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The Art Bulletin, Vol. 75, No. 4 (Dec., 1993), 627-646.

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Edvard Munch's *Self-Portrait with Cigarette:* Smoking and the Bohemian Persona

Patricia G. Berman

"One can no longer regard Herr Munch as a man to be taken seriously, nor as even having a normal mind. He either seems to be, in an artistic sense, hallucinating or joking, and he looks down upon the public and degrades art and human life."[1] Such was the reaction that Edvard Munch (1863–1944) received when he held a large and much-anticipated one-man exhibition in his hometown of Kristiania (present-day Oslo) in the autumn of 1895. The exhibition included some of Munch's most stylistically and psychologically challenging images, including *The Scream* (1893), *Vampire* (1893), and *Madonna* (1894–95), as well as less overtly audacious yet nonetheless maligned works such as *Portrait of Ragnhild Bäckström* (1893).[2] This exhibition, the artist's first in Kristiania in three years,[3] consolidated Munch's critical reputation as both visionary and malefactor. Central to this process was Munch's *Self-Portrait with Cigarette,* exhibited as *Self-Portrait* (Fig. 1).

Painted in 1895, when Munch was thirty-two years old, *Self-Portrait with Cigarette* is loaded with subtle contradictions. Lacking an identifiable environment and depicting the artist viewed frontally and slightly from below, the self-portrait represents Munch as a man directly engaging his viewer yet distanced from the world. Lit theatrically from below, his face and his right hand stand out in sharp relief against the blue background in a manner that is, as one of his critics noted, related to Rembrandt.[4] Tiny spatters of blue paint, which form a mist across his cheeks and shirt collar, initiate the gradual absorption of the artist's darkly clad body by the swirling blue background. The control and self-assurance projected by Munch's rigid posture and direct gaze are belied by the physical dissolution suggested by the sickly ocher highlights on his hands, eyelids, and mouth. The cigarette that Munch holds in his right hand, from which plumes of blue smoke rise upward to thicken the already hazy atmosphere, is the symbolic agent of this dissolution.

Scholars have suggested that Munch included the cigarette as a formal device, "a quasi-naturalistic explanation for the symbolically enveloping haze,"[5] as a sign for sexual potency,[6] or as a loose reference to the café society that the artist was known to frequent.[7] It could also be argued that tobacco is foremost a physical addiction, and that by representing himself smoking, Munch provided a public view of his daily life. Although the cigarette smoke unquestionably furnished Munch with a practical source for the theatrical lighting and disjunctively hazy quality of his painting, and revealed a private habit, it also provided him with an identity that was accessible and familiar to his audience.

The smoldering cigarette, Munch's sole prop in his self-portrait, was an object that served as a nexus for marginal social identities in the 1890s. At that time, the cigarette was associated with deviancy—café society, poverty, and illness—and with death. Suggesting a slippage between social categories—identities both male and female, upper- and lower-class—and between intact and disintegrating mental states and physical and political bodies, the cigarette challenged the notion of their boundaries. As a symbol of such social dissolution, the cigarette played a role in both Max Nordau's condemnation of Degeneration and J. K. Huysmans's celebration of Decadence, in medical and sociological theories of aberrancy, and in popular constructions of gendered behavior. By selecting the cigarette as his chief attribute in *Self-Portrait with Cigarette,* Munch elevated the social ritual of smoking into a metaphor and invited the spectator to transfer the cigarette's associations onto himself. This study examines the background for this constructed identity and the social base for its reading. It proposes that the cigarette, which was only mass-marketed for the first time in the 1880s, constituted an emblem of Bohemian and Decadent culture, and that Munch included the cigarette in his 1895 self-portrait as a programmatic assertion of his affiliation with the European Decadent community.

At the time of Munch's 1895 exhibition in Kristiania, *Self-Portrait with Cigarette* was cited by critics as an expression of the artist's highest achievements. In a lecture delivered before the University Students' Organization, the writer Sigbjørn Obstfelder called the artist "a lyrical poet with

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Portions of this article were presented as a paper in May 1990 at the annual conference of the Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Studies in Madison, Wisc., under the title, "Emblems of Decadence"; and at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in March 1991 under the title, "Edvard Munch, Smoking, and the Bohemian Persona." I would like to thank Reinhold Heller and Michelle Facos for their initial comments; Arne Eggum, Sissel Biørnstad, and Tone Skedsmo for their assistance with research; and Sam Engelstad, Thomas Cushman, Dagmar Krämer, Jane Van Nimmen, Gabriel P. Weisberg, Shelley Zuraw, and especially Robert Lubar, for their editorial advice. Research funds were generously provided by Wellesley College. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

[1] "Nye Arbeider af Edv. Munch. Udstillingen hos Blomqvist," *Aftenposten,* Oct. 4, 1895. Clipping found in the library of the Munch Museum, Oslo.

[2] Hans Lemmich Juel, two of whose daughters—Dagny Juel Przybyszewska and Ragnhild Bäckström—were Munch's colleagues in Berlin, asked Munch to remove his painting of Ragnhild from the exhibition. This request, and Munch's compliance, were reported as a public scandal as far away as Paris in T. Natanson, "Corréspondance de Kristiania," *La Revue blanche,* Nov. 15, 1895, 477–478.

