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Vienna Secession

An Honors Paper for the Department of English

By Bobby Murray

Bowdoin College, 2023

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If you want to know about me, just look at my paintings.

-Gustav Klimt

The true poem is not the work of the individual artist; it is the universe itself, the one work on art which is forever perfecting itself.

-Ernst Cassirer

*Isn't it time that we lovingly
freed ourselves from the beloved and, quivering, endured:
as the arrow endures the bowstring's tension, so that
gathered in the snap of release it can be more than
itself. For there is no place where we can remain.*

-Rainer Maria Rilke

The Vienna Secession

Gustav Klimt, The Kiss (1908)

I: Flöge

Klimt and Flöge are described as companions.
Months before her death he wrote to her:

*A water lily grows by the lake
It is in full bloom
But a handsome man has wounded its soul*

...

Water lilies grow up
invisible stalks,

open slow in mid-morning yellow
and close their lids at night.

He chose the periwinkle meadow of her headdress
to inoculate their hands.

II: Red Hilda

Danaë's rain twinkles
 gold in the cosmos.
 Water snakes and goldfish
 surface like time stars;

Gossaert, 1527

Correggio, 1532

Titian, 1544

Goltzius, 1603

Gentileschi, 1612, 1623

Rembrandt, 1636

van Loo, 1654

Wertmüller, 1787—

Klimt's Danaë
 floats in another portrait—
 saffron-haired
 behind a Tyrian purple veil.

But this universe
 speaks of curled toes on moat
 edges,
 moored by golden vines
 to solid ground.

III: Vienna

Yellow dimensional
city of love—the am-
iguous ringstrasse er-
ected above sunken
greats—Alexander, Au-
gustus and Caesar, down-
river. The Kings, The Re-
public, Imperial

age. O, Vienna, Vi-
enna, you bend over
time! If you carry my
music, and soak up my
dye, if you dance to a-
muse in your cobblestone
quartz, I'll brighten your
hue—woman, give me this

waltz! For the Grass, my Horse
bit, and the Ore, my Pa-
dug. O, Adele, you're my
soil for hydrangea, my
golden foxglove—a sig-
nificant flower to
paint in the manger—the
wife of the buyer, my

gentle exchanger—I'll
paint you in yellow, or
gold, as you wish, wearing
diamonds and pearls for the
nationalists. Wearing
blush and red lipstick, like
jesters and queens. With an
opulent oval, and

pyramid schema. The
seed you desire is
stuck in my brush—is it
romance in yellow, ver-
million lust? Speckled
city of women, I will
repaint your bust,

ownerless city—unconditional love.

IV: Klimt

“If you want to know about me, just look at my paintings.”

gold man woman kissing almost
 flowers grass black squares rectangles
 purple and blue circles gold speckles ledge they hold each
 other lovers as if lovers her eyes closed why
 because she is shy loath nervous but her hand wrapped
 softly around his lips slightly pursed does she want him neck bent her other hand
 over his neck where is his arm hidden in the gold rectangles but his hand grabs her chin,
 her neck and other hand holding the back of her head — she is tall as him on her knees?

his knees could be bent they're covered in golden rectangles I wonder why
 he has squares and she has circles sexual innuendo laurel wreath around
 his head like a Roman flowers in her hair like a princess the same flowers in the meadow
 purple hydrangeas and lavender foxglove with golden disc florets arch gently over shorter
 dandelions and daisies. stalks and stems switch forest green pastel green olive green jutting
 upward always as if from the bottom of a pond. as if growing through the figures. as if feeding
 the golden layers. as if one plant all together. One plant altogether—water rushing like blood up
 through the earth to erect the two on the edge of love; edging on love. Slowly, slowly, like years
 of friendship growing ever so slightly toward love. Blossom, blossoming, and almost, almost
 there—so close, so close that you can feel the breath on your lips, the wind between stalks, the
 sweat of her palm, the verge of her ovals pressing his blocks. The tenuous space between water
 and crop, paintbrush and canvas, steps in a waltz, arrows and ankles, lilies and stalks, myths and
 Old Masters, Klimt and Makart, layering matrix, quickening throbs, “paint when it’s painful,”
 wealthy and smart, nuzzled companions, women and art...

Gustav Klimt, Beethoven Frieze (1902)

I: Floating Genii, Suffering Humanity, Knight in Shining Armor

She floats along the Donaubach,
sgraffito headwater
from Old Masters.

Genii in aeolian slumber,
do you dream of pyrite,
black, or gold
in that river?

Rippled ringstrasse;
up in suffering arms—
the underworld jungle. Suffering
not like Bruegel's—suffering
eye-to-eye with disaster.

The Well-Armed Strong Man
who knows lonely sea-girt islands.
Weak souls in their human position
who beg Compassion.
Who beg Ambition to take heed.
Splashed geometry.

For his golden turn
he is a new hero—
outstepping sympatry,
carving chryselephantine,
pushing plague down that
Wachau valley river.

Beethoven departs the Abnoba
without his golden visor,
carrying just his species up the Danube—
its paling flotilla,
hydras and naiads
ancient as the ode
in his excalibur baton.

II: *Hostile Forces, The Gorgons, Typhoeus*

The evil wall shows
bushy women tangled
with snakes and monkeys.

'*Ghastly!*' says a suffering patron.
Klimt turns, smiles,
brush in hand,
golden-hilted.

What must the *Künstlerhaus* vanquish?
—When the medieval city was demolished
even the Oslator gate creaked the tune of old walled towns
and forsaken Ottoman cries
up the Kahlenberg Mountain.

Edwardian boots click the hall.
The brute's rotund stomach drums
like thunder before the endmost bolt;
that evil canvas of gorilla-eyed critics
and Klimt, the lone pupil
heeding Franz Joseph's heavy step.

