

THE BIRTHPLACE OF PSYCHOANALYSIS

It is commonly accepted—and Freud insisted—that psychoanalysis was created out of pure scientific investigation, untainted by historical circumstances. Bruno Bettelheim makes clear, however, why psychoanalysis was born exactly when and where it was, in turn-of-the-century Vienna. From its court society to its literary and artistic circles, the city was abuzz with the preoccupations out of which Freud fashioned psychoanalysis. Here Bettelheim recreates Vienna at the time of its greatest ferment.

by Bruno Bettelheim

It is not by chance that psychoanalysis was born in Vienna and came of age there. In Sigmund Freud's time—that is, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries—the cultural atmosphere in Vienna encouraged a fascination with both mental illness and sexual problems which was unique in the Western world—a fascination that extended throughout society, even into the imperial court which dominated Viennese social life. The origins of this preoccupation can be traced to the history of the city itself, especially to the concerns and attitudes foremost in the minds of Vienna's cultural elites just before and during the period in which Freud formed his revolutionary theories about our emotional life.

Freud was by no means the only innovator in Vienna who brought about a change in our view of sexuality in general and sexual perversions in particular, as well as in our treatment of insanity. For instance, Baron Richard von Krafft-Ebing, a professor of psychiatry at the University of Vi-

enna, was the first to name paranoia, thus bringing it into common discourse. His clinical accounts of sexual pathology showed the many forms the sexual drive could take, years before Freud undertook his studies of sex. Krafft-Ebing's most important work, *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1886), revolutionized the world's ideas about sexual perversions, a subject completely ignored by scientists up to that moment. This book led to the decriminalization of sexual perversions in Austria, long before such a sensible view spread to other countries. Krafft-Ebing led the way to an era of changed attitudes toward sexuality in Vienna and Austria, and in a sense he prepared the environment that made Freud's work possible.

In addition to psychoanalysis, other methods of treating mental disturbances were created and developed by doctors in Vienna. Wagner von Jauregg, who followed Krafft-Ebing as head of psychiatry at the University of Vienna, and who as such was Freud's chief while he taught there, discov-

ered the malaria treatment of general paresis and the fever treatment of the same disease; for this he won in 1927 the first Nobel Prize in medicine to be awarded for a psychiatric discovery. His work can justly be seen as the beginning of chemical treatment for mental illnesses. In the same direction, Manfred Sakel, another Viennese physician, discovered in 1933 the insulin-shock treatment for schizophrenia. Remarkably, all modern methods of treatment for mental disturbances—psychoanalysis, chemical treatment, and shock treatment—were brought into the world within a few decades in the same city.

To understand the unique form that Vienna's culture attained during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, one must recognize that Vienna had long been, as it was called with some affection, *die alte Kaiserstadt*—the old Imperial City. The Habsburg name does not now carry the aura and glamour it once did, but for many centuries the Habsburg Empire, of which Vienna was the capital, was the greatest the world had ever known, surpassing in extent the ancient Roman Empire, of which it saw itself the rightful heir: The Habsburgs were rulers of the "Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation."

In the 16th century, a Habsburg emperor, Charles V (also Charles I, as King of Spain), could make the claim (later borrowed by the British) that since his empire circled the globe, the sun never set upon it. After Charles V, however, the empire entered a gradual but steady decline. The empire almost perished during the Napoleonic Wars. But at their conclusion, Vienna hosted the Congress of Vienna (1814–15), which determined the geography and future of Europe. After this, the Viennese looked upon their city as the preeminent city of Europe, for the Habsburg emperor once again dominated the continent, thanks largely to the skill of Austria's chan-



The Washmaids' Ball (1893) by Wilhelm Gause. *Fin-de-siècle Vienna appeared always to be dancing, as though lost wars, ethnic discontent, and growing poverty were matters of scant importance.*

cellor, Prince Metternich.

