EDVARD MUNCH'S FATAL WOMEN:
A CRITICAL APPROACH

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
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MASTER OF ARTS

By

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This study is the first comprehensive analysis of the fatal woman motif in the writings and art of Edvard Munch from the early 1890s to 1909. It uses a background of the women in the artist's life as well as the literary and artistic worlds in which Munch participated. Following separate accounts of Munch's relationships with five women, the manner in which the artist characterizes each as a fatal woman in his writings and art is discussed and analyzed. Next, the study describes the fatal woman motif in late nineteenth century art and literature. It begins with a discussion of the origin of the Symbolist and Decadent Movements and an ideological examination of the fatal woman motif as it is manifested in the writing and art of these two groups. In addition, it compares Munch's visual manifestations of the femme fatale with the manner in which the artist's contemporaries depicted her. Finally, this study describes two groups of men with whom Munch was particularly close: the Christiania Bohème and the Schwarzen Ferkel Circle. An examination of the literary works of these men helps to determine the way in which they affected Munch's pictorial perception of the fatal woman.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Edvard Munch (1863-1944), Norway's leading Expressionist artist, lived and worked in various art centers in Europe. A trip to Paris in 1885 represented Munch's first excursion outside the country of his birth. It was there that he first became exposed to the Impressionists, and visited the Salon and the Louvre. In 1908, he suffered a serious mental breakdown after which he spent the remainder of his life in semi-seclusion in Norway.

Overwhelmed by his fear of life and often ill, Munch based his art on the physical and emotional problems which plagued him and which he expressed thusly in his writings:

"The fear of life has accompanied me ever since I can remember. My art has been a confession. . . . Yet I have the feeling that the fear of life is a necessity to me, just like illness. Without the fear of life and illness I should have been like a rudderless ship."

Fatalistic by nature, introspective and brooding and predisposed to view life as a series of anxious struggles, all of which were nonetheless a necessity to him, it was for Munch the "insanely religious" father who reared him and the deaths of his tubercular mother and sister that formed his propensity as an adult to view the world as a hell on earth:

"Two of the most terrible enemies of mankind I inherited, the legacy of tuberculosis and insanity. Disease, madness, and death were the black angels around my cradle. A mother who died early gave me the germ of consumption, an overly nervous, an insanely religious father . . . gave me the seeds of madness. From birth . . . there by my side, the angels of anxiety . . . sorrow . . .

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and death . . . of fear . . . followed me into the spring sun, in the beauty of summer. They stood by my side in the evening when I closed my eyes . . . and threatened me with death, hell, and eternal punishment.

Impressionable as a child, Munch was to remain so throughout his life. The anguish and terror which appear so frequently in Munch's writing proved, at times, unbearable for the artist. By his own admission his mother gave to him the germ of consumption. Prone to suffer from respiratory ailments, the most serious of which was tuberculosis at the age of thirteen which nearly took his life, fearing himself insane and plagued by chronic anxiety and episodic depression, long confinements to hospitals, sanatoria and solitary retreats to health spas and seaside resorts became a way of life for the artist. It was as if Munch derived strength and the will to live from such therapy, despite all his sufferings.

Accompanying his fundamental dread of life, Munch suffered from a series of unfortunate and unsuccessful romantic intrigues. As he moved closer and closer to complete mental collapse in 1908, even such remedies as rest and communes with nature were counteracted by the women in Munch's life, whom he felt held a strange and magical power over him and to whom he ultimately succumbed, body and spirit. Thus, in addition to basing his art on his own anxiety and illnesses, Munch patterned his art and his writings on ill-fated love affairs remembered and regretted: "I do not believe in an art which has not forced its way through man's need to open his heart. All art, . . . must be created with one's heart blood." With uncompromising self-analysis and painful admission, Munch searched for written and pictorial equivalents for his morbid preoccupations. His obsessions led him to an anguished eroticism in which women were portrayed as fatal.
Munch's transmutation of the female principle into dangerous *femmes fatales* was orchestrated in perfect harmony with the Symbolists and Decadents who, during the latter half of the nineteenth century, likewise came to view women as demonic, superhuman forces against which mortal men wrestled and inevitably fell victim. Commenting on Munch's predisposition to view women as fatal in connection with the Symbolists and Decadents, Bernard Denvir writes:

The concept of the *femme fatale*, using the phrase in its literal sense, to indicate the idea of woman as a malevolent, destructive, and seductive siren, appears time and time again in the later work of Rossetti, in the paintings of Moreau, Redon, Klimt; in the drawings of Félicien Rops, Beardsley, and Groz; in the writings of Swinburne, Verlaine, and Wilde. It was typified by the pre-occupation with the theme of Salome, and it played a vital part in the work of Munch. Time and time again he reverted to the theme of woman as a vampire, as the fatal temptress. . . .

Obsessed with the fatal woman from whose binding spell there was no escape, no release, Munch and his Symbolist and Decadent counterparts created a fictitious, yet menacing female energy who threaded her way through the art and literature of the counter-culture like a demon unleashed.

In France, the ideological manifestation of the *femme fatale* began with the writings of Charles Baudelaire. In fact it was Baudelaire, with the publication of his *Les Fleurs du Mal* (1857), who provided the catalyst for the depiction of this female archetype found in late nineteenth century art and literature.

In this work, a poem entitled "Les Metamorphoses du Vampire" caught the imagination of two generations of Symbolists and Decadents. Of the poem George Ross Ridge writes:

Charles Baudelaire casts modern man and woman in a graphic scene that is to obsess writers of the French decadence. Modern man is shown as a weak decadent consumed by modern woman, who is a vampire or a *femme fatale*. Their love is a passionate death
struggle in which the active female, like a spider, destroys the passive male. It is an ironical poem. In it man searches for beauty but finds ugliness, and he looks for love in woman's arms only to confront destruction. The beautiful mannequin of his dreams, his ideal woman, is actually a vampire who drains him of his energy, i.e., his life.

Gone was the Byronic hero of the Romantic Era, who often preyed on the weaknesses of women. In his place the domineering woman, the new ideal of the Decadent male, arose. Masochistic love for her by such a male was complemented by her need to fulfill her sadistic pleasures. She was a frightening beauty who came to usurp the beauty and the sublime in nature. It was she who fascinated yet simultaneously became the image of man's most primordial terror.

Outside the periphery of the Symbolist and Decadent Movements proper, the idea of woman as man's fatal enticer likewise captured the minds and hearts of a radical group of writers in Munch's hometown of Christiania (Oslo), Norway in the mid-to-late 1880s. Calling themselves the Christiania Bohème, the members of this group of rebels and libertines, including Munch who joined the group in 1884, were led by Hans Jaeger. Jaeger encouraged his followers to practice free love in order to make way for a society based on reason, harmony and love between the sexes. He also instructed the Bohèmes to write about their personal experiences with women in the spirit of a scientific experiment. With time, however, Jaeger's dream of a utopia, based on more equitable relationships between men and women, was shattered. One by one the individual affiliates of the Bohème succumbed to the fatal powers of women, and they wrote of these experiences with heartfelt passion.

Like his friends, Munch was not immune to his experiences within the Bohème. Of his dealings with the bohemians Munch wrote: "For many artists
it was a testing-time and a touchstone. In this atmosphere, Munch came to reject his father's religious and moral teachings and embrace hedonism instead. Significantly, it was in this milieu that Munch first fell victim to the wiles of a woman and was subsequently consumed by jealousy and despair. It was in the Bohème that Munch began to assimilate and accumulate the material for his fatal woman motif.

In 1892, the artist went to Berlin. Along with others he had known in the Bohème, Munch came into contact with yet another group of radicals who called themselves the Schwarzen Ferkel Circle. Guided by Stanislaw Przybyszewski, whose writings consists of a pathological eroticism via the art of Félicien Rops, as well as known misogynist August Strindberg, the group based their discussions on the hypocrisy of marriage, free love and fatal triangles. Tending to view women as an eternal peril which they then expressed in their writings, the members of the Ferkel Circle were particularly important to the continuing development and amplification of Munch's fatal woman theme throughout the 1890s and well into the first decade of the twentieth century.

The Problem and Its Purpose

This study investigates a selection of the artist's writings and works from the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth century in order to determine how intricately Munch's notion of the fatal woman is tied to his personal experiences with five women. In addition, the influence on Munch of Symbolist and Decadent ideology, as well as the writings of his friends from the Christiania Bohème and the Ferkel Circle, is assessed.
Survey of the Literature

Das Werk des Edvard Munch (1894)\textsuperscript{9} is the first work dedicated to an analysis of Munch's art. Edited by Stanislaw Przybyszewski, the book contains essays contributed by its editor, Willi Pastor, Franz Servaes, and Julius Meier-Graefe, all of whom were friends of Munch in Berlin (1892-1896). Przybyszewski's essay was particularly useful to this study, for Przybyszewski was an especially close friend of Munch and also shared many of the artist's ideas concerning art and the nature of women. His essay, although subjective, analyzes Munch's works in terms of women as being fatal to man. It may therefore reflect the way in which Munch himself felt about his relationships with females. August Strindberg's 1896 article\textsuperscript{10} about several of Munch's major works, including The Kiss (1891-92), Vampire (1893), Madonna (1893), The Scream (1893), and Jealousy (1895), may reflect what the artist himself wished to convey to the spectator about women.

Strindberg and Munch were close friends in Berlin, and since there is no solid evidence to indicate that Munch objected vehemently to Strindberg's misogynist interpretation of the women appearing in these works of art, one might therefore conclude that Strindberg's comments are accurate. The review was therefore an important source for establishing the beginnings of the manner in which the fatal woman motif is manifested in Munch's art, for as friends the two men often commiserated about a number of subjects, including women. Gustav Schiefler's Verzeichnis des Graphischen Werks Edvard Munch bis 1906 (1907)\textsuperscript{11} is the first book to catalogue Munch's graphics. Because the artist collaborated with Schiefler on his book, this work was an excellent source for a review of the graphic works discussed in this
study. General studies and monographs by authors who had known Munch were also useful. Such works include Curt Glaser's *Edvard Munch* (1917).\(^{12}\) Based on conversations with the artist, Glaser's book deals with a formal analysis of Munch's art and particularly the works produced before his mental breakdown in 1908. Jens Thiis' *Edvard Munch og hans samtid* (1933),\(^{13}\) is a study of Norwegian art in the 1880s; it includes an analysis of the artist's works before his voluntary commitment to a sanatorium in 1908 and details Munch's life based on conversations with him. Rolf Stenersen's *Edvard Munch: Naerbilde av et geni* (1946),\(^{14}\) contains anecdotes about the artist's life. Insomuch as it establishes a sense of Munch's relationships with his friends and the women in his life, derived from Stenersen's in-depth interviews with the artist late in life, the book was particularly useful to this study.

In 1949, five years after the artist's death, Munch's art and other such personal belongings including his notebooks and letters were bequested to the city of Oslo to become part of the Oslo Municipal Collection. As this body of materials became available to scholars, the systematic study and publication of materials began to enlarge our knowledge of the way in which Munch lived, worked and thought about a number of subjects. For example, *Edvard Munchs: Brev Familien*, derived from letters written and received by Munch, was published in 1949.\(^{15}\) Edited by the artist's sister, Inger Munch, this work contains enlightening information about Munch's whereabouts, his feelings concerning art, friends, and lovers he had known.

Since 1950, a vast amount of information about Munch and his art has been written in or transcribed into English from the original Norwegian, Swedish or German. The first outstanding study on Munch in English is
Frederick B. Deknatel's *Edvard Munch* (1950). Written in collaboration with the major exhibition of the artist's works held at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1950, Deknatel's book examines Munch's art against the background of his difficult life and thus generates an interest in the man and his art for the American scholar. In 1956, Doctors Stanley Steinberg and Joseph Weiss became the first among a number of physicians to examine Munch's art in relation to his psychological make-up before his mental breakdown in 1908. Several important studies by Reinhold Heller, perhaps America's foremost scholar on Munch and his art, were also invaluable to this study. Transcribed from its original Norwegian text, Arve Moen's contributions to our knowledge of Munch include *Edvard Munch: Age and Milieu* (1956), wherein he pits the artist's life against the background of the times in which he lived, and *Edvard Munch: Woman and Eros* (1957). Though a generalized account of the relationship between Munch's art and women, the latter work by Moen provided a good starting point for the realization of this study. Another excellent book transcribed from the original Norwegian text into English, and used copiously in this study, is Johan H. Langaard's and Reidar Revold's *Edvard Munch fra År til År: A Year by Year Record of Edvard Munch's Life* (1961). A chronology of Munch's life, this work is invaluable to anyone wishing to study Munch's whereabouts and activities from birth until death.

With the opening of the Munch Museum in Oslo in 1963, more materials concerning Munch were made available to the scholar for study and several other important works about the artist and his work were transcribed into English. Such works include Johan H. Langaard's and Reidar Revold's *Masterpieces from the Artist's Own Collection* (1964); Werner Timm's *The
Graphic Art of Edvard Munch (1969), and J. P. Hodin's Edvard Munch (1972). Hodin's book was originally published in Sweden in 1948. Its author had met Munch late in life. Dealing with an overview of the artist's world and his art, Hodin's book provided an excellent biographical basis for the study and analysis of the man and his art.

During the 1970s and the early 1980s, authorities on Munch began to make more specific references to the artist's liaisons with women in passing or in a very generalized, summary manner. Others began to concentrate their attentions on specific aspects of Munch's relationships with a particular woman with whom he was romantically involved. From such accounts the background material for this present study was realized. For example, Reinhold Heller's The Scream (1973) makes passing reference to Munch's relationship with Fru Heiberg, but the main thrust of his study pertains to a formal as well as a philosophical analysis of The Scream against the background of the existential and psychological struggles which beset the artist and his contemporaries. Heller's article entitled "Munch's 'Night,' the Aesthetics of Decadence and the Content of Biography," (1978) likewise makes passing references to Fru Heiberg as does Trygve Nergaard's "Despair," also of 1978. Yet, the main objective of each author is far removed from an analysis of the dynamics of the Munch-Heiberg affair as central to the creation of an anguished eroticism found in Munch's art. For background material on Munch's relationship with Dagny Juell Przybyszewski, Heller's article entitled "Love as a Series of Paintings and a Matter of Life and Death: Edvard Munch in Berlin, 1892-1895," (1978) was especially useful, as was Ragna Stang's Edvard Munch: The Man and His Art (1979) for biographical data about the woman. Reidar
Dittmann's *Eros and Psyche: Strindberg and Munch in the 1890s* (1982), devotes a chapter to Dagny in relation to her dealings with the Ferkel Circle in Berlin and was therefore another reliable source used in studying the relationship which existed between Dagny and Munch. For a firsthand account of the artist's relationship with this woman, August Strindberg's semi-autobiographical novel, *The Cloister* (written c. 1896); Stanislaw Przybyszewski's *roman à clef, Overboard* (1896); and Freda Strindberg's *Marriage with Genius* (1940) were likewise instrumental. For biographical data concerning Judith Molard, Lionel Carley's *Delius: The Paris Years* (1975) was particularly helpful as was Bente Torjusen's "The Mirror" (1978). Although Torjusen believes Molard may have been Munch's model in Paris, and although he hints at an affair between the two, Torjusen's article deals with the graphics Munch produced in Paris in 1896-97 rather than a copious study of the fatal woman motif found in these graphics by Munch. Arne Eggum's short essay entitled "The Green Room," (1977) not only provides some biographical data concerning Tulla Larsen but is useful for its overview of the artist's relationship with Tulla as well as for its generalized account of works of art by Munch in which the woman appears. Yet, Eggum's article falls short of analyzing and interpreting Tulla as a fatal woman to the same detailed extent presented in this study. Based on Eva's letters to and from the artist, Waldemar Stabell's article (1973) is an impressive account of the Munch-Mudocci relationship. For survey or general studies pertaining to Munch's relationships with women, see Harold W. Wylie's paper on Edvard Munch presented before the American Psychoanalytical Association on 17 December 1976. In his study, Wylie provides enlightening information concerning Munch's often provocative,
certainly complicated, and frequently disturbed encounters with women which he believes to be symptomatic of a narcissistic disorder. Equally informative is Carol Ravenal's unpublished article (1979),38 which focuses on Munch's troubled relationships with women as a result of his unresolved relationship with his mother who died when the artist was five years old. Yet, while claiming this traumatic childhood experience was the reason for his complicated relationships with women and while Ravenal's study was instrumental to the formation of the second chapter of this paper, her rather brief survey of Munch's affairs with women and the works in which they might appear falls short of a complete and comprehensive examination and analysis of the fatal woman motif found in the artist's writings and art.

motif in the art and literature of the Symbolists and Decadents for this paper. Through an ideological examination of the works cited, a comparative study between the fatal woman motif in the art and literature of these two groups and Munch's fatal woman theme in his art was realized.

The major sources consulted for the cultural and literary background of the Christiania Bohème and Munch's affiliation with this group of radical literary figures were as follows: Pola Gauguin's Christian Krohg (1932), which explores the life, times, writings and art of Krohg, a leading member of the Bohème; Jens Thii's Edvard Munch og hans samtid (1933), a study which, although tending to cover-up Munch's dealings with the bohemians in Christiania is nevertheless an important one; Alrik Gustafson's Six Scandinavian Novellists (1940), wherein can be found an important chapter on the works of the onetime affiliate of the Bohème, Knut Hamsun; W. Wartmann's "Edward Munch, der Graphiker," (1945), in which the author discusses Hans Jaeger's Syk Kjaerlihet (1893) and cites specific passages from that work; Odd Eidem's Introduction to Fra Christiania Bohemen (1950), which reintroduces Jaeger's most controversial novel against the backdrop of the bohemian movement in Christiania in the 1880s; Arve Moen's Edvard Munch: Age and Milieu (1956), wherein the author discusses the bohemian movement against the background of polite society; Brian Downs, Modern Norwegian Literature: 1860-1918 (1966), who devotes a chapter in his book to the works of several members of the Bohème including Knut Hamsun, Arne Garborg, and Sigbjorn Obstfelder; Roy Asbjørn Boe, "Edvard Munch: His Life and Work from 1880-1920" (1970), who dedicates a chapter section to the cultural and literary ferment in Christiania in the 1880s; Ragna Stang, Edvard Munch: The Man and His Art (1979), who devotes
a chapter to the bohemian movement and Munch's part in it; Carla Lathe's, *Edvard Munch and His Literary Associates* (1979), wherein the author explores the literary background of the Bohemian movement with special emphasis on its leader, Hans Jaeger; and Kirk Varnedoe, "Christian Krogh and Edvard Munch," (1979), who explores Krogh's controversial book *Albertine* (1886) and his equally controversial painting *Albertine in the Police Doctor's Waiting Room* (1888) against an unbending, middle class resistance.

Particularly useful in studying the literary and social ferment which existed inside the boundaries of the Schwarzen Ferkel Circle were the following works: August Strindberg's *The Cloister* (written c. 1896), wherein Strindberg recalls life within the Circle as a series of disastrous intrigues between friends and lovers; Stanislaw Przybyszewski's *Erinnerungen an das literarische Berlin* (1896), which describes the literary trends in Berlin in the 1890s and also contains anecdotes about life within the Ferkel Circle; Stanislaw Przybyszewski's *Overboard* (1896), which describes the triangle which existed between himself, Dagny Juell, and Munch against the backdrop of the activities of the Circle; Freda Strindberg's *Marriage with Genius* (1940), i.e., the author's memoirs concerning her life with August Strindberg with particular emphasis on the Berlin period (1892-94) and the activities within the Ferkel Circle; Jethro Bithell's *Modern German Literature: 1880-1938* (1946), with a chapter dedicated to the works of Stanislaw Przybyszewski and Richard Dehmel as well as modern literary trends in Berlin in the 1890s; Otto Eduard Lessing's *Masters in Modern German Literature* (1967), with a chapter devoted to the life and works of Ferkel Circle member
Richard Dehmel; biographies on August Strindberg including Martin Lamm's *August Strindberg* (1971); Wladyslawa Jaworska's informative article (1974), in which he examines the relationship that existed between Edvard Munch and Stanislaw Przybyszewski; the misogynist plays of Strindberg such as *The Father* and *Creditors* as in *August Strindberg, The Plays* (1975); Carla Lathe's *Edvard Munch and His Literary Associates* (1979), wherein the author examines, in part, Strindberg's and Przybyszewski's literary contributions to the Ferkel Circle; and Reidar Dittmann's *Eros and Psyche: Strindberg and Munch in the 1890s* (1982), which contains a brief chapter about the Ferkel Circle and the relationships between its members.

**Method of Procedure**

Following this introductory chapter, Chapter II, entitled "Munch's Five Fatal Women," is divided into five separate sections. Each section discusses one woman with whom Munch became romantically involved and is subdivided under three separate headings: 1) Biographical data pertaining to the lives of these women and Munch's relationship with them; 2) Munch's characterizations of these women as fatal to his well-being, derived from the artist's writings; and 3) The manner in which Munch depicts his women as fatal to himself in works of art. In addition, the women in this section are presented as follows: Section I: Fru Heiberg, whom Munch knew intimately in Christiania in 1885 until his departure for Paris in 1889; Section II: Dagny Juell Przybyszewski, a childhood friend of the artist and a woman with whom he became obsessively attached in Berlin from 1892 until the year of his departure from the German capital in 1896; Section III: Judith Molard, a girl Munch met in Paris in 1896 in connection with
the Molard Circle; Section IV: Tulla Larsen, the daughter of a wealthy Norwegian businessman and a woman with whom Munch had an especially torrid affair from the late 1890s until 1902; and Section V: Eva Mudocci, an English violinist Munch met in Paris in 1903, and with whom he had contact until shortly after his release from a sanatorium in 1909. From such accounts of Munch's relationships with these women, the manner in which they affected his perception of the fatal woman, both pictorially and in the artist's writings, is determined.

Chapter III begins with a discussion concerning the Symbolist and Decadent Movements in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The discussion includes what the men involved in these parallel movements believed about art and the world. Following this discussion an ideological study of the fatal woman motif as it is manifested in the writings and the art of the Symbolists and Decadents is examined. Moving from the general to the specific, it is subsequently shown that Munch's visual perception of the femme fatale reflects Symbolist and Decadent ideology concerning this same subject through a comparative study of the fatal woman in the literature and art of these groups with Munch's pictorial depictions of her.

The major thrust of Chapter IV is to study two groups of men, namely the Christiania Bohème and the Schwarzen Ferkel Circle, who were of particular importance to the development and amplification of Munch's fatal woman motif. The chapter is divided into six sections. Section I deals with a discussion of the Christiania Bohème as a group of literary radicals who congregated in Christiania in the mid-to-late 1880s and who advocated free love. Subsequently, it is demonstrated through an examination of their individual writings that these men became victims of the very women
they wished to free from the moral and social strictures of middle class society. In Section II Munch's part in this group's activities is discussed as is their influence over him. In Section III we follow Munch to Paris where he suffered from severe depression and where he first formulated his artistic goal to base his art on people who breathe and feel and suffer and love. As is shown, it was his dealings with the Christiania Bohème which caused him to base his art not only on his own sufferings but on the sufferings of others wrought of his experiences within the Bohème. Section IV examines the group known as the Schwarzen Ferkel Circle, i.e., a group of literary radicals with whom Munch came into contact in the early-to-mid 1890s. This discussion includes the lives and works of the major contributors to this group, such as August Strindberg and his misogynist writings, Stanislaw Przybyszewski and his novels based on a compelling pathological eroticism, and the Symbolist poetry of Richard Dehmel. Because many of Munch's friends from the Christiania Bohème migrated to Berlin in the early 1890s, Section V discusses the manner in which both the Bohèmes and the Ferkel Circle members influenced Munch's art. By comparing the writings of his friends with the fatal woman as she appears in Munch's art from 1893 to 1902, it is determined to what extent Munch's friends were central to his pictorial depiction of the fatal woman. In Section VI the problems leading up to the artist's mental breakdown and subsequent admission to Dr. Jacobson's clinic in Copenhagen in 1908 are discussed. While convalescing there, Munch created his "Alpha and Omega" series in which a woman is depicted as being fatal to man. As is shown, the creation of this series was wrought from the artist's remembrances of the women he had known and the friends whose negative attitudes towards women, as
demonstrated in their writings, continued to haunt him until his release from the clinic in 1909. In addition it is shown that after Munch's stay at the clinic, he seemed to have exorcised many of his prior feelings about woman formed within the milieus of the Bohème and the Ferkel Circle and from his individual relationships with females.

Chapter V concludes this study of Munch. In summary fashion it reviews the manner in which Munch's fatal woman theme, manifested in his writings and his art, was the result of personal sexual conflicts with women, a reflection of Symbolist and Decadent ideology, and an expression of the concerns of his friends with this same subject matter.

Significance of the Problem

Despite all the literature already written about Munch, no one has made a serious and systematic effort to investigate and integrate otherwise scattered materials concerning the artist's fatal woman theme in such a sustained and detailed manner until now. That is, there has been no comprehensive study concerning Munch's relationships with individual women as the reason for this motif in his art, nor has there been a detailed study of the fatal woman theme in unison with the *femme fatale* as she is manifested in the writings and art of the Symbolists and Decadents and the Christiania Bohème and the Schwarzen Ferkel Circle. The significance of this study is not only to integrate such materials but to provide new interpretations and meanings for works of art by Munch in which the fatal woman is apparent. Munch once wrote: "In my art I have sought to explain life and its meaning to myself. I have also sought to aid others in clarifying life to themselves." It is with the artist's statement in
mind that the motif of the fatal woman in Munch's writing and art is studied against the backdrop of his times and the literary works of his friends. It is the intent of the author of this paper to clarify and make concrete one thematic aspect of Munch's art to the reader and thereby contribute to a greater understanding and appreciation of the artist and his work as part of the universal and continuing human emotional condition.
I. NOTES


9Stanislaw Przybyszewski, ed., Das Werk des Edvard Munch, with contributions by Willi Pastor, Franz Servaes, and Julius Meier-Graefe (Berlin: S. Fischer, 1894).


12Curt Glaser, Edvard Munch (Berlin: Bruno Cassirer, 1917).
13 Jens Thiis, Edvard Munch og hans samtid (Oslo: Gyldendal Norsk Forlag, 1933). Hereafter cited as Thiis (1933).


23a Hodin (1972).


38. Ravenal (1979), passim.


55. Thiis (1933).


68. F. Strindberg (1940), passim.


75. Dittmann (1982).

CHAPTER II

EDVARD MUNCH'S FATAL WOMEN

Whether represented as themselves or alluded to as mysterious mythological and often terrifying personages, whether depicted in a favorable, unfavorable or seemingly noncommittal manner, many wives or mistresses have been immortalized by their artist husbands (or lovers) in works of art. In the late nineteenth century, some artists concerned with visually portraying the women who affected their personal lives project a presence of mind that goes far beyond the artist's particular content. For instance, Édouard Manet's portrait of his wife in *Mme. Manet at the Piano* (1867) may be viewed as a statement of congeniality, domestic comfort, security and tranquility. By Claude Monet's own written account, he sought to record the pallor of death on his wife's face (shortly after her death) in *Camille on Her Death Bed* (1879). The work ostensibly exceeds Monet's concern with capturing his immediate impressions of death and its gangrenous color to convey also his heartfelt grief. A likeness of Jane Burden Morris, the wife of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, is captured in the artist's *Astarte Syriaca* of 1877. Yet, by casting her in the role of an enigmatic femme fatale, Rossetti demonstrates that he possessed certain ambivalent feelings towards her. Likewise, Edward Burne-Jones, in his "Perseus Cycle" series (1876-98), portrays his mistress, Mary Zambaco, as a vulnerable yet fatal medusa in *The Finding of Medusa*. In Odilon Redon's *Closed Eyes* (1890), the artist not only captures a likeness of his wife but conveys a spiritual affinity with her as well. Paul Gauguin's
Tahitian mistress is a youthful, exotic primitive, as shown in the artist's *The Spirit of the Dead Watching* (1892). Here, a mysterious aura of uneasiness surrounds the reclining nude, possibly revealing Gauguin's own disquieting thoughts about the sensuous, elusive woman.

Edvard Munch also depicts in works of art the women with whom he was romantically involved. The following chapter includes general biographical data pertaining to the lives of each of these women, Munch's relationship with them, and the artist's characterizations of them as *femmes fatales* in his writings. Also discussed are works of art by Munch in which the women are shown as fatal to himself. The women in this study are presented as follows: Fru Heiberg, whom Munch knew intimately from 1885 until his departure for Paris in 1889; Dagny Juell (Przybyszewski), a childhood friend of Munch's and a woman with whom the artist became romantically involved from 1892 to 1896; Judith Molard, a girl Munch met in Paris in 1896 in connection with the Molard Circle; Tulla Larsen, the daughter of a wealthy Norwegian businessman and a woman with whom Munch had a torrid affair from the late 1890s until 1902; and Eva Mudocci, an English violinist Munch met in Paris in 1903 and with whom he had contact until shortly after his release from Dr. Jacobson's clinic in 1909. Munch's relationships with these women who are manifested in his writing and art are examined, and the manner in which they affected his perception of the fatal woman is thereby determined.

**Section I: Fru Heiberg**

At the age of twenty-one, Munch became involved with a married woman whom he refers to as "Fru Heiberg" in his early diary entries. Actually,
Fru Heiberg is a fictitious name. Trygve Nergaard discovered her true identity. According to Nergaard she was, in life, Emilie (Milly) Ihlen Thaulow, the wife of Dr. Carl Thaulow, a naval medical officer, and sister-in-law to the painter Fritz Thaulow. The Thaulows were married when Emilie was sixteen years old. Later, Emilie divorced her first husband to marry the actor Ludvig Bergh in 1891.10

From what can be reconstructed, Emilie had a reputation for being unfaithful to her first husband.11 Munch met her—a woman three years his senior—in 1884, the year he was introduced to the Christiania Bohème by his mentor and friend Christian Krohg.12 Emilie was a frequent visitor to the gatherings of the Christiania Bohème. In all probability, it was at one of these meetings that the two met. According to Reinhold Heller, the adulterous affair lasted for six years: from 1884 until Munch's departure for Paris in 1889.13

The Writings

During the time of his relationship with Fru Heiberg and for years after the tumultuous affair was over, Munch wrote extensively of the married woman in his diary. In these entries, Munch writes about the romance as if it is a fictional narrative, and he views his relationship with Fru Heiberg in self-referential terms. Munch himself is a character in this story, written in third and first-person narrative. Fru Heiberg is represented through the mind's eye of her bewildered yet captivated admirer.

In one such episode, Munch's feelings dominate a meeting between the two lovers. The impression is one of attraction punctuated by a certain
naïveté. Except for a few descriptive details of setting, Munch concentrates exclusively on their strange encounter:

We sat across from each other. Our eyes met. A reddish shadow over everything.
And then she sat up taller and leaned her head back against the sofa. And so I had to look more closely at a strange pattern in the upholstery and I bent over towards her so that our cheeks touched. And I felt how close we were to each other.

With this meeting behind him, Munch begins to contemplate another such rendezvous in his diary.

Walking down Karl Johan Street he thinks about the woman who has captured his heart. Suddenly he meets her on the street. In passing, he nonchalantly notices her "wifely appearance." Shaking this thought, the young man concentrates on his feelings of happiness and weakness. In his joy and longing for the woman he remains oblivious to what is taking place around him. Fru Heiberg quickly reminds him of their potentially dangerous encounter on the street. She leaves him. Munch is temporarily confused and frustrated by this new set of circumstances. In this way he implies his own ignorance and innocence in such matters. In contrast, the woman appears more experienced in the habits of social deception. He begins to depict her as the one in control while his mind is clouded. Changing to third-person narrative, Munch comments on their chance meeting:

He was walking along Karl Johan at dusk—a soft, mild winter evening—two days had passed since he had been together with—He was going to meet her Sunday—that would be the day after tomorrow—He was full of longing for her—the day after tomorrow was so far away—he looked at the yellow air behind the King's Castle—dark shapes were passing him. The soft melancholy of dusk—gave him a sickly longing after her He felt someone who glided up towards him And then she was there next to him wrapped in her fur coat—it gives her a more wifely appearance than usual—he felt her arm against his—she was a bit chilled—It was as if a flood went through his blood a flood of joy he had never felt before—a weakness in his limbs—in his cheeks, could almost not say a thing He was so happy at just being able to walk next
to her without saying a word. They walked down Karl Johan. You must go now because here comes someone I know--she said suddenly. Goodbye then she said and turned off It was sad to leave her now but he was going to see her tomorrow And he drifted about while the light disappeared more and more--filled by her he had just left--This chance meeting.

But then a thought suddenly came up in him which appalled him--was he supposed to have left her--had he not heard wrong.

Part of Munch's naïveté and confusion was due to his inexperience in such amorous affairs. Yet, more importantly, he had been reared in a strictly religious household. This fact interfered with his erotic yearnings, and complications followed.

In another passage describing an arranged meeting with the woman, ambivalence seems to overwhelm the artist as he suddenly remembers that Fru Heiberg is a married woman. This fact frightens and shocks him. As if to remove himself from the situation, Munch writes of his erotic encounter with Fru Heiberg in third-person narrative. From such a perspective Munch seeks to gain some distance from his actions. It may point to his attempt somehow to withdraw from a situation which is beginning to cause him some distress. The guilt which he conveys to the reader for having had sexual contact with another man's wife acts as a foil to the cool nonchalance of Fru Heiberg. Munch does not pass judgment on the woman's actions and words; yet, by juxtaposing himself as a man of conscience against her complacency, Munch inadvertently characterizes her as an unscrupulous seductress:

'What would you say if I were to come to you?' she said, and glanced at him. They both smiled. He saw her coming in her white linen slip, crossed eyes and bare legs, and the thoughts gave him pleasure.

Munch continues:

After a while she said, 'My position is really good. Because I have no children I can do whatever I like.' Suddenly he
thought of the husband; he had almost forgotten that she was married, and the thought came as a shock to him. 'But what of your husband?' 'Oh, him. He doesn't care what I do. I have my free will in everything.'

In his notes, Munch advances progressively from a sense of uneasiness to one of pain, remorse and guilt. He sees himself as well as the fictional, helpless husband caught in a hopeless triangle, mere pawns in a chess-like game of love and guilt. He begins to project his own sense of guilt and suspicion onto the husband and then portrays the woman, by implication, as a deceiver and a liar. Munch himself is a forlorn accomplice to the deception. He returns to first-person narrative as he addresses the husband. His tone is remorseful and his words a confession:

How many times have you been alone at home in the evenings and waited for your wife, listening for her footsteps? She told you she was going to her friend, but she never visited her really. And so she was with me, embracing me fervently... But suspicion and jealousy have tortured you and have eaten at the roots of your heart.

Despite the husband, Munch could not resist the provocative Fru Heiberg. Referring to himself as "Nansen," he writes:

Nansen sat in a heap in the middle of the sofa. How tired he felt--and how lonely. He had wandered the streets until he was nearly dropping, and then finally he had dragged himself up there. Sick, sick and lonely. How he longed to lay his tired head on a nice, soft, woman's breast--breathe in her perfume--listen to her heartbeat. Feel her soft, round breasts up against his chin.

In an attempt to free himself from Fru Heiberg, Munch visits a prostitute. Yet, the immediate gratification of Munch's basic need for companionship, comfort and sex soon gives way to repulsion and the image of the woman he truly desires, hates and fears. It is the specter of Fru Heiberg which haunts his memory and clouds his thinking. She is the source of his innermost anguish:
Come back this evening, then, she said. Perhaps, he replied. She was really too revolting. And the mental picture of Fru Heiberg was far more seductive, far more tempting than ever. He clenched his teeth. He suddenly felt an overwhelming feeling of hatred—-he did not exactly know against whom—but he felt it as strongly as if she had rejected him.\

Continuing in third-person narrative, Munch goes to Fru Heiberg. Yet, he is torn between desire and fear. The troubled relationship is accentuated by ominous thoughts. Now actual intimacy is denied as he transforms the enchantress of his dreams into a horrid monster:  

He sat with his arms around her waist... her head so near him... it was so strange to have her eyes, her mouth, her breasts so close... He watched every eyelash... watched the greenish lights inside her eye... There was the transparency of the sea... He touched her mouth with his fingers... he fingered her brooch... he felt with his trembling hands... he buried his head in her lap... he felt two burning lips in the back of his neck... it made his whole body freeze... a freezing lust... so he pressed himself forward as if in a cramp. This was his vampire.  

The moment Fru Heiberg becomes his vampire, resolution seems impossible. Sexual responsiveness is replaced by sexual conflict, and Munch is henceforth transformed into the victim of life-destroying woman. It was to be a pattern which Munch would follow in subsequent interpersonal relationships with numerous women until his final mental breakdown in 1908.  

Because of these new developments in their relationship, another chance meeting with Fru Heiberg is fraught with frustration and despair. These accidental encounters on the street are beginning to work on the artist's nerves. Perplexed by his own ambivalent feelings, he is torn between stopping to talk to the woman and moving on. This time he knows he must be cautious, not for the sake of social appearance but for reasons of his sanity. Such conflict results in a severe attack of anxiety. In the following passage Munch begins with first-person narrative and quickly
transfers to third-person narrative. This manner of writing gives one the distinct impression that Munch has suffered a "split" in his personality. In life, perhaps insanity had indeed come to the artist:

And then she finally came. . . . She smiled softly and walked on. I was about to stop. But that old stubbornness prevented me for an instant, and by then she was gone. Everything became so empty, and he felt so alone. . . . He almost went into a trance. And then it was as though everything became so silent. The noise from the street became so distant, seemed to come from above. He no longer had any sensation in his legs, they wouldn't carry him any further. Everyone who went by looked at him, stared at him, all of these pale faces in the evening light. He tried to hold on to a thought but couldn't. He felt nothing but emptiness in his head. . . . Then he looked at the window up there where it shone yellow against the dark sky--he stared at it steadily as if he wanted to hang onto it--and as he fell, it sounded so strange, it grated on his ears.

In 1889, Munch left Christiania for Paris. His departure from Norway's capital was motivated by two important considerations. In order to pursue his artistic career, he felt compelled to confront the serious challenge presented to him by the Parisian art community. At the same time he also felt the need to leave his home in an effort to forget Fru Heiberg, the woman who had caused him so much psychic pain. Thus, his unresolved affair with the married woman had come to an end, but the deep-seated conflict lived on to haunt him. Despite the physical distance between the two, the threads which bound the artist to the woman could not be cut.

Munch had also left behind his faltering relationship with his father. The artist's father was a strongly religious man and was disappointed in his son's inability to share his views in matters of faith. Distraught over Munch's affiliation with the Christiania Bohème, a rebellious group of anarchists and atheists whose loose morals were well-known to the Christiania community, Munch's father was equally upset over his son's late hours and often irrational behavior. Perhaps he was also aware
of Fru Heiberg and his son's relationship with this woman conveyed to him through pernicious gossip. Disagreements over these issues caused a further rift in their already unstable relationship. At the time of Munch's departure for Paris, such problems between father and son were largely unresolved. And so it was to remain. Shortly after his arrival in the French capital, Munch received the news of his father's death. Another relationship had now been terminated with no hope of resolution. Soon after, he became ill and fell into a state of suicidal depression.

In his diary notes, Munch anguishes over this turn of events. Memories of Fru Heiberg again haunt him and intermingle with thoughts of his father. Munch's feeble attempt to break with Fru Heiberg long before he left Christiania for Paris—indicating that his father may have known of the clandestine affair—is noted in the following passage. Munch's effort to confess or in some way right the wrong and re-establish contact with his father is also suggested:

Did you know what I suffered? Did you understand why I was so harsh? I was not just myself alone. She was in me. She was in my blood. There was that business with her. Why did I not tell him everything? Then he would have understood why I was so irritable, so nervous, often so harsh and un receptive. [He would have understood] why I did not stay home when he requested it [and] why I often came home late at night.

I had to get out—out—and had to try to drive the thoughts of her from my mind. I had to get out in order to forget her and in order to look for her in the places where she used to be.

With this revelation Munch discloses his pain. A victim of his passions, his illnesses, and despair over the death of family members, he contemplates suicide:

The fire in the fireplace is my only friend—The time I spend sitting in front of the fireplace gets longer and longer. . . . When I suffer most I lean my head against the fireplace—then I suddenly feel a desire overwhelm me—Kill yourself and then it is all over, why live? . . . When I light the candle I suddenly
see my huge shadow across half the wall, clear up to the ceiling--And in the large mirror over the fireplace I see myself--the face of my own ghost.

In an effort to alleviate such suffering Munch begins from time to time to view his relationship with Fru Heiberg as simply another episodic conquest in his many liaisons with women. In an almost cavalier manner he likens himself to the insatiable lover Don Juan:

He walked up and down the street between Magnus' and the post office. It was an afternoon, late in the fall. It began to get darker and people crowded the streets. His skin felt fresh and browned after his summer vacation with the women in light-colored clothing.

He was over that now. He had actually been a little unhappy. Ha, ha, ha.

Actually he was quite an interesting fellow - with all those affairs with women. Let's see - First there was Mrs. Heiberg, then Miss Drefsen, then Mrs. Petersen, not to mention all those other little adventures, like the one that followed him up to his atelier. And all that just in a year - a veritable Don Juan.

Despite Munch's affected nonchalance, the devastating effect of his father's death lingered as did his regrettable remembrances of Fru Heiberg.

Pain and despair trigger a final sense of repulsion and terror and once more Munch likens this woman to a terrible monster:

It's been a long time since I thought of her, but still the feeling is there. What a deep mark she has left on my heart. No other picture can ever totally replace hers. Is it because she took my first kiss that she took the perfume of life from me? Is it because she lied, deceived, that one day she suddenly took the blinders from my eyes and I saw her Medusa head, saw life as a great puzzle? Everything which was rosy hued now became empty and gray ... here I felt burning love's unhappiness ... I felt the executioners ... and I was almost insane for several years. ... Nature screamed in my blood ... I was going to burst.

From this passage, Carol Ravenal explores the dimensions of Munch's personality as it relates to Fru Heiberg and all other subsequent interpersonal relationships with women:
This powerful description of terror, rage, and anxiety is a recurrent theme in Munch's work. Although triggered by Fru Heiberg, the origins lie in the chronic deprivation in childhood and recollections of death. The agonizingly desolate feelings following his mother's death could not have been resolved by his still immature psychological abilities. He was also deprived of the infantile need of a balance between continuing acceptance and denial, so necessary for later individuation.

Munch's attempts to involve himself with a woman but it is merely a palliative; for with the potential development of intimacy, he is again terrified by conflicts. For the woman to be separate, to recognize her otherness, is to expose him again to the dangers of separation and abandonment.

"The other," states Trygve Nergaard, "returned to him in a series of recollections of short moments of togetherness and fervent passion." Nergaard continues, "But he dwelt mostly on the painful separation, on the husband who stood between them, and on the gradual dissolution of their relationship." In reviewing old letters, Nergaard quotes Munch as follows:

There were letters from various women--there were photographs . . . I am looking at a photo--this gentle beautiful face with the smile of spring. . . . She was more beautiful than the other--why couldn't I care for her?

As an epilogue to his accounts of Fru Heiberg, Munch came to record still another assessment of the woman. The notation concerns a conversation between Munch and his two friends, the painter Thorolf Holmboe and the poet Emanuel Goldstein. Holmboe addresses Munch with news of Fru Heiberg's whereabouts. In Munch's retort one senses a final note of resignation. He remembers her fondly, but his tone abruptly changes from fond memories to bitter reproach tainted with sarcasm and condemnation:

By the way, I was supposed to tell you--He looked at me, then slowly it came out: Mrs. Heiberg has gone to Vienna, has become a chanteuse, went with a lieutenant who sings with her . . . I imagined her as a singer in the midst of the thick tobacco smoke and all the tophats. With all the movements I knew so well--when she smiled back over her shoulders, her sensual smile, peering with her hands folded across her belly. And I heard her voice,
sometimes deep and sometimes affectionate. So now she offers her body for money, for 10 kroner.

In 1891, Fru Heiberg became Mrs. Ludvig Bergh, and Munch was left somehow to exorcise her from his mind, but he could not. In the following note Munch once agains revives the memory of the first woman he had loved and lost and recapitulates the painful affair which had cost him so much of himself:

So he thought, he could find a woman, that could mean something to him--outside the bonds of marriage.

The Era of the Bohême came with its doctrine of free love. God and everything else was overthrown; everyone raced in a wild, insane Dance of Life. A blood-red sun stood in the sky; the cross was atoned for. Then the experienced Woman of the World came on the scene and I received my baptism by fire. I was made to feel the entire unhappiness of love and for several years it was as if I were nearly crazy. The horrible face of mental illness then raised its twisted head. After that I gave up the hope of being able to love.

Munch was genuinely perplexed by his attraction to this married woman. It was an allurement that dwelled on the negative aspects of their relationship, even though he wanted to hold onto any remaining remnants of her memory. Yet, this affair marred the artist's ability to form lasting and meaningful relationships with other women who may have been more "suitable." It was Fru Heiberg who set the precedent, and even characteristically typified his future encounters with women.

As with Fru Heiberg the pattern of attraction, love and desire was to be accompanied by another triad--fear, suspicion and despair. This network of raw and deeply felt emotions is evident in subsequent explorations of Munch's writings concerning other women who also deeply affected not only his life but his art as well.
Introduction to the Works of Art

Fru Heiberg may be seen as the occasion of several works of art by the artist. During their relationship and in the aftermath of their final separation, it has been shown how Munch desperately attempted to forget the woman who had caused him so much suffering and pain. But thoughts of her lingered in his memory. She was like a demon which dwelled within him: a parasite feeding on his body, his mind and his very life. In an effort to hold on to his sanity he felt he must do something to exorcise the woman from his thoughts. He did this by committing himself to his art, the one thing he could be sure of, the one thing which gave meaning to his life.

The exorcism began as early as 1885-86 with The Sick Child. Following his departure from Christiania in 1889, the exorcising continued. After carefully reviewing what he had written about the woman in his diary notes, he then transformed these notes into works of art. In this manner the slow, painful, ritualistic process of exorcism began, performed by Munch himself. In the battle between good and evil, Munch acted as a priest who pitted himself against the devil (Fru Heiberg) who possessed him. The works thus stand as the visual equivalents of his psycho-sexual struggle to eradicate the woman from his life and his memory.

The Sick Child

During 1885-86, Munch painted The Sick Child (Fig. 1). "In the sick girl," Munch writes, "I broke new trails for myself - it was a breakthrough in my art. - Most of what I later did was born in this painting." The work is unprecedented in not only its emotive quality but in the highly expressive application of paint, including visible evidence of the artist
scratching the surface of the wet painting. In fact, recalling the execution of *The Sick Child*, Munch came to write:

> During the year, I repainted the picture many times - scratched it out - let it disappear in dripping colors - and tried over and over again to catch that first impression on the canvas - the transparent, pale skin - the quivering mouth - the trembling hands.

The painting is no longer a naturalistic depiction as in his earlier works. It represents, instead, an obsessive and guilt-ridden visual diary of his memories of his dead sister Sophie (who died of tuberculosis at age fourteen) and, according to Peter Watkins, a scraping and scratching away the specter of Fru Heiberg.

Watkins' biographical film about Munch includes a set piece which suggests that while painting his beloved dead sister, the living memory of Fru Heiberg threatens Munch's life. Based upon the artist's diaries and letters, the set piece reenacts Munch painting *The Sick Child* while a narrator remarks:

> Seeking now to de-emphasize all unimportant details by blurring their images--struggling to eliminate Mrs. Heiberg from his mind--striving somehow to impart the quiver and intensity of his feelings onto the raw surface of the canvas--seeking to awaken a similar mood in the viewer--Munch works and reworks the head of his sister--detailing hair, eyes, and mouth--only to scrape the oil from the canvas and begin again. Using his knife, the back of his brush, the point of a pencil, Munch scratches and scores deep into the thick oil, as he struggles to remember, and struggles to forget.

Watkins' remarkable film equates Munch's creative act of painting with the destructive scrapings and scratchings of deformation of the scene. Watkins suggests, then, that Munch's act of painting this canvas is an attempt to remember his sister and to forget Fru Heiberg. Such a conflict is seen as tension between antithetical thoughts that merge in Munch's struggle to paint *The Sick Child*: the artist wishes to create an esthetic memento of
his family at a time of sickness and death but to deny any love toward Fru Heiberg. Past memory of sorrow and present psychological trauma are united.

In fact, while Munch was painting The Sick Child, he was working on several drawings and paintings dealing with erotic themes and was recording in his diary his relationship with Fru Heiberg. Moreover, according to Reinhold Heller, it was at the time of painting The Sick Child that Munch first equated erotic love with themes of death in his art. After this painting, Munch continued to combine the themes of love, death and a profound dread of fusion with a fatal woman. By painting such women he may somehow have denied their power over him just as he may well have evoked a denial of Fru Heiberg in gashing, scratching and scraping the canvas of The Sick Child.

Related Works

Following The Sick Child, Munch attempted to destroy systematically the memory of Fru Heiberg--the woman whom he viewed as an enervating force in his life--with Self-Portrait Under the Mask of Woman (1891/92), The Kiss (1892), Vampire (1893) and The Scream (1893).

In these works, to be examined shortly, the memory of Fru Heiberg is alluded to through various means of pictorial imagery. As in The Sick Child, Munch does not reveal her to the spectator in a straightforward manner. A true likeness of her does not appear. Instead, Munch shows the woman in self-referential terms, i.e., the cryptic, symbolic manifestation of his fixations. In these works she appears an executioner, a soul-destroyer, and one who robs the artist of his ability to think in a
"normal" manner. She takes from him "the perfume of life," i.e., his life's breath (The Kiss) as well as his blood (Vampire). The demon which possesses him finally takes from him the last remaining fiber of hope and salvation. Like the eternal vampire, it is the demon's spirit which lives on while Munch's body is consumed, withers and dies (The Scream). In short, he depicts himself as the victim of a terrible force, a ruthless evil called Fru Heiberg, whom he is powerless to fight.

**Self-Portrait Under the Mask of Woman**

In the winter of 1891/92, Munch executed a work entitled *Self-Portrait Under the Mask of Woman* (Fig. 2). It is seemingly the visual correlation to the artist's diary entry dated February 1890:

... Is it because she lied, deceived, that one day she suddenly took the blinders from my eyes and I saw her Medusa head, saw life as a great puzzle?

In the painting, Munch depicts himself in a dark, cave-like, enveloping space where time and place seem to have evaporated. Here, projected to the very foreground of the picture plane, Munch assumes a frontal position and affects the appearance of a seer who, in a self-induced, hypnotic state, suddenly unveils some terrible truth. With the unshakable memory of his first love affair weighing heavily in his thoughts and imagination, Munch envisions an apparition which has now taken form above him. It is a horrid, nightmarish specter: a strange disembodied head, mask-like with its grimacing mouth and large hypnotic eyes. It is the image of deceit, death and disaster. It is the image of Fru Heiberg who has revealed her true identity to Munch. It is the head of the Medusa.
Munch occupies a position of powerless submission beneath the disembodied head. He is not just a puzzled and bewildered victim but a being whose life has been drained of all energy. Whereas Munch stares at us as if he has been transfixed into stone, the Medusa head's hypnotic-like stare mocks, challenges, and entices the viewer. She is assessing as she intimidates. Pulsating in a lively animation and renewed from her last victim, she has now found her next sacrifice: the spectator.

By juxtaposing his weakened self beneath the mask of this woman, Munch implores the spectator to partake of his psychic trauma. In this manner, he hopes to gain the viewer's sympathy and understanding. Characteristically, Munch employs similar methods in his early diary notes. In these notes, he describes his relationship with Fru Heiberg as one of helpless victimization: his role opposite the powerful seductress. In both means of expression--the written and the visual--Munch makes manifest his fatal woman.

Beyond these issues, *Self-Portrait Under the Mask of Woman* represents a catharsis for Munch in several ways. By resurrecting the image of Fru Heiberg as the Medusa--as the Other--Munch begins the visual exorcism of her beautiful image from his memory. In this manner he begins to separate himself from her. In addition, reproducing and objectifying his own monumental image in the painting, he begins to reinstate and validate his own individual existence apart from hers. Finally, in depicting Fru Heiberg as the disembodied head of the Medusa, Munch intentionally or unintentionally places himself in the role of Perseus, who, by destroying the Medusa through decapitation, thus ends her powerful reign of terror over him.45a
The Kiss

Munch's exorcism of Fru Heiberg in *Self-Portrait Under the Mask of Woman* proved to be only temporary. Again the beautiful image of her resurfaced to haunt him. With Fru Heiberg, Munch had experienced the first kiss, the first awakening of sexual desire, and the first transports of love: "First there was Mrs. Heiberg, . . . ." In a more emotionally vulnerable state of distress, Munch recalled their first kiss. The following notation indicates his remembrances of the kiss as a strong deterrent in his battle to destroy the memory of the woman he had loved:

What a deep mark she has left on my heart. No other picture can every totally replace hers. Is it because she took my first kiss that she took the perfume of life from me?

At the time Munch wrote this diary note he also produced a pencil sketch entitled *Adjø* (Adieu) (Fig. 3). In the sketch, lovers occupy the artist's studio. While standing aside a window open to the street, they embrace and kiss. Later, Munch was to recall that this was not the first time he had drawn such a sketch of lovers kissing.

In a letter to Jens Thiis dated 1905, Munch writes of sketches he had made whose dates coincide with a period of time when his relationship with Fru Heiberg was most passionate: "In a folder of drawings here I have the first sketches for *The Kiss* and *Vampire*. They are from the years 1885-86." Munch's note to Thiis seems to indicate that *The Kiss* (Fig. 4), which he committed to canvas in c. 1891/92, was, in fact, linked to and motivated by Fru Heiberg's memory.

In *The Kiss*, lovers stand beside an open window. Locked in an awkward embrace, they kiss. The setting is a darkened room, perhaps the artist's studio. Discernible through the window of the room is the street below.
A few provincial buildings and a tall cypress tree describe the outdoor setting.

In another version of *The Kiss* (Fig. 5) of 1892, lovers again stand in a room beside a window. This time the curtains are drawn. Through an opening in the curtain one may detect a small male figure in the street below. He is dressed in a coat and top hat.

In 1892, Munch also painted *Evening on Karl Johan Street* (Fig. 6). Karl Johan Street was, at that time, Christiania's main promenade. As indicated in his diary notes, it was also, significantly, the street where Munch searched anxiously for Fru Heiberg many times. In this work of art depicting Karl Johan Street, a few provincial buildings and one lone cypress tree mark the famous promenade. A man, identifiable as the artist himself, walks on the street toward the distance. To the left, a group of mask-like figures advance toward the spectator. The tallest and most striking figure in the crowd is a man who wears a black top hat and coat. His gaunt expression betrays bewilderment and disbelief. He is Fru Heiberg's husband. Representing Fru Heiberg is the woman to the man's left.

In light of such findings, perhaps the view outside the window in the first painted version of *The Kiss* is Karl Johan Street. Possibly the man who stands in the street in the second version of *The Kiss* represents the jealous and suspicious husband to whom Munch refers in his early diary notes. If these observations are accurate, then the woman inside the room with Munch in *The Kiss* is undoubtedly Fru Heiberg.

Heller remarks that such portrayals of illicit love affairs were thematically popular in the nineteenth century, particularly those
involving lovers kissing who are caught by irate, jealous husbands. Here, in The Kiss, Munch seems to take such a motif and relate it to a personal experience. The strong emphasis on the darkened room and the window view of the street below is certainly suggestive of lovers hiding, and here they are hiding from the jealous husband.

Roy Boe, like Heller, also sees The Kiss as thematically indicative of illicit love and likewise views the work in a much wider context than simply the personal visual record of Munch's erotic experiences. According to Boe, Munch was fascinated with Jens Peter Jacobsen's novel, Niels Lyhne (Copenhagen, 1880). In Jacobsen's book, a young student, Niels, is attracted to a much older woman named Fru Boye. She is, likewise, attracted to him, and the two become lovers. In a scene from one of their meetings they stand near an open window. They whisper. Sounds can be heard by them from the street outside the window. Possibly Munch was attracted to the novel because he could relate only too well to the characters portrayed in the work.

Aside from such evidence, which feasibly makes The Kiss the evocation of Munch's relationship with Fru Heiberg, there is also the meaning behind the work in terms of the theme of the fatal woman. Heller sees The Kiss not only as representative of one of Munch's erotic encounters, but a statement on the loss of self as well. This concept is conveyed also by Polish writer and friend of Munch, Stanislaw Przybyszewski (1868-1927), in the first published account of Munch's art entitled Das Werk des Edward Munch (1894). Of The Kiss Przybyszewski writes:

One sees two human forms whose faces have melted together. There is no single identifiable feature; one sees only the area where they melt together and this looks like a giant ear which went deaf in the ecstasy of the blood. It looks like a puddle of melted
flesh: there is something repulsive in it. Certainly this type of symbolization is something unusual; but the entire passion of the kiss, the terrible power of painful, sexual longing, the disappearance of personal consciousness, that melting together of two naked individualities - this is so hoggishly depicted that the repulsive and unusual can be overlooked.

With the loss of individuality comes the complete giving of one's self to another human being. For Munch, this meant the total giving of himself to the woman. This idea is also explicated by Swedish playwright August Strindberg (1849-1912), whose misogynist review of the thematic content of The Kiss appeared in La Revue Blanche in 1896. Of the work Strindberg remarks:

The Kiss. The fusion of two beings, the smaller of which, shaped like a carp, seems on the point of devouring the larger as is the habit of vermin, microbes, vampires, and woman. Man gives, creating the illusion that woman gives in return. Man begging the favour of giving his soul, his blood, his liberty, his repose, his eternal salvation.

Although such interpretations are not Munch's, they do, in a sense, comply with what the artist himself wrote concerning his first kiss as an expression of pain and loss. Furthermore, there is no evidence pointing to Munch's strong objections to such subjective interpretations by Przybyszewski and Strindberg of his work.

With the loss of individuality and the complete giving of one's self comes the battle between desire and fear. With this statement Heller concludes that The Kiss represents a "triptych of fears": There is the fear of the environment without, from which the lovers find protection in the privacy of the darkened room. There is likewise the fear of loss of self, each to the other (as already explored). Lastly, there is the fear of woman's capacity to conceive life which will not only entrap the man but also endanger her life as well. These fears combine to make The Kiss
an evocation not of love but of fear. Desire and love have withered under the heavy burden of fear. "Inside there is not happiness," remarks Curt Glaser, "but compulsion and the pressure of fate." The consequences of becoming woman's consort are, thus, many: There is the social danger which presents the possibility of exposure and subsequent ostracism, there is the danger in loss of self identity, and there is the ultimate danger of entrapment and death in woman fulfilling her biological role. In this manner, the woman depicted in the painting becomes fatal to Munch. In this way, she has within her power to take from him "the perfume of life."

**Vampire**

After the fatal kiss (as expressed in *The Kiss*), Munch's painful remembrance of Fru Heiberg becomes magnified to an even greater extent in *Vampire* (Fig. 7) of 1893. Like *The Kiss*, it too represents the visual manifestation of Munch's early diary entries translated into a work of art. In *Vampire*, the woman is transposed into a hideous monster reminiscent of *Self-Portrait Under the Mask of Woman*:

> He sat with his arms around her waist... her head so near him... it was so strange to have her eyes, her mouth, her breasts so close... he buried his head in her lap... he felt two burning lips in the back of his neck... it made his whole body freeze... a freezing lust... so he pressed himself forward as if in a cramp. This was his vampire.

In *Vampire*, two figures are seen close to the picture plane and confined to an indefinable box-like space.Locked together like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, they hold each other in a deadly embrace. A sharp light defines their forms and casts their combined shadows on the wall behind them to form an ominous embryonic shape which threatens to engulf them. As if love's pain has seized him, the male figure, identifiable as Munch himself,
bends over the seated female figure in a frozen cramp. His arms are placed around the woman's waist; his head buried in her lap. He is paralyzed by fear and desire. All that remains to be seen of him are a few definable features; i.e., the shape of his chalk-white face, the white, lifeless hand and the white cuff and collar of his shirt. The rest of his body blends imperceptibly into the dark background, perhaps symbolic of the ego-dissolving situation in which he finds himself.

In marked contrast to the weak and passive male figure, the seated woman assumes the role of strength and power as she drapes herself over the kneeling man. Her arms are wrapped clingingly around his shoulders and arms. Her blood-red hair falls in rope-like strands about him. As she cradles him, she sinks her lips into the nape of his neck.

In such a manner, the woman has totally encapsulated the male victim in her powerful stranglehold. Thus, in contemplating the piece, it is as if one were witnessing some terrible act of violence performed by woman against man.

Later, Adolf Paul (1863-1943), an acquaintance of Munch in Berlin, recalled the events of the day on which Munch began to commit his idea of *Vampire* to canvas:

One day I went up to him. He was living in a chambre garnie, at the corner of Friedrichstrasse and Mittelstrasse, directly across from the Polish pharmacy, on the second floor.

He was painting at the time ... His model was one with fire-red hair which streamed over her shoulders like spilled blood. "Kneel down in front of her," he shouted to me. "Put your head on her lap!" I obeyed. She bent down over me, pressed her lips to my neck, her red hair fell over me. Munch painted, and in a short time he had his *Vampire* finished ... 

As Paul remembered, Munch's instructions to him were direct and explicit. According to his account, Munch worked feverishly on the piece. This was
because Munch had already written of the incident he now wished to paint. His models—a red-haired woman and Adolf Paul—were only the actors, the incidentals, which helped the artist's mind's eye to reconstruct, visually, an intensely felt episode from his past.

As an evocation of a personal experience which can be traced back to Fru Heiberg through Munch's early diary notes, *Vampire* stands as the projection of some terrible remembrance of a particular moment in his adult life which seized the artist and threatened to consume him. It is also the symbolic expression of some deeper, far more significant encounter which seized him as a child, i.e., tuberculosis, which also threatened to consume his life.

If *The Kiss* represents Munch's most elemental fear of loss of self, then *Vampire* represents the primordial fear of loss of life. In both works of art, a woman is seen to be the vehicle by which these psychic fears were conveyed.

In *Vampire*, the woman who compresses her body over the man and holds him in an all-consuming embrace represents a life-threatening force. As she constrains him, she literally seems to deprive him of air and thus his capacity to breathe. A vital life-sustaining force has therefore been severely jeopardized. Beyond this dire situation, the vampirish woman who seduces and exploits her victim suggests further the evocation of a deeply felt psychic wound which refuses to heal. Munch himself expressed such pain in his many remembrances of his near-death experience as he lay feverishly in bed, the victim of consumption. This disease had threatened Munch with death at an early age. It was a legacy from his dead mother, who died of tuberculosis when Munch was a child and who is perhaps
indicated in the embryonic shadow behind the couple in Vampire. It was also a part of the legacy that took the life of his sister Sophie at the age of fourteen. As may be seen in Vampire which incorporates metaphors of disease and death, these deeply felt psychic wounds festered and resurfaced rather than healed.

Contagion is embodied in the woman. It is she who drains the blood from her victim by placing her mouth on the nape of his neck. She is the recurring nightmare of Munch's childhood illness personified, as well as an evocation of his mother's and sister's deaths. Feverishly, the woman sucks the blood from her victim. Like tuberculosis which literally causes its victim to suffer fever, have shortness of breath, and experience the loss of blood, the vampire in this work consumes her victim through these very same means. Destruction, deterioration, and transformation become processed, just as the progressive wasting away of the body manifests disease. Thus, Vampire is a metaphor for the disease of consumption and is the embodiment of death itself. In this picture of death even hair becomes the thread-like blood expectoration of a tubercular patient. It is precisely in this manner that the woman in Vampire is fatal to Munch.

Vampire was first exhibited in 1893 in Berlin under the title Liebe und Schmerz (Love and Pain). A year later Munch changed its title to Vampire. According to Reinhold Heller, the title change may have been precipitated by Stanislaw Przybyszewski's interpretation of the work for his book Das Werk des Edward Munch which, as stated previously, is the first account of Munch's works up to this point. Of the painting Przybyszewski writes:

A man broken in spirit; on his neck, the face of a biting vampire. The background - a remarkable mixture of blue, purple, green,
yellow dashes of color, mixed together, flowing together, next to each other like small, prickly splinters of crystal. There is something terribly silent, passionless about this picture; an air of doom measureless in its fateful resignation. The man spins around and around in infinite depths, without a will, powerless — and he rejoices that he can spin like that, like a stone, totally without volition. But he cannot rid himself of that vampire nor of the pain, and the woman will always sit there, will bite eternally with the tongues of a thousand vipers, with a thousand venomous teeth.