Lascivious, wanton, intemperate!
Snake-headed stone-maker,
fire-breathing, dragon-headed
many-tongued son of Tartarus!
'*Klimt!*'
Contorted circle, evil oval,
mad square, sick rectangle, death, *femme!*

From the belly of the beast
a symphony tunes.
Cloistered pitch.
Licking reeds, winding strings,
shearing a golden fleece from lambskin mallets.
The choir calls out to Grief
whose gray ear
faces the movement.

III: Poetry, The Arts, Choir of Angels

We talked like we used to, her and I.
When I shed my sabatons
blue water rushed out—

out from my gauntlets,
cuisse, cuirass, pores
and veins
along with that dreadful memory.

‘*You’re scratched!*’ she said—
nouveau hero!
Your back—*Makartsil* back,
dipped inkpot
of that endless score!

For all the blood in the Danube,
she said, all the lost ships,
there seemed a page still—
a faint, golden rumble
like chasing lambswool clouds
on a Byzantine paint mare.

Bbruummm bbrumm brrrumm brumm
 brrruumm

 O Freunde, nicht diese Töne!
 paradise, paradise, paradise,
Euphrates swell
 choir of woman, lithe woman, women, strike gold
 healing woman Hypsipyle! white woman, angel rise to heaven!

This woman—golden woman, skinny lock and arm,
cobblestone musical mother, Daughter of Elysium, floating Genii,
will she wake to the glorious trill of strong ships and gilded cherubs
arriving in the Black Sea? Must she hear it? Schee buhbuhbuhbauuu haauummm
 Seid umschlungen Millionen! Can she hear it—the splash? craaunnshh!

She whispers something close and blue waters coil our achilles—
 I turn to the canvas, cocooned in golden sun and golden moon.
 buhbumm, buhbummmm a kiss to the whole world and fainting flute.

Gustav Klimt, Emilie Flöge (1902)

(the hazel in her gaze,
bow of her brow,
peacock plume
take shape slow.

This palette smudged
and underlips licked
to make a mess
of her

hand on hip, just to the left
Flöge, own the dress.
Let your face dry
in these whites and reds.

What whispers
curl over her ears?
Does he mean to bend or blend—
indigo wallflower)

Gustav Klimt, 'Three Ages of Woman' (1905)

She cannot face
the dark on her back
or beyond nipples moons.
Perhaps she thinks herself unnecessary.

Things go on this way—
the areola orbits orange
the chiffon coils,
the baby and mother rest.

But her silhouette burned
marks of her age—
unknown shade,
vascular crone,
fruitless dismay.

The brown is an old constellation.
The baby will grow past the page.
One will sink into stars
and the other will soon be replaced.

Gustav Klimt, Death and Life (1908)

I: Death and Life

On second thought the matrix is gray—
that river breaks
between Vienna twilight;

the interstice of day
is midnight navy
is self-imposed death.

That instinctive river
which casts light
on Old Masters

is dark oil on canvas
pulled from dirty screens
in an ancient well.

That long deep journey
for water to mix
with gypsum and sulphate—

to craft plaster
from afterworld splats.
Death and Life.

II: Eros

I was the only one awake
when death came.

He carried a club
like a scythe.

I told him to go
but he wouldn't.

He asked me to dance
and he tried.

For my papa who slept
in the chalet,

I cried and I cried
and I cried.

For my cousin above and
my sister below me,

for their muscular husband,
their child.

I was the only one up
to console him—

we swung underneath
the moonlight.

His whispering killed off
the crickets

and soft sound
of sleeping inside.

III: Thanatos

I was only attempting
to tease you—

to feed you the truth
without lies;

the wonderful plays
of the ages,

the quickening sands,
Liszt's *Totentanz*.

Child, you look like me
more every day—

delirious face,
sunken-eyed,

tormented grasp
to the world of

dangerous shapes,
vermillion design.

Let me attempt to
relieve you,

insidious fool,
fabulist child

you sleep in the arms
of a killer—

you carry more darkness
than I.

IV: Portraits

For all our abstractions—
Toledo at dawn,

Rembrandt's *The Stone Bridge*,
Allegory of War,

Swings and embarkments,
 Ingres, *The Source*,

houses by railroads,
 Renoir, Van Gogh,

Camille On Her Deathbed,
 Pablo Picasso,

Warhol, Duchamp,
 skull by a rose—

We paint
 murderous faces as
 angels, winged,
 bright Byzantine shapes
 floating above death in cyanide clouds.

Koloman Moser, 'The Frog King' (1895)

And leaning on
convergent thirds,

that purple princess
rules

the double-foci mire;
a bright gold

ratio
swamped by an

ugly
frog symbol.

Koloman Moser, Venus in the Grotto

Venus in high light
draws

the eye over
and up.

Like that sand
blanket—

she is harmony
green,

divine yellow,
pastel pink

for purity—
that post-impressionist

matte wrap
with dark German curls.

Egon Schiele, 'Yellow City' (1914)

Where we live is everything—
the old shepherd,

behind immense trees,
and small orthogonal browns.

Hamartia of the myopic eye
lying horizontally.

Composition
in each dimension—

the operetta
strung in yellow

through vermilion pipes
and four open sash windows,

the tomorrow of it
setting yellow,

rising like red.

Lay it flat—
she still sits writing in

the lowest house
inside of the city.

Egon Schiele, The Embrace (1917)

They realize love with death converging
brown;

focal grip, raven scar,
cathedral hair, abstinent mouth,

cityscape towel and finger spires—
ridge-post arms.

Angels arch over spines,
pagan-faces, stained hearts,

to hear their plea to time:
'A moment longer, please, I beg.'

(he whispers in her ear)
(she wraps around his wilting leg)

Through cobbled tears,
basilica ribs, wine and bread,

she gasps, gasps in fear.
They figure love, expressing chaste—

death is fed and unembraced.