However, such dominion ended once and for all with the revolutions of 1848, when the aged Metternich was forced to resign and Franz Joseph began his long reign (1848–1916). Even in its reduced form, the realm remained Europe's foremost imperial presence, dominating an assortment of German principalities before modern Germany was formed; it also held sway over all of Central Europe and much of Italy and Eastern Europe. After 1848, the various peoples within the empire began to demand self-determination and independence—a demand which was held in check only by the force of the imperial army (a multinational institution) and by the reverence accorded the emperor himself.

In addition, the capital city of Vienna continued to extend its cultural dominion over the intelligentsia of the entire empire, as well as over much of the rest of Europe. It could be said in 19th-century Central and Eastern Europe that all roads led to Vienna. Not only was it the seat of empire and of the most important cultural institutions within its sphere of influence, it was by far the largest city in this vast geographical area. In fact, it was the second-largest city on the continent of Europe (after Paris). Not surprisingly, it attracted all those adventurous spirits who wished to leave the provinces for life at the center of things.

Many had been brought to Vienna in childhood by their parents. Sigmund Freud was one, as was Theodor Herzl, the founder of Zionism. Others came to Vienna as adults, including the musicians Gustav Mahler and Johannes Brahms, the painter Oskar Kokoschka, and the architect Josef Hoffmann.

Throughout the 19th century, Vienna continued to grow in size, in cultural opportunities, in scientific renown, and in economic importance. But what gave Vienna its uniqueness was the luck of history: the fact that its greatest cultural flowering came about simultaneously with the disintegration of the empire which had made Vienna important in the first place. Emperor Franz Joseph was not only the ultimate symbol of the empire but also the person who held it all together. Things had never been better, but at the same time they had never been worse: This strange simultaneity explains why psychoanalysis, based on the understanding of ambivalence, hysteria, and neurosis, originated in Vienna and probably could have originated nowhere else. And psychoanalysis was but one of the major intellectual developments of a time in which a pervasive awareness of political decline led Vienna's cultural elites to abandon politics as a serious subject and to turn their attention from the wider world to their own private concerns.

The decline was noticeable to all concerned after the events of 1859 (only three years after Freud's birth), when the empire suffered the first of a series of blows to its eminence (and image) as a world power. In that year, it lost its most prosperous and advanced provinces: most of northern Italy, including Lombardy and Tuscany. Only Venice and the Veneto still remained Austrian—and only for a few more years. Seven years later, in 1866, as a result of war with the upstart Prussia, the last Italian territories were lost, and Prussia became the dominant power over the other German states. This deprived Austria of the hegemony it had held over Germany for some 600 years. Four years later, when Prussia

