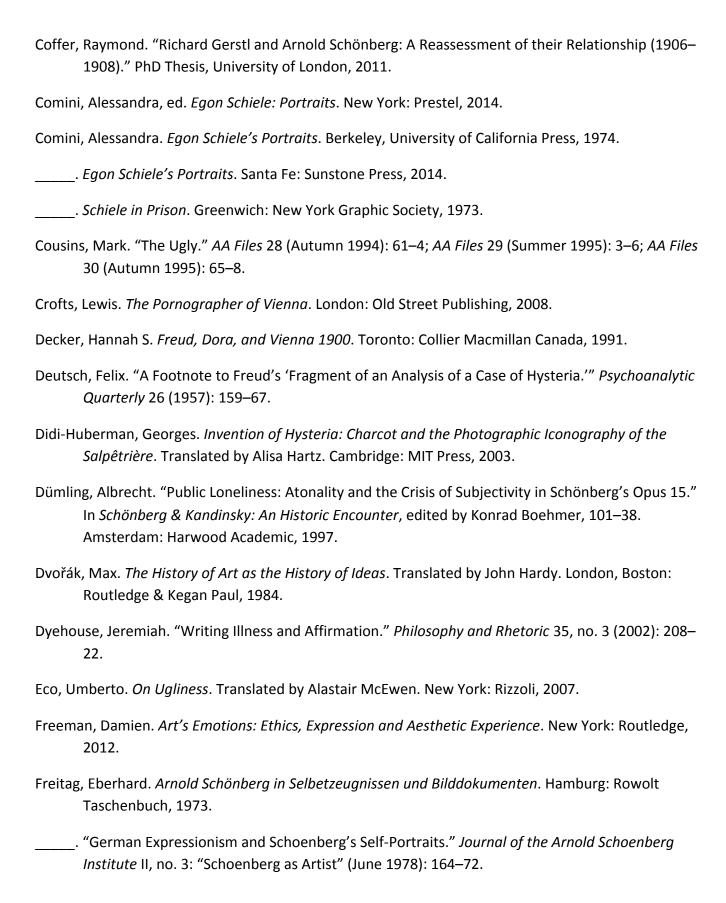
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