Egon Schiele, 'Lovers (Self-Portrait with Wally)' (1912)

The worst headache
came and stayed
when you left.

And it figures,
the clutch—
only you know the depth;

the stroke of my back,
scarlet
of my sex—

my prayer in a
ruff-collar,
rubicund dress.

I'll form with your
palette,
newlywed,

and dance with your body
across
the canvas,

and come as your woman
to leave
as your guest—

bemused
with your hand
on my head.

Egon Schiele, Self-Portrait (1911)

Mix me the ugliest
shade of beauty;
blood,
dirt,
the hair and bones
of our tawny city.

Dying light finds me
bent-armed,
staggering,
upheld by
white shadows
negative capability.

Should my true colors stray;
don't atone for it
in egotistical green
or blue—
mark my date of defeat
in pencil.

Egon Schiele, Portrait of Gerti Schiele (1909)

I cannot figure
our father—

he's too deeply red,
too bold for mother.

His yellow is xanthic—
brassica nigra.

Somewhere between them
you sleep, Gerti,

Gerti,
with radiant *Elektra* eyes.

I will mute you
to the public.

Your ochre
grows

from dark blankets,
dirty sheets

wrapping your hips,
Gerti—

my steady hand
holds a golden seed.

Gottlieb Theodor von Kempf, A Woman Stares Out The Window

She must guess
which corner he will turn,
her husband—

what he makes he calls
'Art Nouveau,'
and treats marriage
the same way—

the painting is unbeautifully
blue, but fresh.
It's hard to know
which is better—

he is beyond
her celadon window,
under her square.

Waltzes

Waltz

If she is Psyche and
 I am of stone; if she
 whispers the footing, I'll
 bungle my role. If her
 fabric, unfolded, is
 limestone or silk, I'd
 catch on her marble and
 fracture her foot. Look—Vic-

toria's riflebird
 dazzles the ballroom—so
 swiftly bejeweling the
 pedestal deck, as the
 tightly-laced corset-girls
 gesture their grandsons to
 model the chivalrous,
 tame Darwinist. If a

chisel can rescue the
 kiss of a God, if Ca-
 nova can master the
 rock without ruin, can
 gentleman ruffled by
 diamond custom un-
 tether the mythical
 folds of her plumage?

Sheepish

O, how they wander, and
mine, how they wander, and
yours, how they wander, and
mine, how they're wandering
yours, how they're wandering
note after note and a
two and a three and *ah*—

footpath dispersions—gold
sheep in a pasture—white
moonlit processions—O
bach'lorette shepherd, do
help me in herding—her
chandelier necklace, I
can't get a word in! O

curséd attention—her
serpentine hair—how her
hissing complexion is
sniffing my hand! O, Sel-
ene, O Medusa, O
woman of beauty! Keats—
tell me this pleasure lasts
just for the movement!

The Ladies Do Whisper

Why must they sing from the
Biedermeier benches—like
puppeteers working the
thread of her legs. Pesin-
oe and Thelxepia,
gossiping Agloape—my
lady—you're caught in the
thoughts of your friends! O, how

pluggéd her ears to the
tune of the waltz, and my
charm, and my effort to
untwine her heart. How un-
sure is a marion-
ette of its foot—we'd be-
dazzle at Salzburg, the
way that we lurch! O, if

Eros's arrows hit
her in the heart, or if
Lancelot offered his
chivalrous arm, she would
sure be less taken—the
power of gossip! My
friends will erupt at this
rich allemande!

Asking a Dance

Why must I ask, if I'm
 wearing a blazer; if
 Cupid was naked for
 most of his life! Does the
 chandelier hang on in-
 elegant quavering?
 Isn't her fancy re-
 fractured in mine? O, how

bumblebees hasten and
 wordlessly marry—in-
 stinctual stinging to
 strengthen the hive. Sporting
 stripes on their suit jackets
 concealing arrows—do
 timorous butterflies
 get butterflies? If a

lady would ask, I might
 dance unprecarious—
 nature declines in the
 line at Knize. A
 gentleman clings to his
 trusty sudarium,
 stung by the spoken
 romantic procedure.

The Last Waltz

Check all the boxes, the
 dance is apace! As The
 Blue Danube flowers us
 fortunate mates, goes the
 arm under arm and the
 wink from Tyche; how she
 smiled at my ask—ah, the
 night is *en prise*! O, her

feathers are golden, her
 touch is an egg— do I
 suddenly smell something
 horribly rank? O! From
 where does it emanate?
 Who is the crook? O! How
 wretched the heavens to
 discharge this rook! Do I

enter her mind in a
 zugzwang of scorn? O—this
 dastardly, artless, in-
 human return! She may
 think me the source of this
 barbaric ruse! I have
 all of the theory, but
 none of the moves!

Short Talks

The "Short Talks" are derived from a poetic form invented by Canadian poet Anne Carson, first seen in her book *Short Talks, Brick Books Classics, 1992*.

Reflection

A mirror is a reflection until you finish your routine—
hair that way, face to the good side. Then it's off to the ice-
covered car, tying wet boot laces with cracked hands, steam
exhales. Everything can be picked from between the teeth,
which is why in the Northeast poetry wants to be delicate.
“Frosty” is the best way to see the bitter morning, like the
topping of a donut. Nonetheless, the walk from house to car
is the time spent outside in January. Sometimes windows
are covered in snow for us to draw faces.

A Short Talk on Short Talks

And that is the trouble of talks that are short. Sometimes in absence is loneliness. Sometimes it's music. Or goosebumps or sirens wailing down 12th Street in the pouring rain. And droplets magnetized to skyline could be pinned to a whiteboard, or chalkboard.