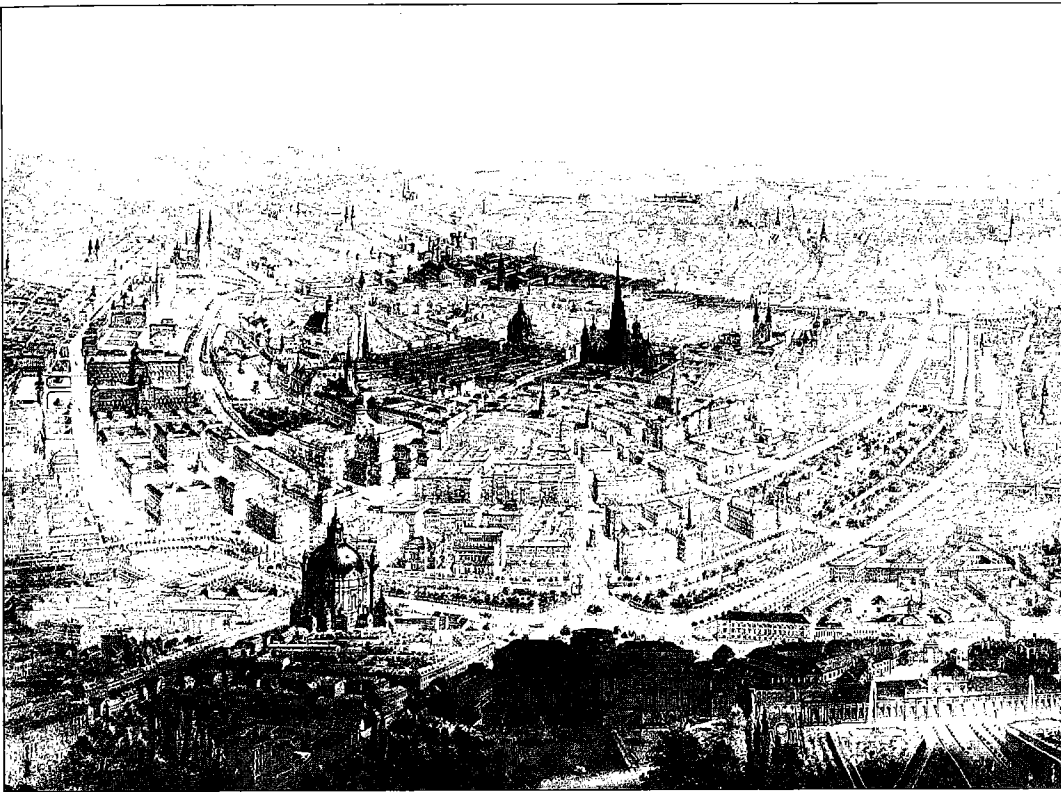
defeated France in 1870, Germany became united under the leadership of Prussia. With this, Berlin began to replace Vienna as the center of the German-speaking world.

One way to cope with these losses was to deny their significance. The Viennese intelligentsia began to say that, while the situation was desperate, it was not all that serious. They also began to discount the importance of external reality—politics, economy, society—and focus their considerable mental energy on the inner life. While the new unified Germany (with its capital, Berlin) was turning its enormous energies toward empire-building, Vienna's cultural elites concentrated upon discovering and conquering the inner world of man. This withdrawal was made easier and more certain by new disappointments which followed upon the heels of the old.

For instance, to compensate for the military defeat of 1866, the government went to great lengths to reassert Vienna's cultural and economic importance. Specifically, it made plans to host a world's fair in 1873. The expectations of prosperity that the fair would bring led to a building boom; many grandiose structures, both public and private, rose up on both sides of the newly created Ringstrasse. This avenue circled the inner city and was intended to outshine the world-famous boulevards of Paris designed by Baron Haussmann. The buildings on the Ringstrasse would be even more splendid than those gracing the Paris avenues.

Historically, Vienna had been a city of the baroque; the grand baroque churches and palaces had given the city its character. Now the modern buildings of the Ringstrasse gave Vienna a double and somewhat contradictory character: that of both an old imperial capital and a center of modern culture. It was as if the city could not decide which way to turn: toward the glorious (though receding) past, or toward a promising new future.

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Vienna's Ringstrasse (1873). The grand new boulevard mingled buildings in Greek, Renaissance, Baroque, and modern styles. By 1890, critics were calling it "pretentious" and "vulgar."

Great expectations for the World's Fair also led to wild speculation on the stock market. Nine days after the fair opened, the market crashed. On Vienna's "black Friday," 125 banks went bankrupt, and many other enterprises failed. The financial crisis in Vienna spread all over Europe and even affected the United States.

Vienna's cultural elites responded by focussing even more intensely on the inner life, on the previously hidden and unrecognized aspects of man. To be sure, this was a solution that could work only for a few. The vast majority of Vienna's population had to find other ways to escape the unease that they felt at a time when the secure, traditional world they and their ancestors had known was falling apart. The answer was lighthearted entertainment. True, the World's Fair of 1873 had failed, but with the premiere of *Die Fledermaus* in 1874, Vienna began once more to rule the world—the world of the operetta. Once the

center of the old high culture—grand opera and serious theater, the greatest in the German language—Vienna now rose to preeminence in light opera and most of all in dance music. The Viennese waltz in a few short years had conquered the globe; besides the waltzes, there were the many operettas of Johann Strauss, Franz Lehár, Franz von Suppé, and others. As we look back, it seems as if the Viennese of that time never stopped dancing: masked balls, the antics of the carnival (the *Fasching*, in which nearly all of Vienna participated), and splendid dancing halls in all parts of the city. Through continual celebrations, the decline of the empire was denied any seriousness.