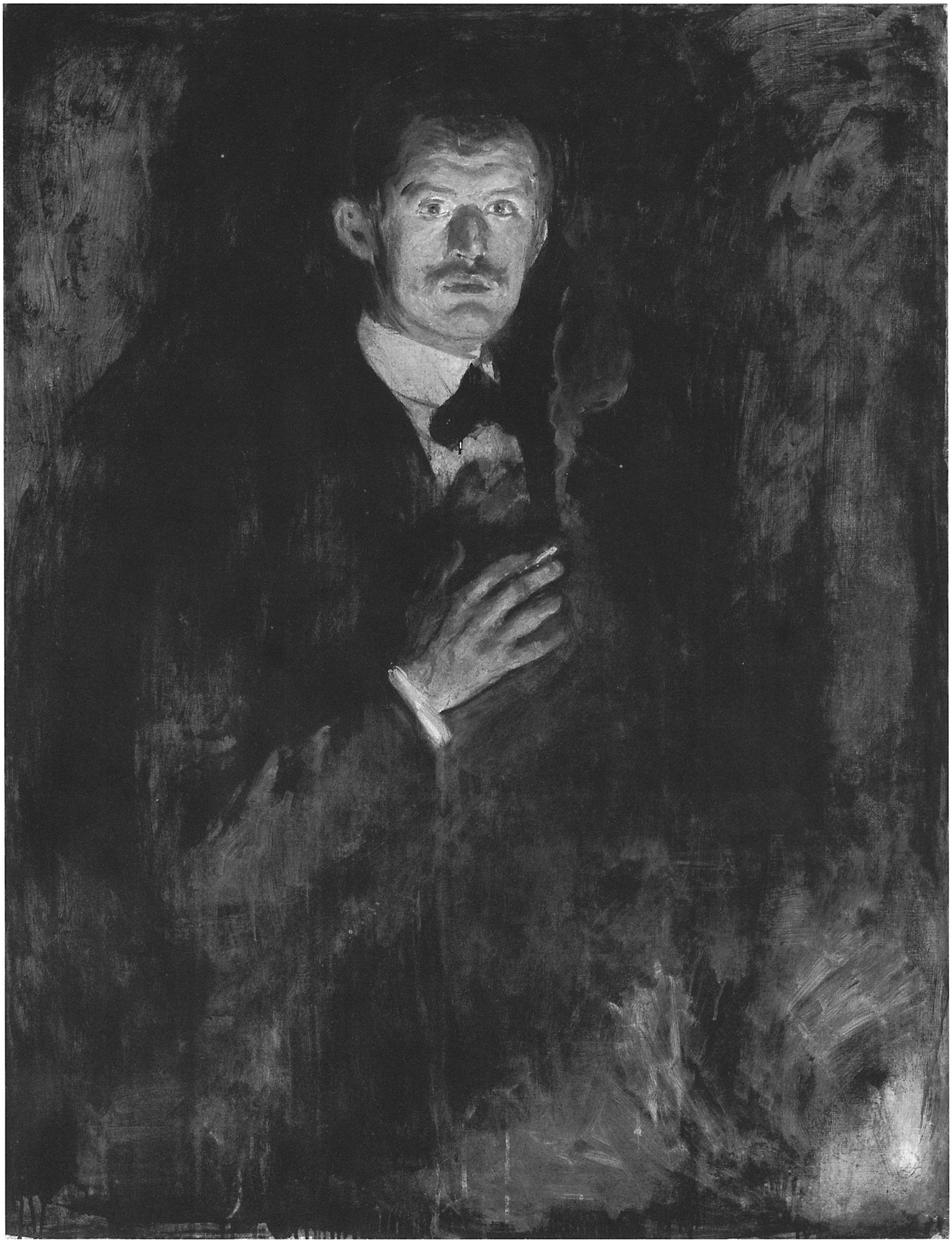
[3] Eggum, 136.

[4] See n. 9 below.

[5] Heller, 1984, 101.

[6] Mitchell, 1987, 29.

[7] R. Heller, "The Portrait Art of Edvard Munch," M.A. thesis, Indiana University, 1965, 52.



1 Munch, *Self-Portrait with Cigarette,* 1895, oil on canvas, 110.5 × 85.5cm. Oslo, National Gallery (photo: J. Lathion, National Gallery) color. . . . A genius."[8] The power of Munch's imagination was, according to Obstfelder, concentrated in the self-portrait, which "describes the soul more than any facial characteristic." Obstfelder compared its "deep underlying beauty" to the psychological resonance of Rembrandt's work,[9] thus establishing both a formal lineage for the painting and an artistic genealogy for the painter. The writer Helge Rode wrote of the painful sensitivity of Munch's art and even referred to its aristocratic qualities, claiming the self-portrait to reveal a "noble head."[10]

At the same time, however, *Self-Portrait with Cigarette* also occupied the center of a controversy over Munch's mental condition, and over the social threat posed by his "abnormal" works. By October 1, 1895, when Munch's exhibition opened, the artist was already established as an important if deeply troubling presence both in Germany and in Norway. In Germany, Munch's work had been targeted repeatedly as corrupting, dangerous, and sick.[11] The assaults on his art and character provoked by this particular exhibition, however, were especially damaging because they came not only from art critics, but from within the medical community.