Corpus

How does one choose what to remember in the
next month, year, lifetime? Light spreads the wall
far as the bulb has watts, or as long as the
lampshade extends, or as thick as its parchment.
Turning pages before bed is a sleepless penumbra.

Brunswick Train Station

While sitting in the Brunswick train station, an elderly man and his wife enter the foyer. She's balancing a loose rose-colored overcoat with purple boots. He wears a dark tweed jacket and heavy corduroy pants. They steer toward the information desk arm in arm. He motions for her to save two seats nearby. She unclasps their arms and goes over. With his worn leather wallet, he pays for tickets—"to Hartford Union Station, sir." At the coffee desk, he buys black without cream or sugar and a big cinnamon roll. She sets down *The Handmaid's Tale*. They ogle at its size. Then pick at it with shaky fingers. They catch me watching. "How's the book?" he asks. Her mouth is full of cinnamon roll.

Poetry

How we don't need poetry 'till we move to a city or
find ourselves alone. For no good reason we need
something new. The familiar throbs behind us like a
deepening wound. We turn to poetry as it may be
the only thing left; people spend lifetimes
describing empty streets.

Rumination

Green painted each blade in the back lawn. Real green—the kind that swelled with the sun and inked your fingers when pinched. In the early morning, dew swirled as if considering whether to slide down or watch the sun rise over the hills. Skinning your knee on pavement meant holding back tears and the taste of dad’s coffee took an orange juice chaser. At night my eyes adapted to darkness when I looked out the window. I used to look out the window. I wondered what deer thought about and if there was anyone else thinking about what deer thought about.

Stevie Wonder

I sometimes feel I would have better range if I wasn't on Instagram. And how I could write *Knocks Me Off My Feet* if I didn't binge watch *The Office* or drink so much. I'm wondering about self-imposed limitations.

Ice Baths and Cold Showers

“*Dukkha*” hardly means “suffering.” I look at the 52-degree water and consider any alternative; what my day would look like if I didn’t. If it would change. If I would feel *better* without it. If hedonism is hot or cold. Jets give the tub an undercurrent. *I will be cold for 20% of my day*. The water has a particular stare—every day we try to figure each other out. It knows my *skandhas* better than I do.

Other

The Roadside Pond, Rutland VT

This roadside pond
has no history
is wordless and deaf;
If wind chimes
rang over
it would not
describe the song.

The cat tails
only push with
the wind as a father
and his child
on a swing.

Its wrinkles
seem imagined.

Without its winterly
wilt
it would be
obsolete.

So, it must be
nearing death,
with its
frozen gray look—

In An Old Lounge

An oakwood ember bows up
by the fireplace.

And copperplate carvings
like petroglyphs
outline violin purfling
and Parisian parquets.

The midnight quiet
seems to listen over lamplight.

Larghetto in F Minor.

Above the mahogany mantle
there's a portrait of a man
from the American Jazz Age.

He may hear this or that
in our conversation—
hers and mine.

Glove Box

The sky reddens
past the winding highway
and the subtle hum

half-light grasps at the sideline hills.
A loose thumb sifts along her pleat.

A pith of clouds is her negligée
shifting gears.

You must have carved your eyes
from this Appalachian.

A soft stretch of skin
to get us over the hump.

Henry James

Madame Merle said, “one cannot judge till one’s 40.”

What should I do—wait?

Aubade for Louis Armstrong

The pale moon is shining
 on the fields below
 and Under a Blanket of Blue
 I comp, low.

Night sky.

That golden Selmer
 reflects the Steinway
 and friendly teeth
 like keys
 pale as moon.

“Sleepy Time Down
 South”? you bid, gravelly
 and rich, smile Cheek
 to Cheek—

There won’t be another
 spirit as sincere.
 I feel your grin—
 I Can’t Afford to Miss This Dream.

I wake to birds
 outside my window.
 Brass penumbra on the Victrola.
Ella and Louis.
 Vinyl edges spin me
 back to my pillow. Oscar
 comps a lullaby,
 the walls and *the pale moon*
shining... on
the fields below

Lady slipper

Magnificent cliché
on ugly rut humus.

Dirty vogue clod.
Rootless hubris.

Hesitation

Along the rocky mid-October pier,
You peer over the slippery ledge.
We're already outside. We're already here.

Concrete eel—straightened, stressed,
You stifle and secrete
Along the rocky mid-October pier.

Slinking down some spineless tract,
Tilting forth...inching back...
We're already outside. We're already here.

A pain and shame you are to us—
That peduncle begs to wring
Along rocky mid-October pier.

What belays you? Leap. Leap.
A dactyl with some pruney feet?
We're already outside. We're already here.

Cold grey sea stones turn to scree
And sessile skins create dock fouling
Along this rocky mid-October pier.
We're already outside. We're already here.

Meteorology

There is a split
in winter ice
that forks your step.

Stand-in
like a symbol,
& snowfall tonight

is of two minds,
a cold, unwanted
touch.

And that tacky notion—
it's fine to be
young & overcome.

What Art

The morning light streaks
shifting over this sheet

promise the work is worth
the lack of sleep.

And warm breath
spinning up like painted leaves

is *lieder* in the bitter cold;
Avercamp's landscape.

Glissade stroke, control
breath, *Ballet Russe*—

Liebstraüm this scroll
of golden resting ballerinas.

What art is in the smell
of hockey gloves and calloused feet—

what art is in the cabriole
and *Hohe Liebe* and *Winter Scene*.

Old Man and the Sea

Cape Elizabeth sea palm
is good reason

to hang by land
for a photo

that misses
the coastline.

Sargasso Sea—
kelp,

the skiff,
the adventure.

The rhythmic rough
kelp fronds—

we settle lifeless
on a park bench.