In the realm of politics and world events, catastrophes periodically shook the empire to its roots, hastening its disintegration. But this was not all: Equally disastrous were the catastrophes which took place in the heart of the city's personal world—

READING VIENNA

When American scholars and popular authors rediscovered Austria during the 1960s, they were particularly attracted to the paradoxes and ambivalences of the late Habsburg Empire (1848–1918). Archaism and modernism, security and danger, and the blurring of reality and illusion characterized a reeling, multicultural empire that perhaps no longer seemed foreign to American intellectuals. Late Habsburg Austria came to life in scholarly works, in popular accounts, and in ambitious museum shows. All eyes were on Vienna, at once the imperial and modernist city par excellence—the urban embodiment of Austrian paradoxes. Sigmund Freud was rediscovered as a Viennese thinker; Gustav Mahler became fundamental to American concert programs; the work of Gustav Klimt and Egon Schiele became priceless; Robert Musil became quotable. Here was a modernism that seemed to coexist with the hoopla of empire and a culture that seemed more innocent than that of the Weimar Republic, which so clearly bottomed out in the brutality of National Socialism.

The Vienna phenomenon has endured. But the celebration of the ambiguous culture that made up the Austrian “gay apocalypse”—in Hermann Broch’s term—took an intellectual toll. It has proven too easy to be carried away by waltzlike sentimentality. Vienna was often allowed to retain its mythic gloss as the city of dreams rather than the city of dream analysis. Freud himself was too often assimilated into American imaginations as the prophet of the pleasure principle rather than as the thinker who defined mental health as the ability to negotiate reality. This is not to say that Vienna’s strife, violence, and even its apocalypses have gone unrecognized, but that they have often been displaced into the realm of the imaginary, as if history really worked according to the rules of grand opera and baroque architecture.

In fact, the kind of illusionism perfected by baroque style and grand opera had developed into a systematic political ideology that proved crucial to the survival of the empire. The office

of the emperor, with its rituals, its theatricality, and its cross-class and cross-cultural loyalties, did much more than reflect imperial cohesiveness; it produced it. Not even the most aggressive modernists were able to resist this imperial spell. All the same, to celebrate the politics of illusion has been to draw the wrong lesson from the collapse of an empire.

On the popular front as well as the scholarly, the great interpreters of Austrian culture have sought to explore the culture of illusion without celebrating or duplicating it. For these qualities, Hermann Broch’s **Hugo von Hofmannsthal and His Time: The European Imagination, 1860–1920** (Univ. of Chicago, 1984) remains a classic. As a Catholic aristocrat of Jewish extraction, a literary modernist with increasingly conservative cultural and political views, Hofmannsthal embodied the kinds of ambivalences that made him the ultimate Austrian in Broch’s eyes. Broch’s analysis is incisive, synoptic, and unsentimental in its study of the dissolution of critical modernism and the return of illusionism—personified by the career of Hofmannsthal between 1890 and 1929.

Broch’s work was one catalyst for Carl E. Schorske’s classic **Fin-de-siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture** (Knopf, 1980), which remains unmatched in its ability to chart the connections between political crisis and the creative imagination. The book is a series of essays on politicians (the anti-Semitic Karl Lueger and Georg von Schoenerer and the Zionist Theodor Herzl), writers (Arthur Schnitzler and Hofmannsthal), architects (Camillo Sitte and Otto Wagner), painters (Klimt and Oskar Kokoschka), and on the politics of psychoanalysis (Freud) and musical modernism (Arnold Schoenberg). As they came of age in the 1890s, Schorske argues, these thinkers entered a collective Oedipal crisis spurred by their perception of the failed liberalism of their fathers’ generation. Although there is constant dialogue across chapters and across cultural spheres, the book’s essay format maintains integrity precisely because of its refusal to blend everything

within the imperial family at the court, which was the city’s true center, its *raison d’être*.