In spite of the title change of 1894, Munch had conceived of a vampire in his diary notes long before Przybyszewski's interpretation of Vampire. Perhaps Munch had conveyed his notions of the vampire to Przybyszewski in a private conversation with the writer. Then, the writer subsequently expressed such thoughts in his writings. In any case, he was not the only interpreter of this work.

In 1896, August Strindberg also wrote his own personal and highly subjective review of Vampire in La Revue Blanche under the title Red Hair. In the review he likens the woman's red hair to "a rain of blood," suggesting in some way that he too was affected by woman as the harbinger of some deadly blood draining disease:

Red Hair. A shower of gold falling on a despairing figure kneeling before his worse self and imploring the favor of being stabbed to death with her hairpins. Golden ropes binding him to earth and to suffering. A rain of blood falling in torrents over the madman in quest of unhappiness, the divine unhappiness of being loved, or rather of loving.

Strindberg's title change of Vampire to Red Hair did not sway Munch to once again reconsider changing the title. Apparently he was content with leaving the title as it was. The allusion to the vampire as an all-consuming personification of disease and death was perhaps the reason why Munch was satisfied with Vampire as the title.
Munch's *The Scream* (Fig. 8) of 1893 depicts a terrifying hallucination. Munch's diary entry of 22 January 1892 indicates that the foreground creature is the artist himself:

I was walking along the road with two friends. The sun set. I felt a tinge of melancholy. Suddenly the sky became a blood red. I stopped, leaned against the railing, dead tired [my friends looked at me and walked on] and I looked at the flaming clouds that hung like blood and a sword [over the fjord and city] over the blue-black fjord and city.

My friends walked on. I stood there, trembling with fright. And I felt a loud, unending scream piercing nature.

Munch's painting shows the artist as a wasted and withered figure clasping his hands to his head in an attempt to protect himself against the storm around him.

This raging and relentless wrath is felt only by the artist. Munch's friends walking back to Christiania are unaffected. But for the artist-as-serpentine-creature there is no escape. Any effort by Munch to shut out the fury that he alone feels to his bones is in vain.

What Munch visualizes is a catastrophe of psychic trauma. It is, as in *The Sick Child*, Fru Heiberg who triggers this profound distress. Soon after his final separation from her, Munch conveys in his diary the loss of her love in terms of not just emptiness but a consuming fever, an overwhelming anxiety. Munch also views Fru Heiberg as the catalyst which has brought him to the brink of insanity:

Everything which was rosy hued now became empty and gray . . . here I felt burning love's unhappiness . . . I felt the executioners . . . and I was almost insane for several years . . . Nature screamed in my blood . . . I was going to burst.
This diary entry is symptomatic of Munch's deep resentment and profound indignation concerning the aftermath of his first sexual encounter and the effect of love's loss. His feelings of hopelessness and his acute anxiety attacks, such as the one depicted in *The Scream*, were accompanied by various physical illnesses which culminated in rheumatic fever during the winter of 1890 when he stayed in a hospital in La Havre.

As a hallucinatory experience, *The Scream* portrays the deadly effect of Fru Heiberg as a fatal woman on the artist's emotional and physical well-being. Munch shows, in fact, this woman as a phantom shadow emanating from the artist. Her nose is the peninsula of the fjord, and her eye is a hill in the background. Her flowing hair overshadows the horizon and becomes the clouds. Reinhold Heller remarks:

> By positing the unity of everything sensual, Munch could equate the landscape with woman, the visual power of nature with the erotic powers of woman; within the unity of sensual reality, the erotic is simply the realm of the most concentrated sensual intensity.

According to Doctors Stanley Steinberg and Joseph Weiss, Munch "feared the countryside as he feared woman. He felt in danger of being enveloped or penetrated by it." If the fatal woman is at one with nature, or at least projected as such, then she is everywhere, and it is impossible for Munch to escape her effect. As the visual manifestation of despair over lost love, Munch's painting reflects, according to Roy Boe, the same feelings expressed in Jens Jacobsen's novel *Niels Lyhne* (1880) wherein the central character experiences severe anxiety concerning the loss of love and who remarks "when the thread of hope is cut . . . then comes the sharp cry of despair through the void."
Section II: Dagny Juell (Przybyszewski)

After Munch's devastating affair with Fru Heiberg, the artist seems to have had a series of short liaisons with a number of women, including a Miss Drefsen and a Mrs. Petersen, as Munch indicates in one of his early diary notes. Yet, such minor affairs were incidental to Munch's life. In fact, it was not until sometime after he became involved with Dagny Juell that Munch once again experienced not only the joy of love but its eventual pain as well.

Dagny Juell (1867-1901) was from Kongsvinger, a town approximately fifty miles northeast of Norway's capital, Christiania. She was the daughter of Dr. Juell, physician and District Medical Officer. Dagny was also the niece of the Prime Minister of Norway who had assumed his governmental position in Christiania in the 1890s.

According to Rolf Stenersen, Munch's friend and biographer in later years, Munch and Dagny had been childhood friends. How or where the two youngsters met is unknown. Yet, since both of their fathers were physicians and medical officers as well, Dr. Munch and Dr. Juell may have known each other through their work. Thus, Munch might have been introduced to Dr. Juell's daughter while accompanying his father to army garrisons and field stations situated in the uplands of Southern Norway in the late 1870s. Although it is not known how Munch and Dagny became reacquainted in adulthood, the two childhood friends met again in Christiania before 1892 and possibly courted at that time.

During the summer of 1892, Munch was in Christiania to prepare for his forthcoming second retrospective exhibition which was to take place in September. Aside from such preparations, the artist also took the time...
to vacation in Aasgaardstrand and doubtlessly visit old friends from the Christiania Bohème. Since there is no record indicating Munch was in Kongsvinger at any time during the summer months of 1892, it must be assumed that Dagny was in Christiania or Aasgaardstrand. Perhaps she wanted to visit her childhood friend Munch, as well as other friends whom she knew in Christiania. Because Dagny was an advocate of Hans Jaeger's free love society as Fru Heiberg had been, these other friends were the various affiliates of the Christiania Bohème. Thus, like Fru Heiberg before her, Dagny was exactly the kind of woman to whom Munch was attracted: young, beautiful, rebellious and libertine.

As an interesting correlation indicating a romantic involvement between Munch and Dagny, perhaps before the summer of 1892, consider Munch's friend and fellow Bohème, Knut Hamsun, whose roman à clef, Mysteries (1892), deals with the tragic love life of Johan Nagel. In Hamsun's novel, the narrator describes young Nagel as a rather quiet fellow who is cultivated, genial and generous. But from time to time Nagel exhibits darker traits: impulsiveness for one, as well as mercurial moods ranging from joyous exaltation to fits of despair and suicidal depression. Hamsun also characterizes Nagel as a loner and a drifter. So when Nagel takes a room at a hotel situated in a small seaside resort, the community becomes suspicious of their transient visitor. All the citizens know of this stranger is that he is a charlatan posing as an artist. Having somewhat recovered from one serious yet unsuccessful love affair, Nagel then meets and falls in love with a girl named Dagny. She is a woman who brings him joy. Conversely, Dagny is also the cause of his greatest despair. When she begins to act indifferently towards him, Nagel realizes he will never
possess her. Having failed to maintain his first love relationship and now also this one with Dagny, Nagel begins to doubt his ability to love and decides life is not worth living. Subsequently, he throws himself into the harbor and drowns.  

Although the central character in Hamsun's novel does resemble Munch in certain respects, and perhaps points to the artist's tenuous relationship with Dagny as well, in life Munch did not leave the seaside community of Aasgaardstrand in quite the same manner as Nagel. Instead, Munch returned to Christiania in late summer of 1892 to be on hand for the opening of his second retrospective exhibition. Even though the show was castigated by critics as a disgrace, there was one man who did admire Munch's work. He was Adelsteen Normann, a Norwegian genre painter who was also exhibiting in Christiania the same time as Munch. Normann, who resided in Berlin, was a member of the powerful Verein Berliner Künstler. He approached Munch and asked him to agree to a prospective showing of his collected works in the German capital later that year. Munch accepted Normann's offer. Subsequently, Normann returned to Berlin to appear before the Association of Berlin Artists with his proposed invitational plans for the Munch exhibition. Without prior knowledge of Munch's art, the committee unwittingly approved Normann's proposal. With the necessary arrangements made, Munch left for Berlin on October 20, 1892, to prepare for his forthcoming show. Coincidental or not, Dagny Juell was also preparing to leave Norway to study music in Berlin.  

On November 5, 1892, an historic moment in the history of modern German art, the Munch exhibition opened at the hall known as the Architektenhaus. Fifty-five of the artist's major works to date were shown. Yet, in less
than a week the exhibition closed due to a conflict of interests between the old guard, who vehemently objected to Munch's work, and the avant-garde, who supported the artist.95

It is uncertain whether Dagny Juell was on hand for the opening of Munch's exhibition in Berlin. Nor is it known whether she arrived shortly thereafter to comfort the artist who was initially shaken by such an unexpected and sudden turn of events. In any case, Munch soon found himself surrounded by avid supporters from among Berlin's avant-garde. Because of their encouragement Munch became convinced that the closing of his show was actually a blessing in disguise, for it gave him the recognition he was seeking in Germany as an infamous upstart in the art world.96

Through Munch's supporters, the now notorious painter was subsequently drawn into the company of a more intimate group of radicals known for their gatherings at a local wine tavern called Zum Schwarzen Ferkel. Finding himself the center of attraction there, Munch decided to stay in Berlin for the next several years. The artist not only made the German capital his new home but made his newly found friends from Zum Schwarzen Ferkel his close companions as well.97

Sometime during this important juncture in Munch's life, Dagny came to Berlin and the friends were reunited. Yet, it was not a reunion with which the artist was totally comfortable. It would seem logical to assume that, after Dagny's arrival, the artist would be eager to introduce her to his friends. Yet, this was not the case.98 Since the members of the Ferkel Circle were practitioners of free love, much like the affiliates of the Bohème in Christiania, perhaps Munch was suspicious of these men as well as of Dagny. He also may have felt that the provocative Dagny might replace
him as one of the most popular figures in the circle. Ultimately, Munch had a change of heart. On March 9, 1893, Dagny accompanied the artist to Zum Schwarzen Ferkel. It was a fatal mistake on Munch's part. Just as he had imagined, the beautiful and talented Norwegian woman with her free social manner and libertine views soon captivated most of the members of the Ferkel Circle. Much to Munch's displeasure, the shy and retiring artist was soon displaced by other more ardent admirers who, one by one, wished secretly or openly to become Dagny's lover.

The most aggressive of her devotees was the Polish ex-medical student turned literary talent, and professed leader of the Ferkel Circle, Stanislaw Przybyszewski. Another leading member of the circle, Swedish playwright August Strindberg, was equally enchanted with Dagny. Other members admired her from a safer distance, yet they too were enamored. Apparently having grown tired of Munch, to the exclusion of all others, Dagny first became involved with Strindberg and then with Przybyszewski. In the spring of 1893, when Dagny finally attached herself to Stanislaw Przybyszewski, much to the aggravation of Strindberg, Munch and many of the others, a whirlwind of jealous rivalry developed which threatened to break the group apart.

In his roman à clef entitled The Cloister, Strindberg not only remembers life in the Ferkel Circle but the tenuous relationship which existed between a Danish artist (identifiable as Munch) and his girlfriend Lias (identifiable as Dagny). Strindberg recalls also the artist had been afraid to introduce the woman to his circle of friends fearing one of them (namely himself) might appear more attractive to her than the Dane:

In less than an hour she had broken with her friend [Munch] of many years' standing--whose prophecy had thus come true--and she
was now allied with the Swede, who only half an hour before had been kissing his bride-to-be goodbye.

In addition to Strindberg's remembrance, Stanislaw Przybyszewski also recalled his introduction to Dagny, though in somewhat different terms. Yet, he too was forced to conclude that Munch was a weak contender in the game of love, as recounted in his own roman à clef entitled Overboard. In Overboard, the first in a trilogy of stories entitled Homo Sapiens (1896), Przybyszewski describes a love triangle between Mikita (Munch), his fiancée Ysa (Dagny) and the writer Eric Falk (Przybyszewski).

As the story opens, Falk receives a letter from his old friend Mikita who writes he is returning to Berlin for a visit. When he arrives, Mikita looks up Falk and the two men become reacquainted. Falk is the first to learn of Mikita's engagement to a woman named Ysa. Anxious for his friend to meet the woman of his dreams, Mikita introduces Falk to Ysa. This meeting proves a fatal mistake on Mikita's part. The two strangers are immediately attracted to each other yet, wishing to spare Mikita's feelings, they suppress their desires. That evening the threesome go to the Green Nightingale, the tavern which is the local haunt of Berlin's artistic community. There Ysa is introduced to Falk's circle of friends who are, like Falk, immediately attracted to and yet suspicious of this mysterious woman. The next evening the hopelessly enamored Falk returns to Mikita's studio to ask the couple to join him at the home of a friend. Working on one of his paintings from which he cannot tear himself away, Mikita asks Falk to escort Ysa to the party. Under the impression that her fiancé will join them later, Ysa leaves with Falk. At the party, Ysa and Falk are drawn closer together. Anxiously wondering what has become of Mikita, Ysa asks Falk to take her home. Instead of escorting Ysa home,
Falk takes her to a local café. Here Falk tells the unsuspecting woman of his love for her. Resisting his overtures, Ysa returns to Mikita to find him in a jealous rage. Later, the guilt-ridden Ysa tells Falk they must never meet again. The heartbroken Falk leaves her and finds the brooding Mikita. The two friends fight. After a while, Falk is able to convince his desperate friend he will never see Ysa. To prove his sincerity, he leaves the city by train. The artist returns to his studio to find Ysa waiting for him. Mikita accuses her of being unfaithful to him and, much to her disgust, takes her by force. Later that evening the unhappy lovers go to the Green Nightingale. There, Ysa is approached by adoring admirers as she secretly awaits the arrival of Falk. Guessing her motives, the jealous Mikita finally tells Ysa of Falk's departure from Berlin. It is then that she realizes she is not in love with her fiancé, but with Falk whom she fears will never return. Thinking himself safe, Mikita leaves for Munich to attend the opening of his exhibition there. Meanwhile, Falk returns to Berlin to confront his old friend. When he learns the artist is away on business, he finds Ysa instead. Unable to contain themselves any longer, the two become inseparable lovers. In Munich, Mikita's thoughts are of Ysa. He buys a revolver, catches the next train for Berlin, and returns to his studio to find her packing her things. When he realizes he has lost her to another, he runs out into the street. Mikita returns several hours later to find Ysa gone. Remembering the revolver in his pocket, he now draws the gun to his head and pulls the trigger. At this moment, the action returns to Ysa and Falk who have boarded a train bound for Paris.
In life, Stanislaw Przybyszewski and Dagny Juell became lovers possibly as early as May 1893.\textsuperscript{105} In May, Munch left Berlin for Dresden in order to prepare for an exhibition there and then on to Munich to do the same.\textsuperscript{106} Possibly out of fear of confronting the lovers, Munch fled home to Christiania and then retreated to Nordstrand for the duration of the summer.\textsuperscript{107} Meanwhile, in Berlin, Dagny moved in with Przybyszewski and subsequently married him on September 18, 1893.\textsuperscript{108} Although Munch was still in love with Dagny, he finally conceded to the marriage as fact—as did most of the other members of the Ferkel Circle save one, August Strindberg—and returned to Berlin in November.\textsuperscript{109} Realizing he could not hate the man who had supported him after the closing of his exhibition at Architektenhaus in November 1892, Munch made an attempt to accept Przybyszewski as his friend. The two men spent many hours together discussing art and literature. From such discussions they came to share many of the same thoughts and ideas. Through this meeting of minds, Munch and Przybyszewski became close friends.\textsuperscript{110} As the other members of the Ferkel Circle came to recall, despite the fact that he was usually present at the Przybyszewskis' gatherings, Munch was somewhat estranged from his former lover Dagny during this time.

According to Julius Meier-Graefe, in attendance at many of the Przybyszewskis' parties, Munch was morbidly introspective and silent in Dagny's presence. When he did speak to her, or anyone else for that matter, he was often curt or bitingly sarcastic in his remarks:

One of us would dance with Ducha [Dagny] while the other two looked on from the table: one spectator was Munch, the other was generally Strindberg. The . . . men in the room were all in love with Ducha, each in his own way, but they never showed it. Most subdued of them all was Munch. He called Ducha "the Lady", talked drily to her and was always very polite and discreet even when drunk
Strindberg would talk about chemical analysis while Munch remained silent. It was in that room in 1893 that the review Pan was born. Ducha gave it that name, which is probably the reason why Munch was against it.

Despite such situations as the one Meier-Graefe describes, the artist remained best friend to the Przybyszewskis as Frida Uhl, Strindberg's second wife records in her memoirs: "... the chairs were out of circulation since they were permanently occupied by the two best friends of the house, Munch and Lidforss, who sat there in silence, drinking..." Such silent drinking bouts must have revealed to Munch's friends what he had become: the jealous ex-lover who unhappily played second fiddle to Dagny's husband. Once, for example, when Dagny (an advocate of free love like her husband) wanted to offer herself to a Russian prince, it was Przybyszewski himself who gladly took his wife to the man while the disapproving Munch raged with jealousy. And yet Munch remained in Berlin unable to tear himself away from Dagny, whose behavior was the source of all his pain and suffering.

In May 1894, the Przybyszewskis accompanied Munch home to Norway as Przybyszewski revealed in a letter to a friend in which he refers to the artist in good faith as "the inseparable Munch." While Munch returned to his studios in Christiania and Aasgaardstrand to paint, the Przybyszewskis continued to Kongsvinger to spend the summer with Dagny's parents. Unable to be parted for very long, Przybyszewski [and perhaps Dagny] visited Munch in Aasgaardstrand. Upon returning to Kongsvinger in August, it was Przybyszewski who expressed his concern about Munch in a letter to a friend. In it, he discloses his thoughts concerning Munch's pictures as well as the artist's present state of affairs:
I have just spent a week with Munch. He has painted the weirdest new pictures, one of which is quite delightful. He also painted my portrait reproducing the expression of the soul with marvelous skill. He is a brilliant fellow, but he's very badly off.

Genuinely concerned for Munch, perhaps Przybyszewski had come to realize that the artist was still in love with Dagny. Judging from "the weirdest new pictures" Munch came to paint in Aasgaardstrand in the summer of 1894--Ashes and The Three Stages of Woman (The Sphinx), both of which depict woman as man's fatal enticer--Przybyszewski could not have missed the possibility that such works may have been evocations of his wife Dagny. Besides these pictures, Munch came to paint portraits of his friend. One, entitled Stanislaw Przybyszewski (Fig. 9), is exemplary of a condition which Wladyslawa Jaworska observes in many of Munch's portraits of Przybyszewski:

... a male figure undergoing psychopathic torments of pain and suffering, doubt and fear, and reeling on the verge of murder or suicide the face is invariably, when at all recognizable, that of Przybyszewski.

The face is that of Przybyszewski, but as subject came to mirror the soul of the artist, the emotions conveyed in the portrait of Stanislaw Przybyszewski belong to Munch who perhaps could not decide whether to murder his friend for having stolen his woman or commit suicide as another way of ending his misery. And the psycho-sexual wounds Dagny inflicted on the artist refused to heal.

In September, Munch left Aasgaardstrand for Berlin via Stockholm. Arriving in Berlin in October, he then again began to frequent the home of the Przybyszewskis who had also returned to the German capital. Shortly thereafter, the artist considered leaving Berlin permanently. In a letter home he makes his intentions clear:
I have the feeling that soon I will have had enough of Berlin, so that I shall either go to Paris or else home to Norway. Berlin is, in any case, not an art center by a long shot.

As he indicates in his letter home, Munch was feeling stifled by Berlin as an art center. Also, there is a certain hostile undercurrent to his tone. At the time the letter was written the sensitive artist may have felt that Dagny was neglecting him, as she was often guilty. Reinhold Heller remarks that the Munch-Dagny relationship was one in which the unfortunate "Munch,... acted much the role of a bass note frequently returned to [by Dagny], but during the intervals anxiously waiting,..." The situation of the "anxiously waiting" Munch could have presented itself again. Possibly suspecting Munch's intentions to leave Berlin, Dagny may have decided to pay more attention to her former suitor at this point in time. And so it would be another sixteen months before Munch would separate himself permanently from Dagny's powerful hold over him.

The final "bass note" seems to have been played by Dagny in the spring of 1895. At this time certain evidence points to the fact that Dagny and Munch were briefly reunited as sexual partners.

It was the year of Munch's famous painting Jealousy, in which the artist depicts himself and the half-dressed Dagny under an apple tree engrossed in intimate conversation, while in the foreground Dagny's jealous husband stares straight ahead, literally green with envy over the tryst taking place behind his back. Aside from the idea that such a painting as Jealousy may have been the product of the artist's overactive imagination, the work might also stand as the visual reenactment of an actual, experienced event. Interestingly, 1895 was also the year of Przybyszewski's book The Vigil. In this work a curious line exists in
which Przybyszewski as narrator says to his woman: "You must kiss him now—you must. I give my woman to the artist, I, the king..." Since Munch created a vignette for Przybyszewski's book depicting the face of Dagny, it is possible that Munch represents the artist in The Vigil.

In 1895, Richard Dehmel, one of the Ferkel Circle's leading poets, also published a series of poems in a work entitled Lebensblätter. In Lebensblätter there is a poem called "Our Hour Has Come" which is suggestive of a secret tryst between lovers. In the poem, which Dehmel dedicated to Dagny, there exist obvious references to Munch's paintings: the darkened forest of Ashes (to be examined shortly), the red sunset of The Scream, and remembrances of the dead sister as depicted in The Sick Child. It seems the lovers could be none other than Munch and Dagny:

Already it is getting dark; come, come home, come! The leafy mass of the chestnut trees reaches out toward us like sharpened claws.
It is too lonely here, too hot and damp for us.

Then see: the lines of your hand, look, they are too much like mine.
You seem, suddenly so very close to me, as if known earlier, perhaps from some other world.

Once I had a sister; she is dead.
Be not so silent, as if you could not speak!
The clouds of evening stream so red through the young trees, as if blood-soaked incest threatened us.

Listen! Yes, just as wild and helpless as the nightingale just sounded your heart trembles in my hand.
We know, it; that suffices for us.

In the spring of 1895, Munch came to share living quarters with Gustav Vigeland, the Scandinavian sculptor, at the Hotel Stadt Köln,
It was at this time, that a strange incident occurred between Munch and Vigeland over a woman. Some years later Munch related the incident to Rolf Stenersen:

In our poverty we shared everything, even a girl friend. One evening I took her out, although it was really Vigeland's turn. When I came back and was on my way upstairs I saw Vigeland's burly figure at the top landing. As soon as I was in sight he ran back into the room and returned a moment later with a bust of me he had just finished. This he threw at me with great fury--barely missing. It frightened me so that I dashed out and ran all the way to the railway station and jumped onto a train. I surely didn't dare stay in Berlin as long as Vigeland was on the loose. . . . that bust he threw at me was good--perhaps the best thing he ever did. Damned women!

Although the ever polite Munch did not reveal the identity of the woman the two men had come to share, and who was also the cause of Vigeland's jealous rage, Vigeland did identify her in a letter to a friend: "The busts, I've destroyed them, both the one of Munch and the one of fru P." That "fru P." was Dagny Juell Przybyszewski is doubtless, for as Ragna Stang points out, Vigeland also made a bust of Dagny in the spring of 1895 which he then destroyed.

Thus, it appears that the relationship which existed between the married Dagny Przybyszewski and Munch was beginning to resemble his past relationship with Fru Heiberg (who had a husband as well as suitors). As history seemed to be repeating itself, Munch made good his escape and left Berlin in an effort to put an end to the relationship with Dagny which was beginning to destroy him.

In June 1895, the artist arrived in Paris and then returned to Christiania and his cottage in Aasgaardstrand for the remainder of the summer. Hardly able to keep himself away from Dagny for very long, Munch returned to Berlin early the following year. In his despair,
Munch finally resolved to leave Berlin, the Ferkel Circle and the Przybyszewskis once and for all. In February 1896, the artist left Germany, which had been his home for the past three years, and went to Paris where he lived and worked for the next eighteen months. Although he continued to correspond with the Przybyszewskis, it would be some time before he would see them again.

Seemingly happy in the French capital, Munch settled back into his routine of painting. But his quiet resolve was soon disturbed by the menacing presence of Strindberg who had been in Paris since 1894. The playwright now related to Munch his hatred for the Przybyszewskis, and Dagny in particular, who had come to haunt him. For Munch it seemed there was simply no escaping the past. At this time Munch also came into contact with the Molard circle in Paris and Molard's young step-daughter, Judith with whom the artist may have had a brief romantic encounter.

Then, Przybyszewski's roman à clef Overboard (1896) was published. It dealt another fatal blow to the artist's already injured ego. Munch came to recognize himself as the character Mikita in this story and once again the terrible ordeal of his break up with Dagny came back to jolt his memory. In his distress over Przybyszewski's portrayal of him as a disturbed painter, Munch came to write a now lost letter to the Przybyszewskis in which he must have attacked them mercilessly, judging from the letter Dagny wrote in response to the artist:

I find it quite incomprehensible that a book by Stachu [Przybyszewski] should upset you. Perhaps the reason is that there is a character in the book Over Bord who is a painter. The painter concerned is about as different from you as it is possible for two human beings to be even if we all are created in the image of God--but the evil of this world is great beyond measure.
Although Dagny assured Munch that he was not Mikita, her weak denial could not have fooled him because in the story there exists a rather blatant description of a painter working on a picture Munch painted in 1893 entitled Hands. The artist was most definitely right in assuming himself to be Mikita in Overboard.

Munch saw the Przybyszewskis again in 1898, when the couple visited him on their way back from Spain via Paris. It was the last time the threesome were together. In 1898, Dagny and her husband moved to Cracow to lend support to the artistic community there. They then invited Munch to join them and even promised to arrange an exhibition of his works in Cracow. Although their intentions were sincere, Munch was apparently disinterested or perhaps even suspicious of their motives. The artist never visited Cracow, nor did an exhibition of his works ever come about. Instead, Munch went to Christiania and Aasgaardstrand in the summer of 1898, and became romantically involved with a woman named Mathilde (Tulla) Larsen.

Sometime before 1901, the Przybyszewskis moved to Warsaw, still in contact with Munch, who had lent the destitute couple financial assistance. The loan proved that Munch no longer harbored hostile thoughts against his former friends, despite all the pain they had caused him.

In 1901, when Munch was spending the summer months in Aasgaardstrand after his long confinement to a sanatorium, news reached him of Dagny's death. She had been in Tiflis in the Odessa region of Russia. There she had been shot by one of her jealous admirers who then turned the gun on himself. In a state of shock and confusion, Munch was compelled to write of the woman whose death came so suddenly and unexpectedly at age
thirty-four. In his memorial to the late Dagny Juell Przybyszewski Munch attempted to dispel for the reading public all the vicious rumors surrounding the life of his former lover and friend.\textsuperscript{147} Apparently in appreciation of Munch's kind words for Dagny, Przybyszewski finally arranged an exhibition of Munch's works in Warsaw. He thus proved to the artist that his friendship had been genuine despite the turbulent years in Berlin. The exhibition took place in December 1903 at the Krywult gallery, a showing the artist did not attend. Afterwards, the two friends drifted further and further apart. Despite Munch's repeated attempts to contact his friend, Przybyszewski remained unresponsive. Przybyszewski remarried and severed all ties with his former friends from the Ferkel Circle and perhaps anything else that might have reminded him of his years spent with Dagny.\textsuperscript{148}

As an epilogue to the relationship which existed between Munch and the Przybyszewskis, the artist wrote of his friend upon his death in 1927. Despite his past hostility, Munch could now look back on his friendship with Przybyszewski with fond memories:

\begin{quote}
The old friend of my youth stands before me as though alive. . . . And the hub of our circle was Przybyszewski, with his huge blazing eyes in a pale face, young and soulful, bursting with zest for life and faith in the future, high-strung, sensitive--now soaring to heights where only the stars gazed down upon him, then plunging to the very depths, close to the ultimate limits of despair. . . . I would have liked to write a memoir of my dear old friend, not now but while he was still alive, as a greeting and token of thanks for his friendship in our youthful days. I could then have expressed my gratitude for everything he did for me.
\end{quote}

Although by his own admission Munch had failed to write of Przybyszewski, the artist had not failed to write of Dagny. Moreover, it was Dagny Juell Przybyszewski who eventually came to replace the image of Fru Heiberg not only in Munch's writings but in his art as well. Thus, as attraction
became obsession and obsession became despair, Munch came to portray Dagny as his new fatal woman, in similar manner and frequency as Fru Heiberg before her.

The Writings

After Munch's romantic involvement with Fru Heiberg, a relationship from which the disconcerted artist had serious doubts of ever recovering, several years passed before he came to court a woman whom he describes later in life as his rescuer: "Then a young blond girl with a smile as fresh as spring came to my rescue."\textsuperscript{150} As he concludes in the same note, it was a relationship which, like the one with Fru Heiberg, also proved disastrous for the artist, as rescuer became executioner: "After that I gave up hope of ever being able to love again."\textsuperscript{151} Although Munch does not identify the young, blond girl by name, she may have been Dagny, the woman Munch loved and hated with the same intensity as he had loved and hated Fru Heiberg.

Although Dagny and Munch may have courted in Norway before both settled in Berlin, there exists no solid evidence of the artist writing about Dagny or depicting her in any works of art prior to the woman's relationship with Stanislaw Przybyszewski which began in the spring of 1893. Interestingly, and seemingly to the exclusion of all others, it was only when Dagny belonged to another man that she became critical to Munch's life and the occasion behind several of his writings and works of art. In fact, in 1893, the year Dagny married Przybyszewski, Munch curiously and quite abruptly returned to thoughts of love and courtship. More specifically, he
came to recollect a highly erotic experience with an intoxicatingly beautiful woman in one such writing.

In the note, to be quoted shortly, Munch views a woman through the eyes of an adoring lover and, as if she were an innocent youth, gently approaches her with reverence, longing and tenderness. She, in turn, is submissive to his cautious advances. Having reached this initial stage of love making, it is the woman who then rescinds her passive role to become an aggressive seductress. Conversely, it is Munch who assumes the role of acquiescent recipient in compliance with the woman's desires. In his total surrender to her, love is consummated and the two become as one. Yet, this pleasurable experience is not without its consequences. In fulfillment of desire, in this moment of passion and perfect union, Munch likens such ecstasy, such surrender, to a life-threatening, death-like experience. Trees and air disappear, and Munch is transposed from a physical state to a mystical union not with himself, nature, or God, but solely with this woman who has become the center of his being. The woman who has replaced all things in nature is also the woman who moves her mouth dangerously close to his jugular and with her kisses draws from him the very air he breathes. Totally consumed by this woman—body, mind and spirit—Munch sinks into a marvelous dream and the swoon of love seems at once the death swoon. In the aftermath of their sexual union, Munch awakens to find the woman retreating from him, her love spent. With only the phantom image of her bent shadow visible to him he then enters a new world. Revived, refreshed, and as if rescued back to life through the powers of this woman who has taught him to see with new eyes, he now belongs to her. Here then is Munch's account of this most exhilarating sexual event which changed him:
May I? he said. He felt her give in. She let herself be pulled closer and--closer--totally in to him. He took hold carefully of her body. She pushed herself up against him. He felt a warm mouth on his neck, a moist chin near his, and his mouth glided in toward hers.

Trees and air disappeared and he only saw into two large, dark green eyes that looked back into his--until they closed. Oh, he felt as if he wanted to cry--it was so wonderful--he sank as if into a marvelous dream.

A second later he saw her bent shadow disappear into the shrubbery.

He wanted to cry, shout in joy. Tonight he had seen--a new world. He had not imagined before that it was so--so wonderful, marvelous, and she had taught him it.

Seeming to have revived the memory of a now lost love, perhaps Fru Heiberg, as Reinhold Heller suggests, it is more than likely that Munch's remembrance of his particularly erotic encounter with a woman was precipitated by a recent experience and thus by a new love rather than recollections of an old one.

In defense of this interpretation, it does not seem plausible that Munch would now wish to resurrect the beautiful and erotic image of Fru Heiberg which he had so painstakingly tried to exorcise from his mind. Moreover, the action in the quoted passage from Munch's note takes place in a forest setting which Heller suggests could be in Norway. Because most of Munch's meetings with Fru Heiberg seem to have taken place in the artist's studio or some other indoor environment, and with the added knowledge of Munch's likely courtship of Dagny in Norway (perhaps Aasgaardstrand) previous to their arrival in Berlin, it is credible that the woman in Munch's above autobiographical note is Dagny Juell as he remembered her at home. To substantiate further the identity of the woman in Munch's note, at the time the artist is believed to have written his commentary about the woman (c. 1893), he also painted Dagny's portrait and was beginning several other works of art which may be traced to her.
fact, in one such work entitled The Three Stages of Woman (The Sphinx) (Fig. 80) of 1894, for which Heller believes Dagny Juell may have been the partial occasion,\(^{156}\) Munch portrays woman as sexually multidimensional. Depicting three women who are actually one woman in various guises, i.e., an innocent youth, a seductress and a woman portrayed as an older, phantom-like image of the other two, Munch's picture seems the visual correlative to the quoted note. In the note he likewise suggests the woman he is with to be simultaneously an innocent and somewhat inexperienced lover, a seductress, and lastly a spent force retreating shadow-like from him into the bush. Given the accuracy of this correspondence between the artist's note and his painting The Three Stages of Woman (The Sphinx) and also given Heller's contention that the picture was inspired, in part, by Dagny, it is reasonable to assume that the woman in Munch's note is Dagny as well.

There are other such writings by Munch which likewise point to Dagny as a source of inspiration. In one note, also dated c. 1893, Munch begins with an appraisal of the woman's beauty, in fact, a force to which he is irresistibly attracted and likens to a Madonna\(^{157}\) and to the loveliness found in nature. Yet, there is something foreboding in the artist's tone punctuated by the words "forgiveness" and "painful" as well as in the idea of the woman's lips resembling "two blood-red serpents." And so, as they are drawn together under "the light of the moon" now reflected on the woman's face, Munch writes:

Your face embodies all that is tender in the world. Your eyes are as dark as the green-blue sea--they draw me irresistibly to you. A painfully soft smile plays on your mouth, as if you wanted to ask me forgiveness for something. Your lips are sensual--like two blood-red serpents. There is piety in your face as it glows in the light of the moon. Your hair is brushed back from your flawless forehead. Your profile is that of a Madonna--your lips part gently as if in pain. Anxiously
I ask if you are feeling sad--but you just whisper, I am in love with you.

In keeping with the quoted passage from the artist's notes, there exist still other such interrelated writings by Munch in which he again mentions a woman (Dagny) with blood-red lips. In fact, with her smile now resembling "the smile of a corpse," the woman who has "dangerously" confessed her love for the artist is thus transformed into a menacing, death-like presence:

The pause as all the world stops in its path. Moonlight glides over your face filled with all the earth's beauty and pain. Your lips are like two ruby-red serpents and filled with blood, like your crimson red fruit. They glide from one another as if in pain. The smile of a corpse. Thus now life reaches out its hand to death. The chain is forged that binds the thousands of generations that have died to the thousands of generations yet to come.

Munch's beautiful, death-like Madonna (Dagny), whom the artist increasingly came to view as a negative force in his life, had other admirers as well.

Capturing the hearts of many of Munch's Ferkel Circle friends, who either secretly or quite openly sought her favors, Dagny proved equally fatal to her enamored victims as she had to Munch. Dividing friend against friend, it was such terrible circumstances which strengthened the artist's ambivalent feelings towards the woman. Moreover, surmising Dagny was actually enjoying all the attention she was receiving, all the chaos she was causing, in Munch's jealous estimation she was fast becoming a temptress, a destroyer of men, and therefore ostensibly the occasion for another of the artist's notes: "You are like a woman passing between two lines of men who are stretching out their hands towards your naked body." Momentarily separated from the reigning queen of the Ferkel Circle by the
intercession of his friends' "hands," Munch is subsequently drawn close to the bewitching woman who has stolen his heart. In still another meeting with the woman, the artist is once again swept away by love. Yet, sensing some dreadful revelation—as expressed in the word "fearful"—the following passage not only acts as a prelude to the next note to be quoted, but gives us some indication that even the artist's most passionate feelings for the woman are slowly disintegrating—as expressed in the phrase "fervor had burned out"—perhaps because he perceives the woman performing a sexual act without feeling, thought or care for him:

She had never before stayed as long as this with him—he implored her not to leave—he was more ardent than ever before—he had to embrace her again—as soon as the fervor had burned out again when they got up—She stood straight fixing her hair with the posture of a queen. There was something in her expression that made him feel fearful—he didn't know what it was.  

In the following note the image of the woman with blood-red lips and the smile of a corpse returns. But the beautiful, death-like Madonna is no more. In fact, transformed into a much more ominous and frightening vision than before, the indefinable uneasiness and fear Munch expresses in the above passage now clearly manifests itself:

Your lips are like ruby worms—your lips are filled with blood like red fruit (... glide apart as in pain, a corpse's smile) ... We walked out of the hot-flower-filled forest ... out into the light-evening night ... I looked at her face and I (lacuna) had committed adultery ... a Medusa head. I felt as if your love (lacuna) lay on the hard stones.  

Far removed from the joy and bliss the artist expressed in his first autobiographical note (c. 1893) presented in this section, Munch had now come to view Dagny as a terrifying enemy. 

In life, the artist now showed jealous and possessive feelings towards the woman who could not be possessed by any man. He knew that he
had to share her with other men and had had intimate relations with another man's wife. Munch had desecrated his spirit through his adulterous act with her, which ultimately destroyed his love for the woman and transformed her from a Madonna into a Medusa. Thus, according to Carol Ravenal:

"... with the potential development of intimacy, he [Munch] is again terrified by conflicts. For the woman to be separate, to recognize her otherness, is to expose him again to the dangers of separation and abandonment; and his aggression is projected—the life-giving Madonna becomes the demonic Medusa head and the "good woman" is lost. Only complete merger with the woman, complete control on his part, would prevent a Madonna from becoming a Medusa. ..."

Ravenal continues:

Munch's use of the symbolism of the Medusa head is a particularly fitting representation of his intense ambivalence. He to witness' (sic) the transformation of the beautiful maiden into a frightening monster, the sight of which turned the spectator into stone. As with Perseus he must then slay her and eliminate her tyranny over him.

But the execution of which Ravenal writes did not take place. In the last analysis, it was Dagny who "murdered" a part of the artist by destroying his spirit and his capacity to love: "After that I gave up hope of ever being able to love again."

Now, making a note to himself about the folly of love from the safe distance of a philosophical observer, the artist henceforth concludes the existence of long and lasting relationships between two people to be a rare and fragile gift which seldom lasts:

"The men of old were right when they said that love was a flame --because when it burnt out, all that remains is a pile of ashes."

Older, wiser, sadder, and the twice "burned" victim of woman's love, Munch never gave of himself to the same extent as he had given himself to Dagny
Juell Przybyszewski and Fru Heiberg before her. In fact, as is examined in subsequent sections, fear, hatred and repulsion seem to dominate the artist's future relationships with women. Perhaps his romantic interludes with these two married women were responsible for his ever-increasing mistrust and hostility towards any woman who cared for him from this point forward.

Later in life embittered thoughts of the years spent in the German capital with his Ferkel Circle friends and Dagny came back to haunt the artist:

I don't understand that my nerves didn't cave in back in my Berlin days. I sat at the table with these people and couldn't say a word. Strindberg talked and talked. All the time I kept thinking, 'Doesn't her husband understand a thing? First he ought to become green with jealousy, then blow his top.'

Also, recalling a work of art entitled *Jealousy* (Fig. 17) of 1895, which Munch had created as a direct result of his collaboration with his friends in Berlin and in particular Dagny and her husband, the artist told Rolf Stenersen just how destructive his relationship with Dagny had once been not only to himself but for his career as well:

I painted a few pictures of these people, among them the one I have called *Jealousy*. It's that one with the green face in the foreground and a man who keeps looking at a nude woman. I had gone to Paris and was planning an exhibit there. Then these people came and I had to pack up my pictures and move on. After all I had painted him green and her in the nude. That Paris exhibit never came off. Had I been able to have a show there I might not have been reminded so often by critics that I received my name as a painter in Germany. To break through in Paris is a great thing for an artist in our days. That business with the woman in Berlin ruined a great deal for me.

Conceding to Dagny the evil of which she was only too capable, and despite all of his remembered aggravations in connection with her, Munch was also genuinely fond of the woman. Immediately following her death in 1901,
Munch's ambivalent feelings towards Dagny temporarily subsided and in an honorable attempt to protect and defend the woman he had once loved, Munch made public what he felt to be her true nature:

...[Dagny] was a poor advocate of the doctrine of free love that her husband is said to have preached in his books. In reality the couple did not indulge in that kind of practice. We, their close friends, know that they lived happily together with their two children each summer up at Kongsvinger.

Dispelling all rumors of Dagny's faithlessness and putting to rest his own hateful feelings about her as well, Munch continued to honor the woman in his final memorial to her. Suggesting she was anything but a destructive presence in his life, he went on to champion her as a positive force for him and all his male friends in the Ferkel Circle:

...she moved among us freely and proudly, encouraging us, constantly comforting us, as only a woman can, and her presence alone was sufficient to calm and inspire us. It was as if the simple fact that she was nearby gave us new inspiration, new ideas, so that the desire to create flamed up fresh and new.

Such praise extended to the woman who had once hurt him so deeply was generous and kind. It was acknowledged as such by Ragnhild Juell Bäckström (Dagny's sister and acquaintance of Munch in Berlin) in a letter of thanks to the artist: "You are the only one who has said anything good about her." 171

Introduction to Works of Art

In spite of his most commendable memorial to Dagny, the works of art Munch created during his Berlin years tell a somewhat different story of the woman. As in his early writings of her, Munch portrays her as a fatal seductress and in a few of these pictures Munch himself appears as her helpless victim.
Portrait of Dagny Juell Przybyszewski

It is evident from Munch's memorial to Dagny that not only did she play a dominant role in the artist's life but furthermore was a woman crucial to his art as well. Thus, during the time Munch lived and worked in Berlin (1892-1896) Dagny was, by the artist's own admission, his inspiration, his artistic muse. She was likewise Munch's tormentor and therefore depicted by him as such.

This examination of Dagny, in works of art by Munch, begins with Portrait of Dagny Juell Przybyszewski (Fig. 10) of 1893. To date, it is the only work of art in which Munch identifies a romantic interest by name. Significantly, Munch kept this portrait for the remainder of his life.172

To understand the manner in which Munch came to portray the woman in her portrait, a comparison between it and a photograph taken of Dagny in the early 1890s (Fig. 11) is in order. In the photograph, Dagny appears the perfect image of feminine reserve and uncomplicated innocence. Dressed in her "Sunday best" with her bonnet forming a halo-like image round her head, she is shown seated, her hands placed carefully on her lap, her left arm positioned tightly to her side as if to act as a protective barrier between subject and viewer. Eyes averted from the eye of the camera and wearing a rather pensive yet nonetheless demure expression, she is the image of modesty and untainted beauty.

In his Portrait of Dagny Juell Przybyszewski Munch depicts her leaner and somewhat older than she appears in her photograph. There is yet something quite imposing, and provocatively alluring about her.

Seen frontally, Dagny stands tall and erect. With her hands clasped behind her back and thus without the protective barrier of her arms between
herself and the viewer, Dagny seems deliberately to reveal her body to us and quite openly invite the sexual advances of any man who would gaze upon her. Moreover, like the stance she assumes, her expression is also provocative and alluring. Lips parted to reveal small, white teeth, she wears a knowing, mocking smile. With the added charm of her slightly titled head—thrown back—she appears to strike the look of a laughing coquette who presently focuses her attention outward and appraises the spectator through languorously heavy, yet seemingly alert eyes. Executed the same year as the woman's marriage to Stanislaw Przybyszewski, there is, paradoxically, nothing bridal about Dagny in Munch's portrayal of her. Rather, quite the antithesis of innocence and feminine reserve (as in the photograph), this sensuoulsy imposing, free-spirited woman dressed in black appears every bit the emancipated woman. Yet, for someone else who knew the woman well, the artist's portrait of Dagny represented much more. For August Strindberg, who was a member of the Ferkel Circle and Dagny's lover for a short while in Berlin in early 1893, the woman in Portrait of Dagny Juell Przybyszewski was:

A most modern type, refined and delicate, a temptress of the mind rather than of the flesh, a highly differentiated creature. No Phryne but an Aspasia, indeed. Her face is unusual, aristocratic, sympathetically alive. There is something searching in it; a trembling of her nostrils. Her lids are lowered, but the eyes underneath them pertain prey on things.

Likening her to the consort of Pericles, Strindberg viewed her as a temptress of the soul and as one as intimidating as she looks. Though she is disguised behind the thin veneer of refinement, Dagny is portrayed in her portrait as a woman searching, smelling, finding and sizing up her prey.

What Strindberg perceived in Munch's portrait of Dagny was his own subjective interpretation. Yet, such perceptions seem to have been
tempered by the manner in which Munch himself came to portray the woman. In fact, taking into account what Strindberg said about Munch's portrait of Dagny and also noting what Munch once wrote in relation to his own art, i.e., "Nature is not something that can be seen by the eye alone--it lies also within the soul, in pictures seen by the inner eye," it will be shown that what the artist himself attempted to reveal about the woman beyond superficial appearances is not far removed from Strindberg's opinions.

In keeping with a closer examination of this work of art, there is something in the manner Munch chose to render Dagny in an undetermined yet seemingly claustrophobic space, without specific reference to groundline or place, which creates an otherworld ambiance about the woman both mystifying and foreboding. She is dressed in funerary black which makes it difficult to discern the total form of her body from the almost equitable darkness of the background. Conversely, the woman's face is clearly visible and seems as if lighted from within. Dagny appears then, an ethereal presence or a haunting apparition from some half-forgotten dream conjured in the artist's mind. Because the artist depicts her just above the hemline of her dress, she floats forward like a bodiless creature who is about to fade from our sights. She appears dangerously close yet remotely distant. Munch may have intended such dialectic tensions inherent in this portrait to signify either something quite specific about Dagny or a manifestation of his own tenuous relationship with her. Consequently, she is part reality and part fantasy. She is an effectual yet evasive presence. Munch's Portrait of Dagny Juell Przybyszewski represents the visual manifestation of the artist's own bewildered and puzzled perceptions about this woman; she was
irresistible and held obsessively in the artist's thoughts, but he could not possess her. Dagny was a woman who captured his heart and tortured his soul.

Seen as such, Strindberg's perceptions concerning Munch's portrait of Dagny are uncannily correct. She is depicted as a temptress of the mind whose eyes prey on things. It is the artist whom she holds in her sights like a prized possession which belongs to her and her alone.

In addition, using paint to describe his own strongly agitated and frustrated feelings concerning his stormy relationship with this woman, Munch seems to have exerted and spent much of his energy smudging and smearing it over the surface of the canvas and fracturing his brushstrokes. Perhaps Munch deliberately created this chaotic landscape of dark and varied colors surrounding the woman to act as a metaphor for the chaos and confusion she injected into his life. Even so, the woman herself remains strangely calm. Like a brightly burning candle flame which barely flickers in the darkness, her face with its preying eyes and enigmatic smile seems at once mystically hypnotizing and triumphantly mocking the artist and the spectator alike.

In conclusion, with the Portrait of Dagny Juell Przybyszewski, a specific character study of a particular woman in Munch's love life, the artist seems to convey the idea that Dagny has cast a fatal spell on him. In fact, the portrait stands as a prelude, a visual catalyst for other works Munch produced over the next several years in which he portrays Dagny as a provocatively alluring temptress who is nonetheless remote and elusive. Thus, as Munch himself admitted in his 1901 memorial to the woman, Dagny was his inspiration and his artistic muse while he lived and
worked in Berlin. Insofar as she was a negative force in his life as well, Munch also reveals her to us as his fatal woman in specific works of art.

**Hands**

Given Dagny's spell over Munch and her popularity among the men of the Ferkel Circle in Berlin, she is most likely the subject in **Hands** (Fig. 12). Like the **Portrait of Dagny Juell Przybyszewski** (Fig. 10) and **Madonna** (Fig. 60a) it was executed in 1893.

In the center of **Hands**, a semi-nude woman appears aloof and facially expressionless. She stands frontally among a group of imploring hands which reach out for her from the left and from the right. As a gesture of enticement her own hands are clasped behind her head thrusting her breasts and belly forward. Here again we see a variation of the pose Dagny strikes in both **Madonna** and her portrait.

Concerning this work of art, Munch writes: "You are like a woman passing between two lines of men who are stretching out their hands towards your naked body." As visually demonstrative in **Hands**, Munch's remark not only offers us "a summation of his feelings about the 'otherness' of woman and the poverty of relationships based solely on lust," but also suggests that he was the enamored, yet passively jealous and suspicious observer of Dagny's attentive male suitors. Because it is known that Munch felt repelled by persons exhibiting their hands, what better way to show his disdain and revulsion towards Dagny and those who desire her than through the depiction of hands grasping for her and her favors.

Stanislaw Przybyszewski, Dagny's husband, also thought the theme of jealousy as a central motive behind **Hands**. Obviously noting Munch's
disapproval of his wife's "lewd" behavior among friends, he seemingly chides Munch for his unaccepting naïveté in such matters as free love in his story *Overboard*:

In the centre of the picture he would paint a woman with a mysterious, treacherous, maniac smile on her lips, and all about her a thousand outstretched, clamourous hands—thin, nervous artists' hands, fat, fleshy, be-ringed bankers' hands, all sorts of hands, an orgy of greedy voluptuous hands. While the woman looked at them with her mysterious, maniac smile.

Mikita [Munch] was in a fever. He must set to painting at once, quick, quick, or it would disappear, and then would come the brooding, anguish, the venomous sting of a thousand serpents.

Przybyszewski's phrase "the venomous sting of a thousand serpents" indicates that Munch was paralyzed with jealous rage when the artist introduced Dagny to his friends of the Ferkel Circle, who are depicted as the hands groping for Dagny. As already noted, Przybyszewski encouraged his wife to seek the affections of others, much to the dismay of Munch and August Strindberg. Moreover, the playwright even claimed to have been the first member of that group to have stolen Dagny's affections from Munch.

It is interesting to note here that while all the hands are vile and repulsive, it is the two hands in the lower right corner which seem to have been singled out by Munch for special emphasis: the one blood-red, the other below it spotted and discolored, as if affected by a skin disease. These ostensibly represent Strindberg's hands which, according to his own account, were affected by a skin disease:

The doctor who looked at my bleeding hands, which can no longer button up a shirt, believed for a moment that they were leprous, that is incurable. Although this is not the case, they are very difficult to heal, after having undergone treatment by so many physicians for six years.

Furthermore, Munch's jealousy did not stop with Strindberg or the others. Unlike Munch's *Madonna*, in which he depicts the woman in sexual abandon to
himself, in *Hands* Munch portrays Dagny to be an emotionally detached, promiscuous nymphomaniac who appears unaffected by her lustful male suitors:

Despite their eager entreaties, the female remains aloof in her acquiescence. To her, each coupling is necessarily the same. The grasping hands never really touch her: her head, locus of the psyche, rises above the writhing physical mass. Internally she remains the mysterious and impenetrable "other," immune to the phallic presences which accost her body at every turn.

In *Hands*, Munch depicts no isolated incident; this sea of overlapping and superimposed hands represents the accretions of time. The dark circles around her eyes attest to her repeated performance of a function that has no end.

She seems unaffected by the men in her life. The unseen men suffer for her love in the form of jealous rivalries and painful reflections. Symbolically depicted as a fatal woman, she therefore represents the calm eye of a storm around which a whirlwind of jealousy, pain and suffering has formed.

In other words, Munch depicts in *Hands* a timeless ritual in which Dagny is an idol. She is unaffected by the imploring men who are just so many anonymous hands. They are the rejected rivals of her attention and affection and are enflamed with jealousy toward each other in their fanatic adoration. Dagny is for the moment, as well as for all such moments, casting an elusive and mysteriously magic spell. She is forever present and yet distant. This dialectic passion of the fatal woman is thus beloved but unapproachable. She projects being needed, but she is incapable of being possessed. It is the projection of idolization and its profoundly affective relation between the female-as-idol and men as devoted worshipers that is reaffirmed in Munch's painting. Just as there is a calm center
in the famous and dangerous whirlpool off the west coast of Norway, Munch's *Hands* depicts the fatal woman as the serene center of a masculine maelstrom of agitated jealousies.

**Ashes**

Apparently having had enough of Berlin and eager to return to his homeland to find solace, Munch arranged a trip to Norway in the late spring of 1894. Accompanied home by the Przybyszewskis, who were on their way to visit Dagny's parents in Kongsvinger (approximately fifty miles from Munch's hometown of Christiania), Munch continued on to the seaside resort of Aasgaardstrand to paint. Later that summer Stanislaw Przybyszewski [and possibly Dagny] came to visit Munch. Upon returning to Kongsvinger after a week with the artist, Przybyszewski wrote to a friend about Munch's new pictures--one of which he found particularly delightful. Without naming the work which caught his attention, Przybyszewski most likely was referring to *Ashes* (Fig. 13), a painting, remarks Roy Boe, Munch worked on that very summer in Aasgaardstrand.

In *Ashes* the artist depicts a man and a woman in a landscape setting which consists of a rocky, light-filled foreground area and a dark forest interior situated in the background. Upon closer examination, the setting is an especially out-of-the-way place which is thought to be located in Aasgaardstrand. Yet, in contrast to this seemingly peaceful site, the couple in it seem the unhappy recipients of what appears to have been a secret, though unsatisfactory sexual meeting between them.

Dominating the foreground and wearing a white dress partially unbuttoned to reveal a scarlet-red bodice beneath it, appears the tall,
rather erect figure of a standing woman. Her hands are clasped above her head in an attempt to arrange her disheveled hair. She assumes a blank expression. Both the woman's pose and her expressionless face are remarkably similar in manner to the way in which Munch portrayed Dagny in Hands (Fig. 12) of 1893. Furthermore, a seemingly unhappy lover contemplating the meaninglessness and emptiness of her sexual victory over the man next to her, the woman in Ashes, perhaps Dagny herself, attempts to regain her composure before taking leave of her partner.

In juxtaposition to the female, the man huddles in the lower left-hand corner of the picture. With his back to the woman and his one hand raised to his bent head, he appears to have given way to extreme exhaustion, or feelings of overwhelming guilt, remorse and hopeless despair. Moreover, to complete the idea of love gone amiss, smoke from smoldered wood rises. As a metaphor for the couple's dying love, the wood will turn to ashes. The smoke partially envelops the man. Rocks lie scattered about the ground and, colored in various hues of brown, the forest behind the estranged lovers appears as though it has been burned and dried by the hot sun. As Ashes is the outward expression of what lies deep within the male's psyche rather than a depiction of physical reality. The painting suggests the idea of a modern day Eden turned to ashes and stone. Because it is evident that the woman is the cause of this destruction of nature and of man, she is thusly transformed into a present day Eve.

As the visualization of several notes written by the artist in which he describes the ill-fated love affair between himself and a woman, Ashes represents an autobiographical account of a particularly disturbing event in Munch's life which began blissfully but ended in a disastrous discovery:
Never before had she been together with him for so long—he begged her not to go—he was hot as never before—he desired, had to embrace her again, to feel her kiss again—again. The flame was extinguished when they got up again.

She stood very tall and erect in the posture of a queen as she ordered her hair. Something in her expression aroused fear in him—he could not figure out what it was.

Inasmuch as Munch's autobiographical note appears to be the written correlative to Ashes and inasmuch as the woman depicted in Ashes not only corresponds in type to the one in the artist's writings but is strangely reminiscent of Dagny as she appears in Hands, it therefore might be concluded that the woman portrayed in Ashes is none other than the married Dagny Juell Przybyszewski.

In order to further substantiate the identity of the woman in Ashes as Dagny and in order to demonstrate just how devastating this woman was to Munch, it is necessary to turn to a second note written by the artist in conjunction with the Ashes motif. In it, the artist reveals his bitter discovery:

We walked out of the hot-flower-filled forest... out into the light-evening night... I looked at her face and I (lacuna) had committed adultery... a Medusa head. I felt as if your love (lacuna) lay on the hard stones.

As Munch confesses in the note, it was the knowledge that he had had sexual relations with another man's wife which ultimately destroyed his love for the woman and transformed her into a Medusa. This transformation of a woman is expressed even more directly in Munch's lithographic version of Ashes (Fig. 14) of 1896.

In like manner to the original painting, the lithograph depicts the same couple in the same forest setting, repeating the same performance. The only other additions to this work are the word "ASKES" ("ASHES") in the lower left-hand corner, a pile of ashes which has replaced the smoldering
wood, and the inclusion of the head of a woman in the upper portion of the picture. The additional head has the snake-like hair of a Medusa and, thus, is the "Medusa head" of Munch's quoted note in which he confesses to an adulterous act.

Taken during the same summer of 1894, when Munch first painted Ashes, the photograph of Dagny Juell Przybyszewski (Fig. 15) demonstrates in its likeness to the Medusa head of the lithograph that it is indeed Dagny who is meant to be depicted. Just as she appears as an apparition in the lithograph, Dagny continued to haunt and torment Munch much longer than the two intervening years between the two versions of Ashes.

The lithograph Ashes II (Fig. 16) of 1899 reverses the two figures. Munch depicts himself in the lower right-hand corner still in mourning over his affair with Dagny. In the left-hand portion of this lithograph, Dagny is shown as having a barely perceptible smile. Unlike the somber expression she assumes in the two earlier versions of Ashes, the smile is puzzling until the events concerning Ashes II are known.

In 1898, one year previous to Ashes II, Dagny and Stanislaw Przybyszewski visited Munch in Paris on their way home from Spain. Although the exact circumstance of this meeting between the trio is not known, such a visit must have resurrected bitter memories of defeat for the artist better left buried. In fact, Dagny's smile in Ashes II is perhaps indicative of Munch finally conceding defeat to the woman who had hurt him in the past. It is therefore possibly a manifestation of what the artist had long denied but was now seemingly willing to admit: that it was Dagny's sexual victory over Munch, that is, her triumph over the man who had never fully recovered from his affair with her which is depicted in Ashes II.
Jealousy

After spending the duration of the summer of 1894 in Aasgaardstrand, where the artist painted *Ashes* (Fig. 13), Munch returned to Berlin as well as to Dagny and her husband who had also gone back to the German capital after their summer in Kongsvinger. However, for Munch it was not a happy reunion. Growing ever more suspicious of Dagny's affections toward him (which he undoubtedly and quite despairingly perceived as false), and constantly battling against fits of jealousy precipitated by the Przybyszewskis, it was at this juncture in Munch's life that he seriously considered the idea of leaving Berlin permanently.192 Yet, unable to be separated from Dagny for very long, it would be another agonizing sixteen months before Munch would find the strength to tear himself away from the woman who held him in her power.

Such circumstances were not new to Munch. He had experienced similar destructive feelings when entering into illicit love with the married Fru Heiberg earlier in life. Added to his relationship with Fru Heiberg was the burden of guilt. Believing the woman's husband was suffering equally in this game of marital deception, Munch greatly empathized with the man and was even compelled to write a secret confession to him in which he identified himself as her despairing lover.193 In fact, projecting his own pain and suffering onto the husband, and thinking the man anxiously and suspiciously awaiting his wife's return home after her meetings with the artist, Munch further deceived himself into believing the husband felt the same as he did. Then too, as another way of relieving his own guilt for having been party to this triangle fatal for Munch, the artist in his
early diary entries came to depict Fru Heiberg as an evil seductress who had deliberately and quite openly enticed him into a liaison with her.¹⁹⁴

Years later, in Berlin, an older yet hardly wiser man concerning affairs of the heart, Munch returned to the patterns of his youth. In a type of repeated performance of the past, with only a change in setting and the cast of characters, Munch played party to another devastating love triangle with the Przybyszewskis. Thus, echoing in part his previous relationship with the Heibergs, Munch painted Jealousy (Fig. 17) of 1895 in which he typecast Dagny in the role of a faithless and evil temptress, Przybyszewski as the suspicious husband consumed by jealousy, and himself as the married woman's lover.¹⁹⁵

In Jealousy, Munch depicts Stanislaw in the right foreground. He stares toward the viewer as if brooding over the background figures of Dagny and the artist. She wears a scarlet dress which is opened in the front, and reveals her nude body to Munch whose face is flushed with the fever of passion and sexual longing. She is seen reaching behind her and plucking an apple which undoubtedly will be offered to the artist: Dagny-as-Eve offers her forbidden fruit to Munch-as-Adam.

Munch depicts the background figures in an almost summary way so the viewer's attention may concentrate on Stanislaw's expression. His eyebrows are raised indicating spitefulness or disgust. His complexion is poisonous green, reflecting his jealous state of mind. Munch depicts Stanislaw as someone suspended for all time to contemplate the deception taking place behind his back. Jealousy is, then, a brooding and embittered account of implied ruin for which Dagny-as-Eve is responsible.
In life, Stanislaw Przybyszewski was not at all the jealous husband that Munch portrays him to be in Jealousy. Rather, the man felt his wife should engage in liaisons with other men. It was Munch himself who vehemently objected to such extramarital affairs and was, in fact, enraged by the very thought of Dagny with a man other than himself. Thus, aside from Jealousy representing the love triangle between himself, Dagny and Przybyszewski as the artist wished it to be, it is doubtlessly Przybyszewski's face which expresses the embodiment of Munch's own projected jealousy onto another, just as he had also once envisioned the husband of his former lover, Fru Heiberg, to be the jealous recipient of his illicit affair with the man's wife. In order to clarify the latter observation, it is necessary to review how the artist felt in the company of the Przybyszewskis and their mutual friends as well as to reiterate what the artist said in conjunction with Jealousy. Following Munch's comments, Przybyszewski's own account of the artist's painting will be offered in an effort to better understand how his beliefs differed from Munch's heartfelt convictions concerning this issue of jealousy.

Later in life, thinking of a time in Berlin with his friends, specifically Dagny, Przybyszewski and Strindberg (the latter of whom was Dagny's lover before she married), Munch made it quite clear that Dagny's misconduct in his presence had tortured him. Then, projecting what he would have done in Przybyszewski's place had he been Dagny's husband instead, the artist revealed to Rolf Stenersen his own sense of jealous outrage concerning past indiscretions between friends and lovers:

I don't understand that my nerves didn't cave in back in my Berlin days. I sat at the table with these people and couldn't say a
word. Strindberg talked and talked. All the time I kept thinking, 'Doesn't her husband understand a thing? First he ought to become green with jealousy, then blow his top.'

Obviously making reference to Przybyszewski who ought to have become green with jealousy and then "blow his top" over the presence of Strindberg, his wife's former lover, Munch was once again projecting his feelings of suspicion and jealousy onto a situation which apparently did not upset Przybyszewski at all.

In addition, recalling another circumstance surrounding an exhibition he was planning in Paris shortly after Jealousy was painted, Munch explained to Stenersen with bitter and deep resentment:

I painted a few pictures of these people, among them the one I have called Jealousy. It's that one with the green face in the foreground and a man who keeps looking at a nude woman. I had gone to Paris and was planning an exhibit there. Then these people came and I had to pack up my pictures and move on. After all I had painted him green and her in the nude. That Paris exhibit never came off. Had I been able to have a show there I might not have been reminded so often by critics that I received my name as a painter in Germany. To break through in Paris is a great thing for an artist in our days. That business with the woman in Berlin ruined a great deal for me.

In his comments to Stenersen, Munch not only blamed "these people," i.e., Przybyszewski and particularly Dagny for having ruined his plans to exhibit his works in Paris which might have meant a breakthrough for him there, but seemed convinced the couple might somehow destroy him for depicting them in what the artist felt to be a most unflattering light in Jealousy. These are irrational fears, to be sure, but nonetheless all too real to the hypersensitive artist; Munch had, in truth, ruined his chances in Paris by projecting his own feelings onto others.