Haiku 1

Reasons you need a—
 The meaning of—
 How does Tik Tok manifest

success? Hike me
 a mountain
 in seven seconds,

with blackbirds passing
 like drones
 while I have you here.

What do you do for a—
 Scientists have finally dis—
 How might a thought

grow, elastic as bubbles?
 Nature and
 nature's laws ringing,

evolving in winter
 circles
 from this mirror pond.

'For you,' the gift
 of ADHD.
 On a grey Amherst morning,

paper scraps rain upon

a steady autumn stream.
I watch them on my phone.

A boulder, obsolete in the Fort River,
preserves
a paling, leeward fly.

Haiku 2

Having shoveled thick ice,
I'm slow to go out,
wary of puddles.

The snow looks heavy—
I've shrunk the hour
far too long.

I'm a warrior
in the cold. My father
worked me like a snowshoe.

Treading
thinly-cracked ice
in bright midwinter.

Frozen eel grass
grapples the dense
undercurrent fog.

A paper birch
and a smaller one
crack a joke.

The butchery is closed
and my father
doesn't hunt.

The tracks are deer,
who lightly come
and go.

Cold wind waits
eagerly for autumn's
blessing.

Workdays start
when sunlight splits
the open snowfield.

To a lonely moose;
this blizzard
is dizzying.

Along the frosted coast,
snowy owls have
learned the hard way.

My father plows
the path quietly
I see, I see.

Chemical Change

Our household was a shadow-edged
storm, overlapping order

on our heads.
Each room shuttered

when he entered. His keys
clanged and doors were pushed.

Finn scuttled to lock them.
He would sketch furiously—Condo's

twisting faces. His skinny arms
moved frantically, as if fortifying

an escape the canvas—oblong cheek,
abutted tooth, urgently sizing our way out.

Shadows stretch like wax
if you dwell in them too long—

and so we became waxy,
beetled over

in filmy pools
of hellfire orange,

desperately drawing
dark heat.

Our shape shifted in the shadows
without knowing—

light exposed
youth—our deformities.

Note to Rilke

There is small silence
(in every mind)
behind a winter-white picket
filled with pollen
for when drums stop
and May ideas flower.

Notes

Gustav Klimt, *The Kiss* (1908)

The closing of lids is an invocation of nyctinasty flowers (water lilies), which, like humans, rise in the morning and sleep at night.

The “cosmos” refers to the background, or matrix of *The Kiss*. Klimt covered the entire canvas with sheets of gold leaf, covered painting with gold wash, then flicked with gold flecks.

“Water snakes,” “goldfish,” and “royal feathers” refer to some of Klimt’s other paintings: *Water Serpents (I & II)* (1903), *Goldfish* (1907), and *Lady with Hat and Feather Boa* (1909).

The list of artists is of those who have famously painted the scene of Danaë and Zeus’s golden rain. Klimt’s painting, *Danaë* (1907) is specifically references as well.

“Tyrian purple” is an expensive pigment made as early as 1200 BC by the Phoenicians, Romans, and Greeks. Apparently, the idea of purple being an “elite” color comes from the ancient association of purple with royalty.

Part III: Vienna is an example of one of my experimental “waltz” poems, in which I use $\frac{3}{4}$ meter for the entirety of the poem and somewhat regular rhyme; a poetic reflection of a waltz, which originated in Vienna.

The “ringstrasse” is the ‘Vienna Ring Road,’ a famous circular grand boulevard in Vienna with magnificent mansions erected in late 19th-century. Klimt was first commissioned the ringstrasse to fill with murals. A symbol of traditional Viennese tradition.

“The Kings, The Republic, The Imperial Age” refers to the three distinct time periods of the Roman Empire: The Period of Kings (625-510 BC), Republican Rome (510-31 BC), and Imperial Rome (31 BC-AD 476).

“For the Grass, my Horse/bit” refers to John Locke’s *On Property*: Thus the Grass my Horse has bit; the Turfs my Servant has cut; and the Ore I have digg’d in any place where I have a right to them in common with others, become my *Property*, without the assignation or consent of any body. The *labour* that was mine, removing them out of that common state they were in, hath *fixed* my *Property* in them. Also referring to the grass outside the Klimt-Villa in Vienna, where Klimt spent most of his time

“Adele” is Adele Bloch-Bauer, who is said to be one of his mistresses, and possibly the female figure in *The Kiss*. Also, the muse for one of Klimt’s most famous works, *Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer I* (1907)

The “nationalists,” generally, were the elites in Austria. More specifically, Karl Lueger, who brought together the German National and Christian Social factions at City Hall to form a group that later became known as the United Christians. Today, Lueger’s influence is controversial due to the populist and anti-semitic politics of the Austrian Christian Social Party, which is sometimes viewed as a model for Adolf Hitler’s Nazism. It is said that Adele Bloch-Bauer, who married a wealthy businessman, was desirous of intellectual admiration, and was exuberant about her newfound fame following the exhibition of *Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer*.

“Arrows and ankles,” towards the end of the poem, alludes to Achilles.

“Makart” is Hans Makart, a primary influence on Klimt, known for his contributions to *aestheticism*.

“Paint when it’s painful” is taken from Renoir: “the pain passes but the beauty remains.”

Gustav Klimt, Beethoven Frieze

“Donaubach” is a short river in Donaueschingen, Baden-Württemberg, Germany, which flows from the source of the Danube to the Brigach

“Old Masters” alludes to W.H. Auden’s *Musée Beaux des Arts*. Same with “human position.” “Bruegel’s suffering” refers to Pieter Bruegel the Elder’s “The Fall of Icarus.”

“aeolian” is both the rising action of the wind and aeolian mode in music, the mode of Beethoven’s Symphony No.9 (D minor).

“lonely sea-girt islands” refers to the gods’ description of Odysseus in *The Odyssey*.