A particularly vitriolic attack against Munch was launched in Norway by Johan Scharffenberg, a twenty-six-year-old medical student. In statements made before the University Students' Organization at the time of Obstfelder's lecture, Scharffenberg established a direct link between Munch's radical images and the occurrences of illness in the artist's family.[12] By placing art criticism under the aegis of science, Scharffenberg gave credence to the notion that the peculiar nature of Munch's creativity was the result of a medical condition. The artist's motifs, palette, and orchestration of pictorial space were not the fruits of artistic labor, but the result of an inherited morbidity. Scharffenberg placed *Self-Portrait with Cigarette* at the center of this proposition: "As [Munch's] self-portrait demonstrates, he is by no means a normal man. When an artist is abnormal, a shadow is thrown over all of his art."[13] Suggesting that Munch's work was the direct materialization of the artist's abnormal mental state, or his "degeneration,"[14] he even invoked the possibility of a contagion: the obvious moral laxity and decadence of Munch's work would exert a corrupting influence over Norwegian youth. This assertion was repeated, and contested, in the Kristiania press.[15] Unlike other negative art criticism which merely dismissed Munch as inept—one Kristiania critic described Munch's work as operating "on the borderline between earnestness and caricature"[16]—Scharffenberg diagnosed the artist as both sick and dangerous.

Having repeatedly been the target of similar attacks, Munch understood the ease with which social commentators, such as Scharffenberg, were able to translate his aesthetics into other discourses: "I do not think that my art is sick—despite what Scharffenberg and many others believe. Those kind of people do not understand the true function of art, nor do they know anything about its history."[17] For Munch in the 1890s, the true artist, the progressive artist, rejected the minutiae of daily life and focused instead on broader philosophical and spiritual issues.[18] Like many others of his generation, Munch considered illness a paradigm for creativity. Illness suggested a condition in which the aesthetic imagination could exceed the constraints imposed by the rational mind, and provided a space within which the artist's creative faculties could operate. Indeed, Munch often asserted that illness and anxiety were central to his work. Through such (by-now) well-known statements as "sickness and insanity were the black angels that guarded my cradle,"[19] Munch asserted that mental and physical disintegration were the creative starting points for his investigations. Such statements, however, should not be interpreted as evidence of Munch as either suffering from uncontrollable pessimism, or as victimized by an inevitable genetically encoded degeneration. They suggest, rather, that Munch viewed aberrant states of emotion, and particularly the emotional world of social outsiders living beyond the boundaries of bourgeois life, to be genuine points of germination for progressive art. As Barbara Spackman suggests, illness commonly served as both metaphor and conduit for such ambitions at the turn of the century.[20]

Scharffenberg, the son of a public official, an ardent nationalist, and a strong supporter of Positivist art and literature,[21] extracted a different message from Munch's work. He viewed it as a threat to national health. In an article published in the Kristiania weekly *Den 17. Mai* shortly after Obstfelder's public lecture, Scharffenberg contrasted Norwegian youths the way he wished to see them—"healthy youthful sportsmen out skiing"—with those seduced by the new art—sitting in a darkened smoke-filled room, drinking, and longingly contemplating suicide.[22] A student of medicine and psychiatry, Scharffenberg played an active role in student politics at the University in Kristiania as president of the Liberal Students' Organization, and viewed himself as a social reformer. His statements about Munch were consistent with the animus with which he viewed mysticism and Decadence in art and literature.

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[8] S. Obstfelder, Protocol of November 9, 1895 for the Students' Organization of the Royal Frederik's University (University of Oslo). Document found in the library of the Munch Museum, Oslo. I would like to thank Sissel Biørnstad, Research Librarian of the Munch Museum, for providing me with this text.

[9] S. Obstfelder, "Edvard Munch. Et forsøg," *Samtiden,* Nos. 1–2, Jan.–Feb. 1896, 18. This article represents the revised text of Obstfelder's lecture before the University Students' Organization.

[10] H. Rode, "Munch, II. af Helge Rode," *Verdens Gang,* Oct. 10, 1895. Clipping found in the library of the Munch Museum, Oslo. When Munch offered the painting for sale to the National Gallery in Kristiania in October 1895, it was purchased on the recommendation of the artist Gerhard Munthe. Thus, despite its contradictory messages, *Self-Portrait with Cigarette* helped to assure Munch's reputation as an artist distinguished by official recognition. See T. Skedsmo, *Edvard Munch in Nasjonalgalleriet,* Nasjonalgalleriet, Oslo, 1989, 18.

[11] See, e.g., Heller, 1984, 93–94; and his "Affæren Munch, Berlin 1892–1893," *Kunst og Kultur,* LII, 1969, 175–91. Eggum, 137, summarizes similar attacks against the artist in 1890 in Kristiania.

[12] C. Gierløff, *Edvard Munch selv,* Oslo, 1953, 102. Gierløff reports that Munch was present for this assault, and that the artist responded with this ironic commentary: "Well, now I know—I'm crazy—been crazy for five generations—that's good to know."

[13] Protocol of the University Students' Organization, Nov. 9, 1895 (as in n. 8).

[14] *Ibid.*

[15] "Er ungdomen huglaus?" *Den 17. Mai,* Nov. 23, 1895, 1.

[16] *Aftenposten,* Oct. 1, 1895. Clipping found in Munch Museum, Oslo.