In fact, Przybyszewski, who had promoted the artist many times during their long friendship and who with equal enthusiasm had encouraged Munch's
psychological probings of the mind and heart in his work—as he himself did in his own writings—made it quite clear that although he personally disdained the idea of jealousy as an illogical and self-destructive emotion, he also understood it to be part of the unchanging human condition as the following excerpt from his review of *Jealousy* demonstrates:

> Up front, as in Chinese painting, one can see a man's head peering out from the frame with one eye that has the appearance of a triangle: a symbol of the eternity of one of the most banal and agonizing emotions. Within this painting lies the entire stupid, inflexible brooding of a passion which has been reversed into the insane idiocy of despair. The painting appears almost like a pictorial presentation of a Cicisbeo's physiological experience of light and color sensations; it is nothing more than the painted philosophy of a suffering feeling of natural selection: . . . It is in this manner that a landscape is pictured in the mind of a male who loses a female of his natural selection to someone else: the wild, prehistorical battle for the female has been transformed into a cultural triste, cowardly, stupid, resigned brooding.

Rather than insulting Munch's work as he might have, Przybyszewski's review demonstrates that he was quite capable of thinking clearly and rationally about *Jealousy*. Having had the wisdom and forethought to distance himself from the work, in which he must have recognized himself depicted as the jealous one, Przybyszewski as philosopher-psychologist suggests the jealous man in Munch's painting to be a sick and cowardly individual incapable of living beyond his own insufferable suspicions. In short, Przybyszewski could hardly have been the agitated recipient of a problem he clearly saw to be Munch's rather than his own. Only too painfully aware of his friend's jealous dilemma concerning his wife, perhaps Przybyszewski's review of *Jealousy* was an attempt, in part, to shake Munch from his own self-destructive despair before the man he so admired and loved did further harm to himself.
By showing himself as Dagny's lover and Przybyszewski as the jealous husband in *Jealousy*, Munch could delude himself into thinking he had finally won and possessed the woman he so desired for at least a brief moment in time and space. But it is a joyless union, an empty triumph on Munch's part. In truth, because the artist depicts Dagny as a woman in red flaunting her charms before him, because he shows her reaching for the forbidden fruit which she will doubtlessly offer to him, she is a modern day Eve whose destruction of Munch is foreseen in Przybyszewski's face.

A representation of Dagny's power to allure and reject male victims at will, *Jealousy* stands as only one instance in an ongoing life scenario. That is to say, although Dagny was to remain the center of passionate emotions in life (just as she will remain so in *Jealousy*) the male partners she chose to love and made to suffer for her love changed many times. Yet even this situation which the artist found quite intolerable eventually played itself out. Six years later, Dagny met a man whose own jealous emotions drove him to take deadly action against her. He drew a pistol to her head, fired, and then turned the gun on himself. Such was the legacy of Dagny Juell Przybyszewski who not only proved fatal to Munch, several other men of the Ferkel Circle, and the man who shot her, but fatal to herself as well.

In conclusion, shortly after Munch painted *Jealousy*, he finally came to the realization that Dagny, wife of his closest friend in Berlin, was his fatal woman. Having therefore loved and lost her, he also decided to leave such love affairs, such devastating triangles, to stronger, less vulnerable hearts than his own. Shaking himself free from the woman, Munch headed for
Paris in February of 1896. There, he threw himself into his work and turned his attentions to an "unattached," single girl named Judith Ericson Molard.

Section III: Judith Molard

In order to discover potential patrons and new outlets for his art works, Edvard Munch settled in Paris in 1896. There he soon became a part of the circle of the Franco-Norwegian William Francois Molard (1862-1936). Molard was a secretary in the French Ministry of Agriculture and an amateur composer. His modest two-story, wooden house was situated at number 6 Rue Vercingétorix in the Montparnasse district of the French capital.

The Molard home was a favorite haunt of French and Scandinavian-born writers, artists and musicians. The "at homes," as the informal gatherings were called, attracted dilettantes and professionals alike. In fact, during the mid-1890s the most frequent guests included the composer Frederick Delius, the playwrights Alfred Jarry and August Strindberg (who had arrived in Paris in 1894), as well as the artists Henri Rousseau, Édouard Vuillard, Pierre Bonnard, and Munch. Moreover, Paul Gauguin rented a studio on the second floor of Molard's house which he vacated shortly before Munch's arrival in Paris.

In his roman à clef, Inferno, Strindberg describes typical jovial and bohemian gatherings of the Molard circle. Along with the following comments, Strindberg also adds some passing remarks concerning Gauguin:

An entire coterie of anarchistic artists gathers there, and I feel doomed to endure seeing and hearing everything I would rather avoid—shameless behavior, loose morals, deliberate godlessness. There is gathered there much talent, infinite wit; one of them is
really a natural genius and has acquired quite a name for himself.  

Strindberg continues with still another account of such "at homes." He remembers with particular disgust Christmas Eve, 1894, at the Molards':

We at once sit down to dinner and begin to eat it in tumultuously noisy fashion. The young artists are quite irresponsible. Their speeches and gestures are unrestrained and a tone prevails which is out of place in the family ... I feel irritated and displeased.

It was the Molards' teenage daughter Judith (1884-1950) who usually filled the role of hostess at these gatherings. Born Judith Ericson in Stockholm, she was the illegitimate daughter of Swedish-born opera singer Fritz Arlberg and Swedish sculptress Ida Louise Wilhelmina Ericson (1853-1927). When Ida married William Molard in 1891, Judith became his stepdaughter.

Judith was a precocious girl: intelligent, witty and outspoken. As a child she quickly developed a taste for music, literature and art. In the 1890s, she studied under the tutelage of Eugène Carrière and soon became a talented painter and graphic artist in her own right. She also preferred and sought relationships with older men. Her first serious romantic attachment was to one of her teachers, Monsieur Floquet. After Floquet's death, Judith transferred her affections to Gauguin to which he responded in kind. Writing of the artist in her memoirs Judith remarks:

Gauguin bubbles over with an inner richness, he is the master overshadowing all the others, even Delius, all reduced to figuring as zeros behind this absolute ... He didn't bear the mark of sordid poverty that was on all the artists of our milieu, both those who have succeeded since those days and those who didn't make the grade (with the exception of Delius who, obviously, is rich).

There can be little doubt that Judith worshipped Gauguin. On the other hand, she could be equally scornful to those she disliked.
Judith jealously guarded her love for Gauguin and quickly assailed anyone who came between them. One such confrontation took place between Judith and the young, poet-journalist Julien Leclercq whose friendship with Gauguin provoked Judith's animosity. When Gauguin left Paris for Brittany in the summer of 1894, Leclercq moved into the artist's vacant studio rent-free. It was perhaps at this time that the following conversation took place between Judith and Leclercq:

L: You don't know what love is.
J: All the same, it's not you who'll teach me.
L: Why not me?
J: And why you, may I ask?
L: Because I love you. I've wept all night.
J: Weep on you'll piss less!

Judith also disliked Strindberg. He was, likewise, a friend and admirer of Gauguin. This time Judith proved that she not only possessed a sharp tongue, but a poisonous pen as well. In the following excerpt taken from her memoirs, she describes Strindberg's repulsive appearance in no uncertain terms:

... with his mouth pursed like the backside of a hen over the sombre mystery of his decayed teeth, the contrived and always identical disorder of his pretentious old lion's shock of hair, his grimy, chapped hands ... 

Such an account points to one dominating fact: Judith was anything but a demure young lady. Although she could cut her victims sharply with her words, she was nonetheless dedicated to Gauguin. Unfortunately for Judith this close relationship with Gauguin was about to come to an end. Disenchanted with the civilized world, the artist left Paris for Tahiti in 1895. He would never return to the French capital and this fact left Judith heartsick. Some months later (February 1896) Munch arrived in Paris. He rented a studio at 32, Rue de la Santé where he remained until
the end of the year. Munch wrote home of his whereabouts: "I am together with Delius and Vilhelm Krag by day. They both live near me--the Latin Quarter as it's called." Shortly thereafter Munch was introduced to the Molards. They took an immediate liking to the artist and he to them. Thus, during this time Munch was a frequent visitor to the Molard home and subsequently became acquainted with Judith.

Many questions remain unanswered concerning the exact nature and extent of Munch's relationship with Judith Molard. Interestingly, Munch's arrival in Paris coincided with a period of time when both he and the young girl were between significant relationships. Gauguin's absence left a void in Judith's life ready to be filled by the next "suitable" lover. Munch likewise was in the process of recovering from his romantic involvement with Dagny Juell Przybyszewski. From Judith's memoirs it is evident that the girl had not found "the others" who frequented the Molard home interesting. They figured "as zeros" and bore "the mark of sordid poverty." Thus, any newcomer to the group could conceivably have proved an interesting challenge to the bored and demanding girl.

Friends often referred to Munch in a flattering manner: cultured, refined, modest in demeanor and aristocratic in appearance. Photographs of Munch clearly indicate such observations were correct. Since Judith was quite particular concerning appearances--judging from her harsh scrutiny of Strindberg--it is quite possible that she may have found Munch an attractive alternative to the others. Likewise, Munch may have been attracted to the high-spirited Judith. This notion is based on thought provoking evidence.
Foremost, Munch decided to remain in Paris for an extended period of time (a little over a year). With only a few, brief excursions elsewhere, which was quite unusual for one so prone to extensive travel, Munch became not only a frequent visitor to the Molard home, but as Bente Torjusen remarks, an "eager" one as well. In addition, says Torjusen, the artist "... got to know Judith before she became engaged to Edouard Gérard and at a time when the memory of Gauguin was still fresh but the loss no longer intense." With such a statement Torjusen seems to suggest some sort of involvement between Munch and Judith prior to the girl's engagement to Gérard, a Parisian secrétaire général nine years her senior. In addition, it is interesting to note that Munch did not make his usual retreat to Aasgaardstrand during the summer of 1896. Then, about the same time Judith became engaged to Gérard in 1897, Munch returned to Norway.

In July of 1897, Munch bought a house in Aasgaardstrand indicating permanency of residence. The following year he received a letter from William Molard. In the letter Molard asks about the artist's work plans and sends greetings from his wife and daughter. He adds that Judith hoped Munch would soon return. The letter then ends on a concerned note: "Gérard has left us, he has been hired by the Prefect in Toulouse." Munch returned to Paris in 1898 and twice visited the city in 1899, but it is not known whether he saw any of the Molards.

In 1902, Judith married Gérard. Munch made a brief trip to the French capital the following year and stayed with his friend Frederick Delius, yet it is unlikely that he became reacquainted with Judith at this time.
After the turn of the century, Judith's paintings were exhibited in the Salon d'Automne. Later she lived in Ballancourt, Seine-et-Oise. This area shares the border with Normandy. During this time she had in her possession many works of art which had been presented to her by various artists associated with the Molard Circle. Among such works was a portrait of Gauguin. In addition she may have owned some prints by Munch. \textsuperscript{232} Years later, when talking to a friend, Munch made passing reference to a certain "mistress" he had known in Normandy to whom he had given some graphic prints. \textsuperscript{233} Perhaps the "mistress" Munch mentioned was Judith Molard.

The Writings

Munch was thirty-two years old when he arrived in Paris in February of 1896. At this time Judith had just turned fifteen. After his introduction to the Molards, Munch began to produce color lithographs and woodcuts. That summer Munch did not return home to Norway. Instead he wrote home of his efforts to keep his studio in order and added: "here it is wonderful to work." \textsuperscript{234} While working, a white cat given to him by a friend was his constant companion. \textsuperscript{235}

Besides producing his first major color lithographs and woodcuts, the artist also found time to paint. His paintings at this time consisted of simple nude studies such as 	extit{Paris Nude} (Fig. 18) of 1896, which shows a model dressing. These straightforward, seemingly trouble free evocations are Degas-like in subject matter, according to Roy Boe. \textsuperscript{236} But what of Munch's model at this time?

Bente Torjusen suggests that Judith Molard was the artist's model and possibly Munch's mistress during his stay in Paris. \textsuperscript{237} Perhaps the young
girl portrayed in these Degas-like paintings is Judith. In any case, this was an apparently happy and productive time for Munch. Yet, just below the surface there were for Munch some disquieting thoughts.

Recalling the Paris years in his autobiographical notes, Munch makes the following remarks:

One day I was working with a female model—a little Parisienne, very lithe and supple—when suddenly I see the cat steal up to her white body, purring and affectionate—They were like two people, or two cats.

The cat Munch refers to in this passage is undoubtedly his own; the model may have been Judith Molard as Torjusen suggests. Interestingly, Munch likens the cat to the woman and the woman to the cat. The cat begins to make him uneasy and nervous, for in another passage from the same autobiographical note the artist struggles to tame the animal. He studies its every move. It occupies his thoughts and mesmerizes him with its gaze. He is afraid: "It had anxious, questioning eyes—the eyes of a human being—and I was almost afraid of its gaze," he writes. In addition Munch recalls being with a woman on another occasion and mentions: "the white cat that gazed at us—as it were, straight into our souls."

Some years later (1903-04), Munch wrote a letter to Frederick Delius, the man who had introduced him to the Molards in 1896. In the letter Munch mentions two women. One was "T" (Tulla Larsen), with whom he had had a disastrous affair after he left Paris. The other was Eva Mudocci whom he was seeing at the time the letter was drafted. In the letter he further mentions "the white cat," but asks Delius to "say nothing on that subject" in his reply. Torjusen, in citing the letter, concludes the following:

Since the white cat is mentioned in the same breath with Tulla Larsen and Eva Mudocci, it seems natural to suppose that she was a
woman to whom Munch had been very close, a woman from the Paris milieu where Munch and Delius had friends in common. Torjusen further concludes that the woman was perhaps Judith Molard "concealed behind the appellation 'the white cat,' a pet name Munch evidently used in describing the woman he knew in Paris." According to Torjusen, Munch does not mention Judith by name in any of his notes or letters until just prior to his mental crisis and subsequent admission to Dr. Jacobson's clinic in Copenhagen in the fall of 1908.

Before his hospitalization Munch had been drinking uncontrollably. One evening he met Albert Stockenström quite by accident in Gothenburg. Stockenström was also a friend of the Molards and had been a part of their circle in Paris during the mid-1890s. Possibly the two men spent the evening together reminiscing about the Paris years, the Molards and more specifically, Judith. A few days later in a state of severe intoxication Munch wrote a letter to his close friend and lawyer, Harald Nørregaard. In it he recounts his evening spent with Stockenström and reflects on his present condition. He mentions Judith Molard, who had hurt him in some way. In a state of dangerous emotional and mental confusion, rendering part of his account incoherent, Munch wrote the letter he, in fact, never completed nor sent to his friend:

I sit here burning out my nerves with whisky, postponing this ghastly half suicide of committing myself to the sanatorium in Hornbaek--which I feel is my duty--since I must either do so or burn my nerves entirely--out--. . . . (I stand outside) looking delirious and miserable and say Judith--Judith her fault--she was Molard's daughter--whom you know--And then there was the G61 Canal--and finally--But in actual fact I was thrown out--.

What Judith had done to Munch remains a mystery. Yet, one fact is certain: Munch felt she had hurt him and never forgave her. The agony Munch felt in
recalling such a memory must have been unbearable. Soon he would voluntarily commit himself to a clinic in Copenhagen in the hope of forgetting this woman and all the other women who had "ruined" his life.

Introduction to the Works of Art

While Munch worked in Paris during the years 1896 and 1897, he used young Judith Molard as a model for works of art. Molard appears as Munch's new fatal woman, replacing Dagny Juell Przybyszewski.

The Cat

This drypoint (Fig. 19) of 1897 depicts Judith Molard as a nude, adolescent girl who arches her back after just pouncing on the decapitated head of Munch. The "cat" is toying with this head in the manner of an animal about to deliver a coup de grace on its victim. In his notebook, Munch refers often to his Parisian model as being "the white cat." This drypoint of victimization continues Munch's depictions of "woman as a destructive and ego-devouring" force in the artist's life. According to H. R. Hays, citing Freud, representations of decapitated males symbolize castration, or the fear of such. In addition Hays points out that the narratives of Judith [or Salome] represent such ego-devouring, emasculating women. Certainly, Munch's self-portrait in this drypoint relates to these Biblical women, and it is yet another representation of his anxieties concerning being victimized by a fatal woman, if not symbolizing castration.

Munch's use of a woman as a cat may be seen, certainly, as an emblem of danger, magic and evil. A cat is a creature that the artist found to be
both frightening and mystifying. His use of a cat in the manner of this drypoint is, moreover, a theme that was perhaps inspired by the Norse myth entailing the cat as a companion to the goddess Freya, the personification of love and death.\textsuperscript{254} In addition, the theme of the cat was used by writers and artists of Munch's own time.

In the mid-nineteenth century, Champfleury's history of the cat inspired artists and writers.\textsuperscript{255} Manet's \textit{Olympia} of 1863 includes a black cat with a Sphinx-like courtesan.\textsuperscript{256} Baudelaire's translations of Edgar Allan Poe's tales include one with the cat symbolizing a demonic force.\textsuperscript{257} The Symbolists often viewed cats as part woman, as in Fernand Khnopff's \textit{The Caresses of the Sphinx} of 1896.\textsuperscript{258}

In his notebooks of the Paris period, Munch uses the theme of the cat as symbolic of an animal disruptive to his work.\textsuperscript{259} Even a cat's gaze makes Munch feel uneasy and clouds his thoughts. According to him, such a gaze is penetrating and mystifying as it steals its way into his soul.\textsuperscript{260} In his attempt to domesticate a cat with little success, Munch believes that the animal seems to possess instead his mind, just as his model does.\textsuperscript{261} That is, Munch felt a cat could not be possessed; rather, it took possession of him.

Munch's notebook entries concerning the cat are similar to Baudelaire's use of the animal in \textit{Les Fleurs du Mal} (\textit{Flowers of Evil}) of 1857. In this collection of poems, Baudelaire's cat is a creature that both fascinates and terrifies the poet. In "The Cat," the "beautiful creature" has an "electric contact" with the poet who sees it as if it is his mistress whose "subtile air, a dangerous perfume" is both "deep and cold" as it regards him.\textsuperscript{262} The cat's charm, according to the poem "Jewels," is "as powerful
as an evil angel" while its eyes are "fixed as a tiger's in the tamer's trance."\textsuperscript{263} As with other Symbolists Baudelaire equates the cat with the legendary Sphinx,\textsuperscript{264} and the cat can mesmerize the poet and penetrate his soul by its very gaze.\textsuperscript{265} Similarly, Paul Verlaine's poem "Cat and Lady," written sometime before his death in 1896, associates the cat with a fatal woman.\textsuperscript{266} Just as the Symbolists used the cat as a symbol for a fatal woman or as her companion, Munch's drypoint is a visual manifestation of the artist's \textit{bette fatal}.

\textbf{The Maiden with the Heart}

As a companion print to \textit{The Cat},\textsuperscript{267} \textit{The Maiden with the Heart} (Fig. 20) of 1896 shows Judith\textsuperscript{268} as a fatal woman who has not just stolen the heart of Munch but is squeezing it's blood between her hands. A fountain of trickling blood drips on the woman's left foot and forms an inverted heart-shaped pool on the grass. Near her, dandelions, symbolic of grief,\textsuperscript{269} have sprouted. Munch is depicting here his heartfelt grief for Judith Molard, a woman whom other men found vicious.\textsuperscript{270} As the symbol of love and the center of emotion, Munch's heart is seen in the grip of a woman who was destined to haunt him for twelve years. In 1908, Munch wrote to a friend:

\begin{quote}
I sit here burning out my nerves with whisky, postponing this ghastly half suicide of committing myself to the sanatorium in Hornbaek--which I feel is my duty--since I must either do so or burn my nerves entirely--out--. . . . (I stand outside) looking delirious and miserable and say Judith--Judith her fault-- . . . .
\end{quote}

The specific incident or set of episodes that triggered Munch's feelings toward Judith are unknown. However, it may be stated that the artist's
attitude toward Judith in The Maiden with the Heart is reminiscent of Baudelaire's poem "The Fountain of Blood" of Les Fleurs du Mal, in which the poet's blood runs like a fountain from no specific wound, stains nature, and is consumed "by the cruel whores!" Baudelaire's poem compares the flow of his blood with "insidious Wine" which puts "to sleep my wasting fear" of being wounded, a wound that cannot be specifically grounded. This idea is evoked also in Munch's later print, The Heart (Fig. 21) of 1899, which depicts a young woman (Judith Molard?) taking a bite from the artist's disembodied heart. Just as Baudelaire traces the source of his delirium and misery to dealings with cruel whores, Munch attributes his pain and suffering to the fatal child-woman who toys bloodthirstily with his stolen heart in both of these prints.

A variant of The Maiden with the Heart is a sketch (Fig. 22) of c. 1896 that includes the image with a depiction of Judith as a young girl looking down a smoking and transparent urn. At the bottom of the tall jar is a bearded head. The juxtaposition of the two images within the same print demonstrates Munch's ability to visually connect otherwise different representations of the fatal woman motif. In this case, he links The Maiden with the Heart and The Urn.

The Urn

The Urn (Fig. 23) of 1896-97, based on the sketch (Fig. 22) that connects it visually with The Maiden with the Heart, depicts Judith Molard's head emerging from a large jug. Around her head, flames emit and illuminate the scene. Beneath the urn, three women cavort in various lascivious poses.
The sketch indicates the head of a man (Munch?) trapped at the bottom of a transparent urn. Here, the jar is opaque. If one assumes that Munch intended to include a tacit reference, visually speaking, of a bearded man's head in the urn, then it is possible to position The Urn in the tradition of the fatal woman motif, beginning with the legends of Tomyris and of Pandora.

Tomyris, queen of an Asian nomadic tribe, defeated the army of Persia and decapitated their leader, Cyrus the Great; she dipped his head into a pithos or large urn containing the blood of his defeated army. Similar in theme to Judith and Holofernes, the scene of dipping Cyrus' head may be seen in many seventeenth century Counter-Reformation paintings.

According to Hesiod, Pandora was the first woman brought to earth by Zeus to punish mankind, Prometheus, and his brother Epimetheus. Zeus gave Pandora a pithos (later changed to a pyxis or box) and told her not to open it. Because of an intense curiosity, Pandora opened the pithos and unleashed evil spirits. During the nineteenth century, John Flaxman used a pithos to illustrate this legend. H. R. Hays examines the Pandora legend and observes that the pithos or urn, a basic funeral receptacle among the ancients, is also an attribute of the earth-mother and symbolizes the womb:

Epimetheus is punished because of a heterosexual activity. By taking Pandora as an erotic partner, he is not only destroyed by the evil magic of her genital but also punished by Zeus for acquiring sexual knowledge. It is not really woman's curiosity which results in the opening of the jar (breaking of the hymen) but man's curiosity projected upon her. The penalty for sexual curiosity is ultimately death. In a sense the story of Prometheus has, together with the dread of women, overtones of the same guilt which Freud discovered in the myth of Oedipus.
Returning to Munch's *The Urn*, the woman at the bottom right may be seen as having the same corpse-fetal position of the fetus in Munch's *Madonna* (Fig. 74) of 1895. The flames emitting from Judith Molard's head may well allude to Prometheus as the bringer of fire to mankind.

*The Urn* seems to indicate the association of women with evil, just as evil spirits were emitted from the box in the legend of Pandora. If one takes and applies Hays' observation to this work of art, then Munch seems to indicate his guilt for having had sexual relations with Judith Molard and projects his own guilt upon her. Recall that before he committed himself to a clinic Munch wrote, "Judith her fault," indicating her as a fatal woman. In fact, *The Urn* may also be related to Baudelaire's poem "The Lid" which ostensibly reiterates the fatality of women in terms of the legend of Pandora.

**Under the Yoke**

In *Under the Yoke* (Fig. 24) of 1896, Munch depicts himself as an old, bearded man who is stoop-shouldered and haggard. Dressed in black, he walks under a yoke to attain his goal of reaching Judith Molard, seen in the nude and laying in a foreground meadow of flowers. As in *The Maiden with the Heart* (Fig. 20), these flowers are dandelions and symbols of grief. They surround the young woman with open-armed petals and, as if dancing the fatal "fairy circle" of Nordic myth, may represent the circle of death to any mortal entering it. Munch depicts such a fate in *The Dance of Life*. Furthermore, Molard's suggestive pose indicates a woman who entices a man for intercourse. As in *Madonna* (Fig. 60a) of 1893, her back is arched, one hand is raised under her head and her hair is flowing.
A yoke is an attribute of monastic obedience, a life which is also dedicated to the vows of poverty and chastity. It is therefore possible that the young woman in the foreground represents a hallucination which entraps an unwary male to sexual fulfillment. But such gratification is not without its fatal consequences of shame and disobedience.

Munch indicates such an allusion in *Under the Yoke and the Suicide* (Fig. 25) of c. 1896, wherein he depicts a man and woman approaching a dead man laying prostrate in the street; the corpse has taken his life with a gun. Certainly, a man [or a monastic figure] could become so self-humiliated by his attraction to a woman that he would take his own life.

In any case, *Under the Yoke* seems to indicate Munch's own pitiful self-image in relationship to the youthful but fatal teen-aged model who had hurt and humiliated him in Paris before his time of "ghastly half suicide of committing myself to the sanatorium. . . ."

There is an epilogue to Munch's relationship with Judith Molard. Shortly after his release from Dr. Jacobson's clinic in May of 1909, Munch wrote to Jacobson that he was living the sedate life of a "monk." His resolve indicates he not only saw himself returning to a more chaste life but was trying to rid himself of all sexual temptation which he had expressed visually in *Under the Yoke* and *Under the Yoke and the Suicide*.

Section IV: Tulla Larsen

Occasionally Munch returned to Christiania to attend to business affairs and revisit old friends from the bohemian sector. On one such visit to the Norwegian capital in 1898 or 1899, Munch met a woman named Tulla Larsen. The exact location and circumstance of their meeting is
not known, but according to Arne Eggum it was playwright Gunnar Heiberg who introduced Munch to Tulla. 295

Mathilde (Tulla) Larsen (1869-1942), like Dagny Juell Przybyszewski, was a young and beautiful Norwegian. She was the daughter of Peter Andreas Larsen, a wealthy Christiania wine merchant from Homansbyen. Because of her father's prominent position in the business community, Tulla's place among Christiania's high society was secure. 296 Yet, like Fru Heiberg, Dagny Juell Przybyszewski and Judith Molard, she possessed an independent, rebellious spirit and enjoyed a semi-bohemian existence. A talented graphic artist in her own right, Tulla was a frequent visitor to the gatherings of the Christiania Bohême where she found support, encouragement and friendship. 297

Tulla was six years younger than Munch. Undoubtedly, their shared interest in art and their mutual affiliation with the bohemians somehow drew them closer together. Attraction led to courtship and courtship to thoughts of marriage. But in 1902 the couple parted bitterly.

Tulla was "dangerously" single. The Munch-Larsen relationship proved a rather fragile one and the unhappy courtship was fraught by numerous arguments. Long separations were followed by frequent and uneasy reconciliations. The problem was due, in part, to conflicting interests. Tulla was determined to marry Munch on her terms. The artist was equally determined to remain single, though occasionally he too trifled with the idea of matrimony. In his more amorous moods Munch agreed to marriage, but with certain stipulations which he contracted in a type of pre-nuptial agreement. The conditions of matrimony aimed at protecting his best interests were as follows: 1) He must be totally free to pursue his
artistic career as he saw fit. 2) He demanded that property and possessions be held in common. 3) Tulla must comply to his wishes to remold her character. It was Tulla's reluctance to comply to these demands which caused still another rift in their relationship.\footnote{298}

During their numerous misunderstandings and separations, many of Munch's old friends from Christiania sided with Tulla. Most of them felt that Munch had treated her harshly.\footnote{299} As pernicious gossip had it, Tulla had supported Munch financially, and "he had breached an explicit promise of marriage."\footnote{300} The problems of their relationship reached an impasse at this juncture, and Munch tried to sever the affair permanently. In one last desperate attempt to win Munch back, Tulla and their friends concocted a plot which proved disastrous in its outcome.

According to Roy Asbjørn Boe,\footnote{301} the incident took place in late summer, 1902. While Munch was at home in Aasgaardstrand a woman came to visit him. She brought with her a letter from nearby Drobak. The letter contained devastating news: Tulla was near death and wished to see Munch one last time. In spite of the stormy weather, Munch left immediately to be at her side. When he arrived he found Tulla layed out in a dark room where friends had gathered. On either side of the bed two lighted candles burned. Munch, in a state of shock, began a soliloquy filled with mournful regrets and utterances of his undying love for the seemingly dead woman. Suddenly she arose, miraculously healed and full of life. Realizing the trick which had been played on him, Munch, quite shaken, left for home in a fit of anger.\footnote{302} A few days later, Tulla came to visit Munch. They quarreled. She drew a pistol and threatened to kill herself if he did not return to her. As he attempted to wrestle the gun from her, it fired. The
bullet entered one of Munch's fingers of his left hand. He was rushed to a hospital in Christiania where he underwent surgery. Doctors were unable to save the two distal joints of the injured finger, and they were subsequently amputated. The shooting incident proved to be their last confrontation. Tulla refused to visit Munch in the hospital where he was recovering from the injury. Instead she eloped with a twenty-five year old painter named Arne Kavli. Shortly thereafter, the couple left for Paris where they were married in 1903. Munch was left behind in Christiania, permanently injured and emotionally incapacitated.

The Writings

According to Arne Eggum, Munch's notes and letters concerning his relationship with Tulla Larsen are scattered and difficult to date. Though fragments have been salvaged, Eggum remarks, they have not been fully transcribed nor systematized. Eggum also states that, due to severe mental strain caused by bouts with alcohol, Munch's writings are often incoherent and illegible. Yet, from what does exist of these letters and notes, it is apparent that Munch's ambivalent feelings towards Tulla were triggered by both desire and fear as well as by love and hatred.

Munch drafted his first letter to Tulla shortly after their initial meeting in 1898. In it, Munch characterizes Tulla as a woman with three very separate and pronounced identities: the woman of sorrow and experience, the innocent and chaste virgin, and the woman as the Sphinx. In fact, Tulla became the model for The Dance of Life of 1900 (Fig. 27). Here, then, is Munch's first letter to Tulla:

I have seen many women who had thousands of shifting expressions – like a crystal, but I have met none that so pronouncedly had only
three - but strong ones. It is strange - in that it embodies a
premonition - It is exactly my picture of the three women - you
will remember what Dr. R. said of the study for one of them. You
have an expression of the deepest sorrow - among othermost
eloquent I have ever seen - like the weeping madonnas of the old
Pre-Raphaelites - and when you are happy - I have seen such an
expression of radiant joy, as if your face were suddenly flooded
with sunshine - Then you have your hot face, and that is the one
that frightens me. It is the sphinx, the face of fate - In it I
find all the dangerous qualities of woman.

With this revelation, Munch gradually weakened as his relationship with
Tulla intensified. During the winter of 1899-1900, he was confined to
Kornhaug Sanatorium suffering from mental, emotional and physical ex-
haustration. At the time of his convalescence, Munch wrote numerous letters
to Tulla--some of which he never sent to her. An examination of these
letters indicates that the couple had discussed the possibility of matri-
mony. Yet, in them, Munch rejects marriage citing reasons of ill health
and emotional instability. That is, Munch believed his various ailments
would prevent him from becoming the proper husband and father.

In his letters to Tulla, heportrays himself as weak, inept, unhappy
and totally unworthy of founding a home. He therefore resigns himself to
live a life outside the bonds of marriage, i.e., without the constants of a
woman, children and a home. Instead, the artist sees himself as a man with
a mission. In order to fulfill his goal as an artist--his curse and his
gift--he must sacrifice his all too human sexual needs and desires. In
Christ-like fashion, he likens himself to a martyr. Suffering and pain
become his banner, in fact his shield, against the woman. Rather than
"risk" marriage Munch must devote himself to his art. By denying the
earthly qualities which he sees in Tulla, Munch masterfully separates
himself from her. He is spiritual, otherworldly, extraordinary and self-
denying. She is animalistic, earthbound, ordinary and self-indulgent.
His world is one of pain. Her world is one of pleasure. She is the "earthly mother" who comes with the "gospel of hedonism." To ensnare him through her physical charms would destroy him spiritually, he thinks. In essence she would become his murderer. Sexual love, Munch reasons, would lead to conception and conception to death—both his and hers. Munch therefore concludes that sex and marriage must be avoided, paradoxically, to ensure life. The following excerpts from Munch's letters to Tulla may typify and make concrete his state of mind:

Should we sick people founded a new home, with the wasting poison consuming the tree of life. A new home with doomed children...

Munch continues:

It is a misfortune... when an earthly mother meets such one as me—who finds the world too sad a place to bring children into—the last son of a dying line.

In addition Munch writes:

For—as you must understand I occupy a place apart in this world—the place given me by a life full of sickness—unhappy relationships—and my positions as an artist—a life that brings nothing resembling happiness nor even desires happiness...

In another letter he remarks, "You come with the gospel of hedonism—I with that of pain." He concludes in still one more letter:

In the future, when you know me, you will understand my need for solitude—which is the regulator of my life. And you will defy it as you have done earlier—you must understand that it means murdering me.

In his letters to Tulla from Kornhaug, which according to Ragna Stang was a sanatorium for tubercular patients, the artist suggests she is to blame for his most recent bout with tuberculosis or some other respiratory condition mimicking the symptoms of the dread disease. She is like a
contagion; he her helpless victim. Yet, shortly after his release from Kornhaug, Munch returned to Tulla.

In March 1900, Munch was well enough to travel to Italy via Berlin. On this trip he was accompanied by Tulla.317 Once again there was talk of marriage between the couple. Possibly Munch drafted part of the pre-nuptial agreement (discussed earlier) about this time. In it Munch's tone is commanding, paternal and condescending. Such an attitude may have stemmed from his deep-seated fear of Tulla's independent and high-spirited nature. In fact, remarks Carol Ravenal, Munch avoids confronting the Vampire, the Medusa, the "otherness" of woman which he fears the most, by denying Tulla a separate identity.318 Munch writes:

... You will get some sort of a home--you can work--get yourself a printing press for etching. ... I will get you books because your mind needs to be educated ... you must get wider horizons and interests ... the lack have made the feelings of your love thoughtless and reckless ....

Before mid-summer Munch succumbed to yet another illness. Once more he sought refuge in a sanatorium, this time in Switzerland.320 In July, Munch was released from the hospital. After a brief stay in Italy, the artist returned to Norway.321 There he began work on The Dance of Life (1900).322 About the time the artist began this painting, he wrote of his resurfaced anxieties.

Specifically, the artist's note concerns a woman and her magical powers over him. As if in a dream, he conjures her as being so close to him that she must be destroyed. In the end his flight from the dream saves him from impending death:

She smoothed my forehead with her hands. What are you doing, I said. Are you hypnotizing me? A strange smile ... through pursed lips ... like a Madonna's head. An unexplainable feeling of fear came over me ... a shivering ... then she left and I
began to draw The Dance of Life. In the evening I dreamt I kissed
a corpse and jumped in fear. A corpse's pale smiling lips I
kissed . . . a cold and clammy kiss . . . love at its climax and
its dying doom and death. 323

Carol Ravenal interprets Munch's remarks to indicate his deepest fears:
Munch was "terrified of being disappointed in love. . . Closeness would
lead to abandonment, merger to loss of self and death."324 Ravenal's
observation signifies, further, the paradox of Munch's fear of attachment
as being a deeper fear of unattachment. This anxiety may have been due, in
part, "with the last kiss he had given his mother as she lay dead,"
concludes Ravenal.325

As stated previously, the shooting incident which took place in
September 1902 between Tulla and Munch proved to be their last con-
frontation. She had indeed abandoned Munch by her refusal to visit the
ailing artist in the hospital where he was recuperating from his hand
injury. Physically injured and in a shattered emotional state, Munch's
hatred for Tulla intensified. To add insult to injury, Munch was further
burdened by financial worries. "In the final separation," remarks
Frederick B. Deknatel, "a financial settlement on Munch's part was
required."326 Obviously, Tulla had demanded some sort of retribution for
the money she was thought to have loaned Munch during their courtship.
Munch referred to such payment as "blood money."327 Such compensation to a
woman who did not really need it was especially offensive to him.328

For the next six years, until his admission to Dr. Jacobson's clinic
in Copenhagen in 1908, Munch viciously attempted to discredit Tulla. His
hatred for her found expression in the letters he drafted and in the
pictures he painted. He also wrote a roman à clef (which he planned to
have published) as well as a play about their relationship. Such writings
and paintings were possibly executed in a systematic effort to exorcise Tulla from his memory.

In the partially completed novel, Munch writes of his last confrontation with Tulla.329 In it he characterizes Tulla as cold, threatening and unfeeling as well as emotionally incapable of comprehending his sacrificial act of love. In the last analysis, he mocks her: thinking only of herself she contemplates what might have been. Had he died, it would have ruined her plans to accompany him to Paris. The scenario ends in an uneasy reconciliation and the fatal kiss:

The door opens and M. stands in the doorway - he looks agitated - she stands rigid and stares at him -
A spasm passes through M's body - she stares rigid and ice-cold before him
He staggers into the room - and sinks down in a chair by the table - leans his head in his hand
Are you hungry - there's food ready
He does not answer
She sets food on the table
He pushes it away
His back is shaken by violent spasms -
After a long silence while she stares at him steadily from behind
I tell you, I can go far away - to a place you will never again get me to see - boat far away
- His whole body is shaken by violent convulsive movements
He looks before him as if in delirium
His arms grip each other then stretch out -
She stands steady rigid in the door to the kitchen -
She approaches
His head
His head sinks forward
What are you doing with the revolver she says - He does not answer - holds a revolver gripped between his fingers
- Tell me is it loaded
He does not answer -
He stares ahead of him without seeing -
- Now he is tense
Answer me is it loaded -
A violent report and smoke fills the room
- M stands up -
Blood trickles from his hand -
He looks confusedly about him and lies down on
the bed
He holds his left hand up in the air
with the blood trickling from it -
She goes stiffly about the room washing the blood off the
floor
- and brings in a wash-basin
She conceals the blood-red handkerchief in
her bodice
- Suddenly he looks at her - she wears a cold
expression
You dolt - don't let me bleed to death get a doctor
In the garden - some way from the house -
She flings herself at him weeping loudly - the tears
trickle - He too now poor man
Oh how good you are -
They embrace weeping aloud (?)
It is wonderful to be able to cry myself out with you -
in your
arm to be helped (?)
Empty Tame -
Now we'll go to Paris then we'll forget
- Can't you forget at home -
I'll do everything for you - we'll go
together and
She smiles through her tears -
Imagine if he was dead - that would have spoiled
everything - the whole trip -
Now only his arm is hurt
---
---
- How you can soothe (?)
- Kiss me 330
They kiss -

In another excerpt from the proposed novel, Sigurd Bødtker arrives. 331

Bødtker tries to convince Tulla of the futility of her relationship with
Munch. She finally agrees with him:

Look, Tulla - how disgusting he is imagine if you had got him -
Imagine treating a woman like that - Tulla seriously and
thoughtfully - You may be right - it would have been impossible
with him.
Meanwhile, Munch is released from the hospital. He sees Tulla with a man on Karl Johan Street. Munch is shocked. Anxiety and jealousy overcome him:

- and then he was back in town and could meet acquaintances
- Drove up along Karl Johan (St.) very weak
- Far away his eye fell upon a couple
- A red-headed woman and a man - walking along pressed close together
- Mrs. L. Kavli!
- A shock passed through him - the blood rushed in his ears -
- and the dreadful suspicion was there again. 333

Shortly thereafter, according to the fictional account, Tulla and her new lover leave Christiania to be married. They are accompanied to the harbor by Sigurd Bødtker and Gunnar Heiberg. 334

In addition to his proposed novel, Munch wrote letters concerning the treacherous Tulla. In one such letter to his Aunt Karen the artist undoubtedly reiterated the shooting incident, judging from her reply: 
"... it is good to get away from that evil woman, possibly because she's insane she did it." 335

In a letter Munch wrote sometime during the summer of 1903, he castigates those who conspired against him with "X" (Tulla) as their ringleader. 336 His tone is angry and bitter as he accuses her of causing his most recent spell of weakened nerves:

... X's helpers have received their payment. I must stop being connected with a circle where X is at the head, the one who has done such a terrible wrong and darkened my life. ... I also realize I must methodically work to get out of my nerve weakness. It is the result of that terrible woman who has persecuted me for years. 337

With this declaration Munch severed all ties with his bohemian friends from Christiania. Aside from his new love interest, Eva Mudocci, the artist
began to lead the life of a recluse. Drawing himself into a shell, his persecution complex intensified as he moved closer to a complete mental and emotional collapse.

Furthermore, Munch was destined to carry with him the painful memory of Tulla. The injured hand was a constant reminder of her treachery. As Carol Ravenal remarks:

He wore a glove in order to hide the missing joint of his index finger. Inside the glove he wore a kind of thimble over the remains of the finger. Munch once commented . . . that the fingers are the most naked and indecent parts of a person. He felt repelled by persons who exhibited their hands. In his paintings, hands are usually treated in a summary fashion as a single entity without fingers, or sometimes in the case of the men's hands, surrounded by blood red.

Just how repulsed Munch was by the human hand is revealed in a painting he executed in 1893 entitled Hands (Fig. 12). In the picture, a semi-nude woman stands frontally with her hands clasped behind her head. She is accosted by numerous gesticulating hands--treated in summary fashion--which surround her. Through these obtrusive and ugly little appendages of physical gratification, Munch makes a statement about man's unfulfilled lust for woman.

In a letter to Jappe Nilssen, dated five years after the shooting incident, Munch seems to have had a change of heart concerning his views on hands. Now the hand is "that marvel of God." In this manner the artist divulges just how deeply Tulla had scarred him, both emotionally and physically:

Her shabby behavior has ruined me for life. . . . Can you imagine what the deformation of a hand means . . . damaged, that marvel of God which a hand is . . . for the pain of love can be forgotten, but not the physical injury. Yes, even in Germany where I have taken shelter, there was no peace.
In still another letter to Nilssen, Munch once more remembers Tulla and the plot against him as "... a disgusting trap engineered by his persecutors to prove he was insane. ..."341

As his hatred towards Tulla intensified, Munch also wrote a play entitled The City of Free Love.342 In it, Munch portrays himself as the poor, defenseless minstrel, Tulla as the cruel "Dollar Princess," and her friends as strange animals--some with antlers and horns--who reside in the town called Free Love.343

As the play opens, the traveling minstrel learns of the city and decides he must go there to seek love. After inquiries at the towngate, the minstrel is welcomed into the city. Wandering freely through the town, he sees the Dollar Princess who is seated at a table surrounded by her animal friends. The Dollar Princess has just bought the affections of a pig when she spies the poverty-stricken minstrel. Because of her great wealth she knows she can buy him as well. The Dollar Princess devises a plan whereby she will entrap the minstrel with her fatal kisses. After instigating an exchange of kisses the Dollar Princess claims the minstrel for herself. The minstrel is confused and frightened. Not wishing to be tied to the woman, he wanders off to find a place of refuge. But the Dollar Princess pursues him like a demon. When he seeks protection and comfort in the sick room, the Dollar Princess follows him there. The couple argue. He wishes to be left alone--she wishes to be with him. In her persistence, the Dollar Princess demands still more kisses and embraces from the sick man. He screams for help but his cries fall on deaf ears.344

The minstrel wishes to leave the city of Free Love. He attempts to escape but is captured and taken to the Queen Bee, the ruler of the city.
In her presence he begs for mercy and understanding. After listening to the minstrel's plea, the unsympathetic ruler orders the pig to chain the minstrel to the Dollar Princess. Hence they are chained. Once again the minstrel attempts to escape. His efforts are thwarted when he comes across a procession in the marketplace consisting of the citizenry of the town. Because the minstrel has defied the sentence of the Queen Bee, unburnt witches threaten to kill him.345

Meanwhile, the Queen Bee concocts a plot: the Dollar Princess will pretend she is dying. Friends will dig a ditch around her. When the minstrel comes to her he will fall into the pit. The plan works. The minstrel goes to see the so-called dying woman, falls into the pit and breaks his leg. Thinking his injury an act of love, the Dollar Princess is overjoyed that she is the cause of the minstrel's suffering and pain.346

Denied food, rest and freedom, the now crippled minstrel appeals to the chairman of the town for his rights. Instead of lending his support, the chairman proclaims him a menace to society and orders the townspeople to assault him. The minstrel is beaten and left bleeding in the street. For befouling the pavement and besmirching the citizenry of the town with his blood, the minstrel is imprisoned. The accused is subsequently brought before the court to stand trial. His crimes are many. He is accused of refusing the Dollar Princess and spattering the townspeople with his blood. The judge then hears the minstrel's defense. The minstrel notes the treachery of their so-called free love system which is designed to protect the rights of women at the expense of men. The citizens of the town fully agree and the minstrel is executed.347
A play about love, suffering and death, *The City of Free Love* provided Munch with a much needed outlet in which to vent his feelings of hostility against his former lover, Tulla Larsen. In fact, he struggled to remember every facet of their relationship in order to forget the woman he now considered his most treacherous enemy and a demon as well. In light of Munch's confinement to two sanatoria during his affair with Tulla, the play suggests that the artist felt Tulla to be a disease whose consumptive powers over him were deadly.

**Introduction to the Works of Art**

Tulla was not only the woman behind Munch's vicious writings but also the catalyst for several works of art he produced between 1900 and 1907. In such works, one may follow step-by-step the steady decay of the artist's mental, emotional and physical well-being. Like a festering wound which would not heal, Munch's works make manifest his deep-seated hatred of the woman with whom he had become pathologically obsessed. By depicting her as a temptress, a sinner, a Salome, a ruthless murderess, and a traitor, Munch gives us an uncompromising portrait of Tulla as his fatal woman.

**The Dance of Life**

During 1899 and 1900, Munch was confined to two different sanatoria for physical and emotional exhaustion. Physically, he suffered recurring attacks of respiratory bronchitis or tuberculosis. Mentally, he sustained nightmares about Tulla Larsen who was cajoling him to marry her. One such nightmare was, according to Munch, preceded by an erotic encounter with a strange and frightening woman (i.e., Tulla Larsen) whom he likened in his
notebook to a "Madonna" with hypnotic powers. That night, Munch continued in his notebook, he dreamt of kissing a corpse and awoke in time to escape death.348

In connection with this nightmare, Munch drew in ink and crayon what was to become a study (Fig. 26) for his painting The Dance of Life (Fig. 27) of 1900. In the study, two corpses are dancing by a seashore. Behind the male corpse (Munch) a full moon is reflected on the water. His dancing partner (Tulla Larsen) ensnares him with her hair and dress. Surrounding them are whirling dancers. The finished painting includes two more women. To the left, a young woman wears a white, flowered dress and her arms are open to receive a dancing partner. To the right, the same woman appears older and doleful and wears a black dress on which she places folded hands. These women, representing youthful aspiration and regretful resignation correspond, along with the central female corpse dressed in red, to the trio of women in the Three Stages of Women (The Sphinx) (Fig. 80) of 1894, in which Munch also represents a multidimensional view of one woman as innocently youthful, another as captivatingly whorish and a third one as resentfully old. According to Arne Eggum, these women in Dance also represent Tulla Larsen's changing moods and expressions which Munch himself described in a letter to her.349 In this letter, he depicts Tulla as a dangerous Sphinx,350 further connecting her with both paintings. In fact, according to Eggum, Tulla Larsen was the model for the Dance painting.351

In The Dance of Life Munch presents his nightmarish vision of the fatal woman as the harbinger of sexual desire, anxiety and death. The central
female corpse is a hypnotically enticing "Madonna"-as-vampire who immobilizes her artist-lover. In an undated note for the painting's study, Munch sees himself as a completely innocent celibate ensnared in death-like bondage:

I have begun a new picture, The Dance of Life. One light summer's night, in the middle of a meadow, a young priest is dancing with a woman with flowing hair. They stare into each other's eyes, and her hair wraps itself round his head. The background is a mass of whirling people—fat men biting women on the neck. Caricatures and strong men entwining women.

Whatever innocence the central male corpse exhibits becomes irresistible lust in another male corpse dancing with and therefore corrupting an innocent white-dressed woman behind the red-dressed Tulla. Several other couples are dancing behind the centrally placed corpses and form a sweeping semicircle of passion. The background women, like the youthful standing figure at the left, wear bridal-like white dresses, referring to Tulla Larsen's desire to marry Munch. In turn, the men represent Munch's conflicting feelings of lustful desire for and innocent entrapment by Tulla, as he once wrote to her:

In the future, when you know me, you will understand my need for solitude—which is the regulator of my life. And you will defy it as you have done earlier—you must understand that it means murdering me.

The yellow-green complexion of the central male corpse-as-Munch has, however, a hopeful metaphoric counterpart in the red-orange, full moon which counterbalances the scarlet dress of the central female corpse-as-Tulla.

As opposed to Greco-Roman mythology, wherein the moon represents a woman (Diana or Selene), in Norse mythology the moon personifies the male god Mani. Mani is pursued by two wolves which threaten to devour him and
thereby engulf the world in primeval darkness.\textsuperscript{354} Also, Mani is the son of the earth goddess Freya, who brings to mankind both love and death and who was once accused by the arch-fiend Loki of being a witch and a demon.\textsuperscript{355} One of Freya's pastimes is to watch fairies dance in moonbeams.\textsuperscript{356} Wherever these fairies danced on earth, they would form "fairy rings," and the grass would thereby grow greener beneath their feet.\textsuperscript{357} However, death was certain for any mortal who would stand in the middle of such a ring.\textsuperscript{358}

Munch was well acquainted with the folklore and mythology of Norway, and his uncle wrote a book on these subjects.\textsuperscript{359} The Dance of Life incorporates Norse myth with Munch's notion of the fatal woman. In his letters to Tulla Larsen, Munch equates her with an earth goddess who is both the bringer of hedonistic love as well as death;\textsuperscript{360} thus, it is probable that he saw her as Freya. Moreover, Munch identified himself with the moon (Mani), and is said to have recognized the moon only when it was full.\textsuperscript{361} In fact, Munch depicts the moon as fully round in all of his works in which it appears.\textsuperscript{362} According to Rolf Stenersen, the artist felt agitated when the full moon disappeared and associated his well-being with the moon's fullness.\textsuperscript{363} Paradoxically, Munch associated moonlight with his sexual urges and consequent anxiety.\textsuperscript{364} In The Dance of Life, the moon's reflection on the water forms a phallic T-shape, resembling his characteristic drawings of male genitalia.\textsuperscript{365} Consequently, for Munch a full moon represented phallic power which may, in turn, offset the death circle (connected with the goddess Freya watching a "fairy ring") that surrounds the central figures dancing on green grass in the Dance painting.

The red moon and its reflection may represent also the Nordic fertility symbol of the hammer of Thor, a device used by that god of the sky and
thunder to smash enemies. As Christians now make the sign of the cross, the ancient Nordic people made the T-sign of Thor's hammer to ward off evil spirits, as well as to solemnize marriages and consecrate burials.

Certainly, Munch's painting reflects the artist's deathly fear of marriage, and he may well signify the T-sign of Thor's hammer-as-the-moon for protection against his enemy, Tulla. Munch apparently believed that Tulla, like the wolves that pursue the moon god Mani, threatened to devour the artist in her pursuit. Thus, Munch's *The Dance of Life* combines myth and reality, as well as sexual desire and deathly anxiety.

**Sin**

Munch's color lithograph *Sin* (Fig. 28) of 1901 depicts Tulla Larsen as a personification of evil embodied in the guise of a naked, primitive earth mother, complete with a preponderance of flesh, a swollen belly and large breasts. Although possessing a voluptuous physique, her skin is ashen-white and has lost its resilience. A second look at Tulla reveals a paunchy belly and fallen breasts. Her expression appears dull, even doleful. Her large eyes lack luster. Her mouth droops. Her chin is weak in construction. Munch's color lithograph emphasizes Tulla's red Medusa-like hair falling in a disheveled manner about her stooped shoulders. In short, Munch depicts an earth mother whose magic has been depleted.

Tulla Larsen is here in sharp contrast to Munch's c. 1898 portrait of her (Fig. 29) in which she appears a proud and youthful woman. This earlier work is conventional in that Tulla strikes a nondescript pose. Plainly dressed, the slender woman holds her shoulders back and smiles yet averts her gaze from the viewer. Munch depicts Tulla, then, as an amiable
lady who is wholesome, gracious and reserved. A comparison of this portrait to Sin may demonstrate further Munch's unflattering and brutal denunciation of Tulla in the later work.

In fact, while confined in 1899 at the sanatorium at Kornhaug, Munch wrote letters to Tulla Larsen in which he characterized her as a Venus Vulgaris—animalistic, earthbound, ordinary, self-indulgent and spiritlessly hedonistic. Sin indicates Munch's contempt for Tulla and depicts her as a woman who has lost her otherworldly beauty. That is, Sin is demonstrative of a disenchanted artist who turns moralistically in judgement of the woman. Like Georges Rouault's similar portraits of his mistresses, Munch mocks Tulla mercilessly.

Tulla is, then, not the embodiment of sin but its parody. Franz von Stuck's Sin (Fig. 30) of 1893 does, in comparison, portray a true daughter of Satan. Von Stuck's woman is erotic, enticing and otherworldly. Raking light reveals her strong torso and full breasts. Her eyes gaze provocatively toward the viewer as if binding the spectator in a spell. This woman's allure is deadly. Even the S-curve of her back connects her visually with the snake coiling around her body. This new Eve allures in order to entrap the viewer.

Munch's Sin depicts Tulla sans snake in the same pose but with diverted gaze. She has been disarmed by Munch. He shows her in the atrophy of power most likely for his own peace of mind. Yet, Munch's lithograph is ironic if seen in light of subsequent events between Tulla and Munch. Their quarrels climaxed during a shooting accident in September of 1902. Left with a disfigured hand, Munch possessed a permanent physical reminder of
the woman's treachery which outlasted his attempt to depict her as a *femme fatale* who has lost her power over the artist.

**Spirits and Salome II**

Although the shooting incident of September 1902 ended the affair between Munch and Tulla, the artist continued to depict her as a fatal woman. The disenchantment seen in *Sin* becomes the bitter and revengeful caricatures of Tulla done in 1905. They are, taken as a whole, retributive of her transgressions against the artist.

The first such caricature is *Spirits* (Fig. 31). In this work, the artist depicts Tulla and friends in a farce in which she is seen as a ridiculous parody of Salome who is accepting the head of the Baptist on a silver charger. Her feathered hat, taken by Munch from a photograph of her (Fig. 32) of 1898/99, symbolizes here the hat of a witch. Munch depicts Tulla's face as old, complete with upturned nose, pointed chin, and grimacing mouth. Whereas the photograph shows Tulla to be a beautiful, fashionable and sophisticated lady, Munch's caricature portrays her as a ludicrous hag whose hat is too large for her head.

In addition, Munch interjects something that transcends his otherwise predictable depiction of this repulsive woman. While Tulla-as-Salome celebrates her victory, the head of Munch-as-Baptist sticks its long, serpent-like tongue out at her. In fact, the tongue dripples with spittle and represents his defiance. Although Tulla draws back from this gesture without malice, she remains for Munch as dangerous as ever. Indeed, prior to the shooting incident of 1902, Tulla feigned an illness to win the artist back. When this ploy did not work, Tulla went to his home in
Aasgaardstrand where Munch was shot. Afterwards, she refused to visit him in the hospital. Instead, Tulla ran off with another man and then demanded retribution money from Munch because of the broken engagement. As deceptive as she was in life, Munch depicts Tulla as a trickster in Spirits, wherein she adds her own insult of amused defiance to his fatal injury. Could her implied hatpin be used next to pierce his tongue or head? Such a further provocation seems probable in Munch’s absurd farce of indignation.

Another caricature of Tulla Larsen is Salome II (Fig. 33). Here, the banquet scene of Spirits becomes a close-up of Tulla-as-Salome holding the head of Munch-as-Baptist. At such close range, the viewer may examine the relationship between the victim and his betrayer. While holding her blood-dripping prize, Tulla hunches her shoulders and smiles. In contrast to her lecherous grimace, his face features a slackened jaw, tightened and downturned lips and closed eyes. No longer animated as in Spirits, this head is the depiction of excruciating pain and death by torture. The castrating female is clearly the victor of a psycho-sexual confrontation.

**The Murderess and The Death of Marat**

From 1904 to 1907, Munch depicted Tulla Larsen as a murderess. During these years, he quarreled with friends, drank excessively, and teetered on the verge of a nervous collapse. Such behavior was, indeed, symptomatic of his pathological hatred towards Tulla whom he now held responsible for his permanently disfigured hand and his unresolved bitterness. Projecting his victimization by the woman in his art, the artist thus portrayed Tulla as his assassin.
The Murderess (Fig. 34) of 1904-05 depicts Munch as a prostrate figure on a sofa. In the far right corner, a woman stands stiffly and stares at the viewer. Her feathered hat appears atop a foreground table which also features a bowl of fruit. The narrow room has diamond-patterned wallpaper. Munch's lithograph visually reenacts the fatal day in September of 1902 when Munch, whose lifeless, ashen-white hand hangs limply over the sofa's edge, was shot. The same figures and room are featured in the lithograph Apparition (Fig. 35) of 1906. Here, the woman's face is clearly visible and repeats Tulla's image as she appears in an 1899 photograph (Fig. 36).

Thus, since the women in The Murderess and Apparition have the same hair style and wear the same V-neck blouse, as well as appear equally stiff and unresponsive, it becomes clear that The Murderess is a depiction of Munch and Tulla with her feathered hat as her attribute.377

The theme of Tulla as a murderess is seen in its painted form in The Death of Marat (Fig. 37) of 1906. As in The Murderess, Munch portrays himself as a lifeless corpse and Tulla as his triumphant assassin. Here the figures are nude and appear in a dimly lighted bedroom. Blood splatters the bed sheets on top of which the male figure lays and projects head-first toward the viewer. In this painting his arms are placed perpendicular to his foreshortened body. To use Linda Nochlin's phrase, the "unabashedly Christ-like"378 pose lends to the figure a greater sense of martyrdom. Standing close to the bed and fully frontal toward the viewer, the assassin holds her legs firmly together and locks her arms at her sides. Thus, within the confines of this dark and cavernous space, martyr and assassin reenact the event of the shooting incident, signified further
by the foreground table with its fruit still-life and Tulla's feathered hat as in *The Murderess*.

The two works are further linked by their titles to Munch's color lithograph *The Death of Marat (The Murderess)* (Fig. 38) of 1906/07. Eliminating all the details of a specified bedroom with table, Munch concentrates on depicting the two nude figures of the fallen artist and his triumphant assassin. His body is colored in a gangrenous green, and his lower torso becomes fragmented lines—a decomposed corpse drained of blood and body. She is larger and closer to the bed than in the painted version. Her body is outlined in a sanguineous red as if she has metaphorically drained the man's blood into her own body like a vampire or other form of necrophagous predator. In both versions, she stands guarding her prey.

In conjunction with these works of art, Munch believed the angels of death stood watch over his body as an infant:

Two of the most terrible enemies of mankind I inherited, the legacy of tuberculosis and insanity. Disease, madness and death were the black angels around my cradle... From birth... there by my side, the angels of anxiety... sorrow... and death... of fear... followed me... They stood by my side in the evening when I closed my eyes... and threatened me with death, hell, and eternal punishment.

At the age of thirteen, Munch's tuberculosis brought him close to death. The artist felt that what he called "visions of the devil" persisted in spite of his father's prayers and Bible readings to comfort him. Likewise, his bloody spittle was a token of approaching death. In the versions of *The Death of Marat*, Munch may well be portraying Tulla as an avenging angel to claim what was once almost hers. The bloodstained bed might represent also a pictorial correlative to the artist's lingering childhood memories of spitting blood in bed.
The Death of Marat (Fig. 39) of 1907 further reiterates the idea of Tulla as both an assassin and avenging angel. Her naked body now stands between the viewer and the blood-splattered bed on which appears Munch's nude body. The compressed room suggests a claustrophobic space, perhaps similar to what a tubercular sufferer feels as lungs constrict. Just as the woman is seen in a vertical position and the bed and man are seen horizontally, Munch paints this picture with strict vertical and horizontal strokes as if exorcising the scene, as well as his childhood memories and the shooting incident, from his mind. Michael Marrinan aptly describes this work as follows:

Within this shallow space the two bodies describe a cross, which at once summarizes the idea of death implicit in the subject but also places the upright, rigid (living) female in sharp juxta-position to the recumbent, flaccid (dead) male. Munch echoes this menacing sign all across the surface of the canvas by his deliberate use of vertical and horizontal brushstrokes to form an open latticework in which individual colors repeatedly cross one another.

As Munch used the moon and its reflection as a sign of Thor's hammer to ward off Tulla's power in The Dance of Life, the artist incorporates the Christian "sign" of a cross-like composition to hold Tulla at bay in The Death of Marat. Like his father's bedside prayers, Munch's paintings of this series act as exorcisms of someone who bedeviled him.

Moreover, in choosing to see himself as a martyr, Munch transforms this work into a form of psychic salvation: instead of submitting to Tulla in life, he opts for a metaphoric death. This choice is personally cathartic even in the expressionistically agitated brushwork and in the choice of colors. About the 1907 version, Munch wrote that it took him "a long time to recover from that picture." Likewise, he considered the motif in terms of a victory over this fatal woman:
My and my beloved's child, the Death of Marat, which I carried within me for nine years, is not an easy painting. Nor, for that matter, is it a masterpiece— it is more of an experiment. If you like, tell my enemy that the child has now been born and christened and hangs on the wall of L'Indépendants. . . .

The reference is to the Salon des Indépendants of 1908, where Munch exhibited the work to a wide public while he voluntarily entered Doctor Jacobson's clinic in Copenhagen several months later for nervous exhaustion. Such physical rest at the clinic and psychic renewal by painting allowed Munch to rid himself of the fatal woman as an avenging angel of death.

Sketch of Hedda Gabler

In the latter months of 1906, and simultaneous to work on The Death of Marat (Fig. 37), Max Reinhardt commissioned Munch to design sets for his production of Henrik Ibsen's four-act drama Hedda Gabler (1891) which opened in March 1907 at the Kammerspiele Theatre in Berlin. Doubtlessly familiar with Ibsen's play, as well as with its characters, Munch did not hesitate to accept this new challenge. The artist left Bad Kosen, Germany, where he was currently residing, and arrived in the German capital in November 1906. Once in Berlin an enthusiastic Munch began his collaboration with Hermann Bahr, under whose direction the sets were to be built. While attending rehearsals, Munch started to sketch. Despite his zeal concerning the project, ill health forced Munch to return to Bad Kosen early the following year. Under strict medical advice which included a regime of exercise, rest and proper diet to quiet his frayed nerves, the ailing artist completed there his set designs for Reinhardt and Bahr. Subsequently, on February 2, 1907, Reinhardt acknowledged receipt of
Munch's seven sketches. Among them was the artist's Sketch of Hedda Gabler (Fig. 40). In the sketch, Munch depicts Hedda almost squarely in the center of an empty room. With only a wall of drapery to her right to indicate any type of setting, the woman stands rigid and tall. She locks her arms tightly against her black dress and stares at the viewer. Here, by repeating the frontal stance he gave to Tulla in The Murderess and The Death of Marat, Munch equates Tulla Larsen with Ibsen's Hedda Gabler.

In the drama, Hedda is bored with her new life as the wife of a likeable but dull scholar whom she does not love. Because she is bored and envious of others, she schemes to destroy the lives of her childhood rival and a former suitor who have worked on a manuscript together and who are now seeking to have it published. Through her evil plan, Hedda's former suitor loses the manuscript which he has come to view as his only hope for respectability and fame. Hedda has in fact burned the manuscript, the "child," of the mutual efforts of her former suitor and childhood rival. Just as she had once threatened to shoot him in order to control him before she was married, Hedda now convinces her former suitor to shoot himself with a gun from her father's pistol collection. After his death, Hedda's husband and her childhood rival set out to reconstruct the lost manuscript from the dead man's notes. Realizing she has been forgotten by her husband, who together with her childhood rival will create a new "child" in memory of Hedda's former suitor, Hedda shoots herself.