Compassion and *Ambition* are the two female figures perched above *The Well-Armed Strong Man* in *Beethoven Frieze*

“plague” refers to The Great Plague of Vienna, which killed more than 76,000 people.

Beethoven’s “departure,” and journey throughout the poem means to emulate the trajectory of a hero in an epic.

“Abnoba”: the Danube river emanates from the Abnoba mountain, which was considered to be a river or spring goddess in Greek mythology.

“species”: both biological and musical species; the foundation of living organisms and counterpoint.

“flotilla”: referencing Austria’s enormous Danube Flotilla ships: 50-ton prewar vessels (early 1900’s, built during the time of Klimt painting *Beethoven Frieze*).

“naiads”: specific reference to the Naiads who, fascinated by his beauty, took Hylas of *Argo*’s crew in Greek mythology.

“excalibur” and “court” are invocation of King Arthur and his court.

Apparently, “ghastly!” was shouted by a prominent art collector upon seeing the frieze at the 14th exhibition at the Secession building.

The *Künstlerhaus* was the Austrian conservative Artist’s House Union.

The “Oslator gate,” “old walled towns,” and “Ottoman cries/up the Kahlenberg Mountain” refers to the battle of Vienna, 1683.

The “endmost bolt” and surrounding description refers to Zeus defeating Typhoeus with two strikes of lightning.

Franz Joseph, Austrian emperor, 1848-1916

“cloistered pitch” refers to the cloistered courtyard at Olympos, *Illiad*. And musical pitch.

“golden fleece” refers to The Golden Fleece, which Jason and Argonauts stole with the help of Medea (symbol of authority and kingship). Also, allusion to The Distinguished Order of the Golden Fleece, Catholic order of chivalry, which still exists in Austria (grand master Karl von Habsburg).

“sabotons,” “gauntlets,” “cuisse,” and “cuirass” are all parts of medieval armor.

“dreadful” invokes W.H. Auden’s *Musée des Beaux Arts*, “that even that dreadful martyrdom must run its course.”

“Your back—”: in the booklet *Viennese Secession*, it says “Klimt himself did not bother to hide the subtle eroticism of his painting. Some of his friends (including Schiele) explained that the broad back of the man is not only representative of his potency but is also supposed to look like the underside of a phallus” (61).

“For all the blood in the Danube” could be any number of wars along the Danube, particularly the *Battle of Carnuntum*, 170 AD during the Marcomannic Wars.

“lost ships” refers to the *Argo*, which was blown into the island of Circe as punishment after Jason and Medea killed and dismembered Absyrtus, most prominently in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*.

“there seemed a page still” refers to Sophocles lost play, *Lemiai*, which apparently detailed a battle between the Argonauts and Lemnian women.

“Byzantine”: Klimt was very influenced by Byzantine art. “paint mare” describes Klimt himself—a knight atop a horse.

“O Freunde, nicht diese Töne!” is the opening line of the final movement of Beethoven’s No.9, ‘Ode to Joy,’ based on Friedrich Schiller’s “Ode to Joy.”

“paradise, paradise, paradise”: subtle reference to *Paradise Lost*, juxtaposing the journeys of heroes in different cultures; Satan’s journey is reminiscent of Odysseus’s, Lancelot’s, etc., but *Paradise Lost* is a very different heroic journey.

“Euphrates swell”: reference to the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, earliest ancient epic (2100-1200 BC). Also, the Euphrates River, another expansive river connecting various countries, with extensive prevalence in mythology and ancient society.

“Hypsiplyle”: in Greek mythology, Hypsiplyle was queen of Lemnos, an island filled with women, which the Argonauts visited. Hypsiplyle had two sons by Jason, leader of the Argonauts

“Daughter of Elysium”: lyric from “Ode to Joy”; Elysium was also called Elysian Fields or Elysian Plain, in Greek mythology—originally the paradise to which heroes on whom the gods conferred immortality were sent. In Homer’s writings the Elysian Plain was a land of perfect happiness at the end of the Earth, on the banks of the Oceanus. A similar description was given by Hesiod of the Isles of the Blessed. In the earlier authors, only those specially favored by the gods entered Elysium and were made immortal.

The Black Sea is at the end, or mouth of the Danube River.

“Must she hear it?”: Beethoven was completely deaf for the performance of his *Symphony No. 9*.

“*Seid umschlungen Millionen!*”: lyric from *Ode to Joy*, “Be embraced, millions!”

“Can she hear it, the splash?” refers to Icarus’s splash, particularly its description in *Musée des Beaux Arts*.

“Coil”: in *Paradise Lost*, Adam says “of fellowship I seek,” requesting a companion from God. Coil, also alluding to marriage/communion.

“a kiss to the whole world” is the most famous line of “Ode to Joy,” and climax of both *Symphony No. 9* and the *Beethoven Frieze*, is this “kiss to the whole world,” depicted on the right side of the final panel of the frieze.

Gustav Klimt, *Death and Life* (1915)

“On second thought the matrix is gray”: In 1911, after receiving first prize for *Death and Life* at the world exhibition in Rome, as well as five other exhibitions, including a 1912 exhibition in Dresden, Klimt decided to change the background of the painting from golden layers (typical of his ‘Golden Phase’) to gray and black.

“that self-imposed death”: alludes to a letter from Kappus to Rilke in *Letters to a Young Poet*: “All my footsteps feel like walking in quicksand, I feel like I’m choking at every moment. I’m so lonely that it’s like death might suddenly overpower me.” Kappus confessed that he had been “twice tempted” to kill himself. Also, a subtle reference to the use of cyanide to extract gold or silver.

“instinctive river”: alludes to Freud’s instinct theory, id. Describes the space between death and life in the painting.