Emperor Franz Joseph’s marriage to Elizabeth, a very young and very beautiful Bavarian princess, was one of great love

and devotion on his part, and this love continued all through his life. But despite the emperor’s best efforts to please Elizabeth, she soon distanced herself from him and from the court. Eventually she was spending almost no time with him or in Vienna.

together into an illusory synthesis. No baroque architecture here.

The period's politics have been analyzed both from the imperial perspective and from the vantage of localized, Viennese politics. These perspectives combine to show an empire increasingly unable to manage its ethnic and cultural diversity. Oszkár Jászi's **The Dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy** (Univ. of Chicago, 1929) remains indispensable for its depiction of the centrifugal forces of Hungarian and Slavic nationalist politics. John W. Boyer's **Political Radicalism in Late Imperial Vienna** (Univ. of Chicago, 1981) charts the emergence of Christian Social politics from the 1848 revolution to the mayoralty of Karl Lueger.

In the mid-1980s, popular international interest in modernist Austria intensified as exhibitions on Viennese culture and politics were mounted in Venice, Vienna, and Paris. Only the Paris curators had the courage to emphasize politics and take their story to 1938, concluding in a darkened room with slides of Hitler's arrival in Vienna displayed with pictures of Viennese intellectuals forced into exile. The version that appeared at New York's Museum of Modern Art in 1986 was greatly reduced. Like the show, Kirk Varnedoe's elegant catalogue, **Vienna 1900: Art, Architecture, and Design** (MOMA, 1986) chooses its artistic examples with superb discrimination but wrongly implies that such objects reveal the dynamics of the culture as a whole.

Perhaps the most difficult question for the interpreter of Austrian cultural diversity is that of the social and cultural identities of the Jews. By the end of the empire, Vienna's Jews, numbering over 175,000, made up nine percent of the population. George Clare's memoir, **Last Waltz in Vienna: The Rise and Destruction of a Family, 1842-1942** (Holt, 1982), offers a moving account of several generations of a Viennese Jewish family. Among the many recent scholarly treatments, Robert Wistrich's **The Jews of Austria in the Age of Franz Joseph** (Oxford, 1989) focuses on the famous figures (Kraus, Freud, Schnitzler) as well as the less well known (for example, the rabbis Isaac

Mannheimer and Adolf Jelinek) to provide, without sentimentality or conceptual confusion, a masterful account of achievement and destruction.

Of course, Austria did not cease to exist with the demise of the Habsburgs in 1918, even though it was reduced to an impoverished country of seven million and to what Austrians commonly called the "republic that no one wanted." The post-Habsburg emergence of Central and East European nation-states has not obscured the historical richness of the confrontations between nationalities and empire. John Lukacs's **Budapest 1900: A Historical Portrait of a City and Its Culture** (Weidenfeld, 1988) reminds us that "Vienna 1900" did not exist in a vacuum. There is also an important role for impressionistic and travel writing, which, at their best, transcend conceptual as well as geographical boundaries. Patrick Leigh Fermor began a memoir of his 1933-34 journey from Amsterdam to Constantinople in **A Time of Gifts** (Harper, 1977). That volume took him through Prague and Vienna; its sequel, **Between the Woods and the Water** (Viking, 1986) picks up in April 1934 outside Budapest and takes him, on horseback, across the Great Hungarian Plain into Transylvania and toward "the end of middle Europe." His account reminds us with elegance how the mutations of the old empire's frontiers have distorted perceptions of geographical constants.

But does such an appreciation of regional coherence amount to Habsburg nostalgia? Paradoxically, the idea of "Middle Europe" has found present-day adherents not only in Vienna and Austria but also among Hungarian and Czech intellectuals who resist the rubric "East European." Perhaps the current European upheavals will nurture a reinvigorated and culturally diverse Central Europe, where Vienna's critical modernism will be valued but where empire will have no place.