[17] Trans. in R. Stang, *Edvard Munch. The Man and His Art,* trans. G. Culverwell, New York, 1979, 123.

[18] See Heller, 1978, esp. 90ff.

[19] Heller, 1984, 14.

[20] B. Spackman, *Decadent Genealogies: The Rhetoric of Sickness from Baudelaire to D'Annunzio,* Ithaca, 1989. Eggum notes this on p. 136. See also G. Becker, *The Mad Genius Controversy. A Study in the Sociology of Deviancy,* Beverly Hills, 1978.

[21] O. Sundet, *Johan Scharffenberg,* Oslo, 1977, 33–34, 35.

As Reinhold Heller and others have observed,[23] Scharffenberg's rhetoric in 1895 relied heavily on the reductive arguments of the Hungarian-born physician and critic Max Nordau, whose influential medical study of deviancy in art and literature, *Degeneration,* had been published in the previous year. In *Degeneration,* Nordau attributed recent developments in European art to the decline of national vigor, and in turn linked social enervation to the influence exerted by diseased artists on the general population: "Books and works of art exercise a powerful suggestion on the masses. It is from these productions that an age derives its ideals of morality and beauty. If they are absurd and anti-social, they exert a disturbing and corrupting influence on the views of a whole generation . . . especially the impressionable youth."[24] Providing the underpinnings of Scharffenberg's attack on Munch, Nordau identified modern art as a contagion and the modern artist as pathological, and posited vision and perception as conduits for both physical and psychic degeneration.

Scharffenberg's commentary on Munch coincided with the broader introduction of Nordau's theories of Degeneration to Norway. Between January 1 and February 17, 1895, the Kristiania newspaper *Morgenbladet* had published in its special supplement a six-part series of articles analyzing a recently published book by the literary critic Christian Collin entitled *Art and Morality. Contribution to the Criticism of Realist Poets and Critics.*[25] The articles, also entitled "Art and Morality," examined in detail Collin's belief that the purpose of art is to edify society and provide optimistic models of humanity, and they summarized his consequent assertions that "the new aestheticism" was socially destructive. Collin wrote that an artist should be "like a doctor trying to save lives,"[26] and, like a doctor, should act as "[a consul] who has the responsibility to see that the state will not be damaged."[27] Like Nordau, Collin compared Decadence in literature to an illness, and stressed the danger posed to the nation, and particularly the nation's youth, by pessimistic themes in art and literature. This threat of pessimism and Decadence to the vitality of the nation was also examined in articles in the popular press in Kristiania throughout 1895, as for example in *Morgenbladet*'s edition of March 31, which examined "Modern Decadent Christendom," and *Morgenbladet*'s September 8 edition, which focused on secular and mystical beliefs among the disaffected youth of France. While Scharffenberg claimed only partial agreement with Collin, he acknowledged that he would rather "have youth follow him than the Decadents" in order to support social health.[28] The nation's youth should inject vitality into the body politic, and not, as it seemed to be doing, initiate its decline.

Nordau's *Degeneration* had set the tone for such debates. In his anthropomorphic model of civilization, Nordau defined late nineteenth-century society as aging, degenerative, and decaying. The morbid artist was its legitimate heir. In describing the etiology of degeneration, Nordau attributed the condition not only to the effects of art, but to poisoning through indulgence: "A race which is regularly addicted, even without excess, to narcotics and stimulants in any form (such as fermented alcoholic drinks, tobacco, opium, hashish, arsenic) . . . begets degenerate descendants who, if they remain exposed to the same influences, rapidly descend to the lowest degrees of degeneracy, to idiocy, to dwarfishness, etc." Statistics, he claims, attest to the increasing poisoning of "civilized peoples," and he cites, among other examples, tobacco consumption in France, Germany, and England, which had doubled between 1841 and 1890.[29] A second form of poisoning, inherent in the urban environment, also contributed to degeneration: through rootlessness, adulterated food, and the overstimulation of the senses, the city, according to Nordau, could even exert a feminizing influence on male morphology.[30] Thus in Nordau's equation, substance abuse and the pressures of urbanism are elevated from the sphere of social concerns to the arenas of national decline and medical crisis. They are also inscribed specifically on the body of the "progressive" or decadent artist—urban, indulgent, contagious, neurasthenic,[31] feminized.

Central to Nordau's argument was his appropriation of one of the chief rhetorical devices of Decadent literature—the artistic attachment to dissolution and even self-annihilation—as a weapon against Decadence. The Parisian literary movement of the 1870s and eighties known as "Decadence" advocated a rejection of Naturalistic narrative in art and literature, and a turn toward the authenticity and authority of subjective experience. The writers who were identified with this aesthetic, including Baudelaire, Mallarmé, Verlaine, and Huysmans, were perceived as radically revising literature by investigating psychology—the arena of the individual—instead of Naturalistic narrative—the realm of the public or social. Further, they maintained a rhetoric of moral deformity as a source of artistic redemption. In turn, the authors were themselves accorded attributes of a cultivated disintegration. Théophile Gautier's description of Charles Baudelaire in the introduction to an 1868 edition of *Les Fleurs du mal* provides an archetypal description of the Decadent artist: Baudelaire is attuned to ". . . the most subtle confidences of neurosis, the confessions of aging passions which enter depravity, and the bizarre hallucinations of obsession turning into madness."[32]

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[22] J. Scharffenberg, "Vor ungdom," *Den 17. Mai,* CXL, Nov. 26, 1895.