“Old Masters” refers to Auden’s *Musée Beaux des Arts*, but also those ‘Old Master’ paintings—Neoclassical paintings like Jaques Louis David’s *Andromache Mourning Hector*, 1700, or Baroque paintings like Annibale Carracci’s *Crucifixion*, which portray death and religion very differently. A prevalent concern of the time was how to suffuse the profundity of Old Masters into modernity without recreating ‘historical paintings,’ which *Death and Life* seems to solve.

“dark oil”: paint, but also subtle reference to ‘crude oil pollution’ and CO2 emissions—invocation of the Anthropocene.

The “screen” is at the very bottom of a well, attached to the casing. It keeps sand and gravel out of the well while allowing groundwater to flow into the well.

“that long downward journey”: *Katabasis*: in Greek mythology, the journey to the underworld, typically performed by a hero of the upper-world, such as Orpheus or Odysseus.

“plaster” of Paris: quick-setting gypsum plaster consisting of a fine white powder (calcium sulfate hemihydrate), which hardens when moistened and allowed to dry. Known since ancient times, plaster of Paris is so called because of its preparation from the abundant gypsum found near Paris.

In most medieval depictions of death, such as *Danse Macabre* paintings and literature, death is depicted with a scythe or an hourglass.

“wonderful plays” could be any of Shakespeare’s tragedies. Particularly *Macbeth*, in which Shakespeare describes life as “a tale/told by an idiot, full of sound and fury/signifying nothing” (lines 1827-1828). Also, in many of his plays, Shakespeare symbolizes death in the image of a skull.

“purgatories”: purgatory in Roman Catholicism and also Dante’s *Purgatory*. In both, death is depicted as a predatory figure who takes away, or strips life from human souls.

“*Totentanz*” is the “dance of death” in German. Also, Franz Liszt’s *Totentanz*.

“*Toldeo* at dawn,” “*The Stone Bridge*” “*Allegory of War*,” “*The Source*,” “swings and embarkments,” “houses by railroads,” “Renoir, Van Gogh,” “*Camille On Her Deathbed*,” “Pablo Picasso,” “Warhol, Duchamp,” and “skull by a rose,” all refer to paintings by El Greco, Jan Bruegel the Younger, Jean Honoré Fragonard, Jean-Auguste Dominique Ingres, Jean-Antoine Watteau, Edward Hopper, Pierre Auguste Renoir, Van Gogh, Claude Monet, Andy Warhol, Marcel Duchamp, and Salvador Dali, respectively. This section is meant to sift chronologically through famous landscape portrayal (by artistic movement) up to Klimt’s *Art Nouveau*. The multitudinous effect of the references is meant to heighten the juxtaposition between landscape and portraiture paintings.

Egon Schiele, Portrait of Gerti Schiele

“*brassica nigra*” is Latin for black mustard seed.

“Somewhere between them/you sleep, Gerti”: purported symptom of the Oedipus complex; a child’s insistence on sleeping between parents

The Electra complex is referred to as the female counterpart of the Oedipus complex. Unlike the Oedipus complex, which refers to both males and females, this psychoanalytic term refers only to females. It involves a daughter’s adoration for her father and her jealousy toward her mother. It was named after the Greek myth of Electra. In the myth, Electra persuades her brother to avenge her father’s murder by helping her kill her mother and her lover. Its use is also meant to invoke its Greek etymological meaning, “bright one.”

“Mute you” in color and in censorship.

Waltz

The poem revolves around the myth of Cupid and Psyche. The allegory demonstrates an overcoming of obstacles in the name love, which the poem resituates in an early 1900’s ballroom between a young male speaker and his desired woman.

Victoria’s riflebird is a funny looking bird with an odd mating ritual. This allusion hopes to put our mating (or courting) rituals into question.

“tame Darwinist” invokes Charles Darwin’s evolution theory, or ‘survival of the fittest.’

Antonio Canova is considered the greatest Neoclassical sculptor of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century.

Sheepish

“gold/sheep in a pasture” alludes to Golden Sheep; in Greek mythology, a flock of vicious, golden-fleeced sheep with poisonous bites.

“bach’lorette shepherd”: In Greek mythology, Endymion was variously a handsome Aeolian shepherd, hunter, or king who was said to rule and live at Olympia in Elis. Selene, the Titan goddess of the moon, loved the mortal Endymion and found him so beautiful that she asked his father, Zeus, to grant him eternal youth so that he would never leave her.

“serpentine hair” invokes Medusa.

Selene is the personification of the moon as a goddess. She was worshipped at the new and full moons and is often linked with Endymion, whom she loved and whom Zeus cast into eternal sleep in a cave on Mount Latmus. There, Selene visited him and became the mother of 50 daughters.

“just for this movement” refers to the opening of Keats’ poem, *Endymion*: “A thing of beauty is a joy forever,” which is also mentioned in *Mary Poppins*. Movement as in ‘dance’ and ‘song.’

The Ladies Do Whisper

Biedermeier design was prominent in Central Europe in the 18th and early 19th century. Often called the “Biedermeier period” for the prevalence of Biedermeier furniture.

In Greek mythology, the three Sirens, Pesinoe, Thelxepia, and Agloape, lured sailors to their destruction with their tantalizing song.

“we’d be/dazzle at Salzburg, the/way that we lurch!”: the ungainly couple resembles a pair of puppets at the Salzburg Marionette Theater; oldest continued marionette theater in the world.

Asking a Dance

Pronounced “k-nee-z-uh.” Knize is a men’s outfitter in Vienna, Austria. Considered the first men’s fashion brand in the world. Known for having long lines outside the store.

“sudarium” is a sweat cloth.

The Last Waltz

“The Blue Danube,” by Austrian composer Johan Strauss II is among the most famous waltzes ever.

Tyche is the goddess of chance; the speaker is hoping to get lucky.