Munch seemed to conceive that Tulla was to him in life what Hedda Gabler was to her former suitor in Ibsen's drama. Both Tulla and Hedda
were, for Munch, without purposeful goals in life. Reckless and thoughtless towards men as well, the attempts of both to mold a man only led to shooting episodes. In fact, in March of 1908 Munch wrote a letter to Christian Gierloff, a mutual friend of Tulla and himself, wherein he instructs Gierloff to inform his "enemy" Tulla that "the child," as Munch called The Death of Marat, "has now been born and christened and hangs on the wall of L' Indépendants." As Munch indicates in this letter, Tulla's efforts to destroy him had failed just as Hedda Gabler's destruction of her former suitor's "child," his manuscript, is foiled by Hedda's husband and childhood rival who vow to reconstruct it from the dead man's notes. Munch's letter demonstrates the artist's strong personal identification with Ibsen's play, as does the sketch of the title character which was an unnecessary addition to his set designs for Reinhardt's production of the drama.

Amour and Psyche

Before Munch wrote the letter to Gierloff, he had moved to Warnemünde, Germany where he attempted to recover from nervous exhaustion and alcoholism and where he painted Amour and Psyche (Fig. 41) during the summer and autumn months of 1907. This painting concerns, once again, the theme of a woman's betrayal, and it represented for Munch a catharsis concerning the events of his broken engagement to Tulla and of the shooting incident which disfigured his hand.

The story of Amour and Psyche was written during the second century A.D. by the Latin writer Lucius Apuleius. Amour, the god of love, adores the mortal Psyche, a beautiful princess who has been promised in
marriage to a winged serpent. The wind god Zephyr brings Psyche to Amour who agrees to marry her on one condition: she must never look at his face. If she does so, they will be forever separated. After Psyche agrees to this stipulation, her jealous sisters convince the woman that Amour is actually the winged serpent. With knife and lamp in hand, Psyche enters his dark bedroom only to discover that Amour is not the serpent. Munch’s painting depicts the moment when Amour awakens from his sleep to find himself bathed in blinding light, hidden beneath and between the couple.

Tulla-as-Psyche stands before Munch-as-Amour with her arms next to her torso, as in her inanimate stance in The Murderess, The Death of Marat and the Sketch of Hedda Gabler. Here, Tulla appears with downcast eyes at the moment of her betrayal and at the realization that she will be separated from Munch. Apuleius' narrative ends with a reunion between Amour and Psyche after many trials and tribulations. Munch indicates here no such future reunion, only Tulla's lack of self-justification, her resignation to separation, as well as her remorse after betraying the artist.

The surface appearance of the painting further indicates Munch's relentless and punitive feelings toward Tulla's betrayal. Paint is applied to the canvas in long, vertical brushstrokes. Such brushwork breaks the picture plane and lends to the surface a splintered, even shredded appearance. "The violent manner in which it is painted," Arne Eggum remarks, suggests "it is as if, in the very act of painting, the artist were reacting to the motive almost as in a primitive rite." Certainly the subject and the painting technique suggest the purgative nature of art for Munch toward dispelling Tulla Larsen.
Section V: Eva Mudocci

In March 1903, Munch went to Paris to see eight of his works at the Salon des Independants. At this time, he was also considering a private exhibition of other works. Munch rented a studio in preparation for just such a forthcoming occasion. During his stay in Paris, the artist resided at the home of Frederick Delius. Delius lived in Grèz-sur-Loing, which was a Scandinavian settlement near Paris. In early April, Munch suddenly cancelled his plans for a private exhibition and abruptly fled the city to return to Norway.

What caused Munch to leave Paris on such short notice is open to interpretation. Sarah Epstein remarks that Munch's swift departure for Norway was prompted by an unexpected turn of events centered around the presence of a certain woman he wished to avoid. In a letter to a friend Munch states he is leaving because of a "private matter." He continues: "... it is a lady--Here [there are] still unfortunately too many Norwegians--I must get away as I otherwise foresee a great unhappiness--." "From the letter," states Epstein, "it is not clear whether he had run into Tulla and her friends, or whether the lady in question was a new romantic interest he had met in Paris."

The English-born concert violinist, Evangeline Hope Muddock (1883 ?-1953) was also in Paris in March of 1903. Hoping for fame and fortune she had changed her name to Eva Mudocci. This assumed stage name added a continental flair to her image, she thought, which might somehow be advantageous to her career.

Like Munch, Eva was independent, ambitious, and dedicated to her profession. With her accompanist, the American pianist Bella Edwards, Eva
toured the continent performing numerous recitals. While in Paris, on tour, Eva met Munch.

Possibly Eva Mudocci was introduced to Munch by the English composer Frederick Delius whom she might have known through her work. In any case, soon after their initial meeting, the artist and violinist became friends. Then, in April, Munch left Paris for his cottage in Aasgaardstrand, where the shooting incident with Tulla had taken place less than a year before. Why he wished to return so soon to a place which undoubtedly caused painful memories to resurface is indeed curious. Yet, because the situation in Paris had proved uncomfortable for Munch (perhaps because of the presence of Tulla Larsen), his escape to the Norwegian resort was a quickly calculated response to an insolvable problem.

Preparing for guests, Munch attended to necessary repairs on his cottage. With the arrival of summer, Munch welcomed the opportunity to entertain his new friends, Eva Mudocci and Bella Edwards, at his home. Perhaps his motives for inviting the two women to Aasgaardstrand stemmed from his desire to forget Tulla. Whatever the reason, his attraction to Eva soon proved more than a passing fancy.

According to psychiatrist Einar Kringlen, it was Jappe Nilssen who advised Munch to show more than a friendly interest in Eva. Nilssen's suggestion, claims Kringlen, was proposed in an effort to save the woman from her American friend Bella Edwards. What began as a joke became a serious problem for Munch, states Kringlen.

Because of Munch's unsuccessful relationship with Tulla, his attraction to Eva was one conditioned by apprehension and fear. Another commitment to any woman at this point in his life was a potentially dangerous venture.
Conversely, the invitation Munch extended to Eva and Bella was the artist's attempt to have necessary comfort and protection. What may seem to be a paradox is not upon examining the relationship between Eva and Bella.

The two women were long-standing and inseparable lovers. Although Munch was successful in capturing Eva's affections, their affair did not sever the woman's close relationship with Bella. During the course of the Munch-Mudocci affair, Eva was involved in other heterosexual encounters as well. This fact, along with her attachment to Bella, did not cause the artist any known jealous fits of rage. The effect was apparently quite the opposite. After Tulla and his other unsuccessful romances, such circumstances seemed almost pleasing to Munch.

Obviously aware of the fact that Eva and Bella were lovers, Munch seemed to welcome Bella's company. She could keep Eva occupied and at a distance while he was working. Concerning this set of relations, Dr. Harold Wylie remarks:

In some respects, the affair appeared reminiscent of his first relationship with Milly Thaulow [Fru Heiberg]... in that both women were involved with someone other than Munch; Milly Thaulow with her husband, Eva Mudocci with her accompanist, Bella Edwards. Wylie continues: "... neither woman made extensive demands on Munch, yet both apparently provided the admiring attention he sought." This triad gave Munch protection against any lasting involvement, but it also caused him eventual pain. Carol Ravenal suggests that Munch wanted throughout his life to be close to another individual. At the same time such closeness led to loss of self.
The Writings

In a letter Munch wrote to Eva early in their affair, the artist describes his dilemma. In it, he attempts to explain his feelings and/or lack of feelings. He also indicates sexual incapacitation:

Last night I could not come to you again. As I left my thoughts were not really clear, also when I stayed with you, it was as if every living feeling inside myself was dead. . . . I wanted to know that you loved me . . . therefore came this ugly fight between us. I wanted to bathe and refresh myself in this (your) life fire . . . wanted you should bring me into this and you could have done this and have not done it. . . .

By his own admission Munch was beginning to fall in love with Eva. However, it was a love fraught with ambivalence. In a letter Munch wrote to Frederick Delius, sometime toward the end of 1903 or the beginning of 1904, the artist relates two contradicting notions concerning his relationship with Eva. On the one hand he fears he is falling in love with the woman; on the other hand, he remarks, he is enjoying "perpetual springtime with the enemy-woman." In the same letter Munch also mentions two other women whom he had known in the past: "the white cat" (Judith Molard) and "T" (Tulla Larsen). Now Eva had joined ranks with his other female adversaries.

Munch became increasingly dissatisfied with his arrangement with Eva. Despite his efforts to suppress his true feelings, the artist became agitated with the woman and life in general. He fought with friends, traveled extensively and drank in excess. Once while traveling with Eva from Christiania to Copenhagen by train, Munch suddenly departed leaving his baggage and Eva behind. His attempt to break with the woman is indicated in a note: "Unhappiness and misery follows the woman. To stay away from her is the best." On another occasion Munch tried to
frighten Eva and Bella away. The incident occurred while the two women were visiting him in Aasgaardstrand. At this time Munch was suffering from the flu. He advised his friends to leave as there were "microbes" everywhere. He also told them his turnip garden represented the heads of his enemies which he delighted in using for target practice.424

In the course of their relationship, Eva wrote numerous letters to Munch. In one such letter she states concern not only for his health but the health of their relationship as well:

My dear, I'm frightened because you're sick again. I could wish that you were lying on my heart and then I would kiss you until you fall asleep... and you would then be my child and I yours.425

Eva's maternalistic remarks must have frightened Munch. Such closeness was dangerous for Munch. In fact, the letter might have prompted him to recall past childhood memories of the dead mother and the tubercular sister whom he had comforted as she lay dying.426 Perhaps he envisioned such closeness to any woman, especially a maternalistic one, might somehow "reinfect" him with the terrible contagion, tuberculosis.

Eva persisted in her attempts to rebuild what was left of the crumbling relationship. In still another letter she pledges to give up her present life style and dedicate her life only to Munch:

I think you understand what I mean when I say I have to become free--free only to think of you--I can only think of you--whether we are going to meet again or not, I live for you--I want to help you--don't be afraid! I will be for you only what you yourself wish. If when our last meeting was not successful, if I've made you even more nervous, the next time it will be different. It is so strange that always when I'm in your surroundings I'm dumb and shy, something before a storm. However that and a lot more I will overcome to get strong so I can help you.427

Despite her good intentions the relationship seemed beyond repair. It was clear that Munch wanted to end their affair.
Beginning in 1905, the artist visited various mountain spas in Germany such as Bad Elgersburg, Bad Kösen, and Bad Ilmenau in order to combat his nervousness. The same year, Munch received a letter from Dr. Max Linde advising him to give up alcohol:

... but it seems to me, however, that in your works you are getting more and more problematical. You are increasingly making allusions since your powers of concentration are dwindling. I think this is a result of your nervousness and in particular alcohol. Alcohol has precisely the unpleasant effect that one moment the nerves are stimulated, as though by the crack of a whip, and after that sleep follows. For this reason I think you could do better than to live a life of complete abstinence for all time.

Linde was not the only doctor concerned about Munch's drinking problem. In "Looking Back: 1902-08," Munch notes other doctors warning him to stop drinking. He must give up alcohol altogether or suffer the consequences, i.e., continued feelings of persecution, the risk of disturbed perceptions, perhaps a stroke, and finally death.

In 1906, Munch's problems became manifest in Self-Portrait With Wine Bottle (Fig. 42). In this work, the artist depicts his addiction to alcohol. Sitting alone in what appears a restaurant, Munch peeks out at the spectator. His unhappy expression and emaciated appearance reveal his pain and his loneliness. Moreover, his attachment to the bottle discloses his detachment from his surroundings and ostensibly Eva as well.

Again seeking refuge, Munch went to Warnemünde, Germany in 1907. At this seaside resort he rented a cottage and began to paint in an attempt to quiet his nerves. The sea and the air revived him, but such positive results were only temporary. Soon after his arrival he began to write friends of his worsening mental and physical condition, and his persecution complex became more and more pronounced. In "Looking
Munch wrote of his latest fear: the police were coming for him. After eighteen months in Warnemünde the artist left Germany in order to escape from the authorities. He then went to Copenhagen, not only to escape from the police but in order to prepare for an upcoming exhibition there. A drinking bout ensued. He had totally forgotten Eva and married misery instead. He knew he must do something to save himself. In October 1908, the artist voluntarily entered Dr. Jacobson's clinic in Copenhagen. Eva (whom the artist had apparently not seen for quite some time) followed him. She even rented a room near the clinic to be near her ailing friend. But her efforts to revive her relationship with Munch were in vain.

In December 1908, Munch wrote a friend of his new resolve. In the letter Munch indicates his intentions to stay away from Eva, as well as other women:

The alcohol-filled days of pain and happiness are finally over for me; I have turned my back on a strange world... Like the old Italian painters, I have decided that woman's proper place is in heaven. Roses can inflict too much damage with their thorns. I am beginning to see the resemblance between women and flowers; I enjoy the scent of the blooms, I admire the beauty of the leaves, but I never touch them and so I am never disappointed.

Munch was released from the hospital in the spring of 1909. He returned to Norway and rented an estate at Kragerø. That same year Eva visited Munch for the last time. Their meeting took place without incident. Even so, it was clear that Munch intended to honor his decision to stay away from the woman. In 1909, Eva gave birth to a male child. The father was not Munch, she stated, but a Norwegian businessman.

As an epilogue to the Munch-Mudocci affair, the artist received a letter of congratulations from Eva on the occasion of his seventieth
birthday. He acknowledged this kindness with a returned note of thanks. Apparently, any bitter feelings he might have held against the woman had long since been laid to rest.

Introduction to the Works of Art

During their frequent recital tours, Eva Mudocci and Bella Edwards had their portraits painted by several important artists including Henri Matisse. In the first year of their relationship, Munch attempted several never completed oil portraits of Eva. Yet, he did execute three lithographic portrayals of the woman. One such lithograph even includes her piano accompanist, Bella Edwards. In a letter to a friend, Eva recalls the events leading up to and including Munch's actual presentation of these works of art to her:

He wanted to paint a perfect portrait of me, but each time he began on an oil painting he destroyed it, because he was not happy with it. He had more success with the lithographs, and the stones that he used were sent up to our room in the Hotel Sans Souci in Berlin. One of these, the so-called Madonna, was accompanied by a note that said, "Here is the stone that fell from my heart." He did that picture and also one of Bella (Edwards) and me in the same room. He also did a third one of two heads--his and mine--called Salome. It was that title which caused our only row.

With Eva's comments in mind, the three lithographs depicting her will now be examined.

Violin Concert

Violin Concert (Fig. 43) of 1903 was based on publicity photographs of the violinist Eva Mudocci and the pianist Bella Edwards (Figs. 44 and 45). In fact, in this work of art Munch depicts the two women musicians about to begin a concert recital. Dressed in a white gown, Eva stands tall
and erect. She wears an expression which betrays a note of cruelty. Exceedingly rare in one so young is the unyielding, rigid posture she assumes as well as the strained expression on her face. Gaunt and drawn, Eva gives the impression she is suffering from some unknown illness. Even the frayed ends of her hair inform the viewer that all is not well. In this manner her appearance is markedly dissimilar from her publicity photographs. Ostensibly she faces an audience. Yet, the slight twist of her slender body and the more emphatic turn of her thrust-back head betray that it is Bella to whom she directs her undivided attention. In her left hand she holds her violin placed close to her body like a shield of armor. The bow, held in her other hand, is placed close to her side. It seemingly guards her on the right. Protected by her musical instrument, which is the symbol of her profession and independence, she fixes her downcast eyes on Bella and awaits her cue to begin playing.

In contrast to Eva, the accompanist Bella Edwards is an ample, matronly figure dressed in black. Shown seated at her piano, she occupies a large and commanding space in the left corner of the picture. She gazes forward. Her hands are placed lightly on the keyboard stretched out before her. Her shawl, which is draped over the back of her piano chair, touches the hem of Eva's gown and indicates a union between the two women. On the upper portion of the upright piano the flames of two burning candles stand breathlessly still. There is a slight tension in the air. At any moment percussion will join string in melodic harmony, a duet which will break the silence and start the candles' flames flickering.

As of this moment, no action has taken place. It will begin with the striking of the first chord. Yet, beyond this initial anticipation,
something has already happened which has been carefully orchestrated by the two women. Here, at first glance, what appears to be the beginning of an ordinary concert recital is in actuality the evocation of something far more significant and provocative and perhaps even funerary.

What seems to be an upright piano is perhaps a nineteenth century funeral organ, complete with lighted candles. What appears to be the train of Eva's gown is in fact the head of a man entangled within the hem of her dress.

Seen in profile, the head with closed eyes assumes a death-like slumber. Strands of thread from the woman's gown reach out and surround the macabre phantom. Such a display suggests the head has been captured by the woman in an all-consuming stranglehold. The way in which the nose and mouth are completely entwined convey a sense of suffocation, as if suggesting a second death to an actual decapitation. The head is now within her possession, like the violin she grasps in her hand. Because the three heads, i.e., Bella's, Eva's, and the man's, form an inverted right triangle, it is probable that this configuration denotes the triad which existed between Bella, Eva and Munch in life. It is therefore the head of the artist himself which is enveloped in the hem of Eva's gown. Furthermore, the two women, juxtaposed in clothing of black and white, bring to mind another work by the artist entitled Mother and Daughter (Fig. 46) of 1897. Perhaps Munch's depiction of the two women in concert is meant to suggest some sort of mother-daughter relationship between them. If so, then it is also likely Munch wished to convey the mother-daughter correlation with another infamous pair of co-conspirators in Biblical history, namely Herodias and her daughter Salome. With the inclusion of
the head in *Violin Concert* the depiction is complete. Here, then, the Salome motif is disguised as a concert recital. In keeping with this idea, Munch once chided Eva for not being "pure enough." In similar manner, John the Baptist had condemned Salome for her wickedness. For this insult the Baptist was executed at Salome's command. Likewise, Munch was "put to death" by the two women in this picture. The real subject of the work thus becomes one of sex, brutality, violence and death. By therefore equating both women with violence and personal death, *Violin Concert* is the visual expression of the artist's psycho-sexual struggles with Eva and Bella.

**Madonna**

Despite Munch's attempt to keep emotionally distant from Eva Mudocci, the artist was beginning to fall in love with the English woman by his own admission. Yet, as soon as such "uncontrollable" feelings of love and desire entered his psyche, they were subsequently overshadowed by other equally uncontrollable emotions, namely fear and even hatred. Thus, because Eva had touched his heart, Munch saw her as his adversary. Such romantic ambivalence likewise colored the artist's visual depictions of Eva. As a pictorial confession, *Violin Concert* depicts Eva as a cruel and evil force in his life. So too did he depict her as his ideal, loving woman--or so it first appears--in *Madonna* (Fig. 47) of 1903.

In *Madonna*, Munch portrays Eva as a woman of exceptionally rare beauty. With her magnificent, oval-shaped head, delicate, swan-like neck, gracefully tilted head, and refined, aristocratic features, the portrait of Eva not only demonstrates the artist's appreciation of Eva's youthful, rather angelic loveliness, but also suggests the notion that during the time he
executed the Madonna Munch momentarily venerated her as a devotional object worthy of his deepest affections and praise. And yet, although beautiful, there is something strangely distant and remote about the woman as well.

With her contemplative expression tinged with sadness, her mysterious melancholic eyes half veiled with languor and a faraway dreaminess, she seems disengaged in some private reverie. Eva, who appears to hold the artist in her power with her captivating beauty, also appears totally detached and separate from him at the same time. Seeming to refuse him the power to penetrate her thoughts, she is therefore Sphinx-like. It was this hidden, unknown part of her, as Munch implies in Madonna, which perhaps weighed so heavily on his mind and heart. It was also possibly the reason behind the note which he sent to Eva at the Hotel Sans Souci in Berlin along with the lithographic stone of Madonna: "Here is the stone that fell from my heart."448

Strangely reminiscent of the woman depicted in Bocca Baciata (Fig. 48) of 1859 by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, whose similar troubled relationships with the women he loved and feared likewise provided the occasion for many of this artist's major works of art, Munch's Madonna might stand as the visual embodiment of the artist's belief about beautiful women. As he confided privately to his friend and biographer Rolf Stenersen: "Even women appearing gracious and sweet . . . were in reality dangerous beasts."449 This outlook is reflected also in a comment Alfred Werner offers in connection with Madonna: "Even the loveliest of Munch's women suggests a hidden cruelty beneath her charm."450 In opposition to this seemingly tranquil but mysteriously puzzling vision of idealized womanhood, Munch paradoxically interjects subliminal elements of disquiet, foreboding and
danger into the image of the Madonna, which transforms the purity and
beauty of his angelic Eva into someone much more provocative, sinister and
even deadly.

In marked contrast to the woman's fragile beauty, there is something
unsettling about the manner in which Munch chose to cast Eva's face in
harsh, almost totally shadowless light against the darkness of the back-
ground. In fact, with its "flash" effect, such lighting tends to sharpen
and harden the woman's rather soft features. Because the light seemingly
reveals a face otherwise hidden in impenetrable darkness, it functions to
heighten our sense of the dramatic and the macabre.

In addition to Munch's approach to light, there is something equally
disturbing about the manner in which the artist chose to render Eva's hair.
Here, seeming to whirl and whip about the woman's head and, likewise, twist
and fall in rope-like configurations around her shoulders, Eva's uncon-
strained hair appears as an animated object in its own right. Portrayed as
though alive, the hair tends to move about and therefore occupy most of the
space. As in the snake-like depiction of the hair of his other femmes
fatales, Eva's hair transforms Munch's "Madonna" into a Medusa. She needs
only to turn her eyes upon us and transform us into stone, as Eva had
already done to Munch, figuratively speaking: "Here is the stone which fell
from my heart."

Also, in keeping with the threatening aspects of Eva's hair, Carol
Ravenal offers some general remarks about women's hair in conjunction with
nineteenth century mythology:

Women's hair held a special position in nineteenth century
mythology. It was believed that it could extend woman's power through the air in electric currents to enslave man.
Ravenal's comments concerning this widely held belief is reflected in Munch's visual vocabulary. Thus, in addition to appearing snake-like, Eva's hair, which is pitching and tossing in waves about her head like a black tempest at sea, may well represent the confusion she injected into the artist's life. To clarify this observation one need only quote what Doctors Stanley Steinberg and Joseph Weiss write about one of Munch's strangely held beliefs:

Munch believed that human beings are like empty vessels capable of being filled by waves which emanate from everything. By flowing into people, these waves affect their minds and change their bodies.

Given such remarks, Eva's hair as Munch renders it in Madonna might ostensibly stand as the visual manifestation of the artist's fears concerning "waves which emanate from everything" to affect minds and to change bodies. In light of this finding, an explanation of the brooch Eva wears on her chest, which might possibly represent another attribute of her deadly power over Munch, is now in order.

Despite Munch's original title, Madonna is known also by its various other titles including Woman with the Brooch (Eva Mudocci) and The Brooch. Interestingly such alternative titles, which art historians continue to appropriate in identifying Munch's Madonna, instantly change one's focus of attention from the woman to her brooch. Yet, Munch's iconographers have largely overlooked the brooch and its importance to this work of art. In an attempt to correct such an oversight, it may be demonstrated that the brooch was deliberately included in this work and purposely placed on Eva, near her heart, to have symbolic significance.

In Biblical history, self-adornment was often associated with sinfulness. For example, in the New Testament women in particular are singled
out and warned against such prohibitive practices and instead instructed to
"... adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and
sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array;
...".  In keeping with the synonymity of self-adornment and sinfulness
in the Bible, the Latin Church Father Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullian,
who preached and wrote in the second century A.D., not only warned men
against marriage, but also taught them to beware of women adorned with
jewels.  Implying that ornaments worn by women were designed to attract
and entrap men into sinful liaisons with them, Tertullian warned that any
bejeweled woman might be considered less than chaste and therefore a
potential danger to man.

The notion of the bejeweled woman as courtesan and as a danger to man
seems to have been kept alive through time and adapted to nineteenth
century thought as well.  Consider, for example, the French poet Charles
Baudelaire who was especially intrigued with the ornamented woman as an
excerpt from his poem "Jewels" from *Les Fleurs du Mal* (1857) clearly
demonstrates:

The darling was naked and, knowing my wish,
Had kept only the regalia of her jewelry
Whose resonant charms can lure and vanquish
Like a Moorish slave-girl's in her moment of glory.

In "Jewels" Baudelaire not only informs us that the woman who excites
him sexually is the woman adorned with jewelry, but also indicates the
adorned woman could break his will.

When applied to the visual arts, the idea of the bejeweled woman
conquering her male prey is likewise evident in Théodore Chassériau's
*Esther Adorning Herself* (Fig. 49) of 1841.  Bedecked with jewelry, Esther
is henceforth transformed into the fatal seductress of King Ahasuerus.  The
same could be said of Gustave Moreau's *The Apparition* (Fig. 50) of 1876. Embellished with jewelry and seen dancing before Herod with the head of the Baptist, Salome has broken her step-father's will with her bejeweled body, her enticing dance. Likewise, in Gustav Klimt's *Judith I* (*Judith with the Head of Holofernes*) (Fig. 51) of 1901, the artist depicts the heroine as the ornamented conqueror of an Assyrian general. Munch could not have failed to recognize how prolific this idea of the bejeweled woman as temptress and conqueror of man was for many nineteenth century writers and artists; it would then follow that the predominantly large brooch which adorns Eva's chest might function not only as somewhat of a visual pun on the so-called purity of the *Madonna* image but also instantly align Eva with her bejeweled, conquering sisters such as the women in Baudelaire's "Jewels," Chassériau's *Esther*, Moreau's *Salome*, and Klimt's *Judith*. Thus, possibly representing an attribute of Eva's power to entice Munch, the brooch may also stand as an object possessing a conquering and destructive command over the artist.

Beyond its proposed meaning as a symbol of Eva's alluring power, the brooch, as Otto Benesch observes, contains within its design a strange configuration: "... even the brooch acquires a face," he remarks. Indeed, one can decipher markings on the brooch which resemble a face. Animated like a living creature complete with ears, nose, eyes which seem to gaze at us spitefully, knitted brow and frowning or grimacing mouth, the angry and horrid countenance etched on Eva's brooch and centered near the region of the woman's heart is strangely reminiscent of the equally hideous face which appears on the breastplate of the armed Athene in Gustav Klimt's *Pallas Athene* (Fig. 52) of 1898.
Munch must have been familiar firsthand or through other sources with this work, in which Klimt projects Athene's image from the darkness which surrounds her. Furthermore, having placed a terrible visage on her breastplate over the region of her heart, which stands as a symbol of the war goddess' triumphant victory over the monstrous Medusa, Klimt's depiction of Athene gives new meaning to Munch's Madonna. That is, because a terrible visage lies helplessly on Eva's breast in the form of a large shield-like brooch, its appearance ostensibly transforms the woman from a Madonna (Medusa) into a possible Athene— or at the very least aligns her with the war goddess. Just as the horrid Medusa which lies inert and beaten on Athene's breastplate in Klimt's picture signifies her victory over the monster, so too could the grimacing face on Eva's brooch stand as a symbol of her triumph over some now defeated enemy. Moreover, given Munch's belief that Eva was his enemy-woman, and also given a letter Eva once wrote to Munch in which she states in part: "I could wish that you were lying on my heart," it is doubtlessly the artist's self-portrait which is depicted on Eva's brooch and which, in turn, is placed on her heart just where she had wished Munch to be.

Likewise, the brooch with its terrible "Munch face," ostensibly a symbol of Eva's victory over him on the battlefield of love, also makes manifest what Doctors Steinberg and Weiss said in conjunction with the artist's imaginary fears. First and foremost, the Munch face on Eva's brooch appears to make concrete Munch's idea concerning waves emanating from everything (in this case Eva's hair) which affect minds and change bodies (in this case Munch's mind and body). Second, it also seems to give credence to the artist's fear of inanimate objects (like Eva's brooch)
which he thought might somehow threaten his separateness from such things.

In conclusion, what at first glance appears to be Munch's ideal image of woman, as well as a visual admittance of his love and desire for Eva, is instead a confession of the artist's most dreaded fears. He transforms the object of his affections into an accursed and lethal beauty whom he believed possessed the power to rob him of his identity and his life. Her detached expression, the harsh light in which she appears, the wild array of hair and, most importantly, the brooch not only align her with other bejeweled, conquering beauties found in nineteenth century art and literature but also with the war goddess Athene. It is therefore the "otherness" of woman, i.e., woman as a dangerous beast behind her apparent mask of beauty, which Munch reveals in this work of art. Although the title is Madonna, the woman in it is not a Madonna but a contemporary, archetypical femme fatale. Like the other women in Munch's life, Eva offered the artist a loss of self, death, and damnation instead of love, life, and salvation.

Salome

In spite of Bella Edwards, whose close friendship with Eva provided a safeguard for the artist against any long lasting or deep involvement with the concert violinist, Munch came to see only himself and Eva, to the exclusion of all others, caught in a complicated love-hate relationship. It was exactly this ambivalent situation with Eva which Munch soon found intolerable, even unbearable. Unable to handle his emotional bond with Eva with any real sense of power and self assurance, as the artist makes quite evident in both Violin Concert and Madonna, any initial comfort Munch might
have derived from their friendship was subsequently replaced by feelings of discomfort, then fear, hatred and revulsion. In order to rid himself of such feelings, Munch visually objectified his increasingly negative feelings towards Eva. He accomplished his goal by transforming his Eva-as-Madonna into Salome (Fig. 53). Last in the series of three lithographs dedicated to Eva, in which Munch disclosed what he now believed to be valid and true about his relationship with the English woman, Salome represents also a work of art which signaled the beginning of the end of the Munch-Mudocci affair. "It was that title which caused our only row," Eva notes about Salome in a letter to a friend. Yet, even devoid of its title, it is the manner in which Munch depicts himself and Eva in this work which was perhaps the true occasion for Eva's angry confrontation with Munch.

In this third and final lithograph, Eva is a Salome embracing the severed head of the artist-as-Baptist. His wide forehead and gaunt cheeks resemble a violin, Eva's musical instrument, which is at her psycho-sexual command. Her head tilts with ease in a graceful motion and her hair falls in waves over his head. As indicated in the discussion of the previous lithograph, Munch believed and feared that waves emanated from everything and could affect his mind and change his body. Here, Munch's severed head, which resembles a violin, is entrapped by "the same smothering, demanding type which he had seen and feared in Tulla." Then too, Eva's brooch reappears here as emblematic of the inanimate danger implicit in the Biblical story of Salome as well as Munch's generalized fear of such "threatening" objects.
After the Baptist was decapitated, Salome placed a fatal kiss on the lips of her victim, and Herodias pierced either St. John's head or tongue with a hairpin or a knife. In *Salome* Munch seems to reinterpret freely the Biblical story as he did, for example, in *Spirits* (Fig. 31): the decapitated artist sticks out his tongue at Tulla Larsen who wears a large plumed hat (with an implied stick pin) and who represents Salome. Instead of including Salome's mother Herodias, Munch may well have meant to combine the two women in this singular portrait of Eva who is displaying spoils of victory. In a letter she wrote to the artist, she saw herself as his mother figure. Could then the brooch with its sharp pin be representative of Herodias' act against the Baptist? In fact, the two slits or puncture marks to the right of Munch's mouth in *Salome* seem to indicate that such a deed has been performed.
II. NOTES


3. Ibid., fig. 27.


4. Ibid., p. 43.


7. Ibid., pp. 130-34.


9. For example, see Edvard Munch, Manuscripts 1, 2761 and 2781, Munch Museum Archives, Oslo, as cited in Ragna Stang, *Edvard Munch: The Man and His Art*, trans. Geoffrey Culverwell (New York: Abbeyville Press, 1979), p. 52. Hereafter Munch's manuscripts cited as Munch, MS. or MSS. Hereafter Stang cited as Stang (1979). All other notes and/or letters by Munch cited under this section, in which the artist makes references to a woman, are believed to be allusions to Fru Heiberg by the authors citing such writings. Brought together here for the first time, Munch's writings tell the story of his devastating relationship with Fru Heiberg.


12. The Christiania Bohème was a group of literary and social radicals who advocated free love. For an extensive discussion of this group, see pp. 225-255.


14. Munch, MS. 2778, as cited in ibid., p. 20.


17. Munch, as cited in Heller (1973), p. 36.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid.


21. Ibid.


32. Ibid.

33. Munch, MS. T2770, as cited in ibid.


35. Munch, MS. T2771, as cited in ibid.


38. Ibid., p. 9, as cited in ibid., p. 88.


41. Ibid.


43. Ibid.


45a. See Ravenal (1979), p. 12, who discusses the Perseus-Medusa issue in connection with one of Munch's notes.


50 Ibid.

51 Ibid., p. 47.

52 Ibid.


55 Boe (1970), 1:149.

56 Ibid., 1:149-50.


66 Ibid.


Although it is not certain to whom he is referring, Reinhold Heller believes The Scream represents the culminating effects of love. See Heller (1973), p. 90.


Heller (1973), p. 90, believes the landscape takes on the qualities of hair.


For an account of such trips with his father, see Boe (1970), 1:25-26.


For an account of Munch's second retrospective, see Dittmann (1982), pp. 59-73.


For an account of Munch's involvement with the Christiania Boheme, see pp. 255-261.


Ibid. Emphasis mine.


Ibid., pp. 71-72.

According to Strindberg (1979), note 146, Dagny arrived in Berlin in the spring of 1893 to study music. According to Dittmann citing Strindberg (1982), p. 85, she may have been in Berlin as early as January 1893.


Munch wrote home about the controversy he was causing in Berlin: "--This is for that matter the best that can happen, better advertising I can't get--." Munch continues: "All of this excitement is very satisfying. I have been in the company of many of the younger painters here . . . " Munchs Brev (1949), #128, p. 122, as cited in Boe (1970), 1:170.

For a discussion concerning the Ferkel Circle and its members, see pp. 274-294.


100 Ibid., pp. 95-104.


102 Ibid., p. 47. [Brackets mine.]


107 Ibid.


109 Ibid., p. 100.


115 Ibid.

116 Ibid. [Brackets mine.]

117 Stanislaw Przybyszewski, letter to Alfred Wysocki, August 1894, as cited in ibid.


123 For a discussion of Munch's Jealousy, see pp. 88-93.


125 Stang (1979), p. 86 and Fig. 102.


130 Gustav Vigeland, letter to Larpent, 16 March 1895, #1137, Vigeland Museum, Oslo, as cited in Stang (1979), note 146, p. 293.

131 Stang (1979), note 146, p. 293.


134 Ibid., pp. 26-29.


136 See Dittmann (1982), pp. 135-42.

137 See pp. 94-108.


139 See Przybyszewski (1915), p. 52. For a discussion of Munch's Hands (1893), see pp. 81-84.


141 Ibid.

142 Ibid., p. 317.
For a discussion concerning Munch's involvement with Tulla Larsen, see pp. 108-122.


Ibid.

For an account of Dagny's death as told by Julius Meier-Graefe, see Stang (1979), p. 84.


Munch, c. 1905, as cited in Stang (1979), p. 90.

Ibid.


Ibid.

For Munch's intimate meetings with Fru Heiberg, see pp. 27-31.

Reinhold Heller suggests Dagny may have been the model for the Sphinx, i.e., the central female figure in The Three Stage of Woman (The Sphinx). See Reinhold Heller, "Iconography of Edvard Munch's Sphinx," Art Forum 9 (October 1970): 80. For a discussion concerning this work of art as inspired by Munch's friends from the Christiania Bohème and the Ferkel Circle, see pp. 306-315.

In 1893 Munch painted Madonna (Fig. 60a). He executed a lithograph of Madonna in 1895 (Fig. 74). Later, he wrote that the model for the Madonna did bear a resemblance to Dagny. See Edvard Munch, undated letter to a lawyer, as cited in Stang (1979), p. 86. Heller suggests also that the woman in an 1894 version of Madonna resembles Dagny. See Heller, "Love as a Series," (1978), p. 105. For a discussion of Munch's Madonna, see pp. 295-298.


162. Munch, MS. T2982-Av, as cited in Ravenal (1979), p. 11.


164. Ibid., p. 12.


175. Several sources concede that Dagny resembles the model for Munch's Madonna (1893) and its variants. See Heller, "Love as a Series," (1978), p. 105; and Jaworska (1974), p. 314. In an undated letter Munch wrote to a lawyer, the artist states that the woman in Madonna did bear a resemblance to Dagny. See Stang (1979), p. 86. The pose Munch gave to the woman in Madonna is similar to that of the woman in Hands. Because of the importance Munch's literary friends had on his Madonna motif, a discussion of this work is to be found later in the text.


177 Ravenal (1979), p. 15.

179 Przybyszewski (1915), p. 52.


186 Ibid.

187 Ibid.

188 According to Arne Eggum, Munch exhibited Ashes under the title After the Fall in 1902 to indicate that time in Paradise had run out. See Eggum, "Major Paintings," (1978), p. 59.


190 Munch, MS. T2982-Av, as cited in Ravenal (1979), p. 11.


193 Munch, diary note, as cited in Heller (1973), p. 36.

194 Ibid.

195 The characters in Jealousy are identified as such by Arne Eggum. See Eggum, "Major Paintings," (1978), p. 51.


197 Munch, as cited in ibid.
198 Ibid., p. 24.
202 Ibid., note 33 and p. 198; and Carley (1975), pp. 45-46.
204 August Strindberg, Inferno (Lund 1962), p. 17, as cited in ibid.
205 August Strindberg, as cited in F. Strindberg (1940), p. 400.
206 Carley (1975), p. 54.
208 Ibid.
209 Ibid.
211 Carley (1975), p. 50.
212 A variation of a conversation between Judith Molard and Julien Leclercq, as cited in ibid.
216 Munch, letter to his aunt, in Munchs Brev (1949), #1, as cited in Carley (1975), p. 66.
Judith Molard, as cited in Carley (1975), p. 54; and Kjellberg (1951), p. 54.


Ibid.


Ibid.

For an account of Judith's relationship with Gérard, see ibid., pp. 206 and 209.


Langaard and Revold (1961), p. 27.


See Langaard and Revold (1961), p. 34.


Ibid., p. 204.


Torjusen (1978), pp. 204-09.

Munch, MS. T2782, as cited in ibid, p. 207.


Munch, MS. T2782, as cited in ibid.
Ibid.

Munch, letter to Frederick Delius, 1903/04, as cited in Torjesen (1978), p. 207.


Ibid.

Ibid., p. 206.

Ibid.

Munch, unsent letter to Harald Nørregaard, as cited in ibid.

As suggested by Torjesen (1978), pp. 207-09.

Munch, diary entry, c. 1896-97, as cited in ibid., p. 207.

See The Earthly Chimera (1981), p. 44.


Ibid.


For an illustration of Manet's Olympia (1863), see ibid., p. 70.


See Lucie-Smith (1972), fig. 96.

See pp. 100-101.

Ibid.

Ibid.


Bente Torjusen suggests that Judith may have been the young model for both The Cat and The Maiden with the Heart. See Torjusen (1978), p. 208.


See p. 96.


Ibid.


Ibid.

Hall (1979), p. 305.

Ibid.


Hays (1964), pp. 79 and 85.

Hamilton (1940), pp. 70 and 72.


Ibid., pp. 86-87.

For a discussion of Madonna (1895), see pp. 295-298.
286 Hall (1979), p. 90.
287 For a discussion of The Dance of Life, see pp. 122-126.
288 For a discussion of Madonna, see pp 295-298.

290 After St. Jerome had taken his monastic vows, he dwelled in the desert where he was tempted by the devil in the form of an erotic hallucination:

How often when I was living in the desert, in the vast solitude which gives to hermits a savage dwelling ... how often did I fancy myself among the pleasures of Rome! ... When I had no companions but scorpions and wild beasts, I often found myself among bevies of girls. My face was pale and my frame chilled with fasting, yet my mind was burning with desire and the fires of lust kept bubbling up before me when my flesh was as good as dead.

St. Jerome, as cited in Hays (1964), p. 112.
293 Munch, undated letter to Dr. Jacobson, as cited in Stang (1979), p. 222.


296 Eggum (1977), p. 82.
297 Stang (1979) note 230, p. 298.
298 Eggum (1977), p. 84.
299 Stang (1979), note 230, p. 298.
300 Eggum (1977), p. 82.
302Ibid.
303Ibid., 1:269-70.
304Ravenal (1979), p. 15; and Stang (1979), note 230, p. 298.
306Ibid., p. 82.
307Ibid. For a discussion of The Dance of Life, see pp. 122-126.
308Munch, as cited in Eggum (1977), p. 82.
310Eggum (1977), p. 84.
311Munch, letter to Tulla, MS. 2732, as cited in Eggum (1977), p. 84.
312Ibid.
313Ibid.
314Ibid.
317Ibid.
319Munch, letter to Tulla, Epstein Collection, Washington D.C., as cited
321Ibid.
323Munch, similar to MS. T2737, as cited in Ravenal (1979), p. 13.
325 Ibid.
327 Ibid.
328 Ibid.
330 Munch, as cited in Eggum (1977), pp. 86 and 88.
332 Munch, as cited in ibid.
333 Ibid.
335 Munch, letter to his aunt, in Dagbøken, 17 April 1903, as cited in Ravenal (1979), p. 15.
337 Munch, letter, as cited in ibid.
339 For a more complete discussion of Hands, see pp. 81-84.
341 Munch, letter to Nilssen, as cited in Ravenal (1979), p. 22.
345 Ibid., pp. 65-67.
346 Ibid., p. 68.
347 Ibid., pp. 70-76.
349 See Eggum (1977), p. 82.
350 Ibid.
351 Ibid.
354 See Guerber (1895), pp. 16 and 265.
355 Ibid., pp. 124 and 130.
356 Ibid. pp. 221-222.
357 Ibid.
358 Ibid.
360 See Munch, letters to Tulla, MS. 2732, as cited in Eggum (1977), p. 84; and Wilson (1973), p. 126.
363 Ibid.
364 Ibid., p. 28.
369 See Munch, letters to Tulla, as cited in Eggum (1977), p. 84.

In fact, Spirits depicts Munch's disgust for others who once betrayed him. Seated in the background as Herod, Gunnar Heiberg makes a toast with an upraised glass. A corpulent Herodias is a caricature of an unknown person. Sigurd Bødtker is seen as a dog-waiter. Salome's (Tulla's) entourage of bohemian friends participate in the antics and complete this ludicrous scene. See Epstein (1983), p. 84.

Ibid.

See pp. 110-111 and 115-118.

Herodias used a hairpin or knife to pierce the tongue or head of the Baptist after his decapitation. See Hall (1979), p. 174. Munch once referred to Tulla as an "earthly mother." See Munch, letters to Tulla, as cited in Eggum (1977), p. 84. It is therefore possible that Tulla could have been meant to represent both Salome and her mother, Herodias, in Spirits.

See Eggum (1977), pp. 90-100.

See pp. 331-332.

Carol Ravenal sees Tulla's hat in the Murderess motif as representative of "the phallic terrifying woman." See Ravenal (1979), p. 17.


Ibid.


Munch, unsent letter to Ernest Thiel, as cited in Stang (1979), p. 209.

See pp. 331-333.


Ragna Stang believes Tulla was the model for the Sketch of Hedda Gabler. See Stang (1979), p. 159.


One of Munch's letters to Tulla demonstrates that he thought the woman to possess these undesirable attributes. See Munch, letter to Tulla, as cited in Ravenal (1979), p. 14. Also see Stang (1979), p. 159.


Hamilton (1940), p. 92.

Ibid., pp. 92-96.

Ibid., p. 100.


Ibid.

Munch, letter, 5 April 1903, as cited in ibid., p. 90.

Ibid.


Ibid., p. 91; and Stang (1979), note 231, p. 298.

Stang (1979), note 231, p. 298.

Ibid.

For an account of the shooting incident, see pp. 110-111.

Stang (1979), note 231, p. 298.


Ibid.

Wylie (1976), pp. 428-29. [Brackets mine.]

Ibid., p. 429.


Munch may have suffered from episodic impotence during his relationship with Eva. See ibid., p. 20.

Munch, letter to Eva Mudocci, Index Book #83, Munch Museum, Oslo, as cited in ibid., p. 19.

Munch, letter to Frederick Delius, 1903-04, as cited in Torjusen (1978), p. 207.

Ibid.


Munch, as cited in ibid.


427 Eva Mudocci, letter to Munch, as cited in Ravenal (1979), p. 20; and Stabell (1973), pamphlet with letters.

428 For an account of these visits to German health spas, see Eggum (1981), p. 39.

429 Max Linde, letter to Munch, 28 October 1905, as cited in ibid.


433 Ibid.


435 For a discussion of the events preceding Munch's admission to Dr. Jacobson's clinic in Copenhagen, see pp. 331-332.


439 Stang (1979), note 231, p. 298.


441 Stang (1979), note 231, p. 298.

442 Ibid. Also, see Stabell (1973), p. 226.

443 Ibid.


Steinberg and Weiss (1954), p. 411.


Steinberg and Weiss (1954), pp. 410-11.


CHAPTER III

MUNCH AND THE SYMBOLISTS

It has been shown in the preceding chapter that Munch's troubled relationships with specific women in his life were synergetic with a deeply personal sexual conflict colored by the artist's profound mistrust of nature and the objects in it, along with his fear of disease and death. Viewed in a much wider context, Munch's personal conflicts with women were also equal to and representative of the concerns and conflicts of the times in which he lived. Moving from the microcosm of the artist's life to the macrocosm of the sexual problems which beset two generations of men reacting to woman's expanding role in modern society, this chapter begins with an ideological examination of the literary and visual manifestations of the fatal woman theme in the Symbolist and Decadent Movements of the latter half of the nineteenth century. It is subsequently shown that Munch's visual perception of the femme fatale reflects Symbolist and Decadent ideology concerning this most pervasive and provocative subject matter.

In the latter half of the nineteenth century the idea of the modern "Decadent" woman, later identified as the fatal woman or femme fatale by Mario Praz in The Romantic Agony (1933), was one of the most pervasive and provocative themes in the literature and art of the Symbolist Movement which reached its zenith in the Decadent ideology of the fin de siècle. In this milieu, the demonic female was manifested as vampire, Sphinx, Salome
and modern day Eve. Like others of his generation, Edvard Munch became consciously and curiously obsessed with the malevolent woman whose image represents "a contemporary statement on the role of woman as she attains new freedoms in a radically transformed society." To understand this phenomenon fully, one must view it from a historical perspective.

The fatal woman archetype is deeply rooted in Western thought. Its historical antecedent stems from Pagan mythology, legends, and the Judeo-Christian tradition. In Greek mythology as well as in Greek drama, the *femme fatale* is represented in depictions of the Medusa, the Chimera, Circe, the enticing but deadly Sirens, and the Maenads. The fatal woman was Helen of Troy, Medea, and Clytemnestra. In Egyptian legend, she was the Sphinx. In Nordic mythology where "the cold pale world of the shadowy dead was woman's sphere," she was Hel or Hela, the goddess of the underworld, as well as Freya, the goddess of love and beauty who rode the battlefields claiming her share of the dead. The fatal woman of Slavic origin was a predator of the night: the bloodsucking vampire.

In Judeo-Christian tradition, the fatal woman was Eve, Delilah, and Judith, who was no less lethal to Holofernes than Salome was to Saint John the Baptist. Women were viewed as Satan's tool by Saint Paul, Saint Augustine and other early church fathers. Sex and magic or witchcraft were the woman's realms, blights to be eradicated as the infamous witch-hunts of the Inquisition proved. Negative attitudes toward women remained with the rise of Protestantism as exemplified in the Salem, Massachusetts witch-hunts and burnings. During the Industrial Revolution in the nineteenth century, a new feminism emerged in England, America and, to a lesser extent, in the Scandinavian countries. It threatened to topple the "moral
authority of biblical patriarchalism." In the latter half of the nineteenth century, the modern "Decadent" woman began to infiltrate literature and the visual arts to a greater extent than before. Here, a fictitious yet menacing female energy was unleashed which threaded itself through the fabric of the counter-culture of European society. Ironically, the Symbolists and the Decadents, whose views incorporated a dislike for traditional religion, perpetuated the old myths and religious leanings of the Church in their anti-woman outlook. The modern woman became the modern "Decadent" woman: the new Eve, the new Salome, the new femme fatale, the old-new symbol of moral depravity and spiritual anarchy.

Contemplating the Mona Lisa in the latter half of the nineteenth century, Walter Pater then wrote:

Hers is the head upon which all 'the ends of the world are come,' and the eyelids are a little weary. It is a beauty wrought out from within upon the flesh, the deposit, little cell by cell, of strange thoughts and fantastic reveries and exquisite passions. Set it for a moment beside one of those white Greek goddesses or beautiful women of antiquity, and how would they be troubled by this beauty, into which the soul with all its maladies had passed! All the thoughts and experience of the world have etched and moulded there, in that which they have of power to refine and make expressive the outward form, the animalism of Greece, the lust of Rome, the reverie of the middle age with its spiritual ambitions and imaginative loves, the return of the Pagan world, the sins of the Borgias. She is older than the rocks among which she sits; like a vampire, she has been dead many times, and learned the secrets of the grave. . . . The fancy of a perpetual life, sweeping together ten thousand experiences, is an old one; and modern thought has conceived the idea of humanity as wrought upon by, and summing up in itself, all modes of thought and life. Certainly Lady Lisa might stand as the embodiment of the old fancy, the symbol of the modern idea.

Before examining the femme fatale as a pervasive theme in Symbolist and Decadent ideology more closely, a brief synopsis of the origin and philosophy of these parallel movements is necessary.
To understand the Symbolist and Decadent Movements both in literature and the visual arts of the fin de siècle, one must view them in terms of their immediate historical antecedent, the Romantic Era which swept the continent of Europe in the first half of the nineteenth century. Born from the remnants of Neo-Classicism of the latter half of the eighteenth century, the Romantic Movement represented a reaction to the Enlightenment. Central to this new world view which resulted from the ravages of the French Revolution and the ensuing unrest which followed, was an ideology based on the belief that the Enlightenment had failed to solve the riddle of life.

The Romantic Age was subsequently fraught with self-doubt and disillusionment. This "romantic agony" laid to rest the premise of reason, anesthetized positivism and ushered in a new revolutionary attitude of its own in favor of the irrational, the pessimistic, the subjective and the introspective. In place of reason, phantasmagoria reigned supreme. Chaos and despair were coveted and nature was charged with a significance beyond itself in all its sublime and terrifying aspects. With this altered perception of the world, perhaps resulting from the use of drugs, the outcast such as the Byronic hero began his life long quest for truth and a world beyond his limitations.

In the visual arts, Francisco Goya was one of the first to recognize that something had indeed gone wrong. He anticipated this altered reality and mistrust of the world with his introspective, internalized vision of it in the highly subjective Sleep of Reason from his "Los Caprichos" series (1796-98). In this work the artist proclaimed the dream, or more appropriately the nightmare, to be more real than moments of consciousness
and in so doing set into motion what was later to become the central ide

ogy of the Symbolists and Decadents. Along with Goya's thought provoking vision, J. A. D. Ingres' Oedipus and the Sphinx (1808)\textsuperscript{9} fore-shadowed the arrival of a new and ruthless, fatal beauty who would solidly usurp nature and proclaim her realm some fifty years later beginning with the poetry of Charles Baudelaire and the art of Gustave Moreau.

In the interim years between the Romantic Era and the \textit{fin de siècle}, old institutions and traditions began to die. Consequent to the rise of urban life and industrialization, Materialism, Marxism, Darwinism, and all forms of political and scientific inquiry, society was thrown into a state of turmoil and bewilderment.\textsuperscript{10} Women began to assert their rights and threaten the old patriarchal system. As Matthew Arnold so correctly perceived, man was wandering between two worlds: one dead and the other powerless to be born.\textsuperscript{11} Man was indeed caught in a severe state of spiritual crisis, a deadly limbo which, in turn, marked the crisis of the nineteenth century. By the latter half of the last century, man stood virtually alone, without God, without the beliefs which had sustained him from early Christian times until the Enlightenment, and now without the traditional woman beside him as exemplified in the plays of August Strindberg and Henrik Ibsen.

Within this atmosphere of chaos and change the Symbolists and Decadents, themselves strangers among the flux, came to reflect upon the more pronounced aspects of a sick society in the throes of crisis. They internalized this sickness and probed the deep-seated psychological dilemmas which beset the age: mistrust of self, the world, nature and women
as well. The result was a body of literary and artistic creation in which strange, fascinating and unnatural worlds appeared.\textsuperscript{12}

Thus, like a pendulum first swinging forward and then back, the Symbolist and Decadent Movements represented a strange new form of the old Romantic Movement. The artists and writers who were part of these new movements were comprised of rebels and elitists who, in reaction against the apparent realities of the world, languidly believed that the end of civilization had come and sought escape from modern society as well as from traditional beliefs in Christianity in a strangely exotic world built upon their own particular dreams and visions.\textsuperscript{13} These anti-bourgeois outlaws, now estranged from a society which they found all too banal, hypocritical, complacent, technically oriented and materialistic, also came to reject art based on Naturalism and Realism. Their new attitude toward art and life was oriented toward the life of the soul (i.e., the spiritual, the mystical, the occult), and a profound belief in the existence of an unseen world parallel to the visible, concrete world.\textsuperscript{14} They explored this strange, invisible world through the use of private, cryptic symbols, which oft times confounded and defied meaning.\textsuperscript{15}

As advocated by the Aesthetes in England, it was a time of "art for art's sake."\textsuperscript{16} These movements took an interest not in the ordinary but in the new, not in the banal but in the original, not in external reality but in the imagination, not in the material but in the spiritual, not in the natural but in the supernatural and the mystical.\textsuperscript{17} The movements were escapist, Neo-Romantic.\textsuperscript{18}

Thus, the Symbolist Movement is best understood as a revolutionary literary phenomenon, Romantic in origin, which developed in France shortly
after the mid-nineteenth century and subsequently spread to the visual arts. In fact, literary symbolism reached its flowering in the mid-1880s at which time the Greco-French poet Jean Moréas defined the movement in his historical essay "Manifesto of Symbolism." In the visual arts, Symbolism reached its zenith in the following decade. Its chief adherent was Albert Aurier who defined Symbolist doctrine in Mercure de France in 1891.

Withdrawal from the apparent world of reality to the unseen world of the paranormal was the basis for this new sensibility. Here, where dreams unfolded for the Symbolists and the Decadents, and visions of antiquity, of legend and the Satanic underworld came to life, a strange new beauty, the fatal woman, arose to claim her realm.

In the early 1890s, Arthur Symons began making regular trips to Paris. He reported back to his fellow countrymen his impressions concerning the latest trends in French literature, with particular emphasis on the works of Symbolists such as Paul Verlaine, Maurice Maeterlinck, and Joris-Karl Huysmans whose writings characterize the essence of the "maladies fin de siècle." Symons' informative essays include "The Decadent Movement in Literature" (1893) and "The Symbolist Movement in Literature" (1899). These titles indicate the ideological thinking behind these parallel movements.

In "The Decadent Movement in Literature," Symons notes the interchangeability of the terms "Symbolism" and "Decadence" but attempts to clarify and qualify each. "Symbolism," Symons remarks, conveys "some notion of that new kind of literature which is perhaps broadly characterized by the word Decadence." He continues:
The most representative literature of the day—the writings which appeals to, which has done so much to form, the younger generation--is certainly not classic, nor has it any relation with that old antithesis of the Classic, the Romantic. After a fashion it is no doubt a decadence; it has all the qualities that mark the end of great periods, the qualities that we find in the Greek, the Latin, decadence: an intense self-consciousness, a restless curiosity in research, an over-subtilizing refinement upon refinement, a spiritual and moral perversity. If what we call the classic is indeed the supreme art--those qualities of perfect simplicity, perfect sanity, perfect proportion, the supreme qualities--then this representative literature of today, interesting, beautiful, novel as it is, is really a new and beautiful and interesting disease.

Healthy we cannot call it, and healthy it does not wish to be considered.

Symons, having judged Symbolism and Decadence as a manifestation of spiritual and moral perversity, as a new and interesting "disease," continues to characterize these parallel movements as follows:

What both seek is . . . the very essence of truth—the truth of appearances to the senses, of the visible world to the eyes that see it; and the truth of spiritual things to the spiritual vision . . . . The Symbolists . . . would flash upon you the 'soul' of that which can be apprehended only by the soul—the finger sense of things unseen, the deeper meaning of things evident.

And yet, it is the darker side of life and of the soul that motivated the Symbolists which Symons reiterates, quoting Ernest Hello:

Having desire without light, curiosity, without wisdom, seeking God by strange ways, by ways traced by the hands of men; offering rash incense upon the high places to an unknown God, who is the God of darkness.

The "God of darkness" was coveted in Symbolist and Decadent ideology as was the fatal woman whom they worshipped and feared with a pathological obsession. The two figure heads of the God of darkness and the fatal woman were inseparable. From this particular bent of mind grew the idea of perverse love.

Having opted for the allurement of their senses, the Symbolists and Decadents took Venus as a type of mystical wife. Born of the
Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood Movement in England at mid-century and particularly the art of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, whose portrayal of women mirrored his own troubled heterosexual relationships, their vision of Venus was fraught with unhappiness, pain, suffering and death. It is Water Pater who, in contemplating Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus*, best exemplifies this union of women and love with pain, death and decay: "... what is unmistakable is the sadness with which he [Botticelli] has conceived the goddess of pleasure, as the depositary of a great power over the lives of men."²⁷ Pater continues:

I have said that the peculiar character of Botticelli is the result of a blending in him of a sympathy for humanity in its uncertain condition, its attractiveness, its investiture at rarer moments in a character of loveliness and energy, with his consciousness of the shadow upon it of the great things from which it shrinks, and that this conveys into his work somewhat more than painting usually attains of the true complexity of humanity. He paints the story of the goddess of pleasure in other episodes besides that of her birth from the sea, [Mars and Venus] but never without some shadow of death in the grey flesh and wan flowers.²⁸

Within Botticelli's works such as *The Birth of Venus* and *Mars and Venus*, wherein the god of war has laid down his arms and succumbed to the goddess of love who now watches over her enervated lover triumphantly, Pater found a co-mingling of the beautiful and the sublime, a trading of hope for hopelessness, pleasure for pain, love for lovelessness, happiness for despair, and life for death. It was from this sense of male powerlessness that the fatal woman was born.

In fact, the woman in Rossetti's *Astarte Syriaca* (Fig. 54) of 1877 became the prototype of this new vision of woman for the Symbolists and Decadents on the continent in the 1890s. Edward Lucie-Smith remarks:

The women whom Rossetti paints exist in a separate universe; they have no precise location, either in space or in time. The *Astarte Syriaca* of 1877, perhaps the grandest of the whole series,
embodies a new conception of woman - one which the French Symbolist poets and painters were to render very familiar in the course of the succeeding decade. The femme fatale who so much fascinated the men of the 1890s is already embodied here with all her most characteristic attributes.

She is a frozen beauty who stares at us with unseeing eyes and who appears as a woman of Amazon strength.

On the continent other precursors to the Symbolist and Decadent vision of woman of the fin de siècle found their hero in Gustave Moreau who was creating his own brand of satanic females beginning with his version of the sphinx motif in Oedipus and the Sphinx (Fig. 55) of 1864. It was Moreau's painting, according to one critic, which "saved" the Salon of 1864 and compelled him to remark:

M. Gustave Moreau, is the hero of this exhibition, and those critics who are usually never satisfied agree that if the 1864 Salon is saved from discredit, it is only thanks to his Oedipus and the Sphinx . . . the work of this unknown painter attracts one's attention and holds it irresistibly, no matter what one does.

Moreau's polished style may have appeased the Academy but it was his subject matter which attracted the attention of the yet to be named Symbolists and Decadents.

In France, and previous to Moreau's Sphinx which touched off a whole plethora of composite women-monsters in the visual arts such as the chimaera, the harpy and like creatures of ancient lore, Charles Baudelaire became the catalyst for other poets and literary figures of the age. In his Les Fleurs du Mal (1857), a poem entitled "Les Metamorphoses du Vampire" caught the imagination of two generations. Of the poem George Ross Ridge writes:

Charles Baudelaire casts modern man and woman in a graphic scene that is to obsess writers of the French Decadence. Modern man is
shown as a weak decadent consumed by modern woman, who is a vampire or a femme fatale. Their love is a passionate death struggle in which the active female, like a spider, destroys the passive male. It is an ironical poem. In it man searches for beauty but finds ugliness, and he looks for love in woman's arms only to confront destruction. The beautiful mannequin of his dreams, his ideal woman, is actually a vampire who drains him of his energy, i.e., his life.

Because of the importance of Baudelaire's poem to Symbolist and Decadent ideology, "Les Metamorphoses du Vampire" is now presented in its entirety:

Meanwhile the woman, from her strawberry lips,
(Like a snake on redhot coals, writhing her hips
And working her breasts against the stays of her busk)
Let flow these words, with a heavy scent of musk:
"My mouth is wet; and I know deep in my bed
How to bury old conscience till he's dead.
On these proud breasts I wipe all tears away
And old men laugh like children at their play.
For the man who sees me naked, I replace
The moon, the sun, and all the stars of space!
And I am so expert in voluptuous charms
That when I hush a man in my terrible arms
Yielding my bosom to his biting lust,
(Shy but provocative, frail and yet robust)
The mattress swoons in commotion under me,
And the helpless angels would be damned for me!

When she had sucked the marrow from every bone,
I turned to her as languid as a stone
To give her one last kiss . . . and saw her thus:
A slimy rotten wineskin, full of pus!
I shut my eyes, transfixed in a chill of fright,
And when I opened them to the livinglight . . .
Beside me there, that powerful robot
That fed its fill out of my blood . . . was not!
Instead, the cold ruins of a skeleton
Shivered, creaking like a weather vane
Or like a sign hung out on an iron arm
Swinging through long winter nights in the storm.32

After Baudelaire's memorable book of poetry in which woman is cast as an all-devouring female, the theme became one of the most prevalent in late nineteenth century art and literature, and a succession of diabolical females became the obsessive subject matter found in countless works by Symbolist and Decadent literary figures and artists alike.33 There is,
for instance, Gustave Flaubert's *Salammbô* (1862) in which the central female character has a fertility rite with a snake. Countering the Decadent heroine in *Salammbô* is the icy beauty of Salome in Stéphane Mallarmé's poem "Herodiade" (1867). Arthur Rimbaud and Paul Verlaine each cultivated his own brand of fatal beauty, and Jules d'Aurevilly prefaced his book *Les Diaboliques* (1874) as follows:

... As for the women in these stories, why should they not be Diabolical? Do they not have enough of the she-devil in them to deserve this nice name? The Diabolical! Not one of them here but is diabolical in some degree. There is not one of them to whom you could seriously apply the word Angel without exaggerating. Like the Devil, who was once an angel too, but came a cropper, if they are angels, they are angels like him: head downwards and their crupper in the air!

Following *Les Diaboliques*, Sâr Péladan, the founder of the Salon de la Rose+Croix, (an offshoot of the Symbolist Movement) wrote *Le Vice Suprême* (1884) in which tales of black magic intermingle with stories of forbidden pleasures. That same year, Joris-Karl Huysmans' *À Rebours* (Against Nature) was published and, according to Arthur Symons, the hero therein became the model of the Decadent male:

À Rebours is the history of a typical Decadent--a study, indeed, after a real man, but a study which seizes the type rather than the personality. In the sensations and ideas of Des Esseintes we see the sensations and ideas of the effeminate, over-civilized, deliberately abnormal creature who is the last product of our society: partly the father, partly the offspring, of the perverse art that he adores. Des Esseintes creates for his solace, in the wilderness of a barren and profoundly uncomfortable world, an artificial paradise. His Thébaïde raffinée is furnished elaborately for candle-light, equipped with pictures, the books, that satisfy his sense of the exquisitely abnormal. He delights in the Latin of Apuleius and Petronius, in the French of Baudelaire, Goncourt, Verlaine, Mallarmé, Villiers; in the pictures of Gustave Moreau, of Odilon Redon. He delights in the beauty of the strange, unnatural flowers, in the melodic combination of scents, in the imagined harmonies of the sense of taste. And at last, exhausted by these spiritual and sensory debauches in the delights of the artificial, he is left (as we close the book) with a brief,
doubtful choice before him—madness or death, or else a return to nature, to the normal life.