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Today, it is easy to view Elizabeth as hysterical, narcissistic, and anorexic. In her time, however, she was acclaimed, with much justification, as the most beautiful woman in Europe. To retain her distinctive beauty, the attribute responsible for her as-

cent in the world, she starved herself on various extreme diets. (One regime, which would last for days on end, consisted of nothing but six glasses of milk a day.) On frequent walking tours, she marched at such a brisk pace that her companions fell



Eros and Thanatos. *The self-centered Empress Elizabeth (left) neglected her son. In 1889, Crown Prince Rudolf shot himself and Baroness Marie Vetsera, his 17-year-old mistress.*

behind her in exhaustion, as she continued on for seven, eight, even ten hours.

Like some hysterics, the empress—who always traveled with enough trunks to fill many railway cars, so that she had always at her disposal a vast array of the costliest and most beautiful clothes—at last took to going out for her walks wearing only a dress, a single garment to cover her body. She wore no underclothes and, to the horror of her companions, no stockings. Nevertheless, she often wore as many as three pairs of gloves to protect her hands.

In 1871, when the emperor wrote to Elizabeth, who as usual was away from Vienna, asking what gift she would like best to receive on her name day, she wrote back, probably in the spirit of self-mockery, "What I would really like best would be a completely equipped insane asylum."

Madness held a particular fascination for Elizabeth, possibly because it was not uncommon in her family, the Wittelsbach rulers of Bavaria. She frequently visited in-

stitutions for the insane in Vienna, Munich, London, and elsewhere. She extolled both death and madness in various cryptic remarks: "The idea of death purifies" and "Madness is truer than life." In 1898, on one of her trips to Geneva, she was assassinated by an anarchist—a murder that made as little sense as her life.

The devastating impact of neurosis and the destructive results of hysteria thus played themselves out upon the stage of the imperial court long before Freud decided to devote his life to understanding such psychological disturbances. And mental disorder was by no means restricted to only one member of the imperial family. Nine years before Elizabeth's assassination, Franz Joseph's only son and heir, Prince Rudolf, staged his own tragic psychodrama. Rudolf led a lonely existence; his mother, Elizabeth, was distant and mostly unavailable to him. He and his father had little mutual sympathy, and no love existed between him and his wife, a Belgian princess. By the age

of 30, he had had many affairs, all of which were meaningless to him. In January of 1889, feeling depressed, lonely, and useless, Rudolf formed and carried out a suicide pact with one of his lovers, a Baroness Vetsera: He killed her and then committed suicide at his hunting lodge at Mayerling, in the heart of the Vienna Woods, 15 miles from the city itself.

Oedipal conflicts between rulers and their sons were nothing new in history—or in the house of Habsburg. The conflict between Philip II and Don Carlos in the 16th century not only made history but became the subject of one of the world's greatest dramas and then a great opera. But Rudolf's act seems unique: the heir of a great empire committing homicide and suicide, immediately after having sex with a woman who had clearly chosen both sex and death. It was a shockingly vivid demonstration of the self-destructive tendencies that Freud would later investigate. It also reflected the intimate relationship between the sex drive and the death drive—a connection Freud sought to clarify in his explorations of the darkest aspects of man's psyche.

The emperor himself sought to cope with these personal and familial tragedies by throwing himself—compulsively, one might say—into his work. He immersed himself in his paperwork tirelessly for as many as 16 hours a day, as if he were a mere subaltern of the empire rather than its supreme ruler. With equal compulsiveness, he insisted on court etiquette and adopted the infamous Spanish Court Ceremony, which permitted no spontaneous personal contact or outward displays of emotion. Interestingly, however, after Elizabeth's estrangement became permanent, and even more so after her death, he sought solace in the company of a young and beautiful actress who had been her reader. Because of Rudolf's suicide, the Archduke Francis Ferdinand—a man with whom the emperor was in deep conflict—became heir to the throne. It is reported that when Ferdinand was assassinated in 1914—the event which led to the First World War—Franz Joseph remarked that he was relieved, because this murder had rectified a situation which was much in need of fixing.