“*en prise*”: (of a piece or pawn) in a position to be taken. One of many chess and strategy references in the poem.

“zugzwang”: a situation in which the obligation to make a move in one's turn is a serious, often decisive, disadvantage.

Note to Rilke

This poem is a response to Rilke's *Letters to a Young Poet*

Appendix

The poems in “The Vienna Secession,” reflect my interest in the Vienna Secession modernist movement that spanned from approximately 1897-1914 in Vienna, Austria. This movement marked the formal beginning of modern art in Austria, which, before the movement, was better known for its conservative artistic tradition. Led Gustav Klimt, the Vienna Secession embraced forward thinking and internationalist views of the world in art, medicine, music, and philosophy. Secessionists like Klimt, Egon Schiele, Koloman Moser, and Joseph Maria Olbrich, were often criticized for their hyper-sexual depictions of the human body. They were also known for their overt subversions of artistic historicism.

This section is solely comprised of *ekphrastic* poetry—the literary description of art. I was introduced to ekphrasis by Professor Reizbaum who, during my freshman year, covered Mark Strand’s ekphrastic collection, “Hopper.” Since then, I’ve found that many of my favorite poems are ekphrastic—William Carlos Williams’ “Portrait of a Lady,” and W.H. Auden’s “Musée des Beaux Arts,” to name a few. I chose Gustav Klimt, Egon Schiele, and other Secessionist artists because they have made some of my favorite paintings. Their works are insightful for their unique portrayals of the human condition.

My ambition is to both contextualize and “tell a story” of the painting. While the artwork certainly contains stories of their own, I hope to offer fresh perspectives. Oftentimes this comes as an alternate view of the paintings’ main themes. For example, in Klimt’s painting “Death and Life,” the portrayal of death is clear: death is depicted as the reaper, holding a club, facing the innocent family. In my poem, however, I explore the farce of death as it is represented in many paintings—suggesting that the living are the true killers, and not the figure of death.

Overall, this is my favorite and most honest section. Ekphrasis is a poetic mode that is seriously under-practiced, and I hope that my exploration can extend the form in some capacity.

The “Waltzes” are an experimental form in which I rhythmically embody the traditional Viennese waltz. Each poem is in 3/4 time with the opening stress is indicated by italics. Many of the rhymes are either perfect or unsophisticated, mimicking the mellifluous sound of 19th century Viennese waltzes—particularly of Johann Strauss II.

The fundamental phenomena that I address in this section, “Waltzes,” are the delimitations of what is “acceptable” and “unacceptable” in any given epoch. I am specifically focused on contemporaneity and the Viennese Secession because I see them both as especially progressive movements. Early 1900’s Vienna saw a stark uptick in forward-thinking minds, including Gustav Klimt, Egon Schiele, Sigmund Freud, and others, resulting in the sexualization of bodies in popular media. This was aided by the *Art Nouveau* and *Arts and Crafts* movements, which were known partly for their scandalous portrayals of the human body and sexualized imagery. On the other hand, it is no secret that sexuality has become commodified in today’s popular culture. Within these waltzes, I hope to not only compare time periods, but to question the function of sexuality in popular culture—whether it pushes artistic expression forward, or possibly something else.

In the opening waltzes, I’m focused on male sexual frustration: they all take place in a hypothetical ‘ballroom,’ and the speaker is tasked with finding a partner. In the waltzes, the

protagonist (the speaker) runs into various difficulties: he cannot grasp the attention of the lady he is dancing with; he doesn't know the proper steps in the dance (despite it being three steps); he cannot find the confidence to properly ask the woman to dance, and, tragically, someone passes gas on the dance floor. If anything could go wrong, it will go wrong, and that is the trouble of the male position. These are meant to be humorous and carry deeper truths about the precarious masculine role.

Masculinity is portrayed in these waltzes as a double-edged sword; while the speaker endures repeated failure, insecurity and embarrassment, the excitement in the ballroom is palpable, as if the speaker is 'on the hunt'—both figuratively and literally. In these poems, women are often portrayed as animals by the speaker, such as "Victoria's riflebird" (which has a very intriguing mating ritual). My decision to engage with the text in this antiquated way furthers a predatory poetic trope that traces back to poems like Sir Thomas Wyatt's "They Flee From Me," written in 1535: "They flee from me that sometime did me seek/With naked foot, stalking in my chamber/I have seen them gentle, tame, and meek,/That now are wild and do not remember." I chose to utilize this voice for a few reasons: to show that these masculine sensibilities persist and to represent the ethos of convention in 19th and 20th century Vienna, as exhibited by my research on the epoch.

Overall, the locus of the waltzes is *moral policing*: how much promiscuity is too much in any given period? How do we gauge what is acceptable? Who decides the boundaries? Who pushes the mold? The goal in these waltzes—while maintaining 3/4 time and the voice the respective period—is to explore the delimitations of conventions and popular culture's commitment to and divergence from moral policing.

"Short Talks" are continuation of poet Anne Carson's 1992 collection, "Short Talks." In her collection, Carson meditations on disparate subjects, from 'walking backwards' to Vincent Van Gogh. I found this collection compelling for its sincerity and forthright delivery. It seemed to strike a perfect balance between poetic depth (using metaphor, allusion, etc.) and accessibility. Moreover, it was as if, when reading, I was having a short conversation with Carson herself, which I enjoyed and tried to emulate.

With that said, these "Short Talks" are less 'mini-lectures' than they are 'short meditations,' meant to demonstrate my process of curiosity rather than display any epiphanic knowledge. This seems appropriate given Carson is a college professor, and I am a student.

Like Carson, though, most of the "Short Talks" are focused and anecdotal. Many of the poems in this section may, at first read, appear to highlight the trivial or the quotidian. However, it is my hope that hope that further meaning can be extrapolated in some of the subtle thematic maneuvers.