For the Decadent hero in Against Nature, his most prized possessions are two works of art by Gustave Moreau, Salome and The Apparition. Contemplating the dancing girl in them, it is she who becomes his high priestess, his idol, the incarnation of lust and evil:

... Des Esseintes saw realized at long last the weird and superhuman Salome of his dreams. Here she was no longer just the dancing-girl who extorts a cry of lust and lechery from an old man by the lascivious movements of her loins; who saps the morale and breaks the will of a king with the heaving of her breasts, the twitching of her belly, the quivering of her thighs. She had become, as it were, the symbolic incarnation of undying Lust, the Goddess of immortal Hysteria, the accursed Beauty exalted above all other beauties by the catalepsy that hardens her flesh and steels her muscles, the monstrous Beast, indifferent, irresponsible, insensible, poisoning, like the Helen of ancient myth, everything that approaches her, everything that sees her, everything that she touches.

As the cult of Gustave Moreau (as best exemplified in his two paintings Salome and The Apparition) and Charles Baudelaire (as exemplified in his Les Fleurs du Mal) spread, so too did that of Félicien Rops who settled in Paris in 1874. The Goncourts were the first among the French to write of his works and what they found reads as follows:

Rops is truly eloquent in depicting the cruel aspects of contemporary woman, her steel-like glance, and her malevolence towards man, not hidden, not disguised, but evident in the whole person.

The Goncourts' critique of Rops was seconded by Joris-Karl Huysmans:

Rops has not confined himself, like his predecessors, to rendering the attitudes of bodies swayed by passion, but has elicited from flesh on fire the sorrows of fever-stricken souls and the joys of warped minds; he has painted demonic rapture as others have painted mystical yearnings. Remote from his century, from an age when materialistic art can see nothing but hysterics eaten up by their ovaries or nymphomaniacs who brains beat in the regions of the belly, he has celebrated not contemporary woman, not the Parisienne, whose simpering graces and dubious finery are not for him, but the essential and timeless Woman, the naked malignant
Beast, the handmaid of Darkness, the absolute bondwoman of the Devil.

Rops also provided the illustrations for Barbey d'Aurevilly's *Les Diaboliques*, Sâr Péladan's *Le Vice Suprême* and the frontispiece for poems by Stéphane Mallarmé. Such illustrations, wherein Rops' perverse bondwomen of the devil figure most prominently, demonstrate the manner in which the malevolent female as subject became a cross-culture concern among writers, poets and artists of Symbolist and Decadent persuasion, as well as provide evidence of the way in which they came to influence each other's visions of the fatal woman.

As the century drew to a close and the Symbolist Movement reached its zenith in the literature and art of the fin de siècle, a new generation of disciples of Baudelaire, Moreau and Rops lent to the movement a more decadent tone. The phenomenon of Symbolism is best characterized by the Decadent preoccupation with cults: the cult of the dandy, the cult of Satan, the cult of woman and the cult of death. Taking life to its extremes—in refinement, in mystery and in sexual perversity—it was this pursuit of the unnatural dream and pathological eroticism which became the central thematic concern of this new breed of Symbolists. In fact, the 1890s might be viewed as the most debauch decade, the culmination of an era obsessed with the idea of primitive lust and the fatal woman, as Mario Amaya remarks:

The frank 18th-century lustiness of a Fanny Hill held little interest; it was the ancient and forbidden Biblical crimes and those of Imperial Rome that caught their attention: sodomy, pederasty, necrophilia, lesbianism, sadism and incest were the
In Octave Mirabeau's *Le Jardin des Supplices*, wherein scenes of horrific sexual orgies are characterized by lesbians embraced in a death-struggle, human beings trapped in cages and fed tainted meat (as well as tortured with sticks and stones), and men copulating with women like animals, the garden of torture, presided over by a woman, is a metaphor for what Europe had become to the modern decadent mind: a great whore with the barbarian invaders waiting at the gate, in ready to take over.

In this land of sexual depravity the abominable woman ruled. Gone was the Byronic hero of the Romantic Era who often preyed on the weaknesses of women and in his place woman arose as the new ideal of the Decadent male who made of her his goddess and his tormentor. Woman as the personification of evil became an overwhelmingly popular yet despairing subject for the Symbolists and Decadents: popular because they knew that escape from her was impossible; despairing because of their terror of her sexual power over them as first exemplified in "Les Metamorphoses du Vampire."

In the final flowering of the Symbolist and Decadent Movements, the Decadent male found his hero in the central protagonist in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. The now familiar fatal woman found her counterpart in Wilde's *Salome* (written in French in 1891) for which Aubrey Beardsley provided illustrations depicting the woman as a cruel and unusual beauty with a taste for the blood of man. In addition, it is in Wilde's prose poem "The Sphinx" that the poet is found contemplating the Sphinx from whose fatal hold he cannot escape, however hard he tries.46

Thus, the Symbolists and Decadents took for their companion the sexually emancipated woman. They transformed her magically and
imaginatively into the fatal woman: a seductive creature whose very presence evoked fascination, repulsion and terror in the hearts of her creators. With this demonization of woman came Vampires, Medusas, Salomes, Harpies, Sirens, Eves, and other such mysterious women from the satanic underworld. They arose like strange and mysterious flowers over the landscape of the artists' canvases and in the pages of poets' and prose writers' books. Intoxicating yet deadly, like some hallucinatory drug, the fatal woman was the collective product of an overly sensitized male imagination. Her existence was totally dependent on her creator whether he be a poet such as Baudelaire, an artist such as Moreau or Rops, or a novelist such as Huysmans. Writing of this tendency to view woman as the handmaiden of the devil, Max Nordau characterizes these Decadent creators of the fatal woman in the following manner:

The morbid activity of his sexual centers completely rules him. The thought of woman has for him the power of an 'obsession.' He feels that he cannot resist the exciting influences proceeding from the woman, that he is her helpless slave, and would commit any folly, any madness, any crime, at her beck and call. He necessarily sees in woman, therefore, any uncanny, overpowering force of nature, bestowing supreme delights or dealing destruction, and he trembles before this power, to which he is defenselessly exposed. ... The erotomaniac 'degenerate' stands in the same position to the woman as a dipsomaniac to intoxicating drinks.

In other words, for the Decadent male, within this celebration of lust and sexual perversity, the fatal woman is brought to life by some initial attraction. Yet allurement is not enough. Attraction must lead to obsession and obsession to a sexual struggle.

Within the man-woman relationship, each party assumes an opposing role. There is clearly an antagonist and a protagonist, an executioner and a victim, an all-powerful personage and a powerless individual, one who
dominates and one who is dominated. Because woman assumes the prior role
and man the latter, it is the male who is left weakened and impaired or
somehow damaged either physically, morally, mentally or emotionally from
his union with the female. The male may idolize this type of strong woman
but he also fears her. Torn between his desire for her and his dread, his
battle becomes one between choosing to remain her consort or attempting to
escape her fatal beauty. The realization that escape is often impossible
leaves the "degenerate" male in a state of powerless submission to the
woman who is for him at once a beautiful seductress and a horrible monster.

This sado-masochistic relationship between a man and a woman seems to
have derived, in part, from the writings of the Marquis de Sade. The
capacity for the Decadent male to view woman as a fatal beauty is at the
very root of Symbolist and Decadent ideology. Such is the allure and
deadliness of the "Decadent" female who stands in relation to man as a
vampire to its victim.

Munch was a participant in and a product of the counter-culture of late
nineteenth century society, wherein the prophets of doom dwelled with their
visions of a decaying world, the *femme fatale* reigned supreme, and
Baudelairian despair was the rule rather than the exception. It was their
masochistic adoration and simultaneous fear of the sadistic woman, their
death-struggle with her, which Munch held in common with the Symbolists and
Decadents. His art, and especially his concept of the fatal woman--born as
it was of restless nightmares and an uncompromising subjectivity--was thus
orchestrated in perfect harmony with the Symbolist/Decadent trends which
beset two generations of males. In the words of Werner Haftman:

More than any other artist, Munch is the representative of the
Symbolist decade and its aftermath. This fact is reflected in
every detail of his life, including his travels, for a genius who mirrors an epoch is led inexorably to the places and people in which the spiritual needs of the age find their fullest expression.

With Haftman's statement in mind, Edvard Munch's fatal woman theme can be closely examined in relation to the Symbolists' and Decadents' concern with this same subject.

Man's Tortured Vision of Himself:
Prerequisite to the Rise of
The Fatal Woman

In order for the fatal woman to work her evil magic on the male, he must become her willing or unassuming victim. This sado-masochistic relationship between woman and man is at the very heart of Decadent ideology. Because victimization is dependent on the Decadent male's perception of the "other" as executioner, as well as a negative view of himself as victim, a fatal fall is therefore inevitable.

The fall of man or the end of man's supremacy over woman is best exemplified in Baudelaire's poem "Don Juan in Hell" from Les Fleurs du Mal. In this poem, the romantic hero, now dead, confronts Charon who will take him across the river Styx. Overhead are heard mournful moans emanating from the mouths of semi-naked women--perhaps the women whose hearts the carefree amourest had broken while alive. The hero then meets his betrayed wife and is subsequently taken away to the gates of Hell.50

Baudelaire's poem seemingly sets the stage for the Decadent male who languidly takes the place of this virile hero of the Romantic Era. In contrast to him, the Decadent male is weak and weary, impaired by neuroses, disease and madness. As art often mirrors life, among the first in this category was Baudelaire himself who came to write:
Now I suffer constantly from vertigo, and today, January 23, 1862, I have experienced a strange warning, I have felt pass over me the breath of the wing of madness.

For Baudelaire brief episodes of insanity were accompanied by a constant nervousness, attacks of neuralgia and the persistent symptoms of syphilis which he had contracted in his youth. After 1862, literary impotence and his inability to reconcile his differences with his unfaithful mistress Jeanne Duval made life impossible for the poet. Suicidal depression plagued him.

Such symptoms were contagious. As G. L. van Roosbroeck writes of the Decadent male:

... he liked to hint at mysterious diseases which preyed upon his mind and his body; ... he desired to be considered an ill-adapted dreamer, ... He consciously differentiated himself from the others, from the mass.

Such was the physical, emotional and mental make-up of the typical Decadent male who found his counterpart not only in Baudelaire, but also in Joris-Karl Huysmans' fictitious character Des Esseintes of Against Nature and Oscar Wilde's protagonist in The Picture of Dorian Gray. They are consumed by anguish and weakened by nerves. Concerning the Decadent male, Max Nordau remarks: "It is the impotent despair; of a sick man who feels himself dying by inches in the midst of an eternally living nature blooming forever."54

The "despair" of which Nordau writes is captured in Arthur Symons' poem "Nerves" from London Nights (1895):

The modern malady of love is nerves.
Love, once a simple madness, now observes
The stages of his passionate disease,
And is twice sorrowful because he sees,
Inch by inch entering, the fatal knife.
0 health of simple minds, give me your life,
And let me, for one midnight, cease to hear
The clock for ever ticking in my ear,
The clock that tells the minutes in my brain.
It is not love, nor love's despair, this pain
That shoots a witless, keener pang across
The simple agony of love and loss.
Nerves, nerves! O folly of a child who dreams
Of heaven, and, waking in the darkness, screams.

Two years before Symons wrote his poem, Munch executed The Scream (Fig. 8).

It was a woman who triggered the profound distress, the ultimate despair conveyed in the wasted and withered figure clasping his hands to his head to calm his nonetheless shattered nerves. "For several years I was almost mad--," Munch writes, "then I found myself staring straight into the hideous face of insanity." The words and picture of a man tortured by love and teetering on the brink of destruction are likewise reflected in Baudelaire's poem "Destruction":

At my side the Demon writhes forever,
Swimming around me like impalpable air;
As I breathe, he burns my lungs like fever
And fills me with an eternal guilty desire.

Knowing my love of Art, he snares my senses,
Appearing in woman's most seductive forms,
And, under the sneak's plausible pretenses,
Lips grow accustomed to his lewd love-charms.

He leads me thus, far from the sight of God,
Panting and broken with fatigue into
The wilderness of Ennui, deserted and broad,

An into my bewildered eyes he throws
Visions of festering wounds and filthy clothes,
And all Destruction's bloody retinue.

Baudelaire, Symons and Munch were not the only ones who stared into the face of insanity. Among others, Odilon Redon depicts the figure of a man assuming the fetal position with glaring eyes and contorted expression in L' Ange du Destin. Sitting in abject terror before the calm of nature, he is a man dying inch by inch. Ferdinand Hodler's Disillusioned Souls
(Fig. 56) after his canvas of 1892 is the very essence of a man in deep despair and turning inward. With bent head and hands placed on his head, he is reminiscent of the brooding male figure in Munch's *Ashes* (Fig. 13) of 1894.

A poem by Louis Duchosal entitled "Ferdinand Hodler" from *Le Livre de Thulé* (1891), might even apply to Munch himself, or for that matter any of a number of Symbolist and Decadent poets and artists:

If I had in my life an hour, but one hour, in which this heart, groaning at the lightest touch of breath had enjoyed one pleasure, however fleeting, for that furtive moment, for that brief joy, I would go my way again, less sad and more spirited and drawing hope from this pleasant recollection, I would say to my heart: "Be of good cheer, all will end!" But I question in vain the horror of my memory. At every page, in the bitter book of my history, one word rises up like a red flower: Mischance--and then--Mischance!--and again Mischance!59

As with Hodler, Munch was predisposed to the horror of his own memory. Reviewing his life as one of fear, Munch writes: "Sickness and death dwelt in my parents' house. Certainly I have never been able to triumph over the miseries there."60 Munch also writes:

I was born into this world dying. . . Illness, madness and death were the black angels who guarded my cradle and, have since accompanied me throughout my life. . . . At an early age I got to know the misery and dangers of this life on earth, and of life after death, of eternal torments in Hell that awaited the children of sin. --Even as a child I felt that I was unfairly treated, motherless, sick, and with the menace of infernal punishment hanging over my head. I remembered that once during my childhood I awoke at night to find the blood streaming from my mouth and fever shaking my body. Fear seized me. I was going to die and would soon be face to face with the stern judge who would sentence me to eternal punishment. On that occasion I recovered from my illness, but fear accompanied me throughout my childhood and youth. . . . The fear of life has accompanied me ever since I can remember. My art has been a confession. . . . Yet I have the feeling that the fear of life is a necessity to me, just like illness. Without the fear of life and illness I should have been like a rudderless ship.61
Munch also saw his life as a tumbling abyss:

My whole life has been spent walking by the side of a bottomless chasm, jumping from stone to stone. Sometimes I try to leave my narrow path and join the swirling mainstream of life, but I always find myself drawn inexorably back towards the chasm's edge and there I shall walk until the day I finally fall into the abyss. For as long as I can remember I have suffered from a deep feeling of anxiety which I have tried to express in my art. Without anxiety and illness I would have been like a ship without a rudder.

This toil and trouble, introspective looking back, moral vexation, unhappiness, madness, helplessness, neurotic sensitivity, fear, and sense of victimization characterized Munch's psyche as well as the psyches of other Symbolist and Decadent males. Such was the fall of man and the rise of the strong woman.

The New Eve: Idol of Perversity

"Eve am I," writes Auguste Villiers de l'Isle-Adam in L' Eve future, "who have been summoned to you from those unbound regions whose pale frontiers can only be glimpsed by Man between certain dreams and certain slumbers." It is this new Eve as a fatal woman who captured the collective conscience of the Symbolists and Decadents. This Eve, as an idol of perversity, may be seen in such diverse works as Dante Gabriel Rossetti's Astarte Syriaca (Fig. 54) of 1877 and Charles Baudelaire's poem "Don Juan in Hell" of 1857.

Many of the characteristics of this Eve may be seen in Jean Delville's drawing The Idol of Perversity (Fig. 57) of 1891. Here, she appears majestic, proud and calmly statuesque. She is a cruel and indifferent beauty. Her staring glance is cold and calculating, her expression frozen and mask-like. It is the face of a Sphinx with the eyes of a vampire and
Medusa's crown of writhing snakes. An asp, as if the one of Cleopatra, meanders its way round her neck. Her breasts are large, and her belly is swollen. This terrible image of an earth mother, ruling over the viewer, has usurped nature in a reign of terror over man. She is unapproachable as an idol of perversity, but she is, nonetheless, worshiped by the Decadent artists and writers who also cursed her. It is this image that lays to rest Dante Gabriel Rossetti's "The Blessed Damozel," brings death in Baudelaire's "Don Juan in Hell," and is the sadistic woman of Algernon Charles Swinburne's "Faustine."

As the devil's handmaid, this fatal Eve has many sisters, such as the demonic females in Jean Delville's *Parsifal* (1890), as well as the fatal woman in Richard Wagner's opera of the same title. Other immobilized and unapproachable beauties are captured in Gustav Klimt's *Pallas Athene* of 1898 and John Singer Sargent's *Astarte* of c. 1892. Such women are far from the languid females one finds in earlier Romantic paintings, for there is in such depictions a demonic energy which seems to be unleashed at the slightest provocation.

The new Eve, born of lust and sin, is reminiscent of Gustave Flaubert's fatal woman in *Salammbô* of 1862, in which a snake accompanies a fertility rite. As in Franz von Stuck's *Sin* (Fig. 30) of 1893, such a serpent, coiled around the woman's body, is a symbolic accomplice. Other provocative visualizations of this new Eve of the 1890s are present in Franz von Lenbach's *Voluptas* (Fig. 58) of c. 1895 and Otto Greiner's *The Devil Showing Woman to the People* (Fig. 59) of 1897. Their smiles allure. Their bodies stretch out suggestively before the viewer in lustful abandon. They are oblivious to anything but the appeasement of their own insatiable
sexual appetites. In Gustav Klimt's Allegory of Sculpture (Eve with the Apple in Front of a Greek Altar) of 1897 (Fig. 60), Eve is a naked woman raising her hand which holds an apple, ready to offer the token of seduction to anyone who is willing to accept it and her.

In his Les Fleurs du Mal (Flowers of Evil) of 1857, Baudelaire introduces this idol of perversity in many variants. For example, in "You'd Take to Bed the Whole World," she is cursed and worshipped. This "slut of sluts, by boredom brutalized!" is served as a prize everyday "a fresh-killed heart." She is a "blind and deaf machine" who is "rich in torment" and drinks "the world's blood" shamelessly. As a "queen of sins," she is a vampire, a "vile animal" who possesses "foul magnificence--sublime disgrace!" Baudelaire's perverse idolization of such a demonic woman is pathological. In "Afternoon Song," the poet writes that he is woman's "worshipper" possessing a "Perilous mad passion" for her. "You're the idol," the poet concludes, "I the priest!" Similarly, in "To a Madonna," Baudelaire builds a poetic "altar of my misery" hewn from his heart to worship her as a "Victorious queen" with "The head of this black serpent" which is "Swollen with hate and venomous with crime." The poet's perverse idolization is found in Symbolist and Decadent literature and art of the 1890s, as well as in Munch's works, such as Hands (Fig. 12) of 1893, which combines the various traits of the new Eve.

In Hands, Munch, like Baudelaire, presents a fatal woman as an idol who is worshipped but who rejects. The quivering mass of gesticulating male hands reach out toward the semi-nude woman's sinuous body. Like Baudelaire too, Munch curses his idol. "You are like a woman passing
between two lines of men," the artist writes of Hands, "who are stretching
out their hands towards your naked body."75

Munch's Madonna (Fig. 60a) of 1893 depicts a "strange devotional
picture glorifying decadent love," comments Werner Hofmann, whose
monumental proportions of a cult figure reduce the (male) viewer to her
subjections.76 This female demon is "unapproachable," and "none can come
near her."77 For Robert Delevoy, Munch's figure refuses to procreate, just
as the foetuses and spermatozoa found in other Madonnas by Munch are
metaphors for "the sterility inherent in the trap which woman sets for
man."78 As "a kind of female Dracula," Delevoy sees Munch's figure as one
"out to suck men's blood like a vampire."79

As in Klimt's rendition of Eve (Fig. 60), in Munch's Jealousy (Fig. 17)
of 1895, Eve sets the trap while reaching to pluck an apple; in taking the
apple, the background male representing Munch will suffer, too, the
foreground male's rejection and consequent brooding over such a fate.
Munch's works present a fatal Eve who summons the artist and viewer and who
"can only be glimpsed by Man between certain dreams and certain slumbers."

Salome

The Salome motif was another pervasive theme which captured the hearts
and imaginations of the Symbolists and Decadents, writers and artists
alike. It has its antecedent in the Biblical account of Salome dancing for
Herod who, in turn, must grant the girl one wish: the head of St. John the
Baptist.81

As the archetypical destroyer of man, Salome was the inspiration behind
Gustave Flaubert's Salammbô (1862) which subsequently influenced the French
opera Hérodiade (composed in 1881) by Milliet, Grémont and Massenet. Stéphane Mallarmé applied the theme of Salome to his poem "Hérodiade" (1867), in which he describes her as a cold, cruel beauty who takes a perverse narcissistic delight in her virginity before her encounter with the Baptist. She was likewise the occasion for one of the three tales entitled "Hérodias" appearing in Gustave Flaubert's Trois Contes (Three Tales) of 1877. Gustave Moreau's several depictions of Salome, such as The Apparition (Fig. 50) of 1876, provided the catalyst for Joris-Karl Huysmans' portrait of the perfect Decadent female in À Rebours (Against Nature) of 1884. Here, Des Esseintes, the male protagonist, takes a perverse, masochistic pleasure and delight in her type of lethal beauty, as the narrator of the story describes:

... Des Esseintes saw realized at long last the weird and superhuman Salome of his dreams. Here she was no longer just the dancing-girl who extorts a cry of lust and lechery from an old man by the lascivious movements of her loins; who saps the morale and breaks the will of a king with the heaving of her breasts, the twitching of her belly, the quivering of her thighs. She had become, as it were, the symbolic incarnation of undying Lust, the Goddess of immortal Hysteria, the accursed Beauty exalted above all other beauties by the catalepsy that hardens her flesh and steels her muscles, the monstrous Beast, indifferent, irresponsible, insensible, poisoning, like the Helen of ancient myth, everything that approaches her, everything that sees her, everything that she touches.

It is clear in Huysmans' description that Salome is a heroine to such a Decadent male.

Oscar Wilde, equally enchanted by such alluring beauty, describes her lethal quality in Salome (written in French in 1891). And while Wilde portrays her as an adolescent girl who possesses an uncontrollable urge to kiss the mouth of the just decapitated head of the Baptist, perhaps the most malevolent visual images of Salome appear in The Dancer's Reward and
Salome, Aubrey Beardsley's illustrations for Wilde's play. Visualizations of Salome as either dancing or holding the Baptist's head also appear in works by Franz von Stuck, Lucien Lévy-Dhurmer, Georges Privat Livemont and Gustav Klimt, among others.

As with his contemporaries and forerunners, Munch presents the theme of Salome in many recurring variants. Often, she represents his own sense of dread and fear of an emasculating and castrating woman. In The Cat (Fig. 19) of 1897, Munch's Salome toys with the artist's head. Munch's variants of this theme include Salome Paraphrase (Fig. 61), Self-Portrait/Salome Paraphrase (Fig. 62), and Head of a Man below a Woman's Breast (Fig. 63), all of 1898. Munch disguises the motif in his lithograph Violin Concert (Fig. 43) of 1903, and he shows his own head slightly beneath that of his executioner in Salome (Fig. 53) of 1903. Munch even parodies the theme in Spirits (Fig. 31) and Salome II (Fig. 33), both of 1905. In fact, Munch's autobiographical writings concerning his unsuccessful relationships with women include his sense of suffering and helplessness in the face of such a woman.

The Fatal Kiss

The fatal kiss as theme was the occasion for many works of art by Symbolist artists. There is the fatal kiss of the Sphinx evident in Franz von Stuck's The Kiss of the Sphinx of c. 1895; the kiss of Salome in Lucien Lévy-Dhurmer's Salome Embracing the Severed Head of John the Baptist of 1896; and the kiss of death in Georges Privat Livemont's Salome c. 1900-10. Incorporated into the Salome motif, the fatal kiss is the perfect example of woman portrayed as a necrophiliac who delights in
devouring her dead victim. Oscar Wilde addressed the theme in Salome
(written in French in 1891) wherein the step-daughter of Herod is obsessed
with the idea of kissing the mouth of the Baptist. She delights in having
finally done so in the last scene:

Ah! I have kissed thy mouth, Jokanaan, I have kissed thy mouth.
There was a bitter taste on my lips. Was it the taste of blood? . . . Nay; but perchance it was the taste of love. . . . They say
that love hath a bitter taste. . . . But what matter? what matter?
I have kissed thy mouth. 98

Wilde's Salome is, in fact, a thirsty vampire, an all-devouring femme
fatale. This idea is inherent in every word she utters.

The fatal kiss of the vampire, i.e., the all-devouring female, is the
subject of Baudelaire's poem "Vampire" as well: "Though one of us should be
the tool / To save thee from thy wretched fate, / Thy kisses would
resuscitate / The body of thy vampire, fool."99

The woman who drains man of his life's blood while she grows strong
from it became an obsessive concern of the Decadents and Symbolists.
Viennese illustrator and poet Ernst Stöhr writes of the vampire's kiss in
Ver Sacrum (1899):

Why do you entice me to sweet lust
With your red, dark mouth?
I sink onto your hot breast
Ah! Kiss me that I may get well!
How your mouth burns as in hot fever
And blazes in wild fire!
My poor life is the price, 100
You drink my heart's blood.

The vampire motif and the fatal kiss were equally close to Munch's
ideological feelings about love: "I have experienced the passion that can
move mountains and transform people--the passion that tears at the heart
and drinks one's blood."101 It was in fact Fru Heiberg who stole his first
kiss and took from him what he called "the perfume of life." It was she who was the occasion for The Kiss (Figs. 4 and 5) of 1892. Sucking from him his life's blood, she also was the occasion for his Vampire (Fig. 7) of 1893. And though the subject of the latter work is a woman kissing a man on the back of his neck, it is secondary to the real message Munch wished to convey: fear, helplessness and victimization. He portrays a virtual death-struggle with a bloodsucking vampire who, with her kisses, drains the artist. Such visions of death at the hand of a woman are even more evident in The Girl and Death (Fig. 64) of 1894, in which a woman embraces and kisses a corpse; in fact, it is she who has devoured and reduced man to a figure of death with her fatal kisses.

Images of Love and Death

Another preoccupation of the Symbolists and Decadents was their propensity to equate the theme of love and sex with decay and death. Poets wrote of this subject and artists depicted it in their works. Its immediate origins may be traced to the Gothic tales of Edgar Allen Poe and to Dante Gabriel Rossetti's haunting portrayals of Elizabeth Siddal, who died of an overdose of laudanum in 1862. A prefiguration of the theme of love and death may also be found in Rossetti's "The Blessed Damozel" written in 1847. The poetry of Baudelaire includes this dual theme which became an obsession, as did his passion for the works of Poe. Perhaps symptomatic of their own guilt which led them to believe that the consequence of original sin and of lust was punishment beyond death, their fundamental dread of women and sex seems to have stemmed from the premise
that somehow a woman would return from the grave to avenge her death by claiming and destroying man in her deadly embrace.

In "A Carrion" Baudelaire remembers how he and his love came across a rotting female corpse laying along the roadside one summer's day. In his graphic depiction of the corpse, the poet concentrates his attentions on the putrefying sexual organs and the maggots swarming over the woman's body which seems to breathe. He then turns to his lover and says:

And even you will come to this foul shame,
This ultimate infection,
Star of my eyes, my being's inner flame,
My angel and my passion!

This look into the future of what will be, this disgust with love and sex, was brought about by an overwhelming preoccupation among Symbolists and Decadents with decay and death. In Baudelaire's "The Metamorphoses of a Vampire," lovers are intertwined in a sexual embrace. Suddenly, the woman of the poet's dreams is transformed into a nightmarish vampire:

When she had sucked the marrow from every bone,
I turned to her as languid as a stone
To give her one last kiss . . . and saw her thus:
A slimy rotten wineskin, full of pus!

In Algernon Charles Swinburne's poem "Hermaphroditus" the poet writes:

Love made himself of flesh that perisheth
A pleasure-house for all the loves to kin;
But on the one side sat a man like death,
And on the other a woman sat like sin.
So with veiled eyes and sobs between his breath
Love turned himself and would not enter in . . .

In Huysmans' *Against Nature*, the Decadent hero, Des Esseintes, is tending his "unnatural" garden. Suddenly, a woman appears from the ground, ashen-faced and naked, a flower, a virus. In his fascination with the woman's eyes, Des Esseintes gives in to her. Then, as quickly, he attempts to hold
himself back from the horrid creature. Caught in a death-struggle with this vine-like vegetation, Des Esseintes continues his battle:

He made a superhuman effort to free himself from her embrace, but with an irresistible movement she clutched him and held him, and pale with horror, he saw the savage Nidularium blossoming between her uplifted thighs, with its swordblades gaping open to expose the bloody depths.

His body almost touched the hideous flesh-wound of this plant, he felt life ebbing away from him - and awoke with a start, choking, frozen, crazy with fear.

'Thank God,' he sobbed, 'it was only a dream.'

Visual equivalents of such nightmares appear in Félicien Rops' "Sataniques" series of 1883, such as The Sacrifice in which skeletal cupids hover over a woman coupling with death on an altar. Jan Toorop's drawing Fatalism of c. 1890 depicts women as reigning queens of death. In Ferdinand Hodler's The Night of 1890, the lovers' embrace in the foreground is juxtaposed with death taking a terror-stricken man. Jean Delville's Trésor de Satan includes the devil presiding over his oceanic kingdom of coupling faithful adherents. Max Klinger uses the theme of love and death in Death of the Lovers, and "Death: I am the one who will make a serious woman of you; come, let us embrace" is the title of an 1896 illustration by Odilon Redon for Gustave Flaubert's The Temptation of St. Anthony. This union of love and death is also the subject of Alfred Kubin's drawing The Bride of Death of c. 1900, as well as Gustav Klimt's painting Death and Life of 1908-11. Such eroticization of death may be seen in many of Munch's works.

Among works using this theme, Munch's drypoint The Girl and Death (Fig. 64) of 1894 depicts a woman embracing a skeleton, signifying that she has drained all life from a man. Munch's etching and aquatint Dead Lovers (Fig. 65) of 1901 portrays two nude figures in bed. A pool of blood drips
onto the floor. After a vampirish encounter, both lovers have sealed their fate. Munch's lithograph The Murderess (Fig. 34) of 1904-05 and his painting The Death of Marat (Fig. 39) of 1907 also bring sexual love and brutal death together as a triumph of the fatal woman over her male partner.\textsuperscript{119}

The Sirens

Another deadly group of women who captured the imagination of the Symbolist and Decadent poets and artists were the Sirens, taken from Homer's account of these strange beauties who live under the sea luring sailors to their deaths (The Odyssey, Book XII). Their counterpart in Teutonic myth is the Lorelei, a water spirit whose singing also lures men to their watery graves. In William Morris' poem "The Sirens," from The Life and Death of Jason (1867), the Sirens seem benevolent creatures who are nonetheless deadly.\textsuperscript{120}

Arthur Symons, on the other hand, takes a different view of these water spirits in his poem "Song of the Sirens" from The Fool of the World (1906):

Our breasts are cold, salt are our kisses,
Your blood shall whiten in our sea-blisses;
A man's desire is a flame of fire,
But chill as water is our desire,
A drowning man's despairing chin
With a little kissing noise;
And like the water's voice our voice.\textsuperscript{121}

Symons continues:

We are the last desires; we have waited,
Till, by all things mortal sated,
And by dreams deceived, the scorn
Of every foolish virgin morn,
You, awakening at last,
Drunken, beggared of the past,
In the last lust of despair
Tangle your souls into our hair.\textsuperscript{121a}
Unlike in Morris' poem, the beckoning call of the Sirens in Symons' work is mournful in tone, a warning to sailors of their deadliness rather than songs of enticement and allure. It is the revenge of the fatal woman which resounds in this work and which is portrayed in much of the literature and art of the fin de siècle.

Visualizations of such fatal women range from Arnold Böcklin's *Calm Sea* of 1887 to Gustav Klimt's *Moving Waters* of 1898. Such creatures beckon toward the viewer to share the deadly fate of sailors who may be caught among rocks or the tails of sirens, or who simply drown in a sea of bubbles. In *Moving Waters* (Fig. 66), the male victim's eyes bulge and his mouth gapes as he is stricken with death. Such an expression of horror recalls the face of the shrieking figure in Munch's *The Scream* (Fig. 8) of 1893. Like Klimt, Munch conveys the same sense of man's mistrust of woman who is synonymous with nature.

In spite of such a fate, the Symbolists and Decadents longed to be one with a Siren. In Baudelaire's "Man and the Sea," for example, the poet writes of being an "unfettered man" who cherishes the sea, which is a metaphoric mirror of the mind. In his union with the sea he "becomes a part of a greater, more savage and less tameable moan." As with Munch's *The Scream*, the poet becomes one with nature which is "without pity or remorse" and there is about it the "sheer love of the slaughter and of death."

Like the Symbolists and the Decadents, Munch recreates Homer's legend of the Sirens, as well as the myth of the Lorelei, in his lithograph *Man and Woman in Water* (Lovers in Waves) (Fig. 67) of 1896. Heads of a man and a woman float on the water's surface, and the mythic Sirens and Lorelei are
embodied in this one woman who appears at one with the sea. Like a swirling vortex, her hair becomes the waves, and her expression is one of serene calmness. In contrast, the man is trapped by her wavy hair. With upturned eyes looking toward her closed eyes, he appears to beg for his life while she remains oblivious to him. At any moment, he will be drawn into her watery realm of primordial terror. Evoking such a fate in his notes, Munch writes: "Moonlight glides over your face, which is full of the earth's pain and beauty ... like a corpse we glide out on to a vast sea." As in Lovers in Waves, Munch conjures a unity with a fatal siren by using the word "corpse" to imply death, both his and hers.

Hair as the Fatal Woman's Snare

A fatal woman's snaring hair was one of the most popular motifs of the Symbolists and Decadents, almost to the point of pathological obsession. Representative of one of her most sensual attributes, the beauty and erotic power of hair became fetishistic. Hair threads and meanders like a serpent throughout such literature.

A case in point is an excerpt from Baudelaire's poem "Her Hair," from Les Fleurs du Mal, in which the poet becomes drunk from smelling the musky fragrance of a fatal woman's hair and is swept away by its flowing currents:

I'll plunge my head, enamoured of its pleasure,
In this black ocean where the other hides;
My subtle spirit then will know a measure
Of fertile idleness and fragrant leisure,
Lulled by the infinite rhythm of its tides! 127

Hair is an allurement capturing the very soul of the poet. In fact, the mythology surrounding a woman's hair became so significant to the
Symbolists and Decadents that, according to Carol Ravenal: "It was believed that it could extend woman's power through the air in electric currents to enslave man." Such enslavement is exemplified in an excerpt from Maurice Maeterlinck's _Pelléas et Mélisande_ of 1892:

Oh! oh! What is this? . . . Your hair, your hair is falling down towards me! . . . All your hair, Mélisande, all your hair has fallen from the tower! I have it in my hands, I have it in my mouth . . . I have it in my arms, I put it round my neck . . . I'll open my hands no more tonight.

Man becomes helplessly submissive to powers that can lock him in such a deadly embrace. An excerpt from Arthur Symons' poem "For a Picture of Rossetti," from _The Fool of the World_ of 1906, describes another such snaring fate:

In her hair have souls been caught; Here are snared the strength of thought, Pride of craft, Her desire has come to nought.

The fatal snare of a woman's hair also is seen throughout Symbolist and Decadent visual works.

Among others, Jan Toorop depicts a fatal woman's hair as whirling with boundless energy. Such linear arabesques of hair are visualized in his _The Three Brides, The Song of Time, and Fate_, all of 1893, as well as his _The Sphinx_ of 1892-97. Likewise, in Alphonse Mucha's posters of Sarah Bernhardt such stylized renditions of hair abound. But of all the artistic works emerging with Decadent and Symbolist sensibilities during the 1890s, it is Edvard Munch's pictures that most often incorporate this motif.

Snaring hair of a fatal woman, to signify a satanic power of alluring and entrapping man, is predominant in Munch's _Man's Head in Woman's Hair_ (Fig. 68) of 1898, and _Self-Portrait/Salome Paraphrase_ (Fig. 62) also of
The head of each man is totally engulfed in the woman's hair. In Madonna (Fig. 47) of 1903, whorls of hair surround the fatal woman's head like a tempest at sea. In Sin (Fig. 28) of 1901, the fatal woman's red hair dominates the painting, and it falls in large rope-like or snake-like configurations about her body. Separation (Fig. 69) and Jealousy II (Fig. 70), both of 1896, depict a fatal woman's hair finding its way into the very heart of a man. Perhaps Munch's most forceful image of the ensnaring powers of woman's hair is found in Vampire (Fig. 7) of 1893, in which a fatal woman's hair falls down round the man's whole body. August Strindberg, who was compelled to retitle the work Red Hair in 1896, describes the hair as a "Shower of gold falling on a despairing figure," and "golden ropes binding him to earth and to suffering." According to the playwright, the hair is a virtual "Rain of blood falling in torrents over the madman."

Such was the deadly allure of a woman's hair and, in fact, of woman herself in the ideological vocabulary of Munch in unison with artists and writers of Decadent and Symbolist persuasion.
III. NOTES


3 Ibid.


10 Brion (1967), pp. 7-11.


17 Ibid., pp. 237-254.

18 Ibid., passim.


21 Praz (1951); and Jullian (1971), passim.


23 Ibid., p. 72.

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid., p. 73.

26 Ibid.


28 Ibid., pp. 28-29. [Brackets mine]. Also, see ibid., note 17, p. 30.

29 Lucie-Smith (1972), p. 43.


33 See Praz (1951), who enumerates on a large number of these fatal women archetypes. Also see Jullian (1971), who discusses the fatal woman in late nineteenth century art.


37 For a discussion of Sâr Pêladan's Le Vice Suprême (1884), see Wallace (1960), pp. 221-224.

38 Symons (1974), pp. 77-78.

39 Ibid., p. 78.


42 Joris-Karl Huysmans on Rops, in Le Plume (1896), as cited in Delevoy (1982), p. 60.


Ibid., pp. 96-97 and 105.


Nordau (1895), as cited in Miiner (1971), p. 32.


See Jullian (1971), plate 59.


Munch, Manuscript T2748b, Munch Museum Oslo, as cited in Stang (1979), p. 22. Hereafter Munch Manuscript cited as Munch, MS. or MSS.


For a discussion of "Don Juan in Hell," see p. 198.


67 See Lucie-Smith (1972), fig. 47.

68 Ibid., p. 61.

69 Ibid., fig. 173.

70 Ibid., fig. 120.


72 Baudelaire, "You'd Take to Bed the Whole World," (1963), p. 34.


74 Baudelaire, "To a Madonna," (1963), pp. 73-74.

75 Munch, undated note, written on the back of a letter with the designation L'art Cosmopolite, Paris, Munch Museum Archives, Oslo, as cited in Stang (1979), p. 52.


77 Ibid.


79 Ibid.

80 See p. 89.


82 Edvard Munch, exhibition catalogue (Houston: University of Houston, 1976), p. 34.

83 For a discussion and an excerpt from Mallarme's "Herodiade," see Engelberg (1967), pp. 165-68.

84 See ibid., p. 166.
85 Ibid.

86 Huysmans (1959), pp. 65-66. Although the passage has been previously cited, it is repeated in the text for emphasis.


88 Ibid., pp. 427-429.

89 For The Dancer's Reward, see Delevoy (1982), p. 135. For Salome, see Lucie-Smith (1972), fig. 112.

90 For Franz von Stuck's Salome (1896), see Delevoy (1982), p. 133. For Lucien Lévy-Dhurmer's Salome Embracing the Severed Head of John the Baptist (1896), see ibid., p. 134. For Georges Privat Livemont's Salome c. 1900, see The Earthly Chimera (1981), plate 6.

91 See pp. 102-104.

92 For a discussion of these works see pp. 325-326.

93 See pp. 144-147.

94 See pp. 154-156.

95 See pp. 128-129.

96 For example, see Munch's writings about Tulla Larsen as a destructive force in his life, pp. 111-122.

97 For an illustration of von Franz's The Kiss of the Sphinx, see Lucie-Smith (1972), fig. 135. For an illustration of Lévy-Dhurmer's Salome Embracing the Severed Head of John the Baptist, see Delevoy, p. 134. For an Illustration of Livemont's Salome, see The Earthly Chimera (1981), plate 6.


For a discussion on Death and the Maiden/The Girl and Death, see pp. 301-302.

For a discussion of Poe's tales as a catalyst for other Symbolist and Decadent writers, see Hays (1964), pp. 195-199. For the Rossetti-Siddal relationship and Rossetti's importance to the Symbolist/Decadent Movements, see Delevoy (1982), pp. 32-34.


Ibid., p. 39.


For illustration, see Delevoy (1982), fig. 3, p. 60.

For illustration, see Jullian (1971), fig. 7.

For illustration, see Lucie-Smith (1972), fig. 140.

For illustration, see Jullian (1971), fig. 58.

For illustration, see ibid., fig. 50.

For illustration, see Delevoy (1982), p. 117.

For illustration, see ibid., p. 138.


For a discussion of the murderess motif see pp. 129-133.


Ibid., pp. 63-64.
For an illustration of Böcklin’s Calm Sea, see Lucie-Smith (1972), fig. 131. For an illustration of Klimt’s Moving Waters, see fig. 66, below.

For a discussion on The Scream see pp. 50-51.

Ibid., p. 22.


Excerpt from Baudelaire’s "Her Hair," (1963), p. 32.


For an illustration of Toorop’s The Three Brides, see Delevoy (1982), p. 121. For an illustration of Toorop’s The Song of Time, see ibid., p. 153. For an illustration of Toorop’s Fate, see ibid., p. 113. For an illustration of Toorop’s The Sphinx, see Jullian (1971), fig. 38.

For an example of Mucha’s stylized rendition of hair as in La Samaritaine (1897), see Jan Thompson, "The Role of Woman in the Iconography of Art Nouveau," Art Journal 31 (Winter 1971-71): fig. 13.

For a discussion of these works, see pp. 325-326.

For a discussion of Separation, see pp. 327-328. For a discussion of Jealousy II, see pp. 319-320.


Ibid.
CHAPTER: IV
THE CHRISTIANIA BOHÈME AND THE FERKEL CIRCLE

Section I: The Christiania Bohème

Outside the periphery of the Symbolist and Decadent Movements, a group of radical anarchists known as the Christiania Bohème began to form in the early 1880s. They advocated free love and complete sexual freedom for all women against the strict moral codes of Christiania, now called Oslo. As will become evident, Munch's psycho-sexual beliefs concerning women as fatal were due in large part to this group which he joined in 1884. He became a close friend to a number of its affiliates and remained friends with them well beyond the 1880s.

In the 1880s, Christiania was a small provincial town. Slow in developing economically, socially and politically—in part due to Norway's subjugation under Sweden—Christiania's urban population stood at only 135,000 by the middle of the decade. Described as "bleak and cheerless" at this time, Christiania's most colorful avenue and main promenade was Karl Johan Street. Here in close proximity stood the Royal Palace, Royal Frederik University, the green lawns of the Student Park and the newly built Grand Hotel. Here too was situated the Parliament Building, the seat of government from which the citizenry of Norway's capital was ruled by a "narrow-minded gentility."

Largely a Protestant, middle class community, the inhabitants were basically conservative in their daily lives, reactionary in their politics and warily suspicious of new ideas. Lacking in continental sophistication,
they also vehemently clung to their Christian beliefs, puritanical morals and old legal codes. In their beliefs they were supported by three conservative newspapers, the Aftenposten, Morgenbladet and Dagen, all staunch preservers of the status quo. 5

Thus, far from the mainstream of modern society, contemporary thought and the revolutionary zeal which was rapidly bringing other European cities to the threshold of the twentieth century, it was not until the emergence of Christiania's avant-garde--as a conscious raising force--that the winds of change began to turn this dreary, complacent community into a virtual hotbed of controversy. 6

Against this conservative background arose radicals who called themselves the Christiania Bohème. 7 They were guided by Hans Jaeger--who was the self-appointed and acknowledged leader of the group and who earned his living as a parliamentary clerk. This loosely organized band of social philosophers, journalists, playwrights, novelists and artists counted among its more illustrious and controversial members such men as Fritz Thaulow and Christian Krohg, two of Norway's leading naturalist painters; the painter and social activist, Karl Jensen-Hjell; novelists Knut Hamsun and Arne Garborg; playwright Gunnar Heiberg; journalist Jappe Nilssen; and the poets, Sigurd Bødtker, Vilhelm Krag and Sigbjørn Obstfelder. All of these people were close friends and constant companions of Edvard Munch who joined the group in 1884.

Mainly a literary and social movement, this fraternity of revolutionaries--some of whom had recently returned from the more progressive cities of Europe where they had acquired new political, social and artistic ideals--now came together to discuss such diversified topics as
Determinism, Anarchism, Socialism, Atheism, Naturalism and Impressionism.

Although their main headquarters was situated in the restaurant of Christiania's Grand Hotel on Karl Johan Street, they also congregated in various other cafés throughout the city, as well as the artists' studios. They also infiltrated the Liberal Student Association of the University.

Bound in their revolutionary spirit and anti-bourgeois sentiment, these men strove for complete personal as well as artistic freedom of expression, while the more socially conscious of the group led by Hans Jaeger and Christian Krohg carried out a broader campaign of total social reform.

The social radicals of the Christiania Bohème believed in basic human rights for all members of society. In this they proposed that everyone everywhere had an obligation to express himself in whatever manner he saw fit and a right to determine his own destiny in complete freedom. As an extension of such ideas, the bohemians agitated for the complete overthrow of all existing institutions, traditions, mores and values in order to make way for a more harmonious and equitable society based on love and reason. What began as an idea evolved into something much more provocative. In their insistence on love and reason as a basis for the new society they envisioned, they themselves became active participants in sexual experiments. In this manner they hoped to inform and release the existing society from its puritanical bondage and bring them to a new level of social-sexual awareness. Yet, by pitting themselves against the bourgeoisie and by vehemently dedicating themselves to the concept of free love, the Christiania Bohème came to represent all that conservative society despised and attempted to silence.
For those who espoused progressive ideas, the process toward change was a slow and painful ordeal. The basic argument which seemed to divide the radicals from the reactionaries was precisely the sexual issue. What the radicals clearly recognized as free love the reactionaries viewed as a glaring example of sexual promiscuity. Noting the activities of the counter-culture, the citizens of Christiania, backed by a conservative press and the Justice Department, began a counterattack against these "moral offenders." Censorship was enforced, and dissenters were often punished for their crimes against society. Works which dealt with sex as a subject were confiscated, and the group's poets had to have their works published elsewhere. Artists were severely criticized by the press. The more radical members of the Bohème and their defenders were on occasion arrested, brought to trial, sentenced, jailed and/or fined. Others lost their jobs. Some were driven from Christiania in search of less hostile, more receptive audiences. In provincial Christiania the message was plain: what was tolerable in the more progressive cities of Europe was clearly intolerable in Norway's capital.

A self-taught disciple of Hegel, Kant, and Fichte, whose idealistic philosophies nourished his own views, Hans Jaeger (1854-1910) was also well versed in the theories of Charles Darwin, Karl Marx and Prince Peter Alexeivich Kropotkin, as well as the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche, Emile Zola and his fellow countryman Henrik Ibsen.

In appreciation of Ibsen and his efforts to define the social ills which plagued society, Jaeger came to resemble the more socially defiant characters in Ibsen's dramas. Like them, Jaeger pitted himself against a confining social system which he found particularly intolerable to his
sense of personal freedom and individuality. Yet, unlike Ibsen, who limited his beliefs under the thin veil of drama and the guise of fictitious characters, Jaeger represented a real menace to society. A seasoned practitioner in anti-social behavior, Jaeger thus stood as a living example to his followers whom he persuaded to join him in defying society. Furthermore, Jaeger not only practiced what he preached, he also came to write about his own life in order to call attention to himself and his radical ideas.

What particularly inflamed the citizenry of Christiania was Jaeger's two-volume, semi-autobiographical novel, *Fra Christiania Bohemen*, 1885. The book, from which the group derived its name, addresses such real but forbidden subjects as sexual struggle, mental anguish, sickness and death; it was soon deemed too true to life and therefore obscene and shockingly pornographic.¹⁵

Aware that his work might cause a public scandal, Jaeger prefaced the book in an effort to make his intentions clear to his reading public:

I know that this book is a monster of a book - literary as well as social. But unfortunately, it had to be that in both respects. Literary, because I, without fundamental literary talents, at the age of thirty years saw myself obliged to resolve a problem, which I had expected over the period of a decade to be solved by another--the task, that is, to introduce a modern Norwegian novel literature.

Socially, because this problem couldn't be solved in any but a naturalistic way, and because a truly naturalistic work both in form and content must necessarily clash terrifically with what is seen at this time to be good social form.

... .

Naturalism is--in short--deterministic writing.¹⁶

"A monster of a book" and against "good social form" well describe Jaeger's novel in which he attempts to lay bare, with sexual honesty, life as it is
lived in the Christiania Bohème. The socially defiant characters in this novel spend their time in dingy cafés discussing ways in which to solve the social-sexual problems of society, as well as their own. They envision a new, free society based on love and reason where both men and women can live in an atmosphere of total sexual and artistic freedom.

Excerpts from Jaeger's novel demonstrate what the citizens of Norway's capital deemed so shockingly defiant of good moral behavior. The story contains a confession by the narrator: "I was ill." He then proceeds to describe a childhood illness which nearly took his life. Continuing in this pessimistic vein, the narrator describes also his lonely, defeated life as well as that of his young and troubled friend Jarmann. In the hope of changing these conditions, the narrator suggests ways in which to realize a better way of life. This hope includes ridding society of its existing Christian beliefs and moral teachings which, according to Jaeger, inhibit the natural sexual drive and promote all forms of human suffering.

Strolling along the street one day, the protagonist takes note of all the pretty, young, pubescent girls and dreams of the beautiful women they will become. His comments betray a happy, wholesome yearning as he openly admires that which has attracted his eye:

Hey! Haven't you noticed the small girls on Karl johan, those pretty young girls who walk around in flocks and in each other's company and giggle and amuse themselves, God knows over what. And most people pay no attention to them - 'They're just little girls, you know!' - Suddenly, one fine day one of them grows up! No one noticed the change coming about, but now everyone notices it: the breasts have filled out and the hips have become more padded; the figure has taken on that grace peculiar to a virgin at that age. And she no longer walks in the company of one other girl. And she walks about with those wondering, newly awakened eyes and seems to
sniff at the scene of existence to find out what it is that now has revealed itself to her. She becomes the epitome of receptivity!

As the story continues, the protagonist is likewise obsessed by similar visions. This time such visions take the form of an erotic hallucination which pleases him but torments him as well:

Oh, this sensuality, this absorbing sensuality! When he took up a book, and began to read, he could not think of what he was reading because of the figures of naked women, capering between the lines till he forgot the book and the lines, seeing nothing but women.

First attracted to and then obsessed by the female persona, the males of the Bohème are also haunted by a terrible vexation: "When it comes, [love] descends on us like a bird of prey on its victim. We do not have control of it!" It is just such uncontrollable sexual urges, which society looks down upon, that destroy Jarmann.

Scorned by society whose faces "flowed together in front of him into a single, large, revolting, hovering smile," driven by the demons of desire and unable to sustain a meaningful sexual relationship with a woman, young Jarmann finally takes his own life in a moment of desperation.

Devastated by this turn of events, the narrator makes the following comments concerning the tragedy of his friend's senseless and untimely death:

And so, the music ended. The crowd dispersed and slowly, in groups or alone, the people work their way up and over the broad, slippery hill towards the morgue. Then, they have all vanished and Jarmann lies alone again, there in the desolate cemetery, and rots under his cover of flowers.

The narrator is also a victim of love. He reads philosophy, reflects on the unlived life, and resigns himself to the futility of it all. Equally vexed by life and love, he too surmises that he could be no more than a mere spectator in a new society of free love because, as he states, the
seeds of life had long since dried up within him. With this he concludes: "... death does not return what it has once gripped with its skeleton hand... I could not live any more."25

Based on personal experience and on the experiences of others in this artistic milieu which consisted in Sigbjørn Obstfelder's words of "vast shadows of misery, impotence and shabbiness - spirits straining for fulfillment, striving in vain to be great, complete, unique,"26 such a tale of erotic desire, sexual strife and violent suicide, as presented in Jaeger's novel, was more than any "decent" citizen could bear. And all this in a society where two years previous to Jaeger's book an incident occurred at the opening of the Christiania Museum of Sculpture whereby a professor of art history was obligated to swear publicly--with hand on Bible--that the art of the nude was not a shameful display but an object to be admired, contemplated and venerated for its beauty and purity.27

For contributing to the moral decay of the society at large, i.e., for his sexual candor, all existing copies of Jaeger's book were confiscated one hour after its release, and its author was arrested.28

At his trial, Jaeger was given an opportunity to defend himself and that which he had written. The speech Jaeger presented before the Supreme Court in 1886 reads as follows:

It is written with steaming human blood; the characters who come to meet you in their works are alive; alive with the life of reality. Touch them and feel it! They are alive underneath your fingers, they are made of living human flesh; it is the red blood of reality that flows in their veins, put you hand on them anywhere you wish, and feel; the pulse beats of life, vibrates in every muscular fibre underneath the skin; --listen! and you will hear their hearts beat. It is living human beings, the very urge of life that, most honorable Sirs, assails you from these works that live underneath your hands; and every time you have finished one of them, you have lived one human life more than when you began--you have in a few short hours absorbed all the wisdom of
life that another person has paid for with his life. And such a literature is not to be read! --Insanity, most honorable Sirs, it will be read like no literature in the world before it--it has been written in steaming human blood."

The grim determinist Jaeger proposed an acceptance of all naturalistic literature as vital to what he saw as an effort to lay bare the truth of human existence. He was rejected by the Court. So, in spite of his defense, the author of *Fra Christiania Bohemen* was indicted for "blasphemy and violation of modesty and morality." He was sentenced to two months in jail. In addition, Jaeger was subsequently dismissed from his position as parliamentary clerk and expelled from the University where he had been a part-time student of philosophy.

Not to be deterred, Jaeger's novel mysteriously reappeared in Christiania the following year. Once again, its author was punished for violating the law. In 1888, he was sentenced to yet another jail term of five months and ordered to pay a fine of 600 kroner.

According to Carla Lathe, Jaeger had found inspiration for his novel after reading a Danish translation of another equally controversial book published anonymously by Scottish physician, George Drysdale. The work, entitled *The Elements of Social Science; or Sexual and Natural Religion*, examines what the author felt to be three specific and pervasive social evils at that time: poverty, prostitution and celibacy. Taking the latter observation as the basis for his novel, Jaeger had attempted to demonstrate "that young men could become impotent or driven to suicide if they continued to observe Christian and social morals," remarks Lathe. Such was the fate of Jarmann, the young protagonist in Jaeger's story.

Since ignorance in matters of sex resulted in untold suffering, Jaeger sought to expose and therefore rid society of what he considered to be
"... the three gargantuan idols which support the old society and protect its spiritual vacuity: Christianity, morality and the old legal codes." Tracing man's suffering to Christian morality and the system which supported it, Jaeger then proposed a rejection of such evil systems in order to prepare for a new society based on love and reason. In this manner Jaeger hoped to free imprisoned minds and prevent such senseless human tragedies, as the death of Jarmann, from recurring.

Basing his novel on its sociological usefulness, Jaeger believed that individuals such as Jarmann were not so much the victims of love as they were the unassuming victims of an oppressive social system whose laws supressed basic human sexual drives. It was this kind of hypocrisy Jaeger found unreasonable. Thus, it was Jaeger's contention that society's sexual problems would cease to exist in an open, free society where both sexes were treated equally and allowed complete sexual expression.

Like Jaeger, Christian Krohg was also a staunch social activist. To this end he took up the cause of the prostitute whose plight he felt to be the result of an inequitable and oppressive social system.

In their complacency, the middle class viewed prostitution as a blight upon society and deemed the prostitute an object of great contempt. Conversely, they also considered the institution of prostitution, evil as it was, a necessity. After all, the prostitute was there to serve the sexual appetites of middle class males at will. She was also there to keep their own women (who supposedly abhorred sex) pure and virtuous. In Krohg's opinion such self-serving and manipulative situations based on economic, political, social and sexual inequality represented the epitome of moral hypocrisy and the apogee of social-sexual ignorance. In a society
where it was men who held the reigns of power, other polemical issues were ignored by them as well. The plight of the prostitute was in fact the potential fate of any economically dependent and socially powerless woman who lived outside the protective custody of her male subjugators such as her father, brother or husband. Such, then, was the dilemma of countless economically and socially destitute working class women from whose ranks the prostitutes of Christiania were usually drafted. Thus, for Krohg, the prostitute was not a contemptible creature, but a victim of social, economical, political and sexual inequality. It was this issue that Krohg addressed and aimed to expose.

The plight of one such working class girl became Krohg's main concern and the subject of his controversial novel Albertine (1886). Supposedly based on a true account, as related to him by one of his models, the book concerns the life of a young, innocent seamstress (Albertine) whose life comes under the direct control of corrupt police officials. After her seduction by one such unscrupulous officer of the law, she is subsequently registered as a public prostitute. Driven by her seducer into a life of prostitution, Albertine is forced to submit herself to a demeaning physical examination which takes place in the police doctor's office. Stripped of all pride and dignity, Albertine is transformed into a brazen whore by the end of the story.

Like Jaeger before him, Krohg had meant his book to be instructive. But on the day of publication, the work was suppressed and confiscated, and its author arrested and brought to trial. At his trial, according to Kirk Varnedoe, the Justice Department cited three descriptive accounts in Krohg's book that were particularly offensive:
... the initial seduction of Albertine by a policeman, which damaged her virtuous modesty; her encounter with the police doctor, which destroyed her feminine dignity; and the last chapter, which depicted her, bereft of shame, totally debased, transformed into a hardened whore.

As Krohg told the court in his defense, those exact points which the judges had found so objectionable were the very same points he had found most moving and which he felt an obligation to communicate to his reading public. It is not Albertine who is evil, Krohg argued, but the corrupt police department whose duty it is to protect and defend its citizens, not to vanquish them. In addition, Krohg thought, because it is the police who cast Albertine into her present role, it is they who should be held accountable. This was precisely the issue the court wished to silence, fearing the vengeance of the working class. Subsequently, Krohg was found guilty of obscenity and ordered to pay a fine. Yet, Krohg would not be silenced. If the court could not accept his book, he reasoned, then he would use another weapon in order to make his point clear.

Turning from the power of the pen to that of the brush, Krohg decided to make public his now famous painting Albertine in the Police Doctor's Waiting Room (Fig. 71) of 1887. On the day after his court appearance the work was exhibited in a large hall in the working class district. Thousands came to view this important showing but, under pressure from the courts and the community at large, the newspapers neither mentioned this momentous occasion nor reviewed the work.

The painting depicts the young, downtrodden Albertine in the station about to be escorted into the doctor's office by a young police officer. Like the other prostitutes in the room awaiting their turn to see the doctor, Albertine will soon undergo a mandatory physical examination. As
in the book, Kirk Varnedoe remarks, Krohg's painting shows us not one scene, but an expanded narrative depicting the three stages of Albertine's fall: 1) Albertine is led into the police doctor's office, perhaps by her seducer who glares at her shamelessly. 2) Albertine is about to undergo the examination itself. 3) Albertine is to become a brazen whore as revealed in the foreground figure who stares provocatively, in fact defiantly, at the spectator. 47

Such realistic subject matter, clearly in defiance of Krohg's court order, was tolerated. Yet, by ignoring its showing, the conservative element of society attempted to de-emphasize the painting as a significant work of art and, more importantly, as a relevant social statement as well.

Though abhorred by society and incriminated by the Justice Department, Jaeger and Krohg continued their ruthless war against their oppressors. To further their counterattack, the two rebels co-founded and co-edited a periodical which they called Impressionisten. In this radical forum for the avant-garde Krohg and Jaeger published their nine bohemian commandments. Partly designed to baffle and further inflame an already irate community, and partly in answer to the conservative press, they proposed the following laws:

1. Thou shalt write thine autobiography.
2. Thou shalt sever thy family ties. (Family roots.)
3. Thou shalt treat thy parents as badly as possible.
4. Thou shalt never "hit" thine neighbor for less than five Kroner.
5. Thou shalt hate and despise all peasants such as Bj. Bj. (Björnstjerne Bjørnson)
6. Thou shalt never wear celluloid cuffs.
7. Thou shalt never refrain from making scandalous scenes in the Christiania Theatre.
8. Thou shalt never repent.
9. Thou shalt take thine own life. 48
According to Roy Boe, several of these commandments proposed by Jaeger and Krohg represented their own personal indictment of the Norwegian patriarchy which they found to be increasingly intolerable. In such a society it was woman who was left voiceless while the man as head of the household had complete control over the lives of his wife and daughters. Making arbitrary laws for them to follow, a man was free to break those same laws he so rigidly enforced on others. Jaeger and Krohg thought such laws to be totally unjust and against reason. Until Bohemianism prevailed, such injustices against women would continue.

In their staunch criticism of the patriarchy, Jaeger and Krohg came to represent the backbone of women's emancipation in Christiania. Vehemently opposed to all forms of female subordination, they persisted to seek ways in which to expose male supremacy as a lie, the pedestal on which the virtuous woman was placed as a cage, and the concept of the "despicable" prostitute as a myth. Thus, while Krohg continued to work for an end to public prostitution, Jaeger became the high priest of free love.

Within the existing system women fell under the jurisdiction of their male subjugators: daughters to their fathers, wives to their husbands and prostitutes to the local police department. In accordance with his beliefs, Jaeger viewed such situations as exploitative, spiritually debilitating, counterproductive to human development, and at variance with an individual's freedom of expression. He felt that such conditions must be eradicated.

Scornful of puritanical chastity for the single woman as well as the sexual exclusiveness of the husband-wife relationship, Jaeger called upon
the bohemians to seduce the daughters of the middle class and demanded an end to all traditional marriages. To this end Jaeger foresaw:

An open, free life together for open, free men and women knowing no laws for the organization of society other than freedom and love and happiness on earth; a society in which each single life is able to develop in all its individuality like a fruit tree planted in fertile soil. Oh, what people they would be! God-like people! contrasting to the miserable creatures that now creep around on the earth's surface, hiding themselves, each separate and alone, in the dark cellular holes of decrepit freedom-suffocating institutions and traditions, frightened of the strong, stimulating daylight of the open, free society.

Under Jaeger's spell and promise of total sexual freedom, many free-spirited, adventuresome young women (single and married alike) left their homes to become frequent visitors and active participants in Jaeger's free love society. Here, within the confines of the Bohème, many women found an oasis: a place in which to express themselves openly, directly and honestly without fear of transgression. Here, too, in the Bohème, both men and women were allowed to determine the limits and/or extremes of their own sexuality which had been otherwise denied to them by the existing social structure.

Once people were freed from all existing issues of law and the dictates of morality, Jaeger hoped then to establish a new order of men and women and a society of total love. As Reinhold Heller remarks:

... Jaeger believed that in his new society women and men should love without the need for life-long faithfulness, freely separating once love ceased, and that in this manner more and more people would come to truly love one another, thereby ultimately creating a society of total love.

Where sexual relationships between men and women were allowed to develop and dissolve at will, the free love system devised by Jaeger consisted of an unending and often complicated series of arrangements between the members of the Bohème. In such an environment--where nothing save love was
sacred--Jaeger's plan was conceived in the spirit of a new religion and conducted in the methods of a scientific experiment. Heller concludes:

The process of sexual love--attraction, seduction, consummation, and separation--became Jaeger's obsessive concern, and he inaugurated several experiments with members of his Kristiania Bohème to permit him to observe scientifically and with detached logic the processes of love among the sexes.57

Of the many women who participated in Jaeger's free love society, such as Milly Thaulow (Munch's "Fru Heiberg"), it was perhaps the painter Oda Lasson Krohg (1860-1935) who was among the most experimentally minded women of the Bohème.58

Divorced from her first husband, Oda then became the wife of Christian Krohg in 1888.59 Yet, her marriage to the now famous social activist did not prevent the free-spirited woman from taking lovers. Of her known liaisons with various affiliates of the Bohème, including affairs with Jappe Nilssen and Gunnar Heiberg, it was Oda's involvement with Jaeger himself which best demonstrates the manner in which his free love system came to simulate the methods of a scientific experiment.