[23] Heller, 1984, 155.

[24] M. Nordau, *Degeneration,* trans. from the 2nd German ed. (1893–94), New York, 1895, viii.

[25] C. Collin, *Kunst og Moralen. Bidrag til kritik af realismens digtere og kritikere,* København, 1894. The series of articles critiquing the book are: A. Wildhagen, "Kunst og Moralen," in *Morgenbladet extranummer,* Jan. 1, 1895, 1–2; Jan. 6, 1895, 6–7; Jan. 13, 1895, 11–12; Jan. 27, 1895, 21–22; Feb. 10, 1895, 29–30; and Feb. 17, 1895, 33–34.

[26] Quoted in A. Wildhagen, "Kunst og Moralen," *Morgenbladet extranummer,* Jan. 1, 1895, 2.

[27] *Ibid.,* Jan. 6, 1895, 6.

[28] Letter from Johan Scharffenberg to the editor of *Morgenbladet,* dated Dec. 2, 1895, University of Oslo Library, Håndskriftsamlingen (Documents Collection). The letter was written in response to an article that appeared in the Dec. 1 *Morgenbladet extranummer,* entitled "Ungdommen og 'Idealerne,' " which criticized the "self-indulgence" of Norway's new pessimistic writers, and of the social critics who attributed too much social power to them.

[29] Nordau (as in n. 24), 34.

[30] *Ibid.,* 36.

[31] As a rebuttal to Nordau's theories, Dr. William Hirsch claimed that the only "disease" that could be detected in many of the targets of Nordau's attacks was their deviation from Nordau's opinion about art. See W. Hirsch, *Genie und Entartung. Eine psychologische Studie,* Berlin and Coblenz, 1894, translated as *Genius and Degeneration,* New York, 1896.

By the early 1890s, the physical attributes that corresponded to this psychological condition were well defined. The Viennese critic Hermann Bahr identified them in a description of James McNeil Whistler's 1891 portrait of Robert de Montesquiou, in his essay entitled "Décadence":

> There he is, the haggard, pale Dandy . . . entirely in black, very tall, very thin, very sleek, a little affected, heroic yet bizarre, nearly sublime, but comical. . . . He appears [to his friends] as the great artist not through his works, but through his power . . . to hallucinate [while] fully conscious, to escape into unreality, to live a poem, that is "the art of the Decadence"; in this he is the master. . . .[33]

Whistler's studiously artificial representation, including a setting removed from any references to nature, was for Bahr, as for the comte de Montesquiou (on whom Huysmans based the protagonist of his novel *A rebours*),[34] a virtual personification of Decadence. The ambivalence of such an identity—located between the aristocratic and the Bohemian—is affixed by Bahr to Whistler's portrayal of the author's body.

It should be emphasized here that cigarette smoking was still uncommon in Norway in the 1880s. Even in the nineties, when tobacco taxes amounted to nearly twenty-three percent of all import revenues in Norway,[35] cigarettes accounted for only the smallest profits realized by Tiedemann's Tobacco Company, the largest Norwegian tobacco concern. Indeed, 1895 was the first year in which any profit was reported by Tiedemann's cigarette division at all.[36] Tobacco sales elsewhere in Europe support the image of the cigarette as a relatively rare but growing commodity: in 1900, only twenty percent of the tobacco purchased in Great Britain was consumed in the form of cigarettes.[37]

It should also be stressed that, prior to the 1890s, artists rarely fashioned self-portraits that included cigarettes.[38] A few examples of these rare images might, however, have been available to Munch. One that has been cited as a direct source for Munch's painting is a photographic self-portrait by August Strindberg from 1889 (Fig. 2), in which the playwright has incongruously removed the glove from his left hand in order to extend a smoking cigarette toward the camera.[39] Another likely source is the well-known lithographic self-portrait by the Parisian painter and caricaturist Paul Gavarni from 1845 (Fig. 3). Widely reproduced and readily accessible in Volume II of Richard Muther's *Geschichte der Malerei im XIX. Jahrhundert* from 1893–94, the image could have been known to Munch and his circle.[40] Muther's text accompanying the reproduction of this image[41] describes the sitter, Gavarni, as the prototypical Decadent: "In his own dress [Gavarni] had a taste for what was dandified, and plunged into the enjoyment of Parisian life that eddied around in a world of pleasure . . . at bottom Gavarni was . . . an artist of strangely somber imagination, a profound and melancholy philosopher who had a prescience of all the mysteries of life."[42] Like Munch's self-portrait, the message extracted from Gavarni's image—of night life, effeteness, marginality, and dissolution—is enhanced by the inclusion of the cigarette.[43]

Dissolution was also presented as a model for artistic authenticity. This model, defined through a series of oppositional images, was applied by the Symbolist critic Albert Aurier to Vincent van Gogh in 1890: ". . . a thoroughbred with the brutal hands of a giant, the nerves of a hysterical woman, the soul of a mystic, . . . [who] is at once too simple and too subtle for the contemporary bourgeois spirit."[44] The connection between artistic creativity and illness that runs throughout this text was central to much late nineteenth-century art criticism. It had been well enough established

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[32] T. Gautier, "Charles Baudelaire," foreword to C. Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du mal,* Paris, 1868, 17.