Sex and destruction coexisted strangely

in Viennese culture during the empire's slow decline. Even leading politicians were openly preoccupied with ideas of death. "We have to kill ourselves before the others do it," declared the Hungarian foreign minister around 1912. The connection between sex and death formed a main underlying topic of Viennese art, literature, and psychoanalysis. It permeated the work of artists and thinkers, including the brilliant philosopher Otto Weininger, who in 1903, at the age of 23, committed suicide at the place where Beethoven had died. His *Sex and Character* (1903), with its deeply pessimistic view of sex, had a tremendous influence on the intelligentsia of Vienna.

Early in his own life, Sigmund Freud made a choice that seemed to presage his later recognition of the importance of the death drive in his mature system. In December of 1881, Vienna's Ring Theater had burned down, resulting in a great loss of life. It was yet another of the city's tragic catastrophes. The emperor, always putting the best face on disaster, decreed that on the site of the destroyed theater there should rise a new residential and commercial building to be called the Sühnhaus ("House of Atonement"). Because of the excellent location on the Ringstrasse, the new building would be able to charge high rents; part of the income thus derived would go to support the children who had been orphaned by the fire.

At first, it was difficult to find tenants for the Sühnhaus's splendid apartments: People were reluctant to move into a place where so many others had lost their lives. But it was in this "House of Atonement" that Freud—although the rent was far beyond his means—took an apartment when he married in 1886, and it was there that he established his practice. He did not consider that his patients, suffering from debilitating nervous disorders, might be hesitant to enter a building so strongly associated with death. For reasons we do not know, Freud not only tolerated this association but relished it. Perhaps even at that time ideas about the morbidity of neuroses were in his unconscious, bringing him to choose this ominous building as the place for his life and work. In addition to being among the first tenants of the Sühnhaus, the

Freuds were also the first couple to have a baby there. On the occasion, Freud received a letter from the emperor, congratulating him for being the first to bring a new life into a place where so many lives had been lost.

This letter is the only known direct contact between the emperor and Freud. But the emperor, and what he stood for, was never far from Freud's awareness. He often said that an emperor was a symbol for the father and the superego, and therefore that the figure of the emperor played an important role in the conscious and unconscious of everyone in the empire.

Events, however, had made clear that even Vienna's emperor was not master in his own house; and this fact may have inspired Freud to develop the idea that the ego was not master in its own house—a realization that Freud calls a severe blow to our narcissism (and similar to the blow the emperor's narcissism must have suffered when he was rejected by son and wife). The emperor's compulsive reliance on work as a defense against the many attacks on his self-esteem probably was not lost on Freud. His study of neuroses led him to believe that they were defenses against sexual fears and attacks on one's self-love.

One of the great themes of Freud's work was the subtle yet powerful interplay of thanatos and eros, death and sex. But Freud was not the only person in Vienna to explore this theme. The writer Arthur Schnitzler, whom Freud claimed as his alter ego, won literary renown in Vienna for his treatment of the subject in his novels and plays. In one of the latter, *Liebelei* (*Playing with Love*, 1914), a young man of the upper class has an affair with a lower-class girl who loves him deeply. But their relation is of little importance to him, compared with his interest in seducing the wife of a prominent citizen. He is not truly in love with her either, but the challenge of seducing her appeals greatly to his vanity. The lady's husband feels obliged to challenge the seducer to a duel, in the course of which the husband kills the young man. The hapless girl who has loved him so much is not even permitted to attend the funeral, and this fact impresses her with how little she had meant to him; in des-



Hostile Powers (1902) by Gustave Klimt.

peration, she commits suicide.

In much of Schnitzler's other writings, sexual involvement leads to destruction. This is the theme of one of his best-known novels, *Fräulein Else* (1925), in which a neurotic, and probably hysteric, young girl, to save her father from being disgraced, accedes to the desire of an older man: She comes to him naked, only to kill herself as she does so.