In keeping with the empirical spirit of their triad, Jaeger encouraged Oda and her husband to keep separate diaries in which they were to record their most intimate secrets as related to the threesome affair. Jaeger also came to record his thoughts on the subject in his own journal. In this way Jaeger hoped to trace the processes by which multi-partnered relationships such as theirs began, blossomed and ended. The results of his own findings would later be published in his book Syk Kjaerlihet (Sick Love) in 1893.60

Not only did the Krohgs and Jaeger maintain such diaries, but under their leader's advice other members of the Bohème began to do the same.61
After all, it was their obligation as the vanguard of Jaeger's new society to live as well as to write of what their leader came to define as the modern life. By then publicizing what they had written, Jaeger hoped to educate society at large.

In his article entitled "Our Literature," Jaeger made such intentions clear to his followers:

Youth is modern when it through its own life has lived to obtain the experience that the conditions under which it has grown up have arrested or crippled its development and made it, humanly speaking, into a youth inferior to what it otherwise would have been. A youth who through its own life has lived to obtain this experience, and who therefore desires a change in conditions, who can liberate the coming generations from suffering the same fate--that youth is "modern"... 

But if this will is to become a reality, then it must also become the will of the public, the great public. And how can that happen? Yes, the great public must be forced to live to obtain the same experience that modern youth has lived to obtain--and thus be infused with the same will. And the public can be forced this way through a living, realistic literature, which is compelling with the force of living life... 

And this Naturalistic literature, it must thus contain their own, this modern youth's own real life, lived in the milieu in which it has been really lived. That which this literature has to do is: to publicize the private life of this youth. But how many, even among modern youth, do you think there are, who will agree to thus undressing themselves and standing before the public completely naked? Few, very few--even among modern youth: be sure of that! 

In fulfillment of Jaeger's lengthy challenge, the more daring of the bohemians followed his suggestions to the letter. As a step toward the changes Jaeger sought, the teen-aged poet Vilhelm Krag wrote of his nights spent at a local brothel in Vika (the red-light district of Christiania). 

Sigurd Bødtker, who was briefly engaged to Munch's sister Inger, likewise participated in such endeavors and recorded his experiences with a woman in a series of poems entitled Elskov (Love). In these poems Bødtker first describes his lover in the most erotic of terms. Yet, she fulfills her
animal passions with abandon only after attending church service. Here, one is forced to sense with telling uneasiness the problems and pressures which were beginning to develop in Jaeger's so-called "free love society."

Because Jaeger and many of the other Bohèmes were avowed atheists and found Christian morality to be absurd, offensive, against reason and the cause of all suffering, such poems as the ones Bødtker wrote must have caused a variety of responses from the individual members of the Bohème ranging from outrageous laughter to sanctimonious indignation. In choosing to pit his lover's carnal nature (i.e., her socially unacceptable nature) against her spiritual nature (i.e., her socially desirable nature), both of which he seems to view with suspicion and cynicism, Bødtker not only mocked society's moral hypocrisy but the moral hypocrisy of his lover as well. Furthermore, in examining the dual nature of such a woman, Bødtker had come to divide her into two separate and very distinct female personas, both of which may have caused him untold frustration in life. Seemingly to wallow in his self-righteous criticism of this woman, in order to make his point about the multifaceted morality of society at large, the author of such poems demonstrates, then, the ever growing sense of hopeless despair concerning problems he felt powerless to solve. The fact was that the Bohèmes were beginning to turn against each other.

Consider Men-Folk (1886), Arne Garborg's contribution to the bohemian movement in Christiania. Characteristically, it is about life in the Bohème. In this story the two main characters, the younger Laurits Kruse and the older Georg Jonathan, are worlds apart in their views. Kruse is a student of theology, but he is a despicable person. While attending to his studies, he is also involved with two women. One woman is Dagmar...
Dyring, educated and aristocratic. The other woman is a beautiful maid who is carrying Kruse's child. When Kruse refuses to marry the girl, she loses her job and is thrown out into the street. As mother and child struggle heroically, Kruse returns to Dagmar. Forgetting the plight of his ex-lover, he swears to Dagmar that there is nothing in his past for which he is ashamed. The couple then become engaged. In contrast to Kruse, there is Georg Jonathan. Like Kruse he is also having an illicit affair. Yet refusing to stoop as low as his whore-mongering friend, Jonathan dutifully marries his mistress. 67

No doubt, Garborg intended his novel as a criticism of the Bohèmes whom he felt were wandering through life irresponsibly as well as living in a spiritual vacuum. Clearly, his book demonstrates also what the Bohèmes had become in life: no better than animals whose sole purpose and function was to copulate without further thought, care or commitment. As one character in the story so aptly put it: "We are swine. But what the Devil are we to do?"68

Then, Ola Hansson's novel Sensitiva Amorosa (1887) was published. As co-leader of a radical group in Stockholm, with August Strindberg, Hansson and his book caused quite a stir not only in Stockholm but throughout the United Kingdoms of Sweden and Norway.69 As public wrath rippled like a shock wave from one country to the other, Hansson's work undoubtedly caught the attention of the Bohèmes in Christiania.

In Sensitiva Amorosa, Hansson deals with the subject of pathological eroticism and views his succession of love affairs as nothing more than an endless series of frustrating episodes.70 Having finally given up all attachments to women as senseless and erroneous, the author proclaims:
"... I now have no more than one interest left for me: to study and use sex." Such cynicism and resolve then gives way to a complete disdain of the women who have hurt him. He now views all women with apparent disregard. Yet, in actuality, behind this thinly disguised veneer of arrogant ease lies despair:

For men such as myself, there always comes, sooner or later, a time when one is tired of all real attachments to women. There is, in all such attachments, no matter what else they may be, so much that is banal and painful. I have had more than enough of that, and now I use women at arm's length, in the study of them and of myself, and from this point of view I can reject all the trivial aspects of sexual relationship while using the pure essence without all the distasteful accretions.

Hardly a happy man, Hansson's scientifically matter-of-fact confession reveals what he had become in life: the resigned recipient of broken dreams.

Likewise recklessly indiscriminate in their liaisons with women, the Bohèmes in Christiania became equally careless in preserving the essence of Jaeger's messianic decree to love one another. Thus, groping for the unattainable and then shrinking from their divine responsibilities to reform the world, one by one, the men of the Bohème lost their original drive as social reformers and simply gave up on their youthful idealisms of the past. What the Bohèmes came to realize instead was that they were human beings, hopelessly trapped on earth and not at all invincible to the destructive powers of love as they might have first suspected. Thus, as the decade of the 1880s drew to a close, spiritual deprivation and a belief in the futility of all human relationships, particularly those with women, began to infect the Bohème. Crushed was the dream of a Utopia where god-like men and women reigned supreme governed by no laws save freedom, love and happiness.
And so the "distasteful accretions," of which Hansson writes in his novel, took many forms and became manifest in the Bohème of Christiania as they apparently had for some in the artistic milieu of Stockholm. What followed was nothing short of total disaster. As Ragna Stang remarks:

Personal tragedies, syphilis, suicide, alcoholism and hopelessly entangled relationships with women were the price that the bohemians had to pay in order to practise what they preached. They were completely ostracized by the rest of society, but they found little privacy in their own cramped environment, where everyone knew everything about everybody else.

Under such painful conditions as those Stang describes, Jaeger's free love society had evolved into something quite different from what the Hegelian philosopher and leader of the Bohème had originally intended. Love did not grow and spread as Jaeger had thought, but withered and died. And as the dream of love withered and died, the bohemians' image of women was likewise altered. What often began as mutual attraction and the novelty of the new between a man and a woman was followed by familiarity, familiarity by boredom, boredom by emptiness, emptiness by bitterness and bitterness by a deadly silence in which each individual, separate and alone, had nothing more to say to the other. Conversely, mutual recrimination was the other side of the coin and in this capacity all that was left of the Bohèmes' multi-partnered relationships was "... jealousy, flaunted faithlessness, combative confrontations, increasing insensitivity, anxious arguments, and debilitating despair," remarks Reinhold Heller.

Despair, in fact, of life, love and women, became the Bohèmes' banner. Henceforth Jaeger's utopian dream was transformed into a nightmarish world of black pessimism and pain as described in Knut Hamsun's *Hunger* (1890),
Arne Garborg's *Tired Men* (1891) and the poetry of Vilhelm Krag and Sigbjørn Obstfelder.

In *Hunger*, Hamsun does not depict a world of joy, happiness and reason, nor does he describe god-like men and love divine. Rather, in opposition to Jaeger's vision of what could be, Hamsun presents to the reader the reality of what is. In *Hunger*, Hamsun explores the nightmarish world of an unnamed hero. His sickness both of body and soul is the result of severe starvation. With the pangs of a lacerating hunger literally consuming him, the protagonist is reduced to a subhuman level, in fact to the level of an animal. His days and nights are spent in mental confusion, uncontrollable panic and an overwhelming sense of despair. His life is nothing more than an unending series of loveless battles for survival.\(^7\)

*Hunger*, as metaphor for spiritual deprivation, consuming despair and lovelessness, was followed by Arne Garborg's equally despondent *Tired Men*. The central character in Garborg's novel is Gabriel Gram, a forty-year-old alcoholic whose youthful days have been spent and whose idealisms of the past have all but vanished. Disenchanted with his job, his mistress, the mechanics of sex and life in general, Gram regains some of his zest for living after meeting a girl named Fanny Holmsen. Yet, Gram's attraction to the girl is soon consumed by mistrust, doubt and fear. Turning his back on happiness, Gram returns to absinthe-drinking and his former life of self-inflicted despair.\(^7\) Converse to the belief that sexual abstinence is destructive, as Jaeger proposed in *Fra Christiania Bohemen*, Gram believes the opposite to be true. His sexual drives have actually weakened and destroyed what little will he now possesses. Although he may yearn for a woman, he also views her as the cause of all his suffering and pain and, in
agreement with the misogynist philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer, concludes that sex and women are destructive and even fatal forces in his life. The old myths speak of satan. What lay behind these myths, Schopenhauer discovered and instead of satan, he spoke of 'the genius of sex.'

It is he who causes all the suffering and all evil. For him, there are no individuals, only specimens. With harpoon and rope, he drags he-specimens and she-specimens together, in order that they bring forth new specimens that he can drag together with harpoon and rope. . . . But he who wants to free himself of the harpoon will sit here like me— with the harpoon deep in his flesh and the long rope tugging and tugging.

Cynical yet despairing, Gram is torn between his desire for sex and fear and mistrust of a woman. In the end he embraces religion and in doing so finally removes himself from all sexual temptation.

No doubt born from the sexual experiments within the Christiania Bohème, the men of the Bohème, like the central male character in Gaborg's novel, became increasingly disillusioned with life and love. Since their relationships with women became disastrous scenarios as well, they were likewise increasingly distrustful of women. Thus, while in life Arne Gaborg made his way back to recovery by way of a solid marriage and a return to religion, others such as the young Vilhelm Krag and Sigbjørn Obstfelder took in earnest Jaeger's dictum, "Thou shalt not repent," and fell under the spell of the French Symbolist and Decadent Movements of the fin de siècle. In fact, their poetry typifies the Decadent attitude towards women as being not only desirable but concurrently repulsive enemies of man as well.

Characterizing the poet's own yearning and desire for women and his fear and despair of them as well, Vilhelm Krag's poem, "Fandango," which he read before an audience of students in Christiania in 1890, reveals strong undercurrents of erotic sensuality. Mingled with such thoughts is hopeless
pessimism. In the poem, it is woman who entices and allures man with her erotic dance. But it is she who also brings to the men who desire her—in loving, cooing tones—a song of death. As the following excerpts from Krag's poem demonstrate, she betrays herself as a messenger of destruction:

Tcherkess women, Tcherkess women,
let them in!
In shall they dance on tiny small feet
to muted music
from distant guitars.
Wooing, cooing, loving tones,
smiling, whiling, whisp'ring tones,
sensuously sweet:
Fandango!

Krag continues:

"Oh, sire, autumn's days are coming
and Persian roses fall.
And the dew weeps from carnation mouths
and foliage wilts, sire."
Wilting, wilting,
wilt, wilting,
the world is wilting, and roses and women,
my body and all its trembling nerves,
wilt!
And time, past me it creeps slowly,
and the hours go to dig my grave.
I dare not think—I dare not live.
Dare not die!
And in that death's night-deep silence
trickles and endless golden song:
Wilting, wilting,
wilt . . .
Music, music, march music,
the big bass drum!

With "Fandango" Krag entered a new plateau in his life and in his work, heralded in a new era of Norwegian Neo-Romanticism born of French Decadence, and dealt a final blow to Naturalism. Furthermore, the pessimistic tenor of "Fandango" with its intermingling of sex, women and death is in strong reaction to Jaeger's world view in which he had envisioned strong men and women indulging in healthy sexual activity guided
by love and reason. In fact, the following excerpt from Krag's poem "Night" seems a definitive renouncement of Jaeger and his free love society:

   Yes, come, you great, you mighty satan!
   You bring soothing songs,
   seductive songs,
   and now I will listen!

   But should you lead me now up Garizim's mountain
   and show me the wonderful world,
   then I'll only smile,
   oh great Mefisto,
   because of her, because of her,
   will you give me her?

   Do you remember that night on Garizim's mountain,
   do you?
   You showed me all the treasures of gold,
   the girls in white.
   And I rose up and beat you to the ground,
   and strangled you
   and killed you, satan! 87

Sexual temptation fraught with fear, despair, betrayal and death, which characterizes Krag's early works, also colors the poetry of Sigbjørn Obstfelder. In his volume of works entitled Digte (Poems) of 1893, Obstfelder presents to the reader deep psychological soundings, a drugged perception of the world, a spiritual willessness and a deviant and/or sterile sexuality. 88 Such poems are the products of his sexual longing fraught with sexual anguish, revulsion, mistrust of women, and an uncontrollable fear of the world as well. His dread of the world and his sexual insecurities begin with a profound sense of isolation from, and not proximity to, the world and the self. In his poem "I See," Obstfelder exemplifies such alienation in the following lines: "I see, I see . . . /
   Now I've come to the wrong planet! / Here it is so strange. . . ." 89

Likewise, in his poem "The Belly," Obstfelder explores the "otherness" of
woman. It is her ability to procreate which revolts him and thus proves a strong deterrent to any notion of longing and desire the poet may have occasionally felt for women. In another of Obstfelder's poems the poet best expresses his longing and his simultaneous disdain, mistrust and repulsion towards women. The poem is entitled "Torture" and in it sexual temptation becomes a curse. In search of purity Obstfelder finds only the harlot and, in answer to Jaeger's call for god-like men, concludes that he is not a god but the tortured victim of a woman who entices and kills with her perverse love:

Why do you tempt me, accursed roses,
Accursed moonlight, accursed trees?
From every quarter the smile of woman,
Whisper of woman, hands of woman!

I have floundered through heath and morass--
I--a god?
My heart is bleeding,—it writhes in convulsions.
She winds her hips in silken fabrics--
She--a harlot!

I have wept on the bare damp earth--
I--a god?
She is so lovely—white, soft, warm--
Her white throat deep in the snowy pillow,
Her brown hair in luxuriant ripples--
Why do you tremble, ye lilies?

She slipped her slim hands around my neck--
Death and damnation! why do you stand there trembling?

Torture—keenest of torture--
Poisonous, devouring torture!

Lonely on a grave in the moonlight
In the churchyard among the corpses,
His shadow quivering,
Pierced with cold, sits a man.

Stars.
Ye stars--
Far out where you go,
Is there peace there,
Purity?

You go so silently.
'Tis as if God were breathing,
The stars His thoughts.

... The stars His thoughts...

White fingers, rounded bosom, glowing eyes,
But never a soul.

Millions of glorious flowers the earth brings forth,
Millions of radiant summer birds,
They gleam and die, they vanish.
A woman's whiteness fades.

Like blood-red blossoms without scent
Are sensual dreams without a soul.
Like stars are glances from soul to soul,
Like sunlight a smile from spirit to spirit,
Like the earth's warmth is the embrace
Of a noble man and a noble woman.

... The moon is gone.
The stars are quenched.
The roses and lilies sleep.
Look! the chaste pink of the dawn is kissing,
Kissing the church spire.

Dawn-dusk!
Is there of all earth's women one
Chaste?

Obstfelder's poem ends with a question of doubt, the same doubt which afflicted the rest of the Bohème. In life, his search for a pure and chaste woman transformed the poet into an incurable romantic. His confrontations with the opposite sex became never ending encounters with fatal women from whom there seemed no escape. His words, "Love—that no one knows. Longing—that everyone knows," characterize much of this new vision of love far removed from the beliefs and hopes of the sexually idealistic dreamer, Hans Jaeger.
By the early 1890s, it had become apparent to the Bohèmes that Jaeger's free love society was doomed to total failure and the Bohèmes began to disperse. Taking with them a new concept of woman and love as destructive forces in their lives some, like the forlorn poets Obstfelder and Krag, along with Christian Krog, his wife Oda, Jappe Nilssen and Gunnar Heiberg, went to Berlin. There they were joined by the Swedes and avowed misogynists Ola Hansson and August Strindberg. Coming together with a group of Berlin intellectuals, whose own sexual neuroses and negative views concerning women were nurtured by the teachings of Arthur Schopenhauer and Friedrich Nietzsche, the Scandinavian expatriates along with their newly found German friends soon formed a group known as the Ferkel Circle. Together they began to explore the nature of woman and sex to a greater extent. What they left behind in the wake was a literary plethora of pathological eroticism which more often than not casts woman in an unfavorable light.

Equally broken and disillusioned, Hans Jaeger settled in Paris where he began to reassess the concepts he had so vehemently defended in Christiania. Although he never tired of shocking the public, his views concerning love and women now took a more definite, pessimistic turn. Born of his own self-devised sexual experiments, Jaeger wrote and published his novel *Syk Kjaerlihet* (Sick Love) of 1893 in which he made known to the world the results of his triad with the Christian Krohgs.

In *Syk Kjaerlihet* Jaeger presents himself as the dejected lover of Frau Vera Hansom (identifiable as Oda Lasson Krohg) whom he portrays as a woman indecisively caught between her desire to remain a free-spirited bohemian and her need for a more stable, traditional way of life, i.e., marriage, home and family. Jaeger's rival in the story is the dislikeable
and ridiculous Waldemar Björk (identifiable as Christian Krohg) who eventually wins Vera's love and marries her much to Jaeger's chagrin.  

The story begins in 1887, the year the protagonist flees to Paris to escape the wrath of the authorities in Christiania. From Paris he writes to Vera, the lover he has left behind:  

You have hundreds of faces. And some of them are elegant and some suddenly angry, but every one of them is beautiful. And some are as fresh as a day in May, and some are ripe and softly pale like a lovely bronze September, and with these hundred faces you go about, a young girl and a mature woman, lady and wenche, and tread so lightly on the earth—a Russian princess—une vraie Princesse de Boheme.  

Haunted by the image of this mystery woman, who possesses hundreds of faces, and despite danger of imprisonment, Jaeger returns to Christiania to be with the woman of his dreams—the woman, he remarks, with the "Madonna smile." His arrival there in June 1888, is followed by a series of summer meetings between the lovers in town, at the cafes, in the woods and by the sea. Yet, soon Jaeger's love and longing for Vera is replaced by apprehension, as he reveals in the following passage from his novel:  

With tense, oppressed heart I lie there on her breast . . . and powerlessly I lift my face to hers to beg her . . . but again I am confronted by that empty insane smile, and again I bury my face on her breast . . . and then she lets down her hair and spreads it with her hands about her head, so that it falls heavily over her shoulders and down over her breast and darkly frames her soft, melancholy face . . . And with folded hands hanging in front of her, and the lose hair darkly streaming over her two shoulders and framing her features, she stands there still before me and looks at me . . .  

Another meeting is likewise characterized by desire and yearning. But again such emotions are fraught with agonizing fear, a feeling as incomprehensible and perplexing to Jaeger as his love for the mysterious woman who has stolen his heart. As she takes leave of him, the grieving protagonist states his case:
There was, after all, no more than one true woman on the whole earth—oh, how I trembled! How you coursed through me like a perverse anxiety in my blood! And I saw you leave in the pale violet coat, a full step ahead of me, a bit to the side, with a walk that is so much you; and I imagined the form under it, those forms that are so much yours; oh, I saw only yours in the entire world—and fear ran ever more insanely through my blood; and my entire body shook when suddenly you turned your head and looked at me with your grave, large-eyed, fate-like face from the coupé window—Oh God, my God, how I was sick!

Jaeger yearns for what he knows he can not possess, his woman running like a perverse anxiety in his blood.

The protagonist's return trip to Christiania to become Vera's consort, then, not only ends in despair but imprisonment as well. The emancipated woman, the woman who belongs to no man, has taken possession of Jaeger, body and soul. Victimized by her love, she is for Jaeger his fatal woman. In May 1889, the protagonist is released from jail and returns to Paris to find peace and solitude. Instead he finds himself still haunted by the memory of Vera, whom he can not forget. After months of misery and unhappiness, Jaeger once again returns to Christiania to find Vera. In his absence she has taken Waldemar Björk (Christian Krohg) not only as her lover but as her husband.

Jaeger's tragic story of lost love demonstrates that even he was not above falling victim to the pitfalls of love. Ensnared by the system of his own making and desperately trying to unravel that which he had woven for himself, Jaeger's search for solutions to society's social-sexual problems resulted in unanticipated destruction. His self-proclaimed experiments of radicalism in sexual affairs became a virtual Pandora's box—opened. Love and commitment became hatred and jealousy. In Sick Love Jaeger is driven by his desire for a woman. Yet, he is also fearful, suspicious and sick. Jaeger believed, then, that men became self-appointed
victims of women who are inconstant. To put it differently, Jaeger's concern with social-sexual issues led him to disregard psycho-sexual problems. A woman became not a social or sexual equal but a mysterious stranger or, as Obstfelder believed, a monster. Jaeger's free love society was doomed.

Torn between desire and fear, members of the Bohème worshiped woman or became her most ardent accuser. In either case, the male affiliates of the Bohème felt themselves victimized by women. Balance or harmony between the sexes was, they concluded, a myth. Instead, they ultimately came to conclude with Schopenhauer and Nietzsche that there were only strong-willed and weak-willed people.

Munch's visual records of his self-proclaimed sufferings began with his involvement with the Christiania Bohème: man-as-rescuer-made-victim. For Munch, as with the other male members of the Bohème, the victimizers were women who were, hence, fatal to a man's well-being.

Section II: Munch and the Christiania Bohème: 1884-1889

During the time Hans Jaeger was beginning to emerge as a controversial figure in Christiania, Munch and a group of young fellow artists had come to their own radical conclusions. Art, they thought, as it was taught in the state schools of Norway, had come to a definite impasse. Together with Kalle Løchen, Lorentz Nordberg, Andreas Singdahlsen, Halfdan Strøm, Jørgen Sørensen and Thorvald Torgersen, Munch decided to break new ground. In 1882, Munch left the State School of Art and Handicraft where he
had been a drawing student under the tutelage of the neo-classic sculptor Julius Middelthun. With the idea of establishing their own school of art, Munch and his young colleagues rented a studio at No. 7 Parliament Square. The move soon proved a sensible choice. Here on the top floor of this four story commercial building called the "Pultosten," situated opposite the parliament, Fritz Thaulow and Christian Krohg had established their ateliers. 106

Without a set program but armed with enthusiasm and conviction, the young artists soon gained the sympathy and understanding of the two older artists. On a voluntary basis, Krohg began to supervise their works. Moreover, Thaulow offered his support by inviting several of them—including Jørgen Sørensen, Halfdan Strøm and Munch—to join him at his "open-air academy" at Modum in the autumn of 1883. 107

Soon, both Thaulow and Krohg singled out Munch as their most promising pupil. Sponsorship from Thaulow permitted Munch to visit Paris for three weeks in May 1885. 108 Yet, even before this trip it was Krohg's intervening efforts that enabled Munch to become closely associated with Christiania's avant-garde. Some time before September 1884, Krohg introduced young Munch to Hans Jaeger and the other members of the Christiania Bohème. 109 What began as a casual introduction soon developed into an intense relationship between Munch and the affiliates of the Bohème. Thus, Munch became an accepted member of the group and an eager and regular visitor to their gatherings.

This association soon proved a turning point in Munch's life as well as in the thematic content of his art. It was also an association to which Munch's father, Dr. Christian Munch, vehemently objected. Often at odds
with his puritanical father, Munch was made to feel a stranger in his own home. This fact is indicated in an excerpt from a letter Munch wrote some years later. In it he relates his sense of confusion as well as his mistrust and fear of his father, who ruled the household inconsistently and according to his rashly changing moods:

My father tried to be both mother and father to us, but he had a difficult temperament and an inherited nervousness that led to almost insane bouts of religious obsession, during which he would spend days pacing up and down the room, praying to God. At an early age I was taught about the perils and miseries of life on this earth, about life after death, and also about the agonies of Hell that lay in store for children who sinned. When he was not going through one of his periods of religious fanaticism, he could be like a child and play and joke with us and tell us stories. As a result, it became doubly painful for us when he punished us; on those occasions he would be almost beside himself with anger. It is that nervous anger that I have inherited.

Admittedly nervous and high-strung, traits he had learned from his father, Munch came to reject his father early in life. Perhaps because Christianity had been presented to him in such a fanatical, irrational manner, the artist also came to dismiss organized religion as well.

Munch's father was not reluctant to accept his son's decision to become an artist, but he staunchly disapproved of his artistic friends. In a partial excerpt from a letter written to a friend many years later, Munch remarks: "It was not difficult to persuade my father that I might become a painter; it was only that he was afraid of the models."

The models his father objected to were no doubt Munch's newly found friends from the Christiania Bohème whose life style was an insult to the community. Not only did they deliberately flaunt their loose morals, they also defied Christianity. Now under the influence of this group, Munch came to have an argument with his father which he related later in life to his friend and biographer Rolf Stenersen:
One evening I came to have a discussion with my father on the subject of how long unbelievers are tormented in Hell. I maintained that no sinner could be so great that God would let him suffer for more than a thousand years. Father said that they would suffer for a thousand thousand years, but I would not give up the argument. I became so irritated that I finally left the house, slamming the door behind me. After I had walked the streets for a bit, my anger subsided, and I returned home to make peace with him. He had gone to bed, and so I quietly opened his bedroom door. My father was on his knees in front of the bed, praying. I had never seen that before. I closed the door and went to my own room, but I could not get to sleep: all I could do was toss and turn. Eventually I took out my drawing block and began to draw. I drew my father kneeling by his bed, with the light from the bedside lamp casting a yellow glow over his nightshirt. I fetched my paint box and coloured it in. Finally I achieved the right effect and I was able to go to bed happy, quickly falling asleep.

Misunderstood by his father and unable to embrace his religious beliefs in turn, Munch instead took comfort in his art as well as the models his father had warned him to avoid. And so, while Dr. Munch spent his nights praying for his son's immortal soul, Munch spent his nights in the company of the Christiania Bohème discussing art. Here he found the understanding and support he so desperately sought and needed but which was denied to him by his own disapproving father. Hopelessly estranged from his often hot tempered parent, Munch instead attached himself to the cool and logical Hans Jaeger—avowed atheist, instigator of illicit sex between members of the Bohème, and surrogate father to Munch. Thus, while Munch's relationship with Jaeger was one of mutual acceptance and praise, the relationship with his own father was one of mutual denial, doubt, disappointment and frustration. In light of the fact that Munch later sought out similar bohemian environments in Berlin and Paris, it is reasonable to assume that among the Bohemes Munch had found a home in which he was able to express himself openly, without fear of transgression. No other
segment of society offered him such freedom, such fascination, such novelty, mystery and excitement. But there was another attraction as well. Here among the bohemians, Munch experienced the first stirrings of sexual desire and subsequently became an active participant in Jaeger's free love experiments. Without the nurturing support of his mother and his older sister Sophie, both long since dead, Munch now attached himself to an older, married woman. As she cleverly entrapped him, he soon fell victim to her charms and whims. Taking in earnest what Jaeger had dictated to his followers, "Thou shalt write thine autobiography," Munch wrote of his liaison with Milly Thaulow whom he disguised as "Fru Heiberg" in his early diary notes. In these notes Munch remembered the affair which began with an overwhelming attraction to the woman. Yet, all too soon this love affair was fraught with jealousy and pain. She was, in fact, a woman whose liaisons with other men were known to Munch. She was also the woman who kept him from forming lasting, more natural relationships with younger, more suitable women. He, in short, belonged to her. Conversely, she belonged to no man. Slowly, as time went by, Munch came to transform the loving woman of his dreams into the fatal woman of his nightmares. By his own admission it was a relationship which nearly destroyed him. As stated previously, there were other women as well. Here in the Bohème Munch came into contact with countless liberated females. There was, for example, the wife of his friend and mentor Christian Krohg who maneuvered freely among the male members of the Bohème with considerable assurance. She flaunted her charms and took lovers among its affiliates despite her marriage to Krohg.
And so within this milieu of kindred spirits, in search of some meaning to their existence, Munch spent the next five years of his youth watching, listening and learning the lessons of what Jaeger called "the modern life."

Later, taking into account his affiliation with this group, Munch came to remember it as the most important association of his young life:

When will the history of the Bohemian period be written, and who is there capable of writing it? It would take a Dostoevsky, or a blend of Krohg, Hans Jaeger and myself, perhaps. Who will describe the Russian period in that Siberian town which Oslo [Christania] was then and still is? For many artists it was a testing-time and a touchstone.

A time for testing one's self, and a standard by which to judge and measure one's own needs and desires, well describes the years Munch spent in the company of the Christiania Bohême. Drawn inexorably into this milieu of social-sexual radicalism, the effects which the Bohème had on the young Munch are incalculable but more than worthy of careful analysis. For not only did this group help to launch his career as an artist--therefore sealing his reputation as an infamous figure in the art community of Christiania--they also came to change his life in other, more provocative ways as well.

In this atmosphere, Munch first came to reject his father's religious and moral teachings to embrace hedonism instead. It was here that Munch first became aware of his own sexuality and erotic desires, succumbed to the powers of love, and was subsequently consumed by jealousy and despair. Like so many others from the Bohème, including Hans Jaeger himself, it was in this milieu that Munch also began to form his life-long opinions concerning women and the concept of love as dangerous and destructive forces in his life. Here too he began to absorb and accumulate material for his fatal woman motif.
Keeping Jaeger's dictum in mind, "Thou shalt write thine own autobiography," Munch was now eager to escape the confines of the Bohème, the growing unrest therein and Fru Heiberg. He subsequently fled to Paris in 1889 to study art under Léon Bonnat. Yet, although he was physically detached from his friends, their phantoms remained to haunt him and led him to conclude that he would paint "... people who breathe and feel and suffer and love--." 119

Section III: Munch: Crisis and Recovery, 1889-1892

Relieved of all his complicated yet unresolved relationships at home, Munch arrived in Paris in early October 1889. In the French capital Munch happily settled and began his art studies under the tutelage of Léon Bonnat. Yet, this seemingly fortunate state of affairs was soon disrupted by news from home of his father's death in late November. Munch fell into a state of deep despondency laden with guilt and regrettable memories of his father and their problematic relationship. 120 Munch also came to reflect on his affiliation with the Christiania Bohème and specifically his now questionable friendship with two of its most memorable members: Fru Heiberg and Hans Jaeger. 121

In particular, Munch began to focus on his affair with Fru Heiberg as a liaison which should never have occurred. In a note, the artist even apologized to his dead father for having let this woman come between them, but ended by stating that there was no escaping the woman who was in his blood. 122

Munch was by this time quite ill. He spent Christmas of 1889 in bed with the flu and centered his morbid attentions on the influenza epidemic.
then raging through the French capital. Although Munch recovered from the flu and moved to St. Cloud to escape from Paris, he could not shake the memory of Fru Heiberg who had come to replace all others: "What a deep mark she has left on my heart! No other picture can ever totally replace hers." Moreover, thinking of the woman who was in his blood, and likening her to a Medusa, Munch began to see life as a great horror.

His confessions prove an interesting correlative to one aspect of Jungian psychology.

According to M. -L. von Franz, an eminent associate of the late Carl Jung, the woman within is associated with the anima, which in the case of the male is the female element of the male psyche or the female personification of the male unconscious. Von Franz continues:

In its individual manifestation the character of a man's anima is as a rule shaped by his mother. If he feels that his mother had a negative influence on him, his anima will often express itself in irritable, depressed moods, uncertainty, insecurity, and touchiness. . . . Within the soul of such a man the negative mother-anima figure will endlessly repeat this theme: 'I am nothing. Nothing makes sense. With others it's different, but for me . . . I enjoy nothing.' These 'anima moods' cause a sort of dullness, a fear of disease, of impotence, or of accidents. The whole life takes on a sad and oppressive aspect. Such dark moods can even lure a man to suicide, in which case the anima becomes a death demon. . . .

The French call such an anima figure a femme fatale.

Munch came to identify Fru Heiberg with his dead mother about this time, something which he had learned to do from his readings in associative psychology within the milieu of the Christiania Bohème. Considering von Franz's definition of the femme fatale within man, the artist now had his fatal woman (Fru Heiberg) born of his first sexual experiences within the Bohème. Furthermore, in conjunction with his recollections of Fru Heiberg, Munch began to experience "anima moods" like those von Franz describes.
Overcome by a sense of dullness and touchiness, irritability and depression, Munch conveys the "I am nothing . . . enjoy nothing" syndrome, as explained by von Franz, in the following passage from his diary:

Each day resembles the other. My friends have stopped coming to see me. After all why should they come? They see that I cannot join them and that their laughter only bothers me, causes me pain. That their hearty joie de vivre makes me nervous. In another passage from the same diary, Munch relates his growing sense of irritability over a friend's flirtatious behavior with a chambermaid:

Golfstein [sic] put up with me the longest, but he too has stopped coming. Last time he was here, I had to go lie down. His flirtations with the chambermaid irritated me, and finally I told him, almost shouting, 'Shut up!' He did not like that.

At this time Munch also wrote of his insecurity, uncertainty and perhaps his unknown fear of accidents: "And I lay there, afraid of a sudden noise, afraid of a chair, afraid of I know not what." With recollections of the past haunting him as well, Munch's depressed mood became even more severe. Increasingly afraid of disease and everything else in life, Munch contemplates suicide as a means of escape:

When I suffer most, I put my head down towards the fireplace. Then suddenly there arises an urge within me: Kill yourself! Then all this will be over. Why live? It is only cowardice to live a life such as this. After all, you will not live much longer anyway. And dragging through the world like this, in this miserable body, with all these medicines, and with this constantly cautious fear: That is not life!

Because the thought of death was even more terrifying to the artist than life, he realized he had to live. Yet, within himself Fru Heiberg, his fatal woman, also survived and dwelled like a demon in his heart and in his mind.

Simultaneous to his near suicide attempt the artist directed his thoughts to Hans Jaeger, the instigator of such fatal affairs as the one
Munch had experienced with Fru Heiberg in the milieu of the Christiania Bohème. Jaeger was also the man who once wrote, as the last of his nine commandments, "Thou shalt take thine own life." What Munch had respected and admired about Jaeger was his forthright honesty, his boldness of spirit, his hard logic, his sense of challenge—attributes which complemented Munch's own shy, retiring nature. Yet, shortly after the death of his father, Munch began to reexamine his relationship with Jaeger and even harbor hostile feelings towards the leader of the Bohème whom he had once considered a friend and father figure.

Keeping in mind what Jaeger had taught him ("Thou shalt write thine autobiography"), Munch came to record a conversation he had had with Emanuel Goldstein. The conversation between the two friends concerned Jaeger who, according to Munch, once suggested that the artist ought to have killed his father:

And then it was Jaeger—possibly the greatest sorrow—I almost felt hatred for Jaeger—
For it was my conviction that he was right—but still—
I was up at Goldstein's
Now it is you--
Yes, it always hurts when one has not been in agreement--
But you see we were fond of each other he was so soft you see as wax--
Is your father still living
Yes
I envied him that
That Jaeger—he was a hard one—do you know what he said—
Kill him--
My father—he with the heart—I couldn't understand Jaeger. I could love him—but also hate him--
That was the worst of it—for my father that thing with Jaeger—

It was Jaeger who believed that the existing order must be overthrown before the utopian society which he envisioned could rise from the ashes of.
the present patriarchal system. Through the denial of one's family, and more specifically the father, Jaeger saw the means by which his free love society could be realized. In order to achieve such goals, Jaeger then called on his followers to take at least three of his nine bohemian commandments in earnest. The three are: "Thou shalt sever thy family ties." "Thou shalt treat thy parents as badly as possible." "Thou shalt never repent." But these were dictims Munch could not accept.

With an ever growing sense of remorse, shame and guilt for having rejected his father while simultaneously having accepted with abandon Fru Heiberg, Hans Jaeger, and the rest of the bohemians, Munch now wished to resurrect the father as well as other family members whose ghosts Jaeger would have so willingly put to rest. As Munch relates in his diary:

I love even the fever with its hallucinations, that half-conscious state when you can see shadows leaning over you. It is they--Father, your sister--watching over you. You hear them whispering words.

Although Munch attempted a reunion with the shadows of his dead family members, there was in conjunction with this effort a much stronger force at work. As if in a dream, Munch no longer conjured images of his dead family members but of his own terrifying shadow as well as the face of his own ghost:

When I go for walks in the moonlit park among the old, moss-covered statues I know so well, then my own shadow frightens me. When I light the lamp, suddenly I see my enormous shadow covering half the wall and reaching up to the ceiling. And in the big mirror over the fireplace I see myself--the face of my own ghost!

The terror Munch experienced in confronting his shadow, the shock he felt in seeing the face of his own ghost in the mirror before him was possibly a
manifestation of what is referred to in Jungian psychology as "the realization of the shadow." \[140\]

According to M. -L. von Franz, the realization of the shadow occurs when part of the unconscious self acquaints the individual with unknown qualities or attributes of his own personality. \[141\] Furthermore, states von Franz:

When an individual makes an attempt to see his shadow, he becomes aware of (and often ashamed of) those qualities and impulses he denies in himself but can plainly see in other people. \[142\]

Von Franz continues:

... the shadow is exposed to collective infections to a much greater extent than is the conscious personality. When a man is alone, for instance, he feels relatively all right; but as soon as 'the others' do dark, primitive things, he begins to fear that if he doesn't join in, he will be considered a fool. Thus he gives way to impulses that do not really belong to him at all. It is particularly in contacts with people of the same sex that one stumbles over both one's own shadow and those of other people. \[143\]

Considering von Franz's explanation of the "realization of the shadow" it seems that Munch was now experiencing a sense of shame and denial for once having identified with Jaeger and the rest of those "other" sexually obsessed men of the Bohème. That "other" part of himself was then made clear to him in the form of his own shadow as well as the face of his own ghost in the mirror, which he hardly recognized. Munch had taken part in Jaeger's free love society as a way of conforming to the radical activities of his friends. But such an association violated the deeper sense of morality ingrained in him by his puritanical father who haunted him mercilessly. Now, in an effort to deny the hedonistic urges which had emerged during his association with Hans Jaeger and his affair with Fru Heiberg, Munch's diary notes indicate that he attempted to silence and
exorcise his fear of his own shadow. Also, the artist returned to thoughts of his dead family members and particularly his father:

And I live with the dead—with my mother, my sister, my grandfather, and my father—mostly with him. All memories even the most insignificant ones, return.

Such a note, in which Munch tries to make amends with his father by reviving his ghost, when viewed in a much wider context brings one to some interesting conclusions.

Like the young, fictitious Jarmann in Jaeger's novel *Fra Christiania Bohemen* (1885), Munch's had been taught by his mentor, Hans Jaeger, to deny Christianity as a moral evil and embrace hedonism instead. Yet, after this release of his erotic yearnings Munch, like Jarmann, despaired. Jarmann could not reconcile his sexual urges with the moral demands placed on him by society. In his sense of shame he took his own life. Similarly, Munch fell into a state of suicidal despondency because he could not reconcile sexual need with his father's Christian beliefs. Yet, unlike Jarmann, whose suicide laid to rest his unresolved problems, Munch lived on to write his autobiography (as Jaeger had instructed his followers to do) and tell through his art the story of his sexual despair. Thus, it was in the interim of his emotional crisis of 1889-90, while listening to his own voice of suffering and despair, as well as the suffering and despair of others, that Munch began to set forth the artistic program which had evolved from his years in the Bohème. As an expression of his unsuccessful experiences within the Bohème and with Fru Heiberg Munch made another note in his diary:

No longer will interiors and people reading and women knitting be painted.
There shall be living people who breathe and feel and suffer and love—.
I will paint a number of such paintings. People will understand that which is sacred in them and will take off their hats as if they were in a church.

Although his crisis passed, Munch's religion became that of despair. The memories of the Christiania Bohème and Fru Heiberg remained and festered like open wounds which refused to heal:

Alone and lonely, I sit surrounded by a million mouths. They are a million daggers which tear into my heart and leave behind open, gaping wounds.

A few years later, Munch again thought about himself or Jaeger and the woman who had hurt him:

So he thought, he could find a woman, that could mean something to him--outside the bonds of marriage.

The Era of the Bohème came with its doctrine of free love. God and everything else was overthrown; everyone raced in a wild, insane Dance of Life. A blood-red sun stood in the sky; the cross was atoned for. Then the experienced Woman of the World came on the scene and I received my baptism by fire. I was made to feel the entire unhappiness of love and for several years it was as if I were nearly crazy. The horrible face of mental illness then raised its twisted head. After that I gave up the hope of being able to love.

Thus, the deadly allure of the Christiania Bohème and the fatal woman were now within Munch and would occupy his thoughts and art throughout the decade of the 1890s. What was to emerge from this preoccupation with friends and a lover from the past would be his fatal woman motif. Munch would henceforth incorporate such a theme into his "Frieze of Life"--pictures in which he depicts the multiple subjects of angst, love and death to tell the sequential story of his own personal pain as well as the suffering of others--and other works independent of the frieze wherein he explores, in part, the inconstancy of the female heart.

His crisis over, Munch returned to Norway in the spring of 1890. He rented a house in Aasgaardstrand and also visited Christiania where he
painted a few simple cityscapes. Munch also painted a work entitled Two Bohemian Friends (Fig. 72) c. 1890, depicting two male members of the Christiania Bohème, Hans Jaeger and Jappe Nilssen, drinking in a small tavern. The two men do not converse. Lost in their own private reverie, they represent a microcosm of the taciturn, brokenhearted and hopelessly listless men who now constituted what remained of the once powerful and energetic Christiania Bohème.

In the fall of 1890, Munch left for Paris. It was not an easy trip for the artist. On his way to the French capital, he contracted rheumatic fever and was subsequently hospitalized in La Havre for several months. It was January 1891 before Munch was able to return to Paris. Once there, he suffered a relapse of the dread disease. Still sick, Munch visited Nice where the recuperative powers of the sun and fresh air restored his health. Well enough to travel north, Munch returned to Paris in the spring and then went to Aasgaardstrand for the summer. In Aasgaardstrand the artist joined three of his bohemian friends: Christian Krohg, Krohg's wife Oda, and Jappe Nilssen. Yet, it was not a happy reunion. Living in close quarters with them, Munch soon realized all was not well between Nilssen and Oda Krohg. In fact, Oda's lover, Nilssen, had now become Oda's ex-lover and victim. Saddened over this state of affairs, Munch decided to record, visually, the dire consequences of Nilssen's relationship with Oda in a work entitled Evening, (The Yellow Boat) (Fig. 73) of 1891.

The setting for Evening, (The Yellow Boat) is the shoreline of Aasgaardstrand. Nilssen is seen in the right foreground seated on the beach. Facing the spectator, with only his head and right shoulder visible, his left hand cradling his cheek, the heartsick Nilssen broods
jealously and helplessly over what is taking place behind his back. In the distant background, two small figures make their way down the pier. They are Christian Krohg and his wife, Oda, who are preparing to depart, by way of a little yellow boat, for a rendezvous.\citenum{152}

In conjunction with *Evening, (The Yellow Boat)* an empathetic Munch came to write of Nilssen's sad experience and loss:

> I walked along the shore one evening, alone. There were sighs and whispers among the stones--gray elongated clouds above the horizon. Everything was vacuous, another world--a landscape of death. Then suddenly there was life by the pier--a man and woman, and another man, oars over his shoulder, and the boat out there, ready... It looks like her! I felt a sting in my breast. Was she here now? She's suppose to be far away--and yet it is her walk...? God, God in heaven have mercy, let it not be... Those two--they're going out to the island. In the bright summer night they'll be strolling among the trees, arm in arm...\citenum{153}

Although sorry for Nilssen, as exemplified in *Evening, (The Yellow Boat)* and the artist's text, Munch had had enough of his companions and their complicated triangles born of Jaeger's free love society. Tired and disgusted and furthermore thinking of his bohemian friends whose own miserable lives and unsuccessful love affairs provided ample material for their writings, Munch then wrote to a friend in Paris of his growing frustrations:

> I am beginning to be bored now by all these people who write down their lives. One exists in constant fear of being dragged up to some garret and there being introduced to a life 2000 thousand pages long. It is almost impossible to find a single person here who has not written the novel of their life.\citenum{154}

With his devaluation of the Bohème, Munch made good his escape from Christiania at summer's end and headed for Paris. Yet, once there, the artist began to relive the past just as he had done during his crisis of 1889/90.
Specifically, Munch began by recalling his first sexual encounter with Fru Heiberg with longing and bitter regret. Such recall led to The Kiss (Fig. 4) of 1891/92. Furthermore, Munch painted Self-Portrait Under the Mask of Woman (Fig. 2) in the winter of 1891/92 which, likewise, represents another brutal account of his devastating love affair with Fru Heiberg.155 In addition to these two autobiographical works, there is Munch's biographical painting Evening, (The Yellow Boat) (Fig. 73) of 1891 to consider. As an expression of the pain and despair his friend Jappe Nilssen experienced after his broken love affair with the inconstant and faithless Oda Krohg, Munch had now executed three paintings depicting women as fatal to man. Moreover, such studies of male anguish and sorrow—born of man's love for woman—may be directly credited to Munch's affiliation with the Christiania Bohème and expressly to the sexual experiments of Hans Jaeger. Because such experiments proved unsuccessful and painful for Munch, as they apparently had for many of his bohemian friends, the artist now viewed his past association with the Christiania Bohême as well as his future encounters with women with suspicion, mistrust, and doubt.

Thinking of Jaeger as some satanic destroyer of human lives and hearts, much as Vilhelm Krag expressed in his poem "Night,"156 the embittered artist came to write:

I looked at him—Do you know what,—I think you'll end by dancing the cancan on the graves of all your friends—those who drank themselves to death—those you persuaded to do just that. Jaeger laughed.157

With particular emphasis on Jaeger's ability to exploit others in order to fulfill his own vision, Munch revived his sense of moral indignation, suffering and shame for having played party to such torturous self-destruction. Viewing Jaeger as an executioner and himself as victim to
Jaeger, as well as to the wiles of a faithless woman (i.e., Fru Heiberg), Munch would continue to identify with and become still another living example of the vanquished males of the Bohème who had succumbed to despair and hopeless unhappiness. Like the protagonist in Sensitiva Amorosa (1887), Munch would find his future relationships with women unsatisfactory, in fact, futile exploits. The artist would search but never find his ideal as Sigbjørn Obstfelder's poem "Torture" describes. And though Munch would continue to be lured by beautiful women, in the end he would find them harbingers of despair, much like the man in Vilhelm Krag's "Fandango." Like the hero in Knut Hamsun's Hunger (1890), Munch would henceforth experience life as a loveless battle for survival filled with panic and anxiety, sickness and despair. He would also come to identify more and more with the men in Arne Garborg's Men-Folk (1886) who wander through life in a spiritual vacuum. In manner similar to the central character in Garborg's Tired Men (1891), Munch would also see his sexual drives as debilitating and destructive. He would, in short, incorporate into his life as well as his art a dire view of the world now held by many members of the Bohème. He would subsequently and persistently see himself as a victim of love and of women, until his nervous breakdown in 1908. Despite his former criticism and disapproval of the members of the Bohème, whose writings were brutally and painfully autobiographical, Munch was destined to write his own life, visually, in the same despairing fashion as his friends. Henceforth and specifically, Munch would transform his future fatalistic encounters with women into works of art. In addition, he would move to Berlin and join another group of radicals who also practiced free love.
In the years between 1892 and 1896 in Berlin, Munch came into contact with the Ferkel Circle. Similar in orientation to the Christiania Bohème, their ideas concerning sex provided ample material for literary works. The Ferkel Circle's membership, in part, included former associates of the Christiania Bohème as well as the Swedish playwright from Stockholm, August Strindberg. These men were concerned with the issue of sex and the man-woman relationship. As such, they were destined to have an important impact on the continuing development and amplification of Munch's fatal woman theme. However, before examining the Ferkel Circle as a group of individuals who were important to Munch's artistic development and in particular to his fatal woman theme, a review of the events leading up to Munch's association with them is in order.

With his return to Norway in the summer of 1892—-at which time he may have courted Dagny Juell, who was an advocate of Jaeger's free love society--, 159 Munch settled in Aasgaardstrand and prepared for his second retrospective exhibition due to take place in the fall in Christiania. Shortly after the opening of his show, a representative of the Berlin Kunstverein invited the artist to exhibit a collection of his works in Berlin. Munch accepted and later that year left for the German capital. In early November his show opened at the Architektenhaus as planned. Yet, due to conflicting interests between the conservative and progressive members of the Kunstverein, the Munch exhibition closed one week later. Because of the controversy Munch had caused within Berlin's art world, he was subsequently drawn into the company of the Ferkel Circle who lent their support to the infamous upstart from Norway at this decisive turning point in his career. Due to their kindness to him, Munch decided to stay in
Berlin for an indefinite period of time. Shortly thereafter Dagny Juell came to Berlin and the two friends were reunited. Soon, she too became party to the gatherings of Munch's newly found friends. Now under the powerful influence of the Ferkel Circle and Dagny Juell, Munch's views concerning women and the concept of love as a negative force in his life--born of the Christiania Bohème and his torrid relationship with one of its female members, Fru Heiberg--were reinforced. Here, Munch began to experience the anxiety and the jealousy he had felt during his years spent in the Bohème. Subsequently, Munch's fatal woman theme began to develop at a more rapid pace.

Section IV: The Ferkel Circle

Unlike provincial Christiania, Berlin--the newly founded capital of the prosperous German Reich (1871)--was a thriving cosmopolitan metropolis which by the end of the 1880s had become the mecca for a number of German and Scandinavian artists and writers of radical persuasion. In fact, the Scandinavian gravitation to Berlin was nothing short of phenomenal. In particular, the Scandinavian progressives went to Berlin in order to broaden their creative and intellectual horizons. They also went there in an effort to seek professional opportunities and more receptive audiences, both of which they often found lacking in their respective, more provincial cities to the North--such as Stockholm, Christiania and Copenhagen.\textsuperscript{160} Drawn together in the German capital, the Scandinavian exiles as well as their aspiring young German counterparts gathered in the taverns, cafés and homes of their supporters. There, they embraced the latest trends in contemporary thought which included an interest in such diversified
subjects as Atheism, Socialism, Symbolism, Decadence, Existentialism and Eroticism. Moreover, these young intellectuals and artists studied the philosophical teachings of Arthur Schopenhauer and Friedrich Nietzsche whose theories concerning civilization, moral relativism and the "will to power" (i.e., the idea which addresses human existence as a series of struggles between stronger and weaker wills) proved an interesting correlative to their own radical views concerning another prevalent topic of discussion: the man-woman relationship. 161

Of the many radical Scandinavian-German groups forming in Berlin in the early 1890s, the Ferkel Circle, basically a literary group that gathered around Swedish playwright and known misogynist August Strindberg as well as the Polish writer Stanislaw Przybyszewski, was particularly important to Munch. 162 The major thematic component of the collective works of the Ferkel Circle not only stressed the man-woman relationship but weighed heavily in the treatment of women as mysterious strangers who posed puzzling riddles and/or were viewed as fatal to man. Significantly, such writings were, as a rule, based on their own personal sexual encounters with women and, therefore, prove an interesting correlative to Munch's treatment of woman as he presents her to us in his art. As shall be examined, not only did the Ferkel Circle lend their support to the artist after the closing of his landmark exhibition at the Architektenhaus in November 1892, but, as previously mentioned, this group was destined to become instrumental in the continuing development and amplification of Munch's fatal woman theme from 1892 until well after he left Berlin in 1896.
The story of the Ferkel Circle and Munch's subsequent involvement with them begins in the fall of 1892, prior to the opening of Munch's exhibition at the Architektenhaus. Together this group of men formed a loosely organized circle of rebels who at one time or another during their stay in Berlin frequented Herr Turke's Weinstube—a small wine cellar situated in the very heart of that city at the corner of Unter den Linden and Neue Wilhelmstrasse. Renamed Zum Schwarzen Ferkel (The Black Piglet) in the fall of 1892 by one of its most illustrious and commanding patrons, August Strindberg, the wine cellar soon became a popular meeting place for Berlin's avant-garde who hoped to catch a glimpse of the infamous figure from Stockholm or, better yet, become a part of his entourage as the following eye-witness account describes:

The entire Weinstube consisted of two small rooms separated by a narrow serving counter overflowing with bottles containing all sorts of drinks. The entire area was so limited it could barely accommodate twenty persons. And by six o'clock in the evening, once Strindberg had begun frequenting the place, it was impossible to find a vacant square inch.

In the close quarters of Zum Schwarzen Ferkel, over which Strindberg presided, began a literary phenomenon which was to shake the very foundation of established and polite society in Berlin. As the group grew in size over the next year, so too did its reputation.

Representing Sweden was the Swedo-Finnish journalist, and chronicler of the Ferkel Circle's activities, Adolf Paul who also authored such erotic tales as The Ripper (1891). Also from Sweden came the novelist Ola Hansson, longtime friend of Strindberg and author of the anti-social, anti-woman novel, Sensitiva Amorosa (1887). Hansson was accompanied by his wife, Laura (née Mohr) who was also a writer in her own right. From Denmark there was writer Holger Drachmann who flouted conventional behavior.
with his many notable love affairs including one with a cabaret singer whom he called Edith. It was she who inspired Drachmann's *The Book of Songs* (1889) and *Signed Away* (1890). Representing Finland was the painter Akseli Gallén-Kallela who exhibited with Munch in Berlin at Ugo Barocci's gallery in 1895. Austria had its representative in Frida Uhl, a journalist who was Strindberg's second wife and author of *Marriage with Genius*--an invaluable account of life with Strindberg and of life within the Ferkel Circle. The Germans included poet Max Daughendey; Otto Erich Hartleben, the author of the tragedy *Rosenmontag* which was first performed in 1900; scholar of the Orient, Otto Julius Bierbaum; the painter, printmaker and illustrator for the *Fliegende Blätter*, Hermann Schlittgen; the young literary critic, Franz Servaes; ex-engineering student turned art critic, Julius Meier-Graefe; Richard Dehmel, who was a Symbolist poet as well as one of the founding members of *Pan* and an associate of the Socialist Movement in Berlin; the writers Frank Wedekind and Walter Rathenau; art collector Albert Kollmann; and physicians Max Asch and Carl Ludwig Schleich. From Poland was the ex-medical student turned writer, Stanislaw Przybyszewski whose importance to the group was central. Representing Norway was the sculptor Gustav Vigeland; art historian and musicologist (and later to become director of Norway's National Gallery) as well as author of *Edvard Munch og hans samtid* (*Edvard Munch and His Times*; 1933), Jens Thiis. Also from Norway was Knut Hamsun, novelist and author of *Hunger* (1890) and *Mysteries* (1892); and other displaced members of the Christiania Bohème, including the poets Sigbjørn Obstfelder and Vilhelm Krag; the painter and social activist, Christian Krogh and his wife, Oda; the dramatist Gunnar Heiberg; the journalist Jappe Nilssen; the music
student Dagny Juell; and Munch himself, who joined the group in November 1892. 165

Perhaps the most important and influential members of the Ferkel Circle, in terms of the continuing development of Munch's fatal woman theme, were August Strindberg, Stanislaw Przybyszewski, Dagny Juell, Gunnar Heiberg, and Richard Dehmel. Thus, it is the lives and works of these individuals and their involvement with the Ferkel Circle which will now be addressed, beginning with the life and works of August Strindberg.

As Strindberg recalled about Zum Schwarzen Ferkel:

The famous inn, the Schwarze Ferkel, close to the Linden, is the meeting-place of artists and men of letters; a trysting place for the souls of the damned, if ever there was one.

For there is not one among them who does not drag behind him the ball and chain of ill-luck. Curses shower and blasphemies hail here. Often the passer-by stops in the street in the night hours. Out of the shop-window, with its barrier of bottles, a wailing and gnashing of teeth penetrates the stillness. Then the listeners hasten on, exclaiming: 'What a murderous den!' 166

August Strindberg (1849-1912), who now held court at Zum Schwarzen Ferkel, had already created quite a fervor as a novelist and a playwright of Pan-European fame before coming to Berlin in October 1892. Although early in his career he had experienced temporary setbacks, it was Strindberg's novel The Red Room (1879), a satire dealing with the then existing political, cultural and religious institutions of Sweden, that brought him to the attention of the public, sealed his reputation as an infamous upstart, and secured his position as leader of a group of radicals in Stockholm. Following The Red Room Strindberg wrote The New Kingdom (1882), a collection of short stories in which he not only severely ridicules established institutions but attacks prominent citizens of
Stockholm. For the latter work Strindberg was brutally criticized by the Swedish establishment and forced to leave Stockholm.

In search of a less hostile environment in which to pursue his career, Strindberg took his wife, Siri von Essen, and children to Grèz, France. Grèz was a Scandinavian settlement near Fontainebleau. There, Strindberg turned his attention to an equally forbidden subject: marital discord.

In *Marriage I* (1884), the first of a two volume work, Strindberg examines the theme of sexual warfare between husband and wife. Subsequently published in Sweden in 1884, *Marriage I* was found to be shocking by the establishment of Stockholm. In addition, because of some rather caustic remarks in reference to the sacrament, Strindberg was indicted for blasphemy. The novelist returned to Sweden to stand trial and was acquitted. Although this ruling further enflamed the rage and hatred of his enemies, Strindberg's acquittal must have pleased the Christiania Bohème then forming in Norway's capital. They, too, were about to embark upon their own embittered battles against the established rule.

The trial affected Strindberg's thinking as well as his marriage with particularly disastrous results. Because his work was unacceptable to the vast majority of his own countrymen, Strindberg became increasingly paranoid. Thinking his wife, Siri, was somehow involved in an international league of women who were conspiring against him (a fact he later made public in his autobiographical novel entitled *A Madman's Defense*, 1893), Strindberg turned increasingly against his wife and all other women as well.

While his marriage was slowly beginning to deteriorate, Strindberg was simultaneously becoming more introspective. He studied psychology,
hypnosis, and the occult. He also took an interest in the works of Edgar Allan Poe and read philosophy with special emphasis on the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche, with whom he even corresponded. What particularly intrigued Strindberg was Nietzsche's theory concerning human existence as an endless struggle between stronger and weaker wills. Strindberg then transformed this theory into his brand of psycho-sexual warfare between male and female. In fact, believing men were superior to women intellectually, but women the more cunning and manipulative of the two, and therefore more successful in their battles against the male, Strindberg returned to his writing in the late 1880s in readiness to apply that which he had learned from Nietzsche as well as what he had experienced in his own tenuous marriage to Siri von Essen.

With a new hatred towards women, Strindberg began a series of misogynist plays which skyrocketed the playwright to literary fame. Steeped in antagonism between the sexes, each vying for domination over the other, Strindberg's plays of the late 1880s portray woman as man's fatal destroyer. Interestingly, at this time Munch was involved in his own ill-fated affair with Fru Heiberg.

In his drama The Father (1887), Strindberg explores the subject of marital discord. The title character is a man surrounded by a household of women. When the father wishes his daughter, Bertha, to be sent away for her education, he meets the resistance of his vampirish wife, Laura, who wants to keep her daughter at home. In order for the daughter to remain with her, Laura must resort to deceptive games: she suggests to her husband that Bertha is not his child. Since it is now uncertain if Bertha is his, the father then realizes he has no legal rights over the girl. Instead of
calling the woman's bluff, the devastated father falls victim to Laura's cunning. Distraught and confused over Bertha's true parentage and believing Laura had been unfaithful to him in the past, the father becomes increasingly ill-tempered. Laura manages to convince the family doctor she is living with a mentally unsound man. Even the daughter believes her father means her harm and turns her back on him to side with her mother. The desperate man then turns to his only remaining ally, his old nurse Margaret. Yet, she too is convinced the man is insane and comforts and mothers her employer only to lure him into a straitjacket. By the end of the play, the father realizes he has been tormented, emasculated and trapped by his wife, his daughter and his nurse. Before suffering a stroke which takes his life, his last horrifying moments are spent in an all-consuming rage against his fate. In the last analysis, it is Laura, the stronger of the two, who has won the battle of the sexes through the exercise of slow and patient cunning.168

Comrades (1888) is another of Strindberg's plays in which he explores the idea of the domineering, self-centered wife. Set in Paris, the action centers around the lives of a married couple named Axel and Bertha who are both struggling, young artists. Axel is the more gifted of the two, a fact which Bertha resents. In order to appease his wife's jealous nature, Axel submits one of his paintings for exhibition under her name and one of her paintings under his name. The exhibition committee accepts "her" work and rejects "his" work. Unaware of the switch Axel has made and thinking herself to be his artistic superior, Bertha assumes the role of a shrew and humiliates him in front of a gathering of friends. When she finally finds out what her husband has sacrificed for her, she begs his forgiveness. But
it is too late. Axel orders Bertha to leave the house. As she is leaving, Axel reveals what he really wants is a wife, not a comrade. 

The battle of the sexes and the love-hate bond shared between male and female continues in Miss Julie (1888). Miss Julie is a young, spirited girl who lives with her father, the count, on their country estate. One day, while the count is away, Miss Julie deliberately and quite openly entices her father's trusted valet, Jean. Jean initially dissuades the advances of the girl, but he is soon captivated by her charms and subsequently succumbs to her demands. Thus begins their short-lived affair. Mutual attraction is followed by consummation and consummation by a revelation. Miss Julie and Jean know they must now run away or face the consequences of a scandal. As they make their plans to escape, Jean reveals himself to be a rather arrogant young man. In turn, Miss Julie betrays herself to be a man-hater, a trait she has learned from her mother. Jean realizes that he must dominate the girl or become her slave. When she demands to take her most prized possession with her, a pet finch, Jean will not allow it. He destroys the small bird instead. In their mutual antagonism Miss Julie threatens to kill herself, and Jean points to a razor situated on the kitchen table. The count returns. Miss Julie runs from the room with razor in hand, Jean returns to his duties, and both are bitterly disillusioned with love. 

The battle of the sexes persists in Strindberg's one-act drama entitled Creditors (1888). It concerns a love triangle between the artist Adolf, his wife Tekla and Tekla's ex-husband, Gustav. Although Gustav is still in love with Tekla, his love is tempered by hatred and jealousy towards the woman who was once his wife but who is now married to another
man. In order to get even with Tekla, whom he holds responsible for destroying their marriage, Gustav wishes to destroy Tekla's marriage to Adolf. While Tekla is away, Gustav befriends Adolf who is unaware of Gustav's true identity as well as his motives. During the course of a conversation, the two men become engrossed in a discussion concerning the man-woman relationship. Taking this opportunity to turn Adolf against Tekla, Gustav tells Adolf about a particular marriage in which a husband was slowly destroyed by his supposedly "angelic" wife. Being the weaker of the two men, Adolf takes Gustav's story to heart. He becomes confused and begins to doubt himself as well as his wife's love for him. Now that Adolf is under his persuasive powers, Gustav devises a plan in order to demonstrate to the perplexed Adolf the inconstancy of the female heart. His instructions are as follows: When Tekla returns, it is he who will greet her. Meanwhile Adolf will hide in the next room, thus enabling him to overhear the contents of a conversation between "stranger" and wife. Moments later, Tekla returns and confronts the strange man who has invaded her home. Suddenly she recognizes him as her first husband. In the course of their discussion, Gustav has Tekla denounce her love for Adolf and persuades her to return to him as his lover. Shocked by his wife's betrayal, Adolf now emerges from the next room. He suffers a seizure and dies.