[33] H. Bahr, "Décadence," *Die Zeit,* I, 6, Nov. 10, 1894, 87–89; repr. in Bahr, *Zur Überwindung des Naturalismus; theoretische Schriften, 1887–1904,* Stuttgart, 1968, 167–168. I would like to thank Dagmar Krämer for assistance with this translation.

[34] For a commentary on the comte de Montesquiou as a "model" Decadent, see P. Jullian, *Robert de Montesquiou. Un Prince de 1900,* Paris [1965], 1987, esp. 67ff.

[35] Schulerud, 196. Histories of tobacco manufacture and consumption in Norway may also be found in C. Gierløff, *Tobakkens Krønike,* Oslo, 1928; and Ö. Richter Frich, *Boken om Tobakk,* Oslo, 1934.

[36] H. W. Nordvik, "Norsk Tobakks industri 1850–1940," in F. Sejersted and A. S. Svendsen, eds., *Blader av tobakkens historie. J. L. Tiedemanns Tobaksfabrik 1778–1978,* Oslo, 1978, 280.

[37] A. and C. Scott, *Tobacco and the Collector,* London, 1966, 162.

[38] A notable exception is the image that Théophile-Alexandre Steinlen created of himself smoking that appeared in *Le Chat noir* on Apr. 6, 1895. For examples of other European portraits of smokers, see P. Wescher, "The Spread of Tobacco in Europe," in *Tobacco and Smoking in Art,* exh. cat., North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh, 1960.

[39] Arne Eggum has stated the relationship between these two images in *Munch and Photography,* New Haven, 1989, 60, and elsewhere.

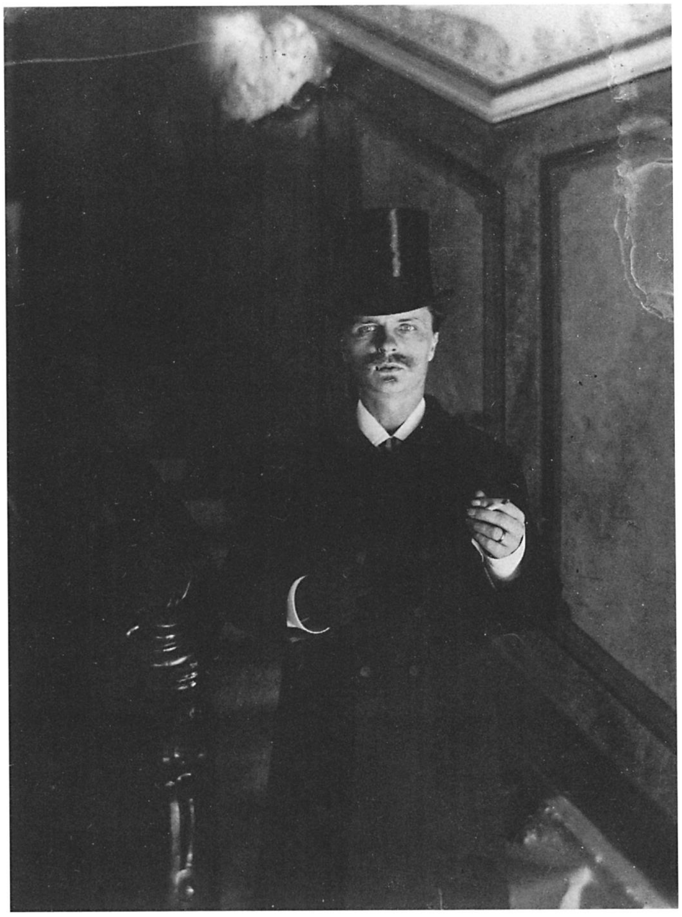
[40] R. Muther, *Geschichte der Malerei im XIX. Jahrhundert,* II, Munich, G. Hirth, 1893–94.

[41] Muther identified the author of the image as Edmond de Goncourt.

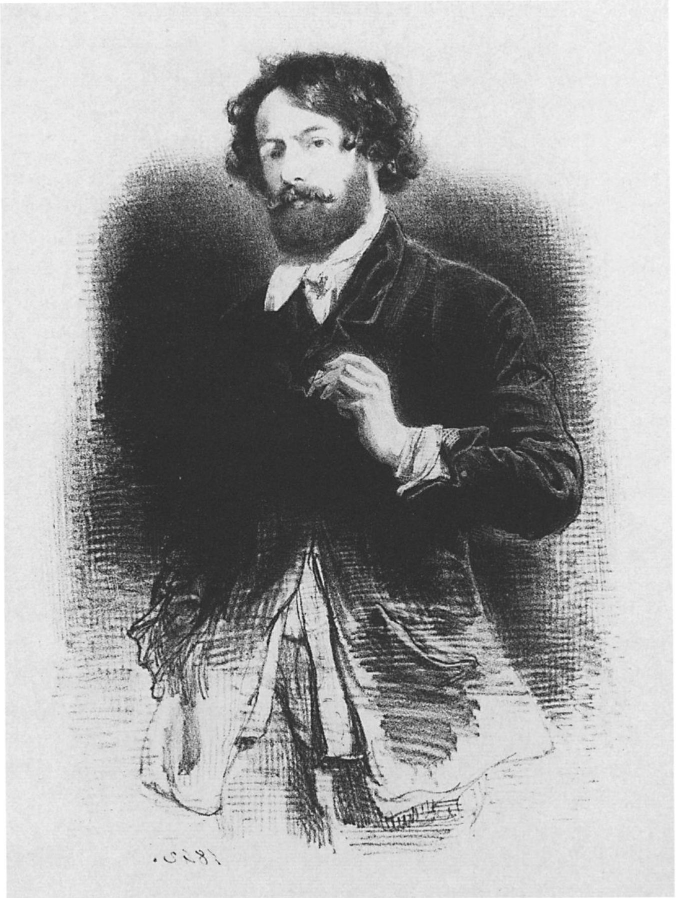
[42] Muther, *The History of Modern Painting,* II, trans. A. C. Hiller, London, 1895, 62–63. The illustration is published on p. 52 of the original German publication (see n. 40).