That eros and thanatos are the deepest and strongest drives in man was an insight achieved by others besides Freud and Schnitzler. One of Brahms's greatest works, his *German Requiem* (1868), has as its central theme the idea that "in the middle of life we are surrounded by death." Mahler wrote songs on a child's death, a resurrection symphony, and, as his crowning achievement, the Eighth Symphony, in which he combines a medieval mass with



Death and Maiden (1915) by Egon Schiele.

the last part of Faust—his apotheosis, where in death he is saved by the love of woman, suggesting that only in death is true fulfillment possible.

The preoccupation with sex and death is also found in the work of Vienna's greatest painters, most notably Gustav Klimt (1862–1918) and Egon Schiele (1890–1918). Klimt's early work had been quite conventional, but upon reaching maturity around the turn of the century he began to paint and draw nude hysterics. Some of his studies for the large paintings that were to decorate the University of Vienna depict nude women in the typical hysterical *arc de cercle* posture, a motif he repeated many times. As early as 1902, an inimical critic referred to Klimt, not without reason, as the "painter of the unconscious."

Klimt's most gifted student, Egon Schiele, went even further than his master in exploring man's neurotic aspects. In his self-portraits, he analyzed his own personality as penetratingly as Freud analyzed his. In the double portrait *Heinrich and Otto Benesch* (1913), he not only illuminated the dark sides of his subjects' psyches but also evoked the Oedipal tension between them.

Freud began his own investigation of the psyche with his study of hysteria, which he was still working on when the Mayerling tragedy occurred in 1889. Through his study he discovered how powerful and all-encompassing a force the sexual drive is, and what strange forms of behavior it could produce when inhibited or repressed. How deep an impression this and other early studies made on Vienna's literary world may be illustrated by the playwright Hugo von Hofmannsthal's remark that, while he was writing the libretto for Richard Strauss's opera *Elektra*, he consulted them again and again. *Elektra* is indeed portrayed as a hysterical woman.

With the appearance of *The Interpretation of Dreams* in 1900, psychoanalysis became established. This greatest of Freud's works is one of introspection; in it all interest is devoted to the inner life of man, to the neglect of the external world.

Freud took as the epigraph for his turn-of-century masterpiece a line from Virgil: *Flectere si nequeo superos, Acheronta movebo* ("If I cannot move heaven, I will stir up the underworld"). This motto was a suggestion that turning inward was the result of a tragic inability to alter the external world or to stop its dissolution. The best one could do, therefore, was to deny importance to the world at large by concentrating all interest on the dark corners of the psyche.

The motto could have been Vienna's as well, but the city chose its own—an architectural motto that seemed to be the first step toward fulfilling Empress Elizabeth's desire for "a completely equipped insane asylum." In the decade after her death, one of Vienna's most distinguished architects, Otto Wagner, was commissioned by the city to design the Church of St. Leopold on the Steinhof, a church devoted to serving the spiritual needs of the mentally ill. Wagner conceived of the church as a total work of art, a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, and he invited many of the best young artists of Vienna—Kolo Moser, Richard Luksch, Othmar Schimkovitz, and others—to participate in decorating it. One of the most splendid features of the church, begun in 1905 and completed in 1907, is its golden cupola, a cupola covered with gilded bronze which glows when the sun's rays reflect off of it.

Thus during the last years of the disintegration of the great Habsburg Empire, its capital paid tribute to the importance of madness with an impressive monument. It was fitting for a city whose greatest writers and painters explored the nature of madness in their work and whose best thinkers devoted their energies to discovering and understanding the previously unknown workings of the human mind.

Because of what took place in Vienna at that extraordinary time, we now have the means of mastering, or at least understanding, some of the darker forces at work in our minds, and so of finding it possible—even when surrounded by disintegration—to extract meaning from life and, as Freud taught, to be master in our own house.