Strindberg furthermore explores the theme of woman's fatalness to man in Simoon, written in 1889. In this one-act drama, an Arab girl named Biskra seeks to avenge the suffering of her people as well as the death of her lover which is the end result of the French invasion of her homeland. Set in the Algerian desert, where the simoon (a strong African wind) rages mercilessly, fate delivers to Biskra a French soldier named Guimard who has
just battled through such winds. He is now near death from lack of water. Though it is in Biskra's power to let the soldier live or die, she chooses the latter. Whereas nature has failed to destroy the French invader, she will not. Using every means at her disposal, including her ability to hypnotize her victim, she gives Guimard sand which he thinks is water. She holds up a skull to his face and tells him it is a mirror. Moreover, she conjures other mental mirages, such as Guimard's wife in the arms of a lover. Finally, in his anguish and pain, Guimard loses all sense of reality, as well as his will to live, and dies.172

As a result of his plays of the late 1880s, Strindberg was becoming known as a brilliant playwright in literary circles throughout Europe. Yet, despite such growing fame, Strindberg remained an unhappy man. Like the fatal women in his dramas of the late 1880s, who trouble and torment the men in their lives, Strindberg's wife was for him a constant source of irritation and torment. In fact, the battles between husband and wife intensified and eventually led to their separation. In 1892, during embittered divorce proceedings, Siri was awarded custody of their three small children. The playwright felt hopelessly lost but continued to write and publish.

In 1892, Strindberg wrote no less than five plays. Some of these point directly to his relationship with Siri, whom he now considered his worst enemy. In The Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, for example, a blacksmith grieves over the loss of his three children who are taken from him by the plague. Now alone, the blacksmith must find his own way back to happiness.173 In The Bond, a powerful courtroom drama, a husband and wife are seeking a divorce. Because of their hatred for each other, both
are ruled equally unfit to rear their child and he becomes instead a ward of the court.\(^{174}\) Such dramas were followed by other plays in which Strindberg continued to depict women as evil and self-centered, just as he had in the works of the late 1880s. In *Mother Love* (1892), Strindberg portrays maternal devotion as selfish and destructive.\(^{175}\) Equally cruel are the women in *Facing Death* (1892). Similar in theme to *The Father* (1887), in which three women destroy the male protagonist in that play, in this one-act drama Strindberg focuses his attentions on the life of a fictitious character named M. Durand whose three ungrateful daughters had been taught by their dead mother to scorn their father. In one final desperate moment Durand sets fire to the house he shares with his daughters and then takes his own life in order to escape his offspring.\(^{176}\)

Strindberg also wrote *Playing with Fire* in 1892. This satirical love comedy concerns the lives of three people who are involved in a love triangle. There is Kerstin, her husband Knut and her lover, Axel. Aware of the affair, Knut devises a plan to drive away his wife's lover. He takes Axel aside one day and tells him he will leave his wife on one condition: Axel must promise to marry Kerstin. Such a proposition makes Axel nervous and his love for Kerstin quickly dissolves. The triumphant husband then returns to his wife and is reconciled with her.\(^{177}\)

There was to be no such truce between Strindberg and Siri. Afflicted, but not yet beaten, the playwright fought valiantly against the women he felt would destroy him. At this time Ola Hansson (Strindberg's Swedish colleague) invited the playwright to join him in Berlin.\(^{178}\) Hansson, who frequented the Ferkel Circle, had written *Sensitiva Amorosa* (1887) which concerns the futility of men relating to women.\(^{179}\) Arriving in 1892,\(^{180}\)
Strindberg not only went to the Weinstube but renamed it Zum Schwarzen Ferkel. After being the star attraction there for several weeks, Strindberg moved to Weimar where he became involved with a married actress who soon left with her husband. With the help of Stanislaw Przybyszewski, Strindberg returned to the Ferkel Circle in Berlin. Shortly thereafter he was introduced to Edvard Munch. Soon after their initial meeting, Munch executed a portrait of Strindberg. In spite of his displeasure with the painting, Strindberg and Munch became close friends.

While the two men were becoming acquainted with each other and commiserating about their relations with women, the citizens of Berlin were becoming aware of Strindberg and his work via the theatre, just as they had been introduced to Munch and his paintings by way of his landmark exhibition at the Architektenhaus in November 1892. In late January 1893, Strindberg's one-act drama Creditors opened at the Residenz. In marked contrast to the manner in which Munch's show was received, Strindberg's play was a huge success.

Besides Strindberg, perhaps the most dominating personality at Zum Schwarzen Ferkel was the Polish novelist, playwright and essayist, Stanislaw Przybyszewski (1868-1927) who not only shared the spotlight with Strindberg within the Ferkel Circle but also emerged as one of its most influential thinkers as well as one of its most respected members.

A student of architecture in 1889, Przybyszewski then came to study medicine at Berlin University in 1890. Known for his brilliance in the field of neurology, the young medical student had written a paper on the structure of the spinal cord which had earned him a scholarship. Besides this contribution to the field of medicine, Przybyszewski's accurate
anatomical drawings of the spinal cord had aided another member of the
Ferkel Circle, physician Carl Schleich, in his discovery of local
anesthesia. 187

Przybyszewski pursued other interests as well. He wrote an essay
entitled Chopin und Nietzsche (1892) which won him the respect of modernist
circles in Berlin. He was also editor of the socialist magazine Gazeta
Robotnicza (Workers' Gazette) from 1892 to 1893. Because of his
contributions to the Polish Workers' Movement based in Berlin as well as
other "suspect" socialist activities, Przybyszewski was expelled from
Berlin University which ended his aspirations for a medical career.
Despite this setback, Przybyszewski pursued a career in writing. 188

Przybyszewski was a prolific reader and drew inspiration for his
writings from works by Immanuel Kant, Arthur Schopenhauer and Friedrich
Nietzsche. 189 He was equally interested in psychology, particularly the
psychology of sex, as well as hypnosis, the occult, music and art. His
interest in these subjects led him to call for a new art form based on the
irrational, the intuitive and the subjective which, in turn, led him to
renounce Naturalism and Realism. He was also well versed in the works of
the French Symbolists and Decadents, beginning with Charles Baudelaire. 190
In fact, according to Julius Meier-Graefe: "The country to the west,
the Paris of Huysman [sic] and Rops, provided the basis for Stachu's
[Przybyszewski's] dissertations on pathological eroticism . . . " 191

Przybyszewski reacted to the world around him in psycho-sexual terms.
He also made use of his own sexual experiences as material for his novels,
essays and plays. In such works, he explores women as perilous to him but
as necessary forces in his life as well. Predating Sigmund Freud,
Przybyszewski likewise believed that the sexual drive is the most powerful force in human existence and the primary motivation behind all human behavior and creative endeavor. Jethro Bithell remarks:

Przybyszewski's importance in literary history lies in his preaching of sex as the ineluctable purpose of life and as the creative organ of art and literature. 'Art,' he says, 'is nothing but a game that sex plays with the brain.' And since life is made up of pain and disgust (Schopenhauer's doctrine), what life springs from—that is, sex—must be the same.

A discussion of Przybyszewski's works on pathological eroticism begins with *Zur Psychologie des Individuums, II (Concerning the Psychology of the Individual)*. In it Przybyszewski contemplates his love for woman as follows:

Why do I love woman?

... The woman that strikes the finest and deepest strings of my being slips without objection into my brain, and I love her with the deep, undetermined feeling of acceptance with which I love the land that has formed my soul.

I love in the woman my self, my own ego raised to its greatest intensity; my fragmented states, napping in all the corners of my mind and in which the most inner secret of my existence rests, have collected around this woman like iron shavings around a magnet...

And the woman that I love, that is I, my most intimate and inner ego, my ego as arrière-fond, as distant background, myself seen from a bird's eye view, me, the object of a mirroring plain.

Expressing a physical and spiritual attraction for women in terms of reflecting his own self-gratification, Przybyszewski seeks a kind of androgynous fulfillment or merger of the "entire" self. The feminine nature of man is one that not only reflects the masculine nature but merges with it. Przybyszewski identifies with the "other," becomes one with it and, thus, matures as a "whole" being.

Przybyszewski postulates further this psycho-sexual view of humanity in *Totenmesse (Requiem Mass)* of 1893. Imitating the opening of Genesis, he writes: "In the beginning was sex. Nothing outside it—everything
Sex is for Przybyszewski the prime creator of the world, as well as "the innermost essence of individuality." Sexuality is so fundamental to his conception of life that it is even seen as motivating primary matter. "It [sexuality] was the power through which the atoms were piled atop each other by Me," Przybyszewski writes, "the blind passion that inspired them [atoms] to copulate so that elements and worlds could appear."

Inasmuch as sexuality is seen to be a fundamental creator, it is also a destroyer of these worlds. Placing himself into the very matter of his theory, he then claims that his or anyone else's sexual atrophy is the result of cerebral hypertrophy. Such an imbalance is to be remedied by sexual orgies. The role of a woman is the sexual redeemer, likened both to the dawn of Easter morning and to a bright, burning flame. A night of passion is performed on the high altar of love where "hotly desired happiness" of a man becomes one with a woman because of the "insane force" of desire. The sexual climax is "the incarnation of the Logos as it became the gospel of the flesh." It is "the meeting point of the past and the future, the bridge between what is gone and what will come, the pledge of a new evolution." Having merged with a woman offers relief from "my own suffering" but it is only a flash in a pan-sexuality. The once burning flame becomes a metaphoric dying ember. Thus, sexual encounters with a woman are only momentary illusions of happiness and are ultimately destructive for a man. Because a woman promises fulfillment but cannot produce it, the opposite sex for him is an opposing force that allures and is ultimately fatal.
A major source of inspiration for Przybyszewski's erotic outpourings, and, in fact, the man to whom he dedicated *Requiem Mass*, was the poet Richard Dehmel (1864-1920)—a member of the Ferkel Circle.  

Like Przybyszewski, Dehmel considered women as temptresses of the flesh, demonic forces, and eternal perils. In this belief he was in agreement with Arthur Schopenhauer, Friedrich Nietzsche and August Strindberg. Yet, unlike these men, and in keeping with the views held by Przybyszewski, Dehmel likewise considered women necessary evils as well as eternal riddles to be contemplated, sought after, and sanctified. In keeping with his ideas concerning the exaltation of demonic women whom he worshipped as cult figures with sadistic pleasure, Dehmel also believed in the celebration of sexual love.

As a disciple of Nietzsche, Dehmel believed moral law to be relative. Simply put, whatever is pleasurable redeems; whatever is not damns. True sexual love cancels evil, and sin becomes virtue. To assert (not deny) love brings about total peace, total harmony. It is therefore one's "solemn" and "divine" duty to seek and find sexual love which brings with it a cosmic, mystical revelation, a oneness with the universe, an absolution of self. Seeking absolution of self through sexual love became the major driving force in Dehmel's life as well as a predominate theme in his works.

While secretary of the union of German Fire Insurance Companies, a position he held after earning a doctorate degree in economics, Dehmel wrote and published several books of poetry in which he explores the subject of sexual love, the nature of women and his relationship with them.
In his first book of poems entitled Erlösungen (Releases) of 1891, Dehmel deals with the all too human struggle between matter and spirit. In order to reconcile the two, Dehmel seeks ways in which to transfuse matter with spirit. He does this by likening the sexual experience to a mystical experience. The sexual act is released from a purely animalistic activity to the realm of the mystical and the divine. Because the physical self could be infused with the spiritual self through sexual love, Dehmel views himself the "redeemer" of all the young women he has deflowered. Furthermore, only through following basic sexual instincts could one hope to find perfect wisdom; only through total sexual surrender could one hope to attain absolution. For this reason Dehmel vows to live only for passion which is synonymous with redemption:

I was conceived during a wild night and in the greatest ecstasy of passion!
And now I yearn to live only for passion, just as passion conceived me; . . .

While these poems seek to reconcile the differences between matter and spirit through the exaltation of sexual love, Aber die Liebe (But What of Love) of 1893 focuses its attention on defining love in its various manifestations.

In some of these poems Dehmel concludes that because a mother's love for her child is selfless, it is the closest to perfect love and, therefore, redemptive. In addition, Dehmel also includes a series of poems entitled "Verwandlungen der Venus" ("The Transformations of Venus"), in which he perceives a woman as the goddess of love, but in various guises ranging from the most profane Venus Perversa (in which the poet witnesses a nun committing onanism) to one of the most spiritual and purified
personifications of love, i.e., his Venus Heroica. Besides this series of poems there are others as well.214

"The Bastard" is a poem wherein Dehmel dreams of a tree which grows from his heart and on which a female vampire perches with rushing wings. When Apollo's chariot passes near the tree, the god approaches and couples with the vampire whose womb instantly swells and who implores Apollo to remain. In disgust the god leaves in his chariot. With convulsive fingers the vampire digs the Son of Light from her body and, as the poet-dreamer awakes, repeats a curse from the poem's first stanza.215

Condemned as immoral and diabolical, Dehmel was charged with sexual license and blasphemy.216 Conversely, for the artistic and literary radicals of Berlin, Dehmel became the prophet of a sexual cult.217 Whatever solace his friends may have provided, Dehmel was tortured by self-doubt and nearly suicidal when a woman rejected his sexual advances; apparently, he even suffered from hallucinations and nightmares.218 The title of But What of Love embodies his fatal encounters with women.

Another who associated with Berlin's Ferkel Circle was Marta Foerder, Przybyszewski's common law wife and mother of his child.219 "He loved her and idolized his son," Strindberg writes, "but pride and ambition made him reluctant to bow beneath the yoke of matrimony; he feared," the playwright continues, "the chain and considered woman as a genius of evil, a microcosm, an earth-spirit, which mates with dust and clay."220 During late 1892 and early 1893, Przybyszewski, Foerder and Strindberg were close friends, as revealed in Strindberg's roman à clef, The Cloister. In this book, a fictional character (Przybyszewski) offers his wife to the narrator (Strindberg) because "she's always pleased to see you, and you'll be doing
me an honour." Przybyszewski encouraged Scandinavian writers living in Berlin. He even supported Strindberg whom he felt to be more important than Émile Zola. However, these writers of the Ferkel Circle began to turn against their advocate and each other. According to Strindberg, this antagonism centered on the admission of women to the Circle:

The Porker is very busy just now. It does not even miss me. It intends to admit ladies to its Round Table, in a gold-miner's camp that is risky. Women mean colour and life but conflict and evil as well. It's only natural that every man should want to have a woman of his own in his tent. That has been man's prerogative since Paradise. But not one of us has. Animosity is already stirring; the coming of woman proclaims itself by the sharp tension between the men, just as the whale's coming may be perceived when the still surface of the water suddenly shivers and hurls up a sudden spout.

The first such woman directly involved with the Ferkel Circle was Frida Uhl, a cultural correspondent in Berlin for Vienna's daily newspaper, the Wiener Zeitung. In spite of tensions between Frida and Strindberg, the two became engaged. Meanwhile, Munch was seeing Dagny Juell. According to Strindberg, Munch was afraid to introduce Dagny to the Ferkel Circle on account of Strindberg himself: "... I'm afraid of you," Strindberg quotes Munch. "She's read your books and never talks of anything but you." According to Frida Uhl, the playwright once remarked of Dagny:

I have not seen her. But I can tell you how Munch sees her. It does not concern him how others see her. All that man demands of woman is, that she should be able [to] awaken an illusion in him and not destroy it again immediately. Woman is and ever will be the clay which man moulds into his ideal according to his needs.

Because Strindberg became engaged to Frida Uhl, Munch falsely felt that he could safely introduce Dagny Juell to the Ferkel Circle.
Later, Adolf Paul, a chronicler of the Ferkel Circle, recalled the evening and also the much awaited arrival of Dagny herself:

One day she stepped into the Ferkel at Munch's side—blond, thin, elegant, and dressed with a sense of refinement that understood how to hint at the body's sensuous movements but avoided giving too clearly defined contours. Thus tempting a man's robust strength without destroying the fashionable decadent nervous glorification of the head with too much 'unmotivated' fleshiness! A classic, pure profile, her face overshadowed by a jumble of curls!... A laugh that inspired a longing for kisses and simultaneously revealed her two rows of pearllike white teeth that lurked behind the thin lips awaiting the opportunity to latch on! And in addition, a primeval, affected sleepiness in her movements, never excluding the possibility of a lightening-quick attack.

Describing Dagny in terms of a goddess, a temptress, a vampire and a tigress, Paul sets the tone of her introduction. A competition ensued between the male members of the Ferkel Circle for Dagny's affections. In The Cloister Strindberg fictionalizes that "In less than an hour" Dagny "had broken with her friend" Munch and "was now allied with the Swede, who only half an hour before had been kissing his bride-to-be good-bye." Such was Dagny's tempting allure.

Section V: The Influence of the Christiania Bohème and the Ferkel Circle on Munch's Fatal Woman Theme

Thus far, accounts of the lives and works of the Christiania Bohème and the Ferkel Circle demonstrate the close affinities between the literary members of these groups and the pictorial and literary works by Munch. Munch saw, heard, read and felt the works of his associates which affected and shaped the development of the fatal woman motif in his art of the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first decade of this century. The notion of the fatal woman also derived from Munch's concurrent and
unsuccessful relationships with certain women, including Fru Heiberg, Dagny Juell Przybyszewski, Judith Molard, Tulla Larsen and Eva Mudocci. Munch simultaneously loved, even worshipped, them as much as he hated and then cursed them. They were his artistic muses and the specific occasions of his tormented sexual fantasies. Carla Lathe remarks that the artist's "association with writers who published intensely introspective literature influenced the development of Munch's images." The way in which they did so will now be examined.

Such a discussion must include not only a reintroduction of previously discussed works but deliberations of the literary works by the members of the Christiania Bohème and the Ferkel Circle that directly influenced Munch's fatal woman motif. Because many associates of the Bohème migrated to Berlin during the early 1890s, the influences of the Bohème and the Ferkel group on Munch's fatal woman motif must be seen in unison.

The influences of both the Bohème and the Ferkel group on Munch's fatal woman motif may be examined in Madonna (Fig. 60a) of 1893 and its later color lithographic version (Fig. 74) of 1895. The painting depicts a naked woman seen from the waist up. Her arms are held behind her body, and her head tilts to one side while her eyes are closed. Around the woman's head there is a scarlet halo. In later lithographic copies of the painted version of Madonna, the woman's pose is retained and the artist adds to these works a scarlet frame with spermatozoa and a male fetus.

Certain members of the Ferkel Circle were obsessed with a pathological passion for women to whom they surrendered body and soul. For instance, Richard Dehmel's Erlösungen (Releases) of 1891 includes a poem entitled "The Creed." In it, the poet vows to live for passion alone, just as
passion had conceived him.231 In Stanislaw Przybyszewski's Totenmesse (Requiem Mass) of 1893, the central protagonist describes a night of passionate ecstasy with a woman who experiences "a painful delight."232 As Reinhold Heller observes, the woman in Madonna is experiencing just such a moment of aching agitation.233 Such a disturbance is visually reinforced by the way colorful waves, ranging from purple to scarlet, emanate from the woman's body. Moreover, whereas the viewpoint may be seen above the woman, the viewer-as-lover is intimately involved with the woman as if in bed. Przybyszewski's protagonist suggests that in such a union there is the conceivability of not just a new biological life but an "all powerful pan-sexuality, the melting point of the past and future" in which there is a "pledge of a new evolution."234 Munch's lithographic version of Madonna presents just such a vision.

Both versions of Madonna are also indicative of a vision of fatal terror. Edith Hoffmann compares them to the woman-as-grim reaper of deathly pestilence in Félicien Rops' Mors Syphilitica (Fig. 75) of c. 1878.235 Peter Schjeldahl sees Munch's lithographic version representing ". . . a moment of death-like loss for the lover, henceforth of no more biological significance than the drone ant after mating with a queen."236 Robert Rosenblum remarks that Munch's works express " . . . his own and his generation's Strindbergian morbidity and pessimism about woman as a monstrous pawn of nature" in that the woman represents "a post-Darwinian femme fatale whose irresistible sexual magnetism perpetuates the species."237 These commentators view the works as expressing the nightmare of a union-dream in which artist and viewer become the precarious partners of sexual surrender.
It was, indeed, the art of Félicien Rops which prompted Przybyszewski to view his particular form of eroticism as pathological in *Requiem Mass*. Rops' *Mors Syphilitica* (Fig. 75) of c. 1878 and *The Sacrifice* (Fig. 76) of the "Sataniques" series of 1883 portray the union of women and death. *The Sacrifice* depicts death emanating from a woman's loins on a high altar, as if to reveal to the spectator some bizarre satanic rite in which woman is the harbinger of death during sexual union. In *Requiem Mass*, Przybyszewski's protagonist is "sacrificed" by a fatal woman. Munch once described the woman in *Madonna* as having the "smile of a corpse." As in the works of Rops and Przybyszewski, Munch's *Madonna* represents the artist-viewer surrendering sexually to a *femme fatale*.

Such sexual surrender by a male consort to a fatal woman is the theme of Strindberg's drama *The Father* (1888). Munch owned a well-worn copy of this play. At one point, the husband is tricked by his wife into believing he is not the biological father of his child, and he succumbs to insanity. Before he dies, he likens his wife to a fatal queen. In the works by Strindberg, Przybyszewski, Rops and Munch the theme of feminine fatality is coupled with her biological triumph and with a man's awareness of his insignificance. Munch reinforces in the versions of *Madonna* the singular aspect of the fatal woman by showing her hands behind her back instead of embracing the artist-viewer and depicting her eyes closed instead of openly communicating with the artist-viewer. The lithographic version of *Madonna* makes explicit the insignificant position of man, who is literally marginal in such a union with a fatal woman.

The male fetus in the lower left-hand corner of Munch's lithograph is skeletal and, according to Robert Rosenblum, is similar to the foreground
Furthermore, Edith Hoffmann, likens the fetus to Rops' depiction of a dead child who is crushed under the feet of a femme fatale in Le dessous de cartes d'une partie de Whist. Thus, the woman in Madonna destroys the life of not just her viewer-mate but also the union's male offspring.

In addition, Richard Dehmel's poem "The Bastard" concerns the mating between Apollo and a vampire. This union quickly produces a male fetus which the vampire violently dislodges and discards from her womb in disgust. Przybyszewski's notion of sexuality as the "external creative, transformatory-destructive" and Dehmel's depiction of abandoned offspring are combined in Munch's lithograph.

If the woman in Madonna has, according to Munch himself, the "smile of a corpse," then she is indeed a vampire similar to the one Dehmel depicts in his poem. Moreover, the male fetus in the lithograph is detached from the scarlet frame-as-womb; it is shriveled and appears to shiver in its forsaken terminus. Could the woman's closed eyes suggest, too, that Munch's vampire is ready to awaken for her next victim, who could well be the viewer? In any case, Munch depicts his notion of man-as-victim in the face of a fatal woman who alone possesses the power of life and death and makes man to feel as if he has never been born.

The woman-as-vampire is, as Mario Praz has shown, an image used by many late nineteenth century writers. Munch's mentor Hans Jaeger refers repeatedly in Fra Christiania Bohemen (1885) to the bird of prey as a metaphor for love. "When it comes, [love] descends on us like a bird of prey on its victim. We do not have control of it!" It is precisely this image Munch portrays in his 1894 drypoint Vampire (Fig. 77). In a
notebook entry, Munch writes that such "a bird of prey has fixed itself within me; its claws have dug into my heart, its beak has pierced my chest, and the beating of its wings has clouded my brain." 251

In Munch's print a man's corpse lies prostrate in the foreground. Next to it, the decapitated head of another man seems to stare at the viewer. In the background a skeletal figure is writing in a notebook. Above the foreground corpse a vampire/harpy appears with outspread wings indicating that it has just landed on the corpse. It places its claws on the corpse's chest and tears its flesh. Furthermore, the bearded, decapitated head near the corpse might represent the severed head of St. John the Baptist, a motif used copiously by Munch as discussed elsewhere in this study. 252 According to Tyrgve Nergaard, it is a portrait of the writer Christian Krohg, 253 who was a member of both the Christiania Bohème and the Ferkel Circle. It is possible that the background skeletal figure represents Jaeger himself hard at work on Fra Christiania Bohemen, his grim tale of love and death. Finally, the foreground corpse who is in the process of being torn to pieces by the rapacious harpy is none other than the artist himself, as his quoted notebook entry indicates: a woman's love for him is all-consuming and he feels himself to be her helpless victim.

Munch's companions within the Ferkel Circle used the vampire motif. Richard Dehmel's poem "The Bastard," as already discussed in connection with Munch's Madonna of 1895, describes a hellacious nightmare. The poet dreams of a tree which grows from his heart and from which a female vampire emerges, signaling her arrival with beating wings. Yet, while deriving life and nourishment from the dreaming poet in parasitic fashion, she does not choose him for her mate. Instead, causing the poet to suffer great
pain, she couples with another over his groaning heart. 254 Although the woman seen in Munch's *Vampire* does not correspond in total with the vampire Dehmel depicts in his poem, the similarities between poem and picture are too obvious to ignore. That is, because there appears an uncanny correlative between Dehmel's description of his vampire who with beating wings hovers over the poet's heart and the manner in which Munch chose to depict his winged vampire who hooks her claws into the chest of Munch-as-victim, one might assume the two men discussed different ways of influencing each other's visions of parasitic, rapacious women destroying male victims.

In turn, both men may have been inspired by August Strindberg who often portrays his women as vicious vampires in his writings. Strindberg's drama *Creditors* (1890) was produced in Berlin at the Residenz Theatre in January 1893. 255 At this time the playwright and artist were still friends. Munch attended the premiere performance of Strindberg's drama, and the artist was an acquaintance of the leading lady who played the shrewish wife. 256 "Leave me," her husband pleads, "You are clawing my brain apart with your rough pincers. You are tearing my thoughts to pieces." 257 Munch's print and notebook entry may be seen as reiterating Strindberg's victimized husband who, like Munch, feels that his mind and body are about to be torn asunder. As an analogue, the woman as consuming vampire/harpy is represented not only in Jaeger's novel, Dehmel's poem and Strindberg's drama, but in Friedrich Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo* (1900) as well.

During the year that Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo* was published, Munch returned to the theme of woman as vampire in the print *Harpy* (Fig. 78). With cravings for a man's flesh, the bird-woman hovers over a decomposing
male figure. In the distant horizon, a palm tree indicates a desert setting. According to Reidar Dittmann, this print freely illustrates Strindberg's one-act drama *Simoon* (1890) in which there is "a profoundly pessimistic image of the inevitably destructive consequence of the relationship between man and woman, and is therefore a commentary on Strindberg's persistent misogynist view."\(^{258}\) Strindberg's drama concerns a young Bedouin girl named Biskra who is determined to kill a French soldier by psychological means.\(^{259}\)

Dittmann remarks that Strindberg's *Simoon* is also related to Munch's *The Kiss of Death* (Fig. 79) of 1899.\(^{260}\) Here, Munch depicts a confrontation between a man's skull and the face of a woman. In *Simoon* Biskra holds a skull to the soldier's face and tries to convince him that he is looking at himself in a mirror: \(^{260a}\) "Look at yourself in the mirror! . . . Don't you see your protruding cheeks--don't you see how the vultures have eaten your eyes. . . ?"\(^{261}\) The soldier succumbs helplessly to insanity and death.

Thematically linked to *The Kiss of Death* is Munch's *The Girl and Death* (Fig. 64) of 1894. In this work, a nude woman is embracing and kissing a skeletal corpse within a frame consisting of sperm and dead male embryos, similar to the use of the frame motif in Munch's *Madonna* (Fig. 74). *The Girl and Death* also relates to Strindberg's *Simoon*. Not only does the character Biskra seduce and kill the soldier but, while convincing him he is already dead, she also conjures images of his wife in the arms of a lover and describes his child in the grips of death.\(^{262}\) It is through the seductive magic of words that Strindberg's Biskra conjures death to her victim. So too does Munch's image produce a sense of victimization to
the viewer. In fact, Munch once intended The Girl and Death to be the frontispiece for a collaborative book by himself, Stanislaw Przybyszewski, and Strindberg. Doubtlessly, this book would have been about the fatal themes of love, suffering and death in man-woman relationships, as in Strindberg's A Madman's Manifesto (1893) and Przybyszewski's Requiem Mass (1893).

In addition, two of Munch's major paintings, Vampire (Fig. 7) of 1893 and Ashes (Fig. 13) of 1894, refer to Strindberg's drama The Father (1887). The artist's two works, as discussed previously, were precipitated by Munch's encounters with Fru Heiberg and Dagny Juell Przybyszewski respectively. The paintings are also indicative of the manner in which Strindberg and Munch shared similar ideas concerning women as fatal to man.

The title character in Strindberg's The Father tries to cope not only with his vampirish wife but the household nurse. The nurse feigns affection towards her employer long enough to gain his trust. She then lures him into a straitjacket and causes him to have a fatal stroke. Before his fatal fall, the sick and exhausted man implores a favor from the seemingly obedient nurse:

Come and sit beside me, here, on the chair. That's right. May I rest my head in your lap? So. That's warm! Bend over so that I can feel your breast. Oh, it is sweet to sleep at a woman's breast, whether a mother's or a mistress's, but sweetest at a mother's!

These words are illustrated in Munch's Vampire in which a man rests his head in the lap of a seated woman who presses herself close to him in an apparent gesture of maternal love and protectiveness. Like Strindberg's deceptive nurse, Munch's woman has lured a man into a fatal trap only to
drain him of his life and will. It is through trust and abandonment to
women, who seemingly provide a rescue from loneliness, that the unassuming
males in Strindberg's play and Munch's painting become victims of their
feminine executioners.

"Man can never get rid of the Vampire and the pain either," comments
Stanislaw Przybyszewski on Munch's work. "Woman will always sit there and
eternally bite with a thousand serpent tongues and a thousand fangs." Munch's friend saw the painting in terms of an endless, diabolical ritual,
just as Strindberg's character submits to his wife's relentless harassment
and to the nurse's literal restraint, which incapacitates him. In 1896,
the year The Father was produced in Paris, Strindberg wrote that the male
in Munch's Vampire seems an "imploring" and a "despairing figure kneeling
before his worse self," as well as "the madman in quest of unhappiness,
the divine unhappiness of being loved, or rather of loving." Just as
the playwright's title character gives in to deep despondency over failed
love and seeks condolence in another woman at his weakest moment, Munch's
male figure surrenders to a woman who is a literal death trap that saps his
life away.

Strindberg's The Father also corresponds to Munch's Ashes. In Ashes,
the artist depicts a man and a woman at the edge of a forest setting.
Shown after what appears to have been an unfulfilling sexual encounter
between them, the woman, whose weary and empty expression betrays her
unhappiness with her lover, presently assumes a standing position and fixes
her hair in readiness to leave him. In marked contrast to her, the man
huddles in the corner of the picture. In fact, dressed in funerary black
and seemingly to have collapsed under the heavy burden of deep despair and
loss, the man who regretfully turns his back to the woman and buries his head in his hand now appears to mourn for an irretrievable love. Rocks, as scenic metaphors for the death of their love, lie scattered about the ground like so many stones marking forgotten graves. The leaves of the forest have browned and withered like those in late autumn preceding the mortiferous onslaught of winter. As if having been struck by lightning a fallen tree, seen in the foreground, appears smoldering and ready to disintegrate into a pile of ashes like the last dying embers of a once brightly burning flame. Munch writes of this work:

Never before had she been together with him for so long—he begged her not to go—he was hot as never before—he desired, had to embrace her again, to feel her kiss again-again. The flame was extinguished when they got up again.

She stood very tall and erect in the posture of a queen as she ordered her hair. Something in her expression aroused fear in him—he could not figure out what it was.

Munch continues:

We walked out of the hot-flower-filled forest . . . out into the light-evening night . . . I looked at her face . . . a Medusa head. I felt as if your love . . . lay on the hard stones.

The artist also notes: "I felt our love lying like a heap of ashes upon the ground." He concludes:

The men of old were right when they said that love was a flame—because when it is burnt out, all that remains is a pile of ashes.

Confessions of a man whose once passionate love for a woman has turned to ashes and bitter disillusionment, these notes also relate to a specific encounter between the husband and his wife in Strindberg's The Father.

In one very disquieting scene the husband confronts his wife with a confession. Specifically, in his meeting with the woman who now stands before him like a triumphant queen over her conquered subject, the broken
and despairing husband begins by referring to his wife as "Omphale." Omphale was the queen of Lydia who so enraptured Hercules that he, for a period of time, became her slave and grew effeminate under her powerful domination. Subsequent to his remark, the husband wonders what has become of their love. Responding fatalistically to his own question, he then recalls an earlier time when his love was joyous and new. Particularly focusing on remembrances of their long ago meetings in a forest setting where he desired her most and the glow of love shone bright, the husband then refers to the oppressive present. Intimating that love is a fragile affair which can easily die if not rekindled by the fire of passion, the husband again anguishes as he attempts to understand what went wrong between them. Currently viewing himself as a spent force, he likewise sees himself as the vanquished victim of a love which will never return. He even intimates that love is a fallacious pursuit which leads to nothing save pain, suffering and emptiness. The husband ends his speech by likening his wife to some monstrous, modern day goddess and damning the woman and all her sex. Consequently, Strindberg's title character concedes defeat and blames all women for having killed his capacity to love: "What became of love--healthy, sensuous love? It died, starved." The excerpt from Strindberg's play reads as follows:

Laura--when you were young--and we walked in the birch woods among the primroses--and thrushes sang! Beautiful, beautiful! How beautiful life was! And now it has become like this. You didn't want it to be like this, I didn't want it, and yet it happened. Who rules our lives? . . . . the goddess, nowadays! . . . . Strength has been vanquished by craft and weakness! Curse you, damn woman, and all your sex!
These words not only bare a likeness to the manner in which Munch himself came to depict the love turned to ashes motif, but are particularly reminiscent in tone to the artist's notes which point to Ashes.

Both Munch and Strindberg employ a "Medusa," to use Munch's term, who represents women as being fatal. She is seen destroying any male's capacity to love and then defeating him. Love between the sexes is not just fallacious but futile: a hopelessly irretrievable pile of ashes. This theme is seen in works by other members of the Ferkel Circle as well.

The fatalistic opinions of the artist's literary friends concerning love and women continued to affect the artistic development of Munch's fatal woman theme. In fact, Munch's The Three Stages of Woman (The Sphinx) (Fig. 80) of 1894, which portrays a woman in three definitive stages of life ranging from the innocence of youth to the ravages of old age, is another of the artist's works pointing to the combined influence of his friends from both the Christiania Bohème and the Ferkel Circle.

Christian Krohg was, during 1884-1889, one of Munch's mentors in the Christiania Bohème. Krohg's suppressed novel Albertine (1886) concerns a young working woman who is at first youthful and innocent. After a sexual encounter with an unscrupulous policeman, Albertine becomes a whore. Resigned to her fate as a harlot, she is in the final chapter a depraved, deteriorated and spent woman. In order to explore further this character, Krohg painted Albertine in the Police Doctor's Waiting Room (Fig. 71) of 1887. In this painting, prostitutes in various stages of life are gathered together in the police station. Each one awaits her turn to be examined by the police doctor. Juxtaposed to the other women who
surround her, Albertine appears in profile. Although she is being led into the police doctor's office by her seducer, with her head slightly bent in shame and her back to the others, Albertine still exudes an air of innocence and youth which the other women have lost. In marked contrast to Albertine, the two women seen in the center foreground are most exemplary of the next two stages of life beyond youth and innocence. The younger, a woman who stands erect and faces the spectator with a defiant stare and a cavalier smile, appears a brazen temptress. Not only does she represent the middle stage of life in which a woman's sexual prowess is at its peak, but she is also a vision of the future Albertine. The older woman has bent posture and leans on her female companion and parasol alike. This woman represents the last stage of life before death. In fact, her energy spent, she is a portrait of what both Albertine and the temptress will become in time.282

Taken together, these three principle figures in Krohg's painting—a work which Munch himself may have had some small part in producing—represent the three sexual stages of a woman's life.

Seen as a visual reiteration of Albertine herself (as Krohg portrayed her in his painting), yet perhaps more ethereal, is the girl dressed in white in Munch's The Three Stages of Woman (The Sphinx). Likewise, Munch's figure has her back to the other women and is seen in profile. Now located outside in Munch's painting, she walks toward the sea. Representing youth and innocence and therefore the first stage in life, she is a reflection of what the other two women have already been. In the center of Munch's painting, and representing the middle stage of life, is the temptress. She is a nude figure who faces us with her arms raised behind her head. Her
eyes stare invitingly at the spectator, and she smiles provocatively. Although more seductive, she corresponds to the woman shown in the middle foreground of Krohg's picture. To her left, as in Krohg's work, appears an older woman. Shown in black with her arms folded in front of her and hidden in the deep shadows of the forest, she appears a specter who represents the last stage of life before death, i.e., a spent force and the phantom image of what the other two women are destined to become in time.

While these similarities exist between Krohg's Albertine in the Police Doctor's Waiting Room and Munch's The Three Stages of Woman (The Sphinx) and while Krohg also may have provided the initial impetus for Munch's thinking of woman in terms of her various sexual stages, it was Krohg's intention, unlike Munch's, to expose the unjust plight and slow degeneration of single, working class women whose sole means of support often meant prostituting themselves. Krohg's work is meant to be, therefore, an objective social-sexual commentary concerning the certain fate and reality of many working class women as well as a critique against society's complacency in such matters. Krohg's novel and painting represent a portrayal of women who in all stages of life are victims in a male dominated society. Such concerns are far removed from what Munch intended to convey in The Three Stages of Woman (The Sphinx).

In fact, the differences between Krohg's painting and Munch's begin with a telling comparison. Krohg's pompous police officer represents woman's archetypical male subjugator. The man in Munch's painting, ostensibly the counterpart of the police officer, is his complete opposite. Seen in the right corner of Munch's picture, this man stands aside and separate from the women and represents the artist. He, with head bent
downward, watches blood flowing from his heart onto his pants and the forest floor. Munch's male figure is the one subjected to and victimized by women who have cast a mysterious spell over him. Consequently, Munch's painting is a commentary concerning his own projected perceptions of his victimization and not a critique of helpless females: in all her forms, guises and phases in life, the fatal woman destroys the artist.

Affecting this variant of the fatal woman motif are literary works by Munch's associates, in particular those by Strindberg during the late 1880s and early 1890s. In these works, the playwright is obsessed with portraying females in three quite distinct stages of existence, each one destructive to the male or males with whom they live. The role of the daughter represents the first stage of life. Strindberg usually characterizes this group of young women as naive, lazy, feckless, spoiled, selfish, irresponsible and careless. In fact, such young females are, typically, shadow images of their dead or living mothers who had or have taught their offspring to despise all men. Therefore, it is often the terrible mother figure who lives on within the daughter to wreak havoc on or destroy the father and/or any man in her life. Female characters in Strindberg's plays who fit this description include: 1) From the play of the same title (1888), Miss Julie, who defies her father at every opportune moment and also attempts to enslave his male servant Jean. 2) The seemingly innocent, rather naive, and most assuredly immature Bertha who is the daughter in The Father (1887). Not only does she mimic her mother by becoming argumentative towards her father when he is weak and ill but sides with her mother against the man which makes her an accessory to his death. 3) There are also the three daughters in Facing Death (1892). Strindberg
characterizes this trio as worthless, lazy, and despicable. Disrespectful towards their elderly father, such young women finally drive the old man to commit suicide which is his only apparent means of escaping from their tyrannical reign over him.

Women portrayed as vampirish wives or temptresses in Strindberg's plays make up the second stage of life. The playwright characterizes these females as vain, selfish, possessive, jealous, cold, uncaring, deceptive, cunning and/or enticing, as well as bent on humiliating and destroying the men in their lives in order to suit their evil purposes. Such women find their representatives in Laura, Bertha, Tekla, and Biskra. Laura, who is the vampirish wife in _The Father_ (1887), not only drives her husband to the brink of insanity but causes him to suffer a fatal stroke as well. Bertha, the wife in _Comrades_ (1888), is another such antagonistic woman. Jealous of her husband's abilities and accomplishments, she attempts to ruin him by belittling and humiliating the man at every opportune moment. Tekla, the wife in _Creditors_ (1890), is equally destructive towards her husband. Deceiving her mate by cavorting with another man behind his back, it is when the husband discovers her betrayal that he suffers a seizure and dies. Likewise, there is Biskra who is the Sphinx-like ventriloquist in _Simoon_ (1890). A battalion of strength, power and enticement, she uses psychological torture as a means of destroying her male prey.

Lastly, there is the mother figure. Representing the final stage of life before death, Strindberg portrays this character type as heartless and cruel, embittered and vengeful. One such woman who falls into this fatal category is the mother in _Mother Love_ (1893). The kind of woman whose hatred towards her ex-lover is so intense that she must keep their
illegitimate daughter from him at all costs, she exemplifies a modern day Medea who, by denying the man the benefit of knowing his offspring, destroys her daughter's will in the process. Another mother figure, in fact the surrogate mother to the family portrayed in the The Father, is the old nurse Margaret. Although she does not possess such evil traits of character as her counterpart in Mother Love, her ability to transform herself into a protective tigress (bearing tooth and claw), when she believes the man of the household means to harm the women of the family, marks her as fatal to man.

All the women in Strindberg's plays of the late 1880s and the early 1890s are portrayed as personages whose sole purpose in all stages of life is to destroy man. However, it is specifically the three fatal women who take part in the complete destruction of the male protagonist in the The Father who best exemplify what Munch wished to convey in The Three Stages of Woman (The Sphinx). That is, like Strindberg before him, who explored the symbolic nature of woman in her multiple destructive roles as daughter, wife, and mother figure, as well as man's fatal relationship with each one, the idea Munch presumably illustrates in The Three Stages of Woman (The Sphinx) is as follows: In all stages of life woman eludes man, is a mystery to him, poses a riddle he cannot solve. And, because man is ill-equipped to do battle with this virtually Sphinx-like creature called woman, who is his natural enemy, he is therefore destined to become her victim instead. Likewise, similar to the female ventriloquist in Simoon who assumes several different disguises once, all designed to confuse, stupefy and destroy her male prey, the women in The Father and the women in Munch's The Three Stages of Woman (The Sphinx), although seemingly three distinct
personages, possess one common denominator, i.e., an ability to destroy man. Thus, because they hold in common this power to destroy man, the trio becomes a symbolic one.

Munch himself clarifies this idea of three as one in the following note:

... Woman in her manysidedness is a mystery to man--Woman who is at one and the same time a saint, a whore, and an unhappy person abandoned.284

With this notation, Munch indicates that the trio of women portrayed in The Three Stages of Woman (The Sphinx) are actually a symbolic representation of one woman possessing several separate identities at once--each contrary to the other, each a mystery to the bewildered artist-made-victim. Such thoughts about woman's changing, perplexing nature seem to have derived from the combined writings of Munch's literary friends from both the Christiania Bohème and the Ferkel Circle.

Consider furthermore the poetry of Sigurd Bødtker. An enthusiastic member of the Christiania Bohème and briefly engaged to the artist's sister (c. 1890-91),285 Bødtker wrote of his own vexations concerning a woman in his book of poems entitled Elskov (Love).286 In this work, he pits the woman's spiritual nature against her carnal nature. In addition, not only does the poet admit his hopeless attachment to the woman sexually but seemingly wallows in a state of perpetual mystification concerning her enigmatic, dualistic nature. Bødtker therefore joins ranks with Munch and several other of the artist's friends, whose own vexations about the insoluble riddle woman poses provided ample material for their writings.

The German poet and Ferkel Circle member Richard Dehmel likewise believed two or more distinct personalities could dwell within the same
person. It was, in fact, an idea he proposed in a letter several years prior to Munch's *The Three Stages of Woman* (*The Sphinx*):

... several totally different personalities can operate effectively in one and the same individual, be it simultaneously, in phases, consciously, 'unconsciously'...

Dehmel also wrote a series of poems called "The Transformations of Venus." Presenting woman in various guises ranging from the most sexually perverse to the most spiritually chaste, the poet seemingly explores woman's nature in terms of something which for him never remains the same but is in a constant state of flux and metamorphosis.

Expressing similar thoughts to those held by Dehmel concerning the way in which several different personalities could operate in the same person simultaneously and particularly in phases, was the Norwegian poet Sigbjørn Obstfelder who was Munch's close friend and onetime affiliate of both the Christiania Bohème and the Ferkel Circle. In his poem "Torture," Obstfelder proclaims: "A woman's whiteness fades ..." and subsequently transforms her into a harlot who tempts yet frightens the sensitive poet. His fate is to remain a hopeless romantic searching endlessly--without compromise--for the one, perfectly chaste woman whom he nevertheless knows does not exist.

The perplexing, insoluble problem of the fatal woman also haunted the former leader of the Christiania Bohème, Hans Jaeger. Specifically, in his *roman à clef* *Syk Kjaerlinhet* (*Sick Love*) of 1893, Jaeger's lover poses a riddle for him. Not only does he see her as a woman possessing two distinct, quite contrary personalities, in fact, a hundred faces altogether, but because she has so many identities all of which elude him,
she is the source of the author's greatest pleasure and fascination, his most anxious moments, and his deepest fears:

You have hundreds of faces. And some of them are elegant and some suddenly angry, but every one of them is beautiful. And some are as fresh as a day in May, and some are ripe and softly pale like a lovely bronze September, and with these hundred faces you go about, a young girl and a mature woman, lady and wench, and tread so lightly on the earth—a Russian princess—une vraie Princesse de Bohème.290

Jaeger continues:

With tense, oppressed heart I lie there on her breast... and powerlessly I lift my face to hers to beg of her... but again I am confronted by that empty insane smile, and again I bury my face on her breast... and then she lets down her hair... frames her soft, melancholy face... she stands there still before me and looks at me... 291

Jaeger concludes:

There was, after all, no more than one true woman on the whole earth—oh, how I trembled! How you coursed through me like a perverse anxiety in my blood! And I saw you leave... and fear ran ever more insanely through my blood; and my entire body shook when suddenly you turned your head and looked at me with with your grave, large-eyed, fatelike face... Oh, God, my God, how I was sick! 292

Sick with desire and longing, trembling with fear, Jaeger's young girl (lady), mature woman (wench) and unhappy person with the "fatelike face" was admittedly for him an unattainable, insoluble mystery.

Jaeger's novel appeared in Berlin the same year it was published (1893).293 It seems evident that The Three Stages of Woman (The Sphinx) of 1894, in which Munch shows us his "saint," his "whore," and his "unhappy person abandoned," according to his quoted note,294 is a work inspired not only by the artist's Ferkel Circle friends but by his interest in Sick Love. Jaeger's fatalistic account of the woman whom he loved above all others yet for whom he also suffered miserably echoes, in part, the artist's own fatal attachment to Dagny Juell Przybyszewski.295 Although the
occasion for The Three Stages of Woman (The Sphinx) may have been Dagny, whose constantly changing nature simultaneously fascinated and frustrated, attracted and repelled Munch,²⁹⁶ it was the artist's Christiania Bohème and Ferkel Circle friends who shaped Munch's thinking and gave impetus to the visual as well as thematic content of this work of art.

Jaeger's Sick Love may also have influenced Gunnar Heiberg, former disciple of Jaeger, onetime member of the Christiania Bohème, and affiliate of the Ferkel Circle. In his well-received drama Balkonen (The Balcony) of 1894, Heiberg portrays his central female character in manner similar to the way in which Jaeger perceives his woman in Sick Love. Heiberg's character is Julia Hessmann, but her spellbound lover sees her as many women at once:

... no, remain standing like that. With your arms raised up high. Stay standing. Everything in you is gay. Yes, smile! All the others are one. You are a thousand.

Seemingly mesmerized by this vision of woman who sends one man tumbling to his death and another taking leave of her despairingly via the balcony, the lover seems to have confronted not only the woman of his dreams but a Sphinx as well.²⁹⁸ Because she remains for him like a thousand pieces to one impossible puzzle he cannot solve, one realizes that, with time, he too will be compelled to leap to his death or otherwise be forced to take his leave of Julia from the balcony.

As Jens Thiis recalled, Munch was deeply moved by The Balcony;²⁹⁹ so much so that when he exhibited The Three Stages of Woman (The Sphinx) in Stockholm in September 1894, the artist used only The Sphinx as the title.³⁰⁰ Furthermore, Munch quoted from Heiberg's work as an epigraph for The Sphinx: "All the others add up to one--you are a thousand."³⁰¹
Vexed and obsessed by the enigmatic female, in fact, made victim of the riddle she posed, there was still another affliction which threatened to destroy both Munch and his friends. Of epidemic proportions the disease was jealousy, and among the discontented members of both the so-called "free love societies" of the Christiania Bohème and the Ferkel Circle, animosity and envy spread like a malignancy and took its toll. The cause for such dire conditions was, in part, woman. But then, too, with the irrepressible Strindberg as the most ardent combatant within this scenario of romantic rivalry among the members of the Ferkel Circle and with jealousy among the major motifs in such plays as Creditors (1890), both life and literature provided the occasion for another of Munch's principle paintings and lithographs in which he portrays woman as lethal to man.

Carla Lathe remarks that Munch could see "medical theories about fluctuations in the mind and heart" demonstrated in Strindberg's Berlin plays such as Creditors, The First Warning and Before Death. Lathe continues:

Strindberg tried to accelerate the exposure of inner life and make it more obvious than in Ibsen's plays, so he exaggerated the mental tension, using distortion of character, time and place. His characters are jealous and neurotic, haunted by their past memories of love and intimacy, as of skeletons in a cupboard or under the floorboards. According to Lathe, Strindberg's "novels and plays expressing the power of heredity, environment, memories, guilt, jealousy and inner anxiety gave impetus to Munch's pictures like . . . Jealousy." "Munch used faces" Lathe observes, "to express a particular situation in much the same way that Strindberg . . . exaggerated or changed characters to make vivid a psychological scene." Munch's Jealousy (Fig. 17) of 1895 and Jealousy
II (Fig. 70) of 1896 can be viewed, therefore, in conjunction with Strindberg's Creditors which was performed at the Residenz Theatre in Berlin in January 1893.

Creditors concerns marital discord and specifics of love, hate and jealousy which produce devastating results. In fact, given the disposition of each of the three principle characters in Creditors, as well as their interpersonal relationships with one another and the devastating psychological transformation of one of them--the cause of which is woman--the play undoubtedly made a lasting impression on Munch and indeed may have provided the impetus, in part, for the pictorial as well as thematic content of his jealousy motif. It may be demonstrated that the figures he depicts in Jealousy I and II are uncanny reflections of the manner in which Strindberg portrays his characters in Creditors.

The central female character in Creditors is Tekla who is married to a hypersensitive artist named Adolf. While she is away from home, Tekla's jealous and vengeful ex-husband Gustav, who wishes to destroy Tekla's marriage to Adolf, visits the husband, befriends him and attempts to turn the artist against his wife. While instilling suspicious doubts in Adolf's mind concerning Tekla's fidelity, Gustav also describes to him the life of another man who was slowly destroyed by his supposedly angelic wife. Gustav then relates to Adolf the details concerning the other man's condition. Portraying him as someone suffering from occasional seizures during which his face would turn chalk white, his arms and legs would become stiff, his eyes would be bloodshot and flicker like gasjets, his chest would appear as though crushed in a vise, it is as though Gustav wishes to intimate that the poor man's horrible wife is the reason for his
epilepsy. Taking this horrid description of another man's suffering to heart, Adolf then begins to ape such attacks. Once Gustav observes that Adolf is in his power, he devises a plan. He instructs Adolf to hide in the next room while he will attempt to demonstrate to him the kind woman Tekla really is.\footnote{305}

When Tekla returns home she is greeted by Gustav whom she has not seen for quite some time. At first she is distant toward him. But, during the course of a conversation between the reunited couple, Tekla softens. Recalling her torrid past with Gustav, Tekla says to him: "I remember that you were even angry with me whenever I didn't wear a touch of poppy red."\footnote{306} As the couple continue their discussion, Tekla exposes her innermost thoughts to Gustav. Not only does she admit to her ex-husband that she is not in love with Adolf, but, forgetting him, she also agrees to return to Gustav as his lover. Adolf, having heard everything from the safety of the next room, now enters the area where the would-be lovers are conspiring against him. Jealousy has seized him. Shocked, mortified and betrayed by the woman he loves and thought he knew so well, Adolf now appears deadly pale. His eyes are bloodshot, still and staring, his mouth frothing. In fact, he suffers a seizure and quickly thereafter succumbs to death in Tekla's arms.\footnote{307} In short, Tekla, his wife, has become his executioner.

With only a change in characters and motivation, Munch's Jealousy (Fig. 17) of 1895 and his Jealousy II (Fig. 70) of 1896 could actually be visual reenactments of the last scene from Creditors. In the former work, as in the latter, Munch shows us a man and a woman conversing. Depicted as a well-conceived background figure, the woman in the 1895 version of
Jealousy is dressed in "poppy red" and exposes her body to her lover. Flushed scarlet with excitement, the man gives his undivided attention to this modern day Eve who stands before him and plucks fruit from a nearby apple tree. In contrast to this amorous couple, the man in the foreground is in an observable state of shock. His face is contorted and his expression is frozen. With constricted pupils, the man's staring eyes appear bloodshot. His chest is compressed and crushed. Furthermore, given the understanding he is party to a lover's triangle, and considering also the poisonous green color of his complexion as well, this sickly man is the apparent victim of a jealous fit which has seized the very core of his being.

Perhaps even more illustrative of the jealous reaction Adolf experiences in the last scene from Creditors, as he overhears his wife conspiring against him with her ex-husband, is the foreground figure in Jealousy II (Fig. 70). In the lithographic version of the jealousy motif the man appears to be in an even greater state of shock than his counterpart in the original painting. He seems stiffer, and the pupils of his eyes are now tiny pin-pricks. His expression is one of total loss and bewilderment and he seems to be the victim of a seizure which has virtually paralyzed him. In fact, his appearance as such is the outward manifestation of his bitter awareness and internal resentment concerning the betrayal taking place behind his back.

In addition to appearing the visual correlative to the last scene in Creditors, Munch's Jealousy of 1895 was, in turn, summarized by Strindberg himself in 1896:

Jealousy, the sacred awareness that one's soul is one's own, that it abhors being mingled with another man by woman's agency.
Jealousy, a legitimate egoism born of the instinct to preserve the self and the race.

The jealous man says to his rival: 'Away with you, worthless fellow: you will warm yourself at fires I have kindled; you will inhale my breath from her lips; you will suck my blood and remain my slave, for you will be ruled by my spirit through this woman, who has become your master.'

Significantly, Strindberg's comments concerning Munch's Jealousy could be taken not only as a subjective interpretation of the artist's work but could likewise be construed as a concluding statement apropos to his own Creditors. Strindberg projects what the jealous one might say to his rival. It is similar in manner to the way in which the fictional Gustav seems to address and humiliate his rival Adolf. Thus, in the contest between stronger and weaker wills, in this case two men battling for the love of one woman who proves fatal to the weaker one, therein lies the vital thematic link between Strindberg's Creditors and Munch's Jealousy and Jealousy II.

With his thoughts seemingly focused on Creditors, as well as on the atmosphere of jealousy which existed within the Ferkel Circle, and now apparently convinced it was woman who was to blame for man's suffering and pain—a conclusion Munch derived from his own ill-fated experiences with women as well as those of his friends—the artist now turned his attentions to the past and more specifically to his best and worst memories of the Christiania Bohème.

In Christiania Bohemians, I (Fig. 81) of 1895, Munch depicts several members of the Bohème situated around a table in what appears to be a café setting. Relaxing over drinks and enjoying each other's company, the four men shown in this work seem a study in congeniality and friendship which marked the early days of these Bohemian gatherings. But such is not the
case in Munch's pendant picture to Christiania Bohemians, I. Entitled Christiania Bohemians, II (Fig. 82) also of 1895, here Munch depicts a totally different situation.

In Christiania Bohemians, II, with the introduction of a woman into their midst, the once animated members of the all-male fraternity of Christiania Bohemians, I have been transformed into somber men, and the scene itself has been converted into a disquieting and foreboding one. The woman enters between drawn curtains. The space between these curtains is reminiscent of an active volcano sputtering forth poisonous ash and smoke which now lurk about the room like an invading serpent. It is evident the artist meant this woman's presence to signal a warning of danger to all those who sit before her. Yet, it appears as though disaster has already struck. Seeming to have cast an evil spell on the zombie-like men who are seated around the table and appear as though lost in sad reverie, the triumphant woman now observes with delight those she has made to suffer for her love. As Reinhold Heller surmises:

The woman belongs to none of them and all of the them belong to her, and the sole products of her love were thoughts of suicide and tormented jealousy and hopeless despair.

According to Heller, all victims of this woman's love, the men in Christiania Bohemians, II are, in fact, identifiable. On the left, smoking a cigarette and bowing his head, is the sunken-eyed artist himself. Next to him sits the bearded Christian Krohg. To Krohg's left appears the sullen and shrunken figure of Jappe Nilssen. Kneeling before the woman, as if her worshipping subject, is Hans Jaeger. To Jaeger's left is the rotund Gunnar Heiberg. Lastly, in the right foreground appears a man wearing a similar expression to the one the man assumes in Jealousy (Fig. 17).
Believed to be the woman's ex-husband, his identity brings us to the identity of the female herself.

Because the woman in Munch's picture possesses the smile, the loose hair, the gypsy costume and the pose of Oda Lasson Krohg, as her husband Christian Krohg depicts her in an 1888 portrait entitled Portrait of Oda Krohg (Fig. 83), she could be none other than a representation of Krohg's wife, as Sarah Epstein suggests. Indeed, onetime mistress of some of the men shown in Christiania Bohemians, II, the smiling Oda appears a temptress without remorse. More importantly, it is the manner in which Munch chose to depict Oda frontally, with her arms shown elbows out from her body, her hands placed squarely on her hips--fashioned after Krohg's 1888 portrait of Oda as Epstein suggests—that calls to mind variations of this provocative pose given to the women in several of the artist's works including Hands (Fig. 12) of 1893, Ashes (Fig. 13) of 1894 and the central female figure in The Three Stages of Woman (The Sphinx) also of 1894 (Fig. 80).

All three works are evocations of Dagny Juell Przybyszewski portrayed as a temptress. All conceived after Krohg's painting of his faithless wife as well, it is, in fact, the nude woman in The Three Stages of Woman (The Sphinx) who most resembles Oda in pose and attitude not only as she appears in Munch's Christiania Bohemians, II but, more significantly, as she is shown in Krohg's Portrait of Oda Krohg.

In like manner to Oda as she appears in Krohg's 1888 portrait, the nude woman in the Three Stages of Woman (The Sphinx) also tilts her head to one side, smiles openly and invitingly, gazes provocatively outward and (in this case shown with her hands behind her head rather than on her hips)
places her arms elbow out to reveal her body shamelessly to the spectator. Presented in such a sexually stimulating manner, the nude woman in *The Three Stages of Woman (The Sphinx)* is Munch's clearest vision of a dangerous *femme fatale*, i.e., a Sphinx, whose image may have been inspired by the artist's familiarity with Krohg's 1888 portrait of his wife. If, in fact, Munch did borrow from Krohg's *Portrait of Oda Krohg* for his depiction of the central female figure in *The Three Stages of Woman (The Sphinx)* and if Munch also reinterpreted this same pose and attitude for the female in *Christiania Bohemians, II*, as now seems plausible, then Krohg's importance to the artist's conception and visual presentation of a fatal woman, who at all times attempts to entice and enslave man by revealing her body to him frontally (dressed or undressed), was central at this point in his artistic development.

In addition, *Christiania Bohemians, II* may also represent a visual manifestation of what August Strindberg believed concerning the introduction of women not to the Christiania Boheme but to the Ferkel Circle. That is, comparing "the coming of woman" to this groups' "Round Table" to "the whale's coming ... perceived when the still surface of the water suddenly shivers and hurls up a sudden spout," the playwright's thoughts seem to find their visual analogy in Munch's portrayal of woman's entry to the bohemians' table between a space of drawn curtains which resemble an erupting volcano sputtering forth ash, dust and smoke. Also believing woman's presence among the men of the Ferkel Circle to be characterized by the "conflict and evil" she brought with her, Strindberg's views likewise appear synonymous with the artist's depiction of smoke emanating from the woman in *Christiania Bohemians, II* which, in turn, twists its way
serpent-like about the men seated before her. Lastly, thinking woman the
harbinger of animosity which proclaimed itself "by the sharp tension
between the men" of the Ferkel Circle, the playwright's thoughts are
also demonstrative in Munch's visual depiction of his bohemian friends as
men plagued by anxious thoughts and inner tensions caused by the woman who
presides over them.

In fact, so alike are Munch's grim remembrances of woman's presence
among his bohemian friends from the Christiania Bohème and Strindberg's
misogynist thoughts concerning woman's fatal effect on the affiliates of
the Ferkel Circle, it is reasonable to assume that, although absent from
the Ferkel Circle at the time Munch executed Christiania Bohemians, II, the
playwright continued to affect Munch's misogynist thinking and his art.

Strindberg indeed played a major role in the development and con-
ception of Munch's fatal woman theme. The playwright's misogynist dramas
of the late 1880s and early 1890s are closely related to what the artist
called his own "Life Pictures" of the 1890s and the first decade of this
century. Such works are visual diaries in pictorial form which reveal
painful psychic wounds from stormy encounters with women. In addition,
Munch's identification with Strindberg was so strong that the artist's
self-portrait of 1895 duplicates an 1888 photograph of the playwright.

Moreover, according to a passage in one of Munch's notebooks dated 1912,
Strindberg "turned his pain to pearls." Munch felt that suffering was
essential to his own work as well. He reveals such thoughts in the
following manner:

A German once said to me: 'But you could rid yourself of many of
your troubles.' To which I replied: 'They are part of me and my
art. They are indistinguishable from me, and it would destroy my
art. I want to keep those sufferings.'
Munch's "daily communion" with Strindberg, to use his own phrase, became severely strained shortly after Munch's introduction of his mistress (Dagny Juell) to the Ferkel Circle; Strindberg had his desired affair with Dagny as he fictionalized in his roman à clef, The Cloister.

In 1896, Stanislaw Przybyszewski likewise fictionalized his liaison with Dagny and also recounted the affair between Munch and his wife in Overboard. As a response to Overboard, Munch, removed now in time and place from the Przybyszewskis, reinterpreted and then transformed the fatal woman motif presented in his friend's story into works of art.

In the novel Munch is Mikita. He has a stormy courtship with Ysa (Dagny) and is depicted as possessive, jealous, ill-tempered and even suicidal. Przybyszewski, as the character Falk, becomes an all-suffering suitor of Ysa who metaphorically works her way into his brain:

In the space of a single hour the woman had thrust roots deep into him, spreading and enmeshing his soul. He felt cut up into two parts. No sooner would one part direct his will on the clear path of sobriety than the other would intoxicate his brain up-setting his resolutions, drowning the voice of duty and conscience. Anguish and desire ate in deeper and deeper so that he stood helpless, writhing with pain, nowhere able to find peace.

Thinking of the woman again, the character admits to being possessed. "I can think of nothing else." Falk continues, "You are the contents of my brain." Falk's declarations of being possessed in painful love by a woman are depicted in Munch's woodcut In Man's Brain (Fig. 84) of 1897. Here a naked woman floats in a man's head where her hair has taken root. His face is divided into dark and light halves, indicating Falk's head "cut up into two parts." The man's eyes stare vacantly toward the viewer, and his blank expression indicates his fatal struggle. Moreover, Munch depicts a literal suffocating stranglehold of a woman with her hair reaching out to
engulf a man's head in *Man's Head in Woman's Hair* (Fig. 68) of 1896. This woodcut is, in fact, a portrait of Przybyszewski. 325

The Przybyszewskis visited Munch in Paris in 1898. About this same time Munch did three more works which are ostensibly the contemplations of Falk in *Overboard*. Each of these works also shows a man's bodiless head possessed by a fatal woman: *Salome Paraphrase* (Fig. 61), *Self-Portrait/Salome Paraphrase* (Fig. 62) and *Head of a Man below a Woman's Breast* (Fig. 63). For the character Falk, the woman possessing his mind is a vampire of the soul. "You have become my fate," Falk confesses to Ysa, "my ruin." 326 He continues:

I am carrying you in myself, I have carried you in myself all my life as a great sorrow and martyrdom . . . I am in such terrible anguish . . . with a senseless fear . . . let my soul break and perish--

Falk drops to his knees, and everything seems to grow dark before his eyes. He senses her body approaching and bending over him. "Falk trembled fearfully," Przybyszewski writes. "He waited to hear his death sentence." 328 Falk is the predestined victim of a modern day Salome. The character Ysa is seen in *Salome Paraphrase* engulfing her victim with her arms and hair. This victim is Przybyszewski, whom the artist portrays in the same manner as in *Man's Head in Woman's Hair*. Munch depicts the author's own anguish with Dagny in this work that "paraphrases" Falk's fate with Ysa.