[43] Reinhold Heller cites works by Christian Krohg and Wilhelm Leibl as examples of artists who included images of smoking in their portraits. See Heller (as in n. 7), 52. The tobacco historian Mentz Schulerud has noted in passing that both Krohg and Munch had developed a kind of typology of smokers, including references to Bohemianism, in their work. Linda Nochlin also mentions that images of smokers appear throughout Realist art. See her *Realism,* New York, 1971, 187. Mitchell, 1987, traces late 19th-century artists' representations of smokers and interprets Munch's portraits of smokers as transposed phallic symbols.

[44] G. A. Aurier, "Les Isolées: Vincent van Gogh," *Mercure de France,* 1890, trans. in S. Stein, *Van Gogh: A Retrospective,* New York, 1986, 181–193.



2 Strindberg, *Self-Portrait,* 1889, albumen paper, carte-de-visite. Stockholm, Strindbergsmuseet (photo: Strindbergsmuseet)



3 Gavarni, *Self-Portrait.* 1845, lithograph. Wellesley, Mass., Wellesley College Museum, given by Eugenia Parry Janis in memory of her father, Demetri Parry (photo: Museum)

even in the popular imagination by the early 1880s for Gilbert and Sullivan to make use of this image in their operetta *Patience,* in which they characterize an artist by his pallid, thin, haggard, "foot-in-the-grave" appearance.[45]

In the same year that Aurier wrote his article about Van Gogh, the Norwegian critic Andreas Aubert introduced the concept of Decadence to Norwegian art criticism. As Reinhold Heller has noted, he used as his vehicle a review of Munch's work. Drawing upon a parallel repertory of images to those invoked in the description of Van Gogh, Aubert defined Munch as:

> . . . nervously sensitive, seeking stimulation to the very point of sickness; in his veins is the blood of an extraordinarily noble race. . . . Among our artists, Munch is the one whose entire temperament is formed by the *neurasthenic*. . . . He belongs to the generation of fine, sickly sensitive nerves that we encounter more and more frequently in the newest art. And not seldomly do they find a personal satisfaction in calling themselves "Decadents," the children of a refined, overly civilized age.[46]

The themes stressed by Aurier and Aubert—the idea of the artist as aristocrat, the basis of this aristocracy in an antibourgeois spirit, and in turn the identification of this social position with a psychologically aberrant (and in one case androgynous) condition—were the hallmarks of the late nineteenth-century urban Bohemian milieu. This perspective informed and reinforced the way in which artists created images of themselves. When first introduced to Scandinavian art criticism in the 1890s, the concept of Decadence provided a point of departure for young artists who struggled to record and legitimize their subjective experience. They strove to produce works that specifically announced the artists' identification with urban and international values. Munch's *Self-Portrait with Cigarette* suggests such an affiliation. Here, the artist has portrayed himself almost programmatically as an alienated, mysterious, "sickly sensitive," and yet intellectually powerful aesthete. His act of hermeticism, his clothing, pallid complexion, and smoking cigarette function as loci for such an interpretation.

The condition of neurasthenia, which Aubert attributed to Munch, had first been identified in 1869 by the American psychologist George M. Beard as a functional disorder of the nervous system that resulted in lassitude, enervation, and a diminution of sexual vigor.[47] His 1879 book *The Treatment of*

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[45] P. Bade, "Art and Degeneration: Visual Icons of Corruption," in *Degeneration: The Dark Side of Progress,* ed. J. E. Chamberlin and S. L. Gilman, New York, 1985, 226.

[46] A. Aubert, "Høstudstillingen. Aarsarbeidet IV. Edvard Munch," *Dagbladet,* Nov. 5, 1890, 2–3. Trans. in Heller, 1978, 81.

[47] G. M. Beard, "Neurasthenia (Nerve Exhaustion) with Remarks on Treatment," *St. Louis Medical and Surgical Journal,* May 1879. The original paper was published in the *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* in 1869.

Nervous Exhaustion (Neurasthenia), translated into German in 1881,[48] associated the condition with the overrefinement of the cultural elite, and especially with the prevalent social ills of the nineteenth century. The disorder was first described for the Scandinavian community by the Danish psychiatrist Knud Pontoppidan in 1886.[49] By the 1890s, neurasthenia was widely known, if not well defined. The sociologist Emile Durkheim identified the condition in 1897 as a series of intermediate stages that exist "between mental alienation properly so-called and perfect equilibrium of intelligence."[50] In language that might describe the highest aspirations of the Decadent artist, Durkheim pointed to the unusual sensory apparatus of the sufferer: "Due to the extreme sensitivity of his nervous system, his ideas and feelings are always in unstable equilibrium. Because his slightest impressions have an abnormal force, his mental organization is utterly upset at every instant, and under the hammer of these uninterrupted shocks cannot become definitely established. It is always in process of becoming."[51] Durkheim also proposed that the neurasthenic may be predisposed to suicide, "for by temperament neurasthenics seem destined to suffer."[52]

As Eric T. Carlson has demonstrated,[53] neurasthenia was absorbed into the discourse of Decadence by the 1890s. Max Nordau incorporated neurasthenia into his etiology of Degeneration, linking it to the negative forces of urban life. Intoxicants, as cited by Beard and others,[54] were among those forces. The cigarette, one token of urban decline, came under special consideration in the literature of the late nineteenth century as an agent of neurasthenia, in part because it emerged as a popular form of tobacco in the same decades that neurasthenia became known. As Beard noted in his 1881 supplement to *Nervous Exhaustion,* the use of cigarettes was becoming widespread, replacing the previous generation's enjoyment of cigars and pipes.[55] Cigarettes, the "national accompaniment of the creeping neurasthenia of urban existence,"[56] were, according to the German surgeon Theodor Billroth, a "disgusting vice" that "ruins health, and the passion for it to be the result of idleness and ennui. . . . Society is becoming more and more neurotic, and this is due to alcohol and tobacco."[57] Beard also suggested a shift in the demographics of smoking, noting "fewer persons of the same classes who made an excessive use of it than formerly, and of those who use it, even but lightly, there is an increasing number who are perceptibly injured by it."[58]

A broad spectrum of social meanings were associated with the cigarette in the later nineteenth century. With its European origins in the beggars' society in sixteenth-century Seville, where the poor re-rolled discarded cigar butts in paper in order to provide themselves with tobacco, the cigarette only gained respectability during the Napoleonic Wars among French soldiers both in Spain and in the East. Turkish cigarettes became fashionable during the Crimean War, at which time tobacconists in England and France first began to hand-roll cigarettes for the luxury trade. Like the cigar, the hand-rolled cigarette was more expensive than pipe tobacco, and was to be reserved for the well-to-do.[59] Cigars remained the tobacco of preference among (male) members of the bourgeoisie, although by mid-century, the cigarette was a viable, if less popular, alternative to the pipe and cigar. Finally, the introduction of better-quality tobacco and finer paper in the 1860s enhanced the appeal of cigarettes, especially in Austria and France.[60]

Technological and marketing innovations initiated in the United States eventually made cigarettes the least expensive form of tobacco on the world market. In 1880, the American James Bonsack applied for a patent for the cigarette rolling machine, and by the early eighties, the machine was able to produce two hundred cigarettes per minute. A leading innovator in production and advertising, W. Duke, Sons, and Company, as well as its competitors, reduced the cost of cigarettes by more than half, to approximately five cents for a package of twenty, making them the cheapest, and thus most democratic, form of tobacco available.[61] The prices in Europe dropped accordingly as American tobacco increasingly found its way into European markets.

Thus, as George Beard noted, by the mid-1880s the demographics of cigarette smoking had shifted. The cigarette had become associated with the laboring classes. Auguste Renoir's *Dance at Bougival* (1883; Fig. 4) is in part premised on this association. The cigarette butts and matches that litter the ground under the couple dancing at the center, and the detritus of the open-air café society illustrated in the background, suggest the discards of a proletarian outing, while they assert the working-class identity of the dancing couple in the foreground. Théophile-Alexandre Steinlen's first lithographic poster, advertising the singing duet Mothu et Doria in their musical revue *Scènes Impressionnistes* (1893; Fig. 5), makes the class-specific association with the cigarette even clearer. A caricature of class and power relationships,

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[48] G. M. Beard, *Die Nervenschwache,* Leipzig, 1881.

[49] K. Pontoppidan, "Neurasthenien, Bidrag til Skildringen af vor Tids Nervøsitet," in *Særtryk af Bibliothek for Læger,* København, 1886. In 1895, following a period of treatment by Pontoppidan, the Norwegian author Amalie Skram published two novels in which she accused the psychiatrist of extreme unprofessionalism and abuse. The popular press in both Norway and Denmark used Skram's account as a means of calling attention to the ethics of psychiatric treatment. On Pontoppidan's destructive treatment of Skram, see V. Lyhne, *Eksperimentere som en gal: Psykiatriens sidste krise: Brun, Andreasen, Schimmelmann, og Amalie Skram contra Professor Pontoppidan,* Århus, 1980.

[50] E. Durkheim, *Suicide. A Study in Sociology,* trans. J. A. Spaulding and G. Simpson, New York, 1951, 67.

[51] *Ibid.,* 69.

[52] *Ibid.,* 68.

[53] E. T. Carlson, "Medicine and Degeneration: Theory and Praxis," in Chamberlin and Gilman (as in n. 45), 130.

[54] L. Bouveret, *La Neurasthénie. Epuisement nerveux,* Paris, 1891, 25.

[55] Beard, 33 and 38.

[56] Brooks, 252.