In *Self-Portrait/Salome Paraphrase* (Fig. 62), Munch substitutes himself for Przybyszewski/Falk. Here the hair of Salome/Dagny/Ysa ensnares Munch's floating head in a sea of red, signifying the flowing blood of a decapitation. Victimized like John the Baptist, Munch too suffers. In fact, the Biblical victim is shown in *Head of a Man below a Woman's Breast* (Fig. 63). Here, the breasts of his fatal woman crush the martyred prophet's
skull. In *Overboard*, Falk's fate was "a great sorrow and martyrdom" felt all his life. These three works are, indeed, paraphrases of *Overboard* and the visual manifestations of the combined fates of Munch and Przybyszewski.

*Overboard* may have inspired Munch with ideas for several other works as well. In the novel, Falk reveals to Ysa a dream in which both characters are lost in the ocean. He jumps from a small boat into the water to save her, but both are overpowered by waves and drowned. In the lithograph *Man and Woman in Water (Lovers in Waves)* (Fig. 67) of 1896, Munch depicts the novel's doomed characters in a vortex of waves. Breaking the water's surface, Ysa's hair forms a part of the vortex that ensnares the man's head. While his face depicts fear, her expression includes closed eyes and a mouth drawn back in a serene smile. She is submissive to her fate and, as the hair indicates, at one with the sea. Munch depicts, at the same time, the enticing Lorelei who induced unassuming boatsmen to watery graves. Hopelessness and the folly of attraction and love are likewise indicated in this work just as they are in *Overboard*. Concerning his lithograph, Munch's notebook entries repeat the dream in Przybyszewski's novel:

Man and woman are drawn to each other. Love's underwater cable carried its currents into their nerves. The cable strands bound their hearts together. The woman's hair has wound itself around him and penetrated his heart.

He also writes:

Moonlight glides over your face, which is full of the earth's pain and beauty ... like a corpse we glide out on to a vast sea.

Recapturing the dream sequence, Munch's lithograph paraphrases the novel's passage into the more generalized fate of a sailor at sea. Moreover,
according to Munch, Dagny bought a copy of this work. Perhaps she may have recognized the woman in *Man and Woman in Water* (*Lovers in Waves*) as denoting her, the Ysa of her husband's novel.

The inevitable price that Falk must pay in Przybyszewski's *Overboard* is estrangement from the woman he loves. Deciding never to return to Ysa, Falk boards a train. He feels intense pain which is eased by morphine, but remains tormented by her. "Is love really a disease...?" Falk asks himself. Yet, "the depth of his soul was abysmal," and Falk closes his eyes in physical and emotional pain, a pain for which he holds Ysa responsible. In Munch's *Separation* (Fig. 69) of 1896, the artist seems to "paraphrase" Falk's state.

*Separation* depicts a man, dressed in black, at a seaside setting. He can barely stand and seems about to faint. Leaning against a tree, he tries to gain some sense of balance. His dull despair is suggested by his hunched shoulders, bent head and closed eyes. His right hand is placed over his heart, signifying his heart has been broken. At the right, and moving away from the man, a woman with a long, wind-blown dress looks out toward the sea. The wind-swept strands of her hair, drawn back, touch the man's head. Munch came to write of *Separation*:

It had twisted itself around me like blood-red snakes--its finest threads had entangled themselves in my heart--then she had risen--I don't know why--slowly she moved away towards the sea--farther and farther away--then the strange thing arrived--I felt as if there were invisible threads between us--I felt as if invisible threads of her hair still entwined me--and thus when she disappeared completely across the sea--then I still felt how it hurt where my heart was bleeding--because the threads could not be cut.

Just as Falk in *Overboard* experiences heartfelt grief concerning his separation from Ysa, Munch's own removal in place and time from his fatal
woman plagued the artist's physical and psychological well-being. Separation from Ysa was Falk's "death sentence" as well. The character's crushing grief and utter weakness in the novel is effectively shown in Munch's Separation.

Man and Woman (Fig. 85) of 1899 depicts a seated woman who stares with blank eyes at the viewer. Next to the woman, a man in profile bends toward her. As he clutches his hands on his head, strands of the woman's hair touch him. They sit on a rock formation which suggests two upright breasts. The woman's upper torso fills the left rocky formation which outlines her. His head is in the hollow of the two formations, just as the bearded man's head is engulfed by a woman's breast in Head of a Man below a Woman's Breasts (Fig. 63) of c. 1898. Man and Woman is a reworking, too, of the two Ashes (Figs. 13 and 14) of 1894 and 1896, as well as of Ashes II (Fig. 16) of 1899. The setting of Man and Woman is more desolate and barren than the earlier works, and the woman here has her left arm separating herself from the despairing man which reiterates the psychological distance between a man and a woman even in physical proximity. Frozen in stillness and at one with the rocky formation, hence with nature, the fatal woman in Munch's work is inhospitable to man. Man's existence has no measure beyond the confines of his own despairing pain, just as Przybyszewski depicts Falk contemplating his own suffering in Overboard:

I am suffering because my mind is trying to sound its depths, to create links to unite me with the universe, with the whole of nature. I am suffering because I cannot merge with nature, cannot fuse with what is my complement, woman.

The universal hostility Falk experiences reiterates the central character's position in Przybyszewski's Requiem Mass in which sexuality is the animating force of the universe, bringing to man his complement of a woman.
who cannot fulfill his desires except in a flash of sensuality and who ultimately alienates man from nature and himself. Przybyszewski and Munch depict, then, man's longing to unite body and soul with woman and world, yet show him to be dispossessed and victimized by both.

The hostility between a man and a woman may be seen even in Munch's *Double Portrait Leistikow* (Fig. 86) of 1902. Walter Leistikow (1865-1908) was a close Ferkel Circle friend of Munch in Berlin, as well as a prime mover in the Berlin Secession and that faction of the Association of Berlin Artists which supported Munch. The double portrait depicts Leistikow, his Danish wife, and their child. Mrs. Leistikow dominates in her severe and frontal position that "out-shoulders" her husband. Her steady gaze towards the viewer indicates a strong-willed woman in her prime. Her mouth, her half-smile, draws back to reveal a mocking smirk, a grimace. Next to his broad-shouldered, dominating wife, Leistikow appears gaunt, weary and even shrunken. Turning toward his wife, he gazes at her in resignation and fear. Like Strindberg's *The Father* (1887), a weak-willed man is dominated by a woman who is stronger physically and psychologically: even the couple's daughter who appears in the background behind Leistikow reiterates the playwright's plot. Munch's own view of marriage, as seen in this portrait, seems as pessimistic as those of Strindberg and Garborg. The artist once remarked about marriage in another context:
After a few months he was only soup. It was as if she had pulled out all of his teeth. The whole man was only mush. . . . She was terrible, and he was ashen and empty eyed.

Drained of his life's force by his bride, becoming "ashen and empty eyed" because of her, a man is subject to a woman. Munch's works and those of his friends in the Christiania Bohème and the Ferkel Circle reiterate this same motif of such a fatality.

Section VI: Munch: Crisis and Recovery, 1908-1909

Munch's mistrust and fear of women, in fact, of life itself and all things in nature, finally culminated in mental crisis in 1908. In September of that year Munch was in Hamburg. Suffering from hallucinations, black outs, nervous agitation and feelings of persecution, all of which had become frequent occurrences in the artist's life, Munch assaulted strangers in the hotel where he was staying and did bodily harm to himself; he woke up one morning to find his eyes cut and bleeding. Arriving in Copenhagen toward the end of September, Munch met Norwegian writer Sigurd Mathiesen. After a four day drinking bout with Mathiesen, Munch wired his friend Christian Gierløff to come and rescue him. When his friend arrived, he discovered that Munch had voluntarily committed himself to Dr. Daniel Jacobson's clinic in Copenhagen on October 1, 1908.344

Although actual hospital records were confiscated by the artist's sister Inger Munch in an effort to "protect" her brother345 (no doubt from public ridicule and scrutiny), the letters Munch drafted to his friends and family members from Jacobson's clinic remain as testimony concerning the severity of his mental crisis of 1908. In one such letter to Jappe
Nilssen, Munch reveals the dramatic drinking bout which resulted in his hospitalization:

The crunch had to come some day . . . But when it did, it was fairly dramatic--after a trip to Sweden followed by four days in a mass of alcohol with Sigurd Mathiesen. I had a real blackout and also some minor form of heart attack, I believe. My brain had become damaged by my continual obsessions.³⁴⁶

According to Harold W. Wylie, Jr., M.D., Munch had suffered "a brief episode of an acute toxic alcoholic psychosis."³⁴⁷ In addition, Einar Kringlen suggests such a condition was brought about by a series of stresses and stormy love affairs.³⁴⁸ Diagnosed as having suffered a "nervous breakdown," as Munch himself later admitted in a letter to a friend,³⁴⁹ the artist was able to write to his aunt of his early and ongoing treatment less than a month after his admission to Jacobson's clinic:

My cure is going ahead--I am electrified, massaged and bathed every day--the doctor tells me I lack electricity and that I am in a general state of debility, which is not surprising.³⁵⁰

In addition to his letter home, Munch also illustrated his treatment in a cartoon (Fig. 87). In this work he depicts himself subjected to electric stimulation by Jacobson and his assistant. Inscribed at the top of the cartoon is a note which in translation reads as follows: "Professor Jacobson passing electricity through the famous painter Munch, charging his crazy brain with the positive power of masculinity and the negative power of femininity."³⁵¹

According to Wylie,³⁵² Munch was receiving the then popular Weir-Mitchell treatment for acquired neurasthenia which W. A. White and E. S. Jelliffe describe in the following manner:

... isolation from pathogenic social factors, feeling, massage, and electricity, to be combined with a mental investigation with
the therapeutic aim of training the patient to face his environ-ment with equanimity. Patients were encouraged to engage in a hobby or study.\footnote{333}

Munch did engage in a study of the self. He began by reviewing his life in terms of his disappointing relationships with women and friends alike:

I was never mad, as Goldstein thought; it was a web of events and intrigues, woven over many years, combined with the disappointments and the drinking that resulted from them, which brought about my nervous breakdown.\footnote{354}

Then, as if inspired by these events and intrigues which had so disappointed him, Munch began to work as Jacobson himself prescribed.

Specifically, and as an important epilogue to Munch's torrid life which included his past involvements with Fru Heiberg, Dagny Juell Przybyszewski, Judith Molard, Tulla Larsen and Eva Mudocci as well as his affiliation with the Christiania Bohème and the Ferkel Circle, the artist wrote a lengthy allegorical prose poem entitled Alpha og Omega (Alpha and Omega) while convalescing at Dr. Jacobson's clinic. Accompanied by twenty-two lithographs including four prelude vignettes and eighteen prints which make up the illustrated body of the poem, Alpha and Omega tells the story of the relationship between the first man (Alpha) and the first woman (Omega) who together inhabit an island populated by wild beasts. Yet, despite their co-habitation, it is the woman who rules the island which Carol Ravenal describes as Omega's "wide-flung sexual empire."\footnote{355} Alpha and Omega is therefore the tragic tale of a fatal woman who bewilders and betrays man as Munch himself came to admit:

\ldots in jest and earnest, with the age-old story, which must be repeated once more, of man, who since time immemorial has allowed himself to be beguiled by the faithless breed of women.\footnote{356}

Of the women who had hurt Munch personally, Tulla Larsen was singled out at this time as the one responsible for his present condition.\footnote{357} But the
others figured into his poem and illustrations as well. In fact, fifteen years in the making, Alpha and Omega testifies that it was to all the women Munch had known intimately that the fable and illustrations to it were addressed:

The reason Alpha and Omega has turned out to be so intense is because it is as much as 15 years ago that I sketched it out; even then I knew and had a presentiment of women's vileness.

The artist's quoted letters and notes serve as a brief introduction to Alpha and Omega and its related series of illustrations. By examining the poem in its entirety, as well as a selection of works from the lithographs which illustrate it, it will be determined to what extent Alpha and Omega is a haunting and imaginative reflection of the artist's remembrances of lovers and friends who continued to exert a major influence on his fatal woman theme long after he had dissolved many of his close ties with them.

Alpha and Omega

Alpha and Omega were the first human beings on the island. Alpha lay in the grass, asleep and dreaming, when Omega approached, caught sight of him, and grew inquisitive. Omega broke off the stem of a fern and tickled him, so that he woke up.

Alpha loved Omega; in the evenings they would sit, nestling close to one another, looking at the golden stripe of moonlight rocking and bobbing up and down in the waters around the island.

They walked into the forest, and in the forest were many strange animals and plants. In the forest it was strangely dark, but there were also many beautiful little flowers. Once, when Omega was frightened, she threw her arms violently round Alpha.

There were many days of unbroken sunshine on the island.

One day Omega was lying in the shade, outside the forest, when a huge cloud rose out of the sea, spreading across the sky and casting its shadow across the island.

Alpha called out to Omega, but Omega heard nothing. Alpha then discovered that Omega was holding the head of a serpent between her hands, and was staring at its twinkling eyes. It was a large serpent, which had crawled up between the ferns and along her body. But all of a sudden rain came pouring out of the sky, and Alpha and Omega were frightened.

One day, when Alpha discovered the serpent on the ground, he fought with it and killed it, while Omega looked on at a distance.

One day she met the bear. Omega trembled when she felt the
One day she met the bear. Omega trembled when she felt the bear's soft fur against her body. When she placed her arm about its neck, it sunk deep into the fur.

Omega comes across a hyena poet with a somewhat tousled coat. Her customary words of endearment fall on deaf ears, she plaits a laurel wreath with her soft little hands, and as she turns her sweet face up towards his bitter head, she crowns him.

The tiger thrusts its wild and terrible head towards Omega's pretty little face. Omega is not frightened; she puts her little hand in the tiger's maw, caressing his teeth.

When the tiger meets the bear on his road, he smells Omega's scent, the scent of pale apple-blossoms, which Omega loves most of all blossoms, and which she kisses every morning when the sun rose. They fought with one another, and tore one another to pieces.

Just as on a chessboard, which had not been invented in those days, the position of the pieces is suddenly changed - Omega clings to Alpha. Inquisitively and uncomprehendingly the other animals stretch out their necks and watch the game.

Omega's eyes would change - on ordinary days they were pale-blue, but when she looked at her lovers, they became black, with flecks of carmine, and occasionally she covered her mouth with a flower.

Omega's mood would change - one day Alpha discovered her sitting by the river, kissing a donkey, which was lying in her lap. Then Alpha fetched the ostrich, and snuggled up to its neck, but Omega did not pause and look up from her favorite preoccupation of kissing.

Omega was tired and sorry that she was unable to possess all the animals on the island. She sat down in the grass and sobbed violently. Then she rose to her feet and ran frenziedly round the island, until she met the pig. She knelt down and covered her body with her long black hair, and she and the pig looked at one another.

Omega was bored; one night, when the golden column of the moon was rocking on the water, she escaped on the back of a fallow-deer across the sea to the pale-green land lying across the moon, leaving Alpha alone on the island.

One day her children came to him; a new generation had grown up on the island. They gathered round Alpha, whom they called father. There were small pigs, small serpents, small monkeys, and small beasts of prey and other human mongrels. He despaired.

He ran along the seashore - sky and sea were the color of blood. He heard steps in the air, and put his hands to his ears. Earth, sky, and sea trembled, and he felt great fear.

One day the fallow-deer brought Omega back. Alpha was sitting on the shore, and she came towards him. Alpha could feel the blood throbbing in his ears, and the muscles swelling in his body, and he struck Omega until she died. When he bent over her dead body and saw her face, he was terrified at her expression. It was the same expression she had worn on the occasion in the forest when he loved her most.
While he was still looking at her, he was attacked from behind by all her children and the animals of the island, who tore him to pieces.

The new generation peopled the island.

The illustrations to the written text begin with Alpha and Omega (Fig. 88). In this work, Omega approaches the sleeping Alpha and proceeds to awaken him by tickling his face with a fern. Here, Munch explores the theme of sexual awakening. The motif may be traced to the artist's early days in the Christiania Bohème, at which time Hans Jaeger instructed his followers to indulge in illicit sex with women so that he might study the dynamics of the man-woman relationship from beginning to end. Such experiments were conducted also to better prepare for a new society based on love, harmony and reason. Jaeger likewise expounded his ideas in Fra Christiania Bohemen (1885), wherein the male protagonist in the story urges his young friend Jarmann to take note of all the pretty, adolescent girls on Karl Johan Street. Subsequent to Jaeger's book, Munch explored the theme of sexual awakening in the The Kiss (Figs. 4 and 5) of 1891-92 and in his diary wherein he recorded his first sexual experience with a married affiliate of the Bohème, Fru Heiberg: "Let's see--First there was Mrs. Heiberg." The woman in Alpha and Omega may therefore be linked to the artist's affair with Fru Heiberg via the sexual intrigues of the Bohème, which ultimately proved destructive and painful for Munch as well as for many of its other members.

Following sexual awakening, love is consummated in Moonrise (Fig. 89) and The Forest (Fig. 90). The moon's reflection on the water in the former work recalls the phallic moon in The Dance of Life (Fig. 27) of 1900, and therefore might be traced to Munch's affair with Tulla Larsen. The latter work, wherein the couple enters a flower-filled forest (as Munch
describes it in the poem), is reminiscent of the artist's secretive meetings with Dagny Juell Przybyszewski in just such a setting. It is likewise a prelude to the ill-fated outcome of their liaison as recorded in Ashes (Fig. 13) of 1894.

For Munch, consummated love cancels sexual desire and the fatal woman is born. In The Cloud (Fig. 91), he depicts Alpha and Omega in a forest setting near a crystal clear lake. Yet, instead of embracing Alpha, Omega cajoles a snake which has coiled its way round her recumbent body. Mesmerized by its gaze, Omega caresses the serpent while Alpha looks on. Unable to prevent what is happening, he clutches his chin with his hands and his expression registers disgust and anger. Meanwhile, a dark rain cloud has formed in the distance. As it approaches the trio, who will soon be drenched, the cloud as well as the snake and the absence of the sun may stand as symbols of paradise lost much as Munch first portrayed this idea in the Ashes motif. Moreover, after Omega's betrayal, the artist henceforth transforms her into an evil temptress in similar manner to the way Dagny Juell Przybyszewski is presented as Eve in Jealousy (Fig. 17).

In The Serpent is Killed (Fig. 92), he depicts Omega as a background figure who assumes a recumbent, Sphinx-like position. Portrayed as such, she represents the eternal woman of riddles reminiscent to the nude female in The Three Stages of Woman (The Sphinx) (Fig. 80) of 1894 which was inspired by Munch's Ferkel Circle and bohemian friends. As Omega lies there immobile and in silence, the jealous Alpha kills the serpent. Carol Ravenal describes the battle in the following manner:

Alpha throttles the serpent's neck between his legs as he is engaged in a terrible life and death struggle. The depiction of Alpha as having multiple legs suggests the ferocity of the battle.
The phallic serpent represents Munch's desire to obliterate his sexual drives whose frustration has produced such torment. He could then return to a state of sexless bliss. In addition to laying to rest his own sexual desires and returning to a state of sexless bliss ("After that I gave up hope of ever being able to love again," the artist once wrote, possibly concerning his affair with Dagny Juell Przybyszewski), The Serpent is Killed, viewed in a wider context, also recapitulates Munch's serious doubts about and rejection of free love as it was practiced by his bohemian friends and himself.

Here, wherein Alpha is wrestling with the metaphoric serpent of free love and subsequently killing it, one is reminded of Vilhelm Krag's poem "Night" in which the young teen-aged poet of the Bohême overcomes sexual temptation and its eventual pain by killing the devil (perhaps Jaeger himself).

If in The Serpent is Killed Munch has put to rest his own sexual needs and desires, such actions preclude Omega's insatiable need to find sexual fulfillment with other inhabitants of the island. She proceeds by attracting the attentions of all the animals on the island beginning with The Bear (Fig. 93) and The Tiger (Fig. 94). While both works recall Dagny Juell Przybyszewski's ability to attract the various male members of the Ferkel Circle who sought her sexual favors (and although Munch himself claimed that the female figure in The Tiger was supposed to represent a model he had used in Berlin), the latter picture also recalls Munch's involvement with Judith Molard (Paris, 1896-97) whom he once likened to a cat. To further the idea that the woman in The Tiger is Judith Molard, Edith Hoffmann compares this work to Paul Gauguin's La Perte du Pucelage (The Loss of Virginity) (Fig. 95) of 1890-91, wherein the head of a fox
(symbol of lust) is seen juxtaposed to the head of a young girl lying prostrate in the grass.\textsuperscript{372} Because Judith Molard had had an affair with Gauguin prior to Munch's arrival and acquaintance with the young girl in Paris in 1896 and because it was Judith of whom he wrote a few days before his voluntary admission to Jacobson's clinic,\textsuperscript{373} it is quite possible that Judith is the subject for \textit{The Tiger} despite Munch's claim to the contrary.

Apparently resurrecting the memory of Judith Molard in \textit{The Tiger}, Munch then depicts a jealous battle between the two rival animals for the affections of Omega in \textit{The Tiger} and \textit{The Bear} (Fig. 96). Here, wherein Omega temporarily returns to Alpha for protection and the couple watch from a safe distance as the animals prepare to tear each other to pieces, one is reminded of the jealous rivalry between members of the Ferkel Circle for the affections of Dagny Juell Przybyszewski and of the manner in which she, on occasion, returned to Munch after having rejected him for others. In keeping with this idea Munch writes of \textit{The Tiger} and \textit{The Bear}:

\begin{quote}
Just as on a chessboard, which had not been invented in those days, the position of the pieces is suddenly changed--Omega clings to Alpha. Inquisitively and uncomprehendingly the other animals stretch out their necks and watch the game.\textsuperscript{374}
\end{quote}

While the subject of Omega and \textit{The Flower} (Fig. 97) is that of a young girl covering her mouth with a flower and recalls something about the manner in which Munch portrayed the young Judith sucking her fingers as she awaits the arrival of an older suitor in \textit{Under the Yoke} (Fig. 24), Carol Ravenal suggests that the woman's eyes in Omega's Eyes (Fig. 98), which Munch characterizes in his prose poem as "pale blue, but when she looked at her lovers, they became black, with flecks of carmine,"\textsuperscript{375} denote the artist's disturbed fascination with the magical, hypnotic quality found in the eyes of his lovers.\textsuperscript{376} Citing, by way of example, a
passage from one of Munch's early diary notes concerning the eyes of Fru Heiberg, Ravenal therefore seemingly indicates that the woman in Omega's Eyes is none other than a representation of the artist's first love.

After contemplating Omega's eyes, as if in a dream from which he has now awakened, Munch returns to the jealousy motif in Omega and the Fallow Deer (Fig. 99). In this picture Alpha attempts to attach himself to an ostrich in order to make Omega jealous and/or to appease his own jealous feelings toward her. Oblivious to his feeble attempt to attract her attention, she sits instead kissing the mouth of her latest conquest, the fallow deer.

Next, Munch depicts Omega cloven-footed (a sign of her devilish character) and sitting by a smiling pig in Omega and the Pig (Fig. 100). There is reason to believe that the woman in this work is meant to represent Tulla Larsen, while the pig is thought to be Norwegian playwright and fellow bohemian Gunnar Heiberg who, according to Arne Eggum, was the man Munch once suspected of having had an affair with Tulla. To further the identification of the pig as Heiberg, of whom Munch was obviously jealous, the artist once referred to him in one of his texts as a pig living off the flesh of women:

Then Gunnar Heiberg
--sailing alone
with his fat little paunch
--winking with piggy eyes
--a cross between
a pig and a toad
--always crawling with worms
--always sniffing the flesh of women:

Marital abstention

Munch also mentions Heiberg in another passage:

Gunnar H had
a pointed and rather fleshy stomach
--with it he cruised
slowly towards his goal
--his nostrils
rose and picked up the scent--
where there was food--there was female flesh. 380

Because Omega cannot possess all the animals on the island she becomes
dissatisfied. In Omega Weeping (Fig. 101) she assumes a crouching
position. With her arms hanging limply from her stooped shoulders, her
hair falling about her in disheveled array, she appears a cross between a
primitive fertility goddess and a worn out hag who cries violently for what
she cannot have. Interestingly, Omega here recalls Tulla as she appears in
Sin (Fig. 28) of 1901. Moreover, inasmuch as Carol Ravenal likens the
figure in Omega Weeping to Albrecht Dürer's Melancholia--"She shares with
Dürer's monumental figure the inability to surmount physical and earthly
limitations,"381--there can be little doubt that in this work Munch seems
to have resurrected disenchancing thoughts of Tulla. He may have been
thinking also of the letters he had written to her from Kornhaug sanatorium
(1898-99)382 in which he characterized her as an earth mother, a hedonist,
and seemingly one incapable of rising above her earthly limitations.

In Omega's Flight (Fig. 102), the despairing Omega leaves the island on
the back of the fallow deer. As the animal carries her across the sea,
Alpha is seen alone on the shore in a severe state of dejection. Here,
wherein the multiple themes of despair, jealousy and separation seem to
figure, Omega's Flight recalls several works Munch executed between 1891
and 1900. First and foremost, Omega's Flight brings to mind Evening, (The
Yellow Boat) (Fig. 73) of 1891. In this painting Munch re-creates the
events of the summer of 1891, at which time the artist's close friend Jappe
Nilssen was rejected and abandoned by Oda Krohg. Since Nilssen is
portrayed as the dejected one, while Oda is seen in the distance about to leave the shore with her husband in a little yellow boat, it is quite possible that Omega's Flight is Munch's reinterpretation of this painful remembrance. Moreover, Omega's Flight recapitulates the jealousy theme found in Jealousy (Fig. 17) of 1895. In this work Munch depicts his friend Stanislaw Przybyszewski brooding helplessly in the foreground, while the lovers (Dagny and Munch) are seen in the immediate background plotting their affair behind the husband's back. Also noteworthy about Omega's Flight, in relation to previous works and events from Munch's life, is the presence of the phallic moon reflected on the water as in Moonrise from this same series of works and as seen in an earlier work, The Dance of Life. It is not only the moon configuration in Omega's Flight that links the woman in this picture to Tulla Larsen; because she is seen taking her leave across the sea on the back of the fallow deer, the scene also brings to mind Tulla's departure from Christiania for Paris with another man while Munch was left behind, abandoned and broken, to recuperate from the bullet wound he had received as a direct result of the shooting incident with Tulla in September 1902. In short, Omega's Flight represents Munch's composite remembrances of his own despair and suffering, and that of Nilssen, as man's sole reward for having loved a faithless woman.

While Omega's Flight recapitulates several of the themes and ideas found in Munch's earlier works, as well as episodes from his life and the life of his friend, Omega's Progeny (Fig. 103) paraphrases a motif found in August Strindberg's plays. For example, in The Father the central male protagonist is tricked by his wife into believing that he is not his child's true biological father. It is this revelation which drives him to
the brink of insanity as he realizes the insignificance of his part in life's reproductive processes. This idea is likewise a motif found in Munch's Madonnas (Figs. 60a and 74) of 1893 and 1895. In Omega's Progeny Alpha is now alone on the island with Omega's hybrid children who call him father, though he is not. As he sits sulking and contemplating the woman who has betrayed him, the children, as visual evidence of Omega's infidelity, overcome him.

In Alpha's Despair (Fig. 104) he runs to the shore, possibly in search of Omega. With his hands cupping his face and his mouth's circular form denoting an audible shriek, this image of human pain and suffering, according to Carol Ravenal, "duplicates the feelings and the visual effects of The Scream" (Fig. 8). In addition, an excerpt from Alpha and Omega reiterates Munch's fear of women as personifications of nature:

He ran along the seashore--sky and sea were the color of blood. He heard steps in the air, and put his hands to his ears. Earth, sky, and sea trembled, and he felt great fear.

Just as The Scream is the visual correlative of the artist's unresolved love affair with Fru Heiberg, Alpha's Despair resounds Alpha's resentment towards and feelings of betrayal and abandonment by Omega. Yet, unlike the irresolution which marked the end of Munch's torrid affair with his first sexual partner, in this series of works Alpha is soon to have his bittersweet revenge.

Now that Alpha is clearly a madman with no other recourse than to avenge himself, Munch has Omega return to the island where Alpha attacks and kills his unfaithful lover in a violent rage. The Death of Omega (Fig. 105) depicts Alpha drowning the woman in shallow water near the shore. Munch first conceived this death by drowning scene thirteen years earlier,
as evident in a drawing from one of his sketchbooks dated the summer of 1895 (Fig. 106). From this 1895 drawing Munch then went on to execute his Man and Woman in the Water (Lovers in Waves) (Fig. 67) of 1896. Because the sure death of the male at the hand of woman in the latter work has been linked to Dagny Juell Przybyszewski, via Stanislaw Przybyszewski's Overboard of the same year, it is therefore ostensibly Munch's focused aggression against Dagny combined with his still unresolved hatred towards Fru Heiberg which is the true subject of The Death of Omega.

Although Alpha is the winner of the battle of the sexes through his destruction of Omega, it is but for him a small victory as executioner is transformed into a victim of guilt and remorse:

When he bent over her dead body and saw her face, he was terrified at her expression. It was the same expression he had worn on the occasion in the forest when he loved her most.

Alpha mentally resurrects her perfect image when he had loved her most. This passage recalls The Forest, third in the series of illustrations for Alpha and Omega, as well as the forest setting if not the thematic content of the Ashes motif. It therefore might be linked with Dagny as the woman Munch had once loved so long ago.

Now that death has wiped out all recollections of the bedeviling woman and her evil ways for Alpha, just as Dagny's murder at the hand of a jealous lover had prompted Munch to recall only what was good about the woman in his 1901 memorial to her, he is ruthlessly murdered by Omega's children and their fathers in The Death of Alpha (Fig. 107). Having avenged her death, the tiger then castrates the now prostrate Alpha while the others look on and cheer. As Leslie D. Morrisey remarks, because it is Omega who possessed the power to procreate rather than her human mate, it
is she who ultimately triumphs over Alpha in the end. Thus, as in Omega's Progeny, there is about The Death of Alpha that which suggests the ideas inherent in the Madonna theme which, to reiterate Robert Rosenblum, represents:

Munch's... own and his generation's Strindbergian morbidity and pessimism about woman as a monstrous pawn of nature, a post-Darwinian femme fatale whose irresistible sexual magnetism perpetuates the species.

Also, given Alpha's own insignificance in life's reproductive processes on the island, his death recalls what Peter Schjeldahl said in relation to the Madonna motif as representative of "death-like loss for the lover, henceforth of no more biological significance than the drone ant after mating with a queen."397

No human child was ever born on the island. It is therefore an animal rather than a human continuity which is ultimately assured in Alpha and Omega. Likewise, it was Alpha's misfortune to have been murdered and castrated by cheering mongrels—all of whom were virtual strangers to him. Thus, The Death of Alpha stands not only as a manifestation of the artist's self-proclaimed misogyny but a confession of his misanthropy as well. Last in this series of lithographs illustrating his own metaphoric murder, The Death of Alpha might also stand as illustrative of the exact moment of Munch's voluntary admission to Dr. Jacobson's clinic in Copenhagen when feelings of alienation, loneliness, worthlessness and helplessness resulted in "acute toxic alcoholic psychosis."

As Munch himself wrote in relation to his nervous breakdown, "The crunch had to come some day... But when it did, it was fairly dramatic..."398 Further, "... it was a web of events and intrigues, woven over many years, combined with the disappointments and the drinking that
resulted from them, which brought about my nervous breakdown." By the artist's own account, there can be little doubt that the cumulative effect of sexual intrigue, unresolved relationships with the women in his life, and disappointment with the friends he felt had abandoned him to become his enemies accounted for Munch's breakdown as exemplified in Alpha and Omega and its related series of illustrations.

While under the care of Jacobson, Munch transformed his pain into words and pictures. The island and its inhabitants represent, in fact, a microcosm of the world as Munch experienced it both past and present. Thus, from a therapeutic standpoint the story of Alpha and Omega and its related illustrations provided a much needed outlet for the artist. Dealing with the subjects of sexual awakening, sexual love, and sexual discord—which Munch transcribed into the multiple themes of sexual temptation, sin, and death without redemption—the work also acts as an indicator of the sexual terror which beset the artist and of the deep-seated fear and resentment of the women in his life whom he believed were fatal to his well-being. Through this mental exercise of transforming his negative feelings of martyrdom into art Munch was able to vent all that was troubling him, allowing Jacobson to treat the ailing artist. Through Alpha and Omega Munch exorcised the demons which had haunted him. In short, it was a necessary catharsis as the artist himself came to admit:

A strange feeling of peace came over me while I worked that series— it was as though all pain was leaving my body.

By remembering in order to forget, Munch responded favorably to his treatment. And, as though having finally won the battle against the fears which plagued him, he came to write in 1909:
I have been buffeted by dangerous autumn storms before my time--they deprived me of man's best season, the midsummer. Here in the autumn heavy branches were torn from the tree, but I have to admit that I heal very easily and so perhaps these scars will also disappear. 401

In addition, Munch also forgave Hans Jaeger who, as instigator of free love in the milieu of the Christiania Bohême, had first introduced the then young artist to the concept and practice of sexual freedom which years later nearly destroyed him. 402

Strangely enough, the only woman who does not seem to figure in *Alpha and Omega* and its series of illustrations is Eva Mudocci, the last of Munch's fatal women. At the time of Munch's confinement to Jacobson's clinic, she was living nearby in order to be close to her ailing friend should he need her. Perhaps learning of her dedication and devotion, and then possibly perceiving that her interest in him was not purely sexual, Munch must have come to the realization that Eva, like Jaeger, was not an enemy to be feared as he had previously suspected. Yet, although the artist did see Eva one time subsequent to his release from Jacobson's care, he held steadfast to his vow to relinquish all painful relationships with women who, although beautiful roses as Munch remarked, possessed thorns capable of inflicting great damage. 403

After his release from Jacobson's clinic in May 1909, Munch became somewhat reclusive and saw only those friends whom he could be sure would not upset his delicate equilibrium and his newly found peace of mind. He returned to Norway, rented an estate at Kragero, situated near the very southernmost tip of Norway, and wrote to a friend of his new resolve:

"Having overcome all my hardships, I am sitting on a headland overlooking the sea in southern Norway. I hope I will now be
able to let the molecules settle down after all my inner turmoil. 
I have certainly retained my will to work.

Several months later, Munch wrote another letter to this friend:

I live in anti-social isolation, which is really my true nature. 
Nor have I got the vine to rely on any more--though, in fact, it 
was not a very reliable support anyway.

To Dr. Jacobson Munch wrote happily yet realistically about his life:

Now I am living a completely sound and healthy life--just like a 
monk (or a non-smoking, non-drinking Munch) . . . I do not over-
estimate my capabilities and I realize that I am not immune to 
things that may happen in the future . . .

Munch's immediate future consisted of a move to Hvitsten in 1910. Located 
on the Oslo Fjord, near the place where he had once experienced and then 
painted a terrifying sunset as shown in The Scream (Fig. 8) of 1893, 
here Munch threw himself into his work on the decorations for the famous 
Oslo University murals. Shortly thereafter the artist executed The Sun 
(Fig. 108) of 1909-11. Ragna Stang describes and interprets this 
monumental work as follows:

... the sun sheds its life-giving rays over the whole scene 
with extraordinary intensity. Its golden orb has become white-hot. 
And what is more, Munch has painted the whole scene with such 
certainty and such creative pleasure that not only the people who 
look at it, but the whole room as well, are filled with an 
overwhelming awe.

This scene, wherein Munch glorifies the sun rising over the sea with its' 
rays reaching long distances to encompass the whole of nature, is testimony 
to the healing power invested in it. With the execution of The Sun, Munch 
seems to have been looking at the world and nature in a new way. No more 
to view and experience the world as a dark and foreboding place but a place 
filled with light, warmth and hope, no longer in terror of nature but at 
peace with it, the artist thus allowed the life-giving sun to usurp the 
cold clasp of the fatal woman. The demon within had been exorcised.
IV. NOTES


11. For an account of the social reforms of Jaeger and Krohg, see pp. 228-240.

12. For example, see Stang (1979), p. 46; and Boe (1970), 1:35 and 37.

13. Ibid.


22. Ibid., 2:XXIII, as cited in ibid., p. 6.


27. See Hodin (1972), p. 35.


32 Ibid.
33 Lathe (1979), p. 45.
34 Boe (1970), 1:35.
36 Ibid.
37 Ibid.
40 For a biography of Christian Krohg, see Gauguin (1932).
42 Ibid.
43 Ibid., pp. 89-90.
44 Ibid., p. 90.
46 Ibid.
47 Ibid., p. 90 and note 22, p. 95.
50 Ibid.
51 Public prostitution was abolished in 1887 due, in part, to the efforts of Krohg. See Stang (1979), note 28, p. 288.
52 Moen (1956), pp. 21-22.


57 Ibid.


59 Ibid.


61 Ibid.


67 Ibid., pp. 101-102.

68 Arne Garborg, *Men-Folk* (1886), as cited in ibid., p. 103.


70 Ibid.

72 Ibid.

73 Ibid.

74 Stang (1979), p. 46.


77 Downs (1966), pp. 103-04.


80 Downs (1966), p. 103.

81 Ibid., p. 105.


85 Ibid.


88 See, for example, pp. 250-251.


90 Downs (1966), note 3, p. 250.

91 Ibid.


94 For a discussion of this Scandinavian migration to Berlin and the literary ferment there, see Dittmann (1982), pp. 75-82. For a discussion of the Ferkel Circle, see pp. 274-294.


97 Ibid.


100 Wartmann (1945), p. 4.


103 In life, Oda Krohg (the woman in Jaeger's novel) was a faithless lover who was involved with several others simultaneously to her affair with Jaeger. See Heller, "Love as a Series," (1978), p. 93.

104 Wartmann (1945), pp. 4 and 7.

105 See Anthology (1968), pp. 120-22.


109 Langaard and Revold (1961), ibid.

110 Munch, as cited in Stang (1979), p. 31.


112 Munch, as cited in Stang (1979), p. 141.

113 For Munch in Paris (1896-97), see pp. 94-95. For Munch in Berlin (1892-96), see pp. 54-65 and 273-274.

114 For an account of Munch's affair with the married "Fru Heiberg" see pp. 25-35.


116 See pp. 30 and 33.


118 Munch, as cited in Hodin (1972), pp. 34-35.


120 For an expanded discussion of this crisis period in the artist's life see Heller, "Night," (1978), pp. 80-105. For remembrances of his father see ibid., pp. 89-102.

121 For Fru Heiberg, see ibid., pp. 96-102. For Hans Jaeger, see Woll (1978), pp. 231-32. Also see Heller (1969), pp. 48-61.


125 Ibid.

127 Ibid., p. 178.


130 Ibid.

131 Ibid.

132 Ibid.

133 Munch writes: "I truly fear death. I cannot bear the thought that this flesh shall stink, that these fingers will become stiff--blue." Cited in ibid.


135 First of Jaeger's nine commandments to appear in an issue of Impressionisten (1886-90), as cited in ibid., 1:37.

136 Munch, MS. N12, as cited in Woll (1978), pp. 231-32. Heller (1969), note 21, p. 76, dates this manuscript December 1889, or early 1890.


139 Ibid.


141 Ibid.

142 Ibid.

143 Ibid., p. 169.


144a Heller believes that Munch's artistic program, which he formulated in 1889/90, is a rejection of Jaeger's "materialistic atheism." See Heller (1969), p. 61.


For a discussion concerning the origin of the "Frieze of Life" see Heller (1969), passim.


Stang (1979), note 55, p. 288, identifies the two men in Two Bohemian Friends as Nilssen and Jaeger.

In a letter home, Munch remarks that the Mediterranean climate did "more than all the world's doctors." See Munchs Brev (1949), #95, p. 98, as cited in Boe (1970), 1:134.

For an expanded interpretation of Evening, (The Yellow Boat) and the circumstances surrounding it, see Heller (1969), pp. 122-26.

Munch, Notebook, Munch Museum Archives, Oslo, as cited in Dittmann (1982), p. 68.


For a description and interpretation of these two paintings, see pp. 39-45.

See p. 249.


Munch would continue to associate with various members of the Christiania Bohème until his mental collapse in 1908. Moreover, his experiences with them as well as his encounters with the women of the Bohème would remain a constant source of torment and inspiration vital to the continuing development of his fatal woman theme.

For an account of Munch's early association with Dagny Juell, see pp. 52-68.


For a discussion of the Ferkel Circle as a radical literary movement in Berlin, see Carla Hvistendal Lathe, "The Group Zum Schwarzen Ferkel: A Study in Early Modernism" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of East Anglia, 1972). I have not had access to Lathe's paper.


This list of members of the Ferkel Circle was compiled, in part, from Dittmann (1982), pp. 151-58; and Lathe (1979), pp. 11-24.


For a discussion of Hansson's invitation to Strindberg, see Dittmann (1982), p. 76.


Dittmann (1982), p. 76.

Ibid., p. 77.

Edvard Munch, Portrait of Strindberg, 1892, in ibid., fig. 35.

Dittmann, pp. 81-82.

As suggested in ibid., p. 82.


For a complete study of the life and times of Stanislaw Przybyszewski while a member of the Ferkel Circle see George Klim, "Die Gestalt Stanislaw Przybyszewski im Rahmen der deutschen Literatur der Jahre 1892-98" (Ph.D. dissertation, Australian National University, Canberra, 1970). I have not had access to Klim's paper.


Ibid., p. 313.


Julius Meier-Graefe, postscript to Jens Thiis, 1934, as cited in Stang (1979), p. 84. [Brackets mine.]


194 See ibid., p. 92.


196 Ibid.

197 Ibid. [Brackets mine.]

198 See Bithell (1959), p. 70; and Edvard Munch, exhibition catalogue (Houston: University of Houston, 1976), p. 34.


200 Ibid.

201 Ibid.

202 Bithell (1959), p. 70.

203 Ibid., p. 115.


206 Ibid., pp. 65-73.

207 Ibid., p. 68.

208 Ibid., pp. 68-70.


213 Ibid., p. 70.
214 Ibid., pp. 70-71; and Bithell (1959), pp. 113-116.


220 August Strindberg, as cited in F. Strindberg (1940), p. 16.


223 August Strindberg, as cited in F. Strindberg (1940), p. 71.


226 Ibid., p. 30.

227 F. Strindberg (1940), p. 77.


232 Przybyszewski (1893), p. 33, as cited in ibid., p. 104.


According to Julius Meier-Graefe, as cited in Stang (1979), p. 84.


Dittmann (1982), p. 34.


Hoffmann (1965), p. 90.

See Bithell (1946), p. 133.


Hans Jaeger's Fra Christiania Bohemen (1885) was one of four known books owned by Munch in 1892. See Lathe (1979), p. 5.


See pp. 102-104. Also see pp. 154-156.

See Bithell (1946), p. 133.

Lathe (1979), p. 16.

Ibid., pp. 16 and 19.

Strindberg, "Creditors," (1975), I: 206. This passage reiterates a passage of Ecco Homo (1900) by Friedrich Nietzsche, with whom the playwright was in correspondence in the late 1880s. Nietzsche writes: "... the perfect woman tears to pieces when she loves," Friedrich Nietzsche, Ecco Homo, as cited in Hoffmann (1965), p. 87. On the Strindberg-Nietzsche correspondence, see Lathe (1979), p. 23.


Ibid.


Ibid. pp. 141-47.


In Strindberg's A Mad Man's Manifesto (1893), the author is seen as struggling with madness and death resulting from a woman; in Przybyszewski's Requiem Mass (1893), a male protagonist succumbs to death because of his love for a woman. See Lathe (1979), p. 18.

A comparison between Munch's Vampire and Ashes to Strindberg's The Father was suggested in John Boulton-Smith, "Strindberg's Visual Imagination," Apollo 92 (October 1970): 292. Smith only implies such a correlation and does not elucidate his point. Taking his observations as a reference point, the discussion in the text is taken from specific scenes in the play.

See pp. 45-49 and 84-87.


Ibid., p. 85.

Ibid., pp. 85-86.


An example is Ola Hansson's novel Sensitiva Amorosa (1887). Stanislaw Przybyszewski's Requiem Mass (1893) also explores this idea of ruined love.

See Varnedoe (1979), pp. 89-90.

Ibid.

Ibid.


Munch, MS. N30, as cited in ibid., p. 103.

For an account of Munch's fatal attachment to Dagny Juell Przybyszewski, see pp. 52-94.

For an account of Dagny as the Sphinx in Munch's The Three Stages of Woman (The Sphinx), see Heller (1970), p. 80.


This (1933), p. 122.

Ibid.


Lathe (1979), p. 16.

Ibid.

Ibid., pp. 16-17.


307 Ibid., pp. 210-220.


310 Ibid.


312 Ibid.

313 In Christiania Bohemians, II, the man in the right foreground and the bearded Christian Krohg were Oda's first and second husbands, see ibid. Also, there is no evidence to support the idea that Munch was ever romantically involved with Oda. Nonetheless, he identifies and empathizes with those who were, as exemplified in this work of art.

314 Strindberg, as cited in F. Strindberg (1940), p. 71.

315 Ibid.

316 Ibid.


319 Munch, notebook entry, 1912, as cited in Lathe (1979), p. 28.


324 Ibid., p. 72.

Przybyszewski (1915), p. 100.

Ibid.

Ibid., p. 102.

Ibid., p. 100.

Ibid., pp. 71-72.


Munch, undated letter to a lawyer, as cited in Stang (1979), p. 86.

Przybyszewski (1915), p. 115.

Ibid., p. 116.

Munch painted his first Separation motif in 1894. However, the major impetus for the second version of this theme (1896), may have derived, in part, from his knowledge of Overboard.

Przybyszewski (1915), p. 102.


See Przybyszewski (1893), p. 7.


Wylie (1976), p. 413.


Munch, as cited in Stang (1979), p. 212.

Wylie (1976), p. 432.


See Munch, letter to Karen Bjølstad, as cited in Ravenal (1979), p. 25.


See for a discussion on Jaeger's free love society, see pp. 225-255.


See p. 73.

For a discussion about the influence Munch's literary friends exerted on The Woman in Three Stages (The Sphinx), see pp. 306-315.


Munch, as cited in Stang (1979), p. 90.

See p. 68.

According to Eggum (1981), p. 41, Munch's prose poem represents the artist's doubts about free love as practiced by the bohemian set in Christiania.


For a discussion about Judith as Munch portrays her in The Cat, see pp. 101-103.


Ibid., p. 24.


Ibid.


Munch, MS. T2739, as cited in ibid., pp. 42 and 44.

Ibid., p. 44.


For a more complete discussion concerning Evening, (The Yellow Boat) of (1891), see pp. 268-269.

For a more complete discussion concerning Jealousy (1895), see pp. 87-93.

For an account of the shooting incident of 1902, see pp. 109-110.


For a discussion about The Scream, see pp. 50-51.

According to Eggum (1981), pp. 45 and 47.

Ibid., p. 47.

See p. 327.


In a letter to Jappe Nilssen Munch writes:

Poor Hans Jaeger--he was one of the few people I would have liked to see again. He was one of the nicest of the bohemians, and he has now become author of the best Christiania novels. Please give him my warmest regards.

Munch, letter to Jappe Nilssen, 1910, as cited in Stang (1979), p. 48; and Bang (1963), p. 78. Nilssen's reply to Munch's letter reads as follows:

HJ was very moved by your greetings. He had obviously not expected the gesture. In fact he probably had the idea you were among his enemies. He asked me to tell you how grateful he was!

Nilssen, letter to Munch, as cited in Stang (1979), note 6, p. 288; and Bang (1963), p. 78.


Munch, letter to Dr. Daniel Jacobson, undated, as cited in Stang (1979), p. 222.

Stang (1979), pp. 246 and 250.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Between the years 1889 and 1901, Munch found the literary and artistic means to communicate his ill-fated relationships with women. Although other works have alluded to some of the sources of Munch's visions, there has been no comprehensive analysis of this fatal woman motif. This study has therefore investigated and analyzed a selection of the artist's writings and works of art from the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth century in which the theme of the fatal woman appears. Munch used this motif not only as a personal metaphor for his devastating affairs with five women, but also as a reflection of the views and opinions of his Christiania Bohème and Ferkel Circle friends who depicted women as demonic in their own writings. Furthermore, Munch's fatal woman theme was affected by the Symbolists and Decadents, who viewed women as personifications of evil.

In this study it has been shown that the artist's relationship with Fru Heiberg served as a prelude to the fatal woman theme. In The Sick Child (Fig. 1) of 1885, Munch attempted to disarm, in fact, exorcise the woman he characterized in his writings as a fatal seductress, a Medusa, a Vampire, and a female who drove him to the brink of insanity, by repeatedly lacerating the freshly painted surface of the canvas, while simultaneously reaffirming the image of his dead sister. In Self-Portrait Under the Mask of Woman (Fig. 2) of 1891/92, Munch transformed Fru Heiberg into a Gorgon-like woman whose face hovers over him like an omen of death, like a
phantom from some unforgotten nightmare. In *The Kiss* (Fig. 4 and 5), also of 1891/92, he depicted her as one who entraps the artist with a fatal kiss. In *The Scream* (Fig. 8) of 1893, the artist portrayed her as everywhere in nature and himself as her traumatized, emasculated victim who, in his inability to escape the effects of his fatal woman, cries out a shriek of despair.

Munch's depictions of Dagny Juell Przybyszewski, both written and pictorial, have also been shown to be manifestations of hopeless despair and sexual conflict. For instance, in *Jealousy* (Fig. 17) of 1895, Munch portrayed himself as the enamored victim of Dagny-as-Eve. At the same time he depicted Dagny's husband, seen in the foreground of the picture, as the rejected lover shown in the throes of a jealous rage. His anguish is in reality Munch's own: the projection of the artist's inability to possess a woman who had many suitors.

Judith Molard was another of Munch's fatal women. Likening her in his writings to a cat which frightens him with its soul-penetrating gaze, the artist depicted her as a cat-like Salome who eagerly toys with his head in *The Cat* (Fig. 19) of 1897. Equally careless in her love, Judith is shown squeezing blood from the heart of Munch in *The Maiden with the Heart* (Fig. 20) of 1896. In *Under the Yoke* (Fig. 24) of 1896, Munch depicted Judith as a nude temptress, lying in wait for the artist-as-monk who has just crossed under the yoke (symbol of monastic obedience). This work is the portrayal of a foolish Munch who, unable to resist this girl who is ready for sexual intercourse, succumbs to the charms of someone half his age.

Munch's relationship with Tulla Larsen was also problematic as fear and disgust replaced ardent passion. Characterizing her as a hedonist and a
woman fatal to his well-being in his letters to her, Munch also depicted the woman as a corpse-like seductress who entraps the artist-as-priest with her hair, her dress, and her hypnotic gaze in *The Dance of Life* (Fig. 27) of 1900. He subsequently brandished and cursed her as a snare of the Devil in *Sin* (Fig. 21) of 1901. Following the shooting incident with Tulla in September 1902, in which Munch sustained a permanently disfiguring hand injury, Munch then portrayed her as a witch-like Salome in *Spirits* (Fig. 31) and *Salome II* (Fig. 33) of 1905. In similar works, Munch incorporated the idea of violence in unison with his sexual terror of a woman who had come to represent for the artist the new black angel of his childhood nightmares. In a play based on his relationship with Tulla, entitled *The City of Free Love*, she is the Dollar Princess who consumes Munch with her love like a terrible contagion.

The last of Munch's fatal women, before his voluntary commitment to Dr. Jacobson's clinic in Copenhagen in 1908, was Eva Mudocci. According to Munch, she was the woman responsible for his sexual incapacitation and, in unison with this idea, he depicted her as Salome in three 1903 lithographs. In the last of these, *Salome* (Fig. 53), Eva holds beneath her chin the decapitated head of the artist-as-Baptist.

In fact, for Munch, all of the women with whom he was romantically involved were emasculating, castrating Salomes, Medusas, Vampires, and Eves. Such women, whom he once likened to roses possessing sharp thorns capable of inflicting great damage, were therefore instrumental in the execution of his fatal woman motif.

As the women he desired became the women he feared and hated, Munch's obsessive reveries about them, both written and pictorial, were
orchestrated in perfect harmony with Symbolist and Decadent ideology concerning women as the personification of evil. As idols of perversity, the women in Munch's Hands (Fig. 12), Madonna (Fig. 60a), both of 1893, and Jealousy (Fig. 17) of 1895, correspond in type to such modern day Eves as those depicted in Jean Delville's The Idol of Perversity (Fig. 57) of 1891, and Franz von Stuck's Sin (Fig. 30) of 1893. Charles Baudelaire's depictions of the fatal woman are demonstrated in such poems as "You'd Take to Bed the Whole World," "Afternoon Song," and "To a Madonna" from Les Fleurs du Mal (1857). All seductresses who simultaneously tempt and reject, such women were sources of frustration and sexual torment to their male creators who nonetheless worshipped these accursed women.

As one of the most popular among the fatal woman archetypes, Salome came to represent the essence of a woman possessed by perverse love and a taste for the blood of man in the writings and art of the Symbolists and Decadents. We see her in Stéphane Mallarmé's "Heriodiade" (1867), Joris-Karl Huysmans' À Rebours (Against Nature) of 1884, and Oscar Wilde's Salome (1891). She also appears in the art of Aubrey Beardsley, Franz von Stuck, Lucien Lévy-Dhurmer, and Georges Privat Livemont. Likewise Munch created his own menacing version of Salome in such works of art as Salome Paraphrase (Fig. 61), Self-Portrait/Salome Paraphrase (Fig. 62), and Head of a Man below a Woman's Breast (Fig. 63).

Munch's dealings with the Christiania Bohème and the Ferkel Circle, groups who based their writings on ill-fated love relationships with women, were likewise central to the development and amplification of the artist's fatal woman motif. For example, there exist similarities between Munch's depiction of sexual union with a woman in Madonna (Fig. 60a) of 1893 and
the erotic outpourings of Richard Dehmel who, in his poem "The Creed," vows to live for passion alone. Yet, as with the central character in Stanislaw Przybyszewski's Totennesse (Requiem Mass) of 1893, who succumbs to the fatal powers of a woman, Munch's Madonna and his Madonna (Fig. 74) of 1895 are representations of woman's ability to destroy any man willing to become her consort.

As has been shown, other female harbingers of destruction and death can be found in Munch's 1894 drypoint Vampire (Fig. 77) and his 1900 version of this same motif (Fig. 78). In both of these works horrible winged females, complete with lacerating claws, hover over and pierce the chest of male victims. Analogous to several passages from Hans Jaeger's Fra Christiania Bohemen (1885), in which the author can be found describing love as a bird of prey, Richard Dehmel's "The Bastard," which tells the tale of a winged vampire who takes nourishment from and then destroys the prostrate poet, and August Strindberg's Simoon (1890), wherein the central female character reduces her male prey to a corpse through the means of psychological torture, Munch's Vampire and Harpy demonstrate that the artist was able to transform the writings of his friends into works of art. Likewise, Munch's Vampire (Fig. 7) of 1893 and his Ashes (Fig. 13) of 1894 reiterate a motif found in Strindberg's The Father (1888), wherein a man seeks the affections of his nurse and his wife only to be destroyed by both at his weakest moment. In addition, the artist's Jealousy and Jealousy II (Figs. 17 and 70) of 1895 and 1896 are analogous to the last scene from Strindberg's Creditors (1888). In this drama, the husband finds his wife conspiring with another man behind his back. He subsequently succumbs to a jealous rage and death.
In the final analysis, it may be stated that the fatal woman motif found in Munch's writings and in his art stand as evidence of a man who was hopelessly out of sorts with the world, with women, and with himself. As manifestations of the artist's inability to co-exist with any woman, other than in self-referential terms, such depictions of fatal females are forevermore characteristic of Munch's deep-seated struggles and conflicts with the opposite sex in unison with the Symbolists and Decadents as well as the artist's Christiania Bohème and Ferkel Circle friends.

In addition, what makes Munch's depictions of the fatal woman so effective is his own relationship with her. In life, his affairs with Fru Heiberg, Dagny Juell Przybyszewski, Judith Molard, Tulla Larsen and Eva Mudocci not only sharpened his vision of the fatal woman, but lent to his writings and his art a terrifying sense of the real. That is, Munch's fatal woman motif is first and foremost a frightening sexual fantasy born of the artist's own masochistic tendencies to view himself as a victim. He wholeheartedly believed that this victimization was the result of the executioner-women he had known, loved, feared, hated and finally succumbed to, body and spirit, as evident in his voluntary commitment to Dr. Jacobson's clinic in Copenhagen in 1908. It was there that he gained the strength to leave all the miseries and the sufferings of the past behind him. It was there also that he found the courage to rid himself of the cold clasp of the demon-woman within and to commune with the life-giving sun which is vividly and triumphantly conveyed to us in The Sun (Fig. 108).
Fig. 1--Edvard Munch. The Sick Child, 1885-86. Oil on canvas. Oslo: National Gallery.
Fig. 2--Edvard Munch. Self-Portrait Under the Mask of Woman, c. 1891-92. Oil on cardboard. Oslo: Munch Museum.
Fig. 3--Edvard Munch. Adjé (Adieu), c. 1890. Pencil drawing. Oslo: Munch Museum.
Fig. 4—Edvard Munch. The Kiss, c. 1891-92. Oil on canvas. Oslo: National Gallery.
Fig. 5—Edvard Munch. The Kiss, 1892. Oil on cardboard (transferred to canvas). Oslo: Munch Museum.
Fig. 6--Edvard Munch. Evening on Karl Johan Street, 1892. Oil on canvas. Bergen: Rasmus Meyer Collection.
Fig. 7--Edvard Munch. *Vampire (Love and Pain)*, 1893. Oil on canvas. Oslo: Munch Museum.
Fig. 8--Edvard Munch. The Scream, 1893. Oil, pastel and casein on cardboard. Oslo: National Gallery.
Fig. 9--Edvard Munch. Stanislaw Przybyszewski, 1894-95. Oil and pastel on paper. Oslo: Munch Museum.
Fig. 10--Edvard Munch. Portrait of Dagny Juell Przybyszewski, 1893. Oil on canvas. Oslo: Munch Museum.
Fig. 11--Dagny Juell Przybyszewski, early 1890s. Photograph. Oslo: Munch Museum.
Fig. 12--Edvard Munch. Hands, 1893. Oil on canvas. Oslo: Munch Museum.
Fig. 13--Edvard Munch. Ashes, 1894. Oil on canvas. Oslo: National Gallery.
Fig. 14--Edvard Munch. Ashes, 1896. Lithograph. Oslo: Munch Museum.
Fig. 15--Dagny Juell Przybyszewski, 1894. Photograph (taken in Kongsvinger, Norway). Oslo: Munch Museum.
Fig. 16--Edvard Munch. Ashes II, 1899. Lithograph and hand-colored with watercolor. Washington D.C.: Sarah and Lionel Epstein Collection.
Fig. 17—Edvard Munch. Jealousy, 1895. Oil on canvas. Bergen: Rasmus Meyers Collection.
Fig. 18--Edvard Munch. Paris Nude, 1896. Oil on canvas. Oslo: Christian Mustad Collection.
Fig. 19--Edvard Munch. The Cat, 1897. Etching and drypoint. Oslo: Munch Museum.
Fig. 20--Edvard Munch. The Maiden with the Heart, 1896. Etching and dry-point. Oslo: Munch Museum.
Fig. 21--Edvard Munch. The Heart, 1899. Woodcut. Oslo: Munch Museum.
Fig. 22--Edvard Munch. The Girl with the Heart/The Urn, c. 1896. Lithograph. Oslo: Munch Museum.
Fig. 23--Edvard Munch. The Urn, 1896-97. Lithographic ink and chalk. Private Collection.
Fig. 24--Edvard Munch. Under the Yoke, 1896. Etching and drypoint. Oslo: Munch Museum.
Fig. 25--Edvard Munch. Under the Yoke and The Suicide, 1896. Etching and drypoint. Washington D.C.: Sarah and Lionel Epstein Collection.
Fig. 26--Edvard Munch. Sketch for the Dance of Life, 1898. India ink, charcoal and bluegreen crayon. Oslo: Munch Museum.
Fig. 27--Edvard Munch. The Dance of Life, 1900. Oil on canvas. Oslo: National Gallery.
Fig. 28--Edvard Munch. 
_Sin,_ 1901. Colored lithograph. 
Washington D.C.: Sarah and 
Lionel Esptein Collection.
Fig. 29--Edvard Munch. Mathilde (Tulla) Larsen, c. 1898. Oil on canvas. Oslo: Munch Museum.
Fig. 32--Tulla Larsen and Edvard Munch, 1898-99. Photograph. Oslo: Munch Museum.
Fig. 33—Edvard Munch. Salome II, 1905, Drypoint. Washington D.C.: Sarah and Lionel Epstein Collection.
Fig. 34--Edvard Munch. The Murderess, 1904-05. Lithograph. Washington D.C.: Sarah and Lionel Esptein Collection.
Fig. 35--Edvard Munch. *Apparition*, 1906. Lithograph. Oslo: Munch Museum.
Fig. 36--Tulla Larsen, 1899. Photograph. Oslo: Munch Museum.
Fig. 37--Edvard Munch. The Death of Marat, 1906. Oil on canvas. Oslo: Munch Museum.
Fig. 38--Edvard Munch. The Death of Marat (The Murderess), 1906-07. Colored lithograph. Washington D.C.: Sarah and Lionel Esptein Collection.
Fig. 39--Edvard Munch. The Death of Marat, 1907. Oil on canvas. Oslo: Munch Museum.
Fig. 40—Edvard Munch. Sketch of Hedda Gabler, 1907. Watercolor and pencil. Oslo: Munch Museum.
Fig. 41—Edvard Munch. *Amour and Psyche*, 1907. Oil on canvas. Oslo: Munch Museum.
Fig. 42--Edvard Munch. Self-Portrait with Wine Bottle, 1906. Oil on canvas. Oslo: Munch Museum.
Fig. 43—Edvard Munch. *Violin Concert*, 1903. Lithograph. Washington D.C.: Sarah and Lionel Epstein Collection.
Fig. 44--Eva Mudocci, 1902-03. Publicity photograph. Oslo: Munch Museum.

Fig. 45--Eva Mudocci and Bella Edwards, 1902-03. Publicity photograph. Oslo: Munch Museum.
Fig. 46--Edvard Munch. Mother and Daughter, 1897. Oil on canvas. Oslo: National Gallery.
Fig. 47--Edvard Munch. Madonna, 1903. Lithograph. Washington D.C.: Sarah and Lionel Esptein Collection.
Fig. 48—Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Bocca Baciata, 1859. Oil on panel. Chicago: Mrs. Suzette M. Zurcher Collection.
Fig. 49--Théodore Chassériau. Esther Adorning Herself, 1841. Oil on canvas. Paris: Louvre.
Fig. 50—Gustave Moreau. The Apparition, 1876. Oil on canvas. Paris: Musée Gustave Moreau.
Fig. 51--Gustav Klimt. Judith I (Judith with the Head of Holofernes), 1901. Oil on canvas. Salzburg: Galerie Welz.
Fig. 52--Gustav Klimt. Pallas Athene, 1898. Oil on canvas. Vienna: Rudolf Zimpel Collection.
Fig. 53--Edvard Munch. *Salome*, 1903. Lithograph. Washington D.C.: Sarah and Lionel Epstein Collection.
Fig. 54—Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Astarte Syriaca, 1877. Oil on canvas. Manchester: City Art Galleries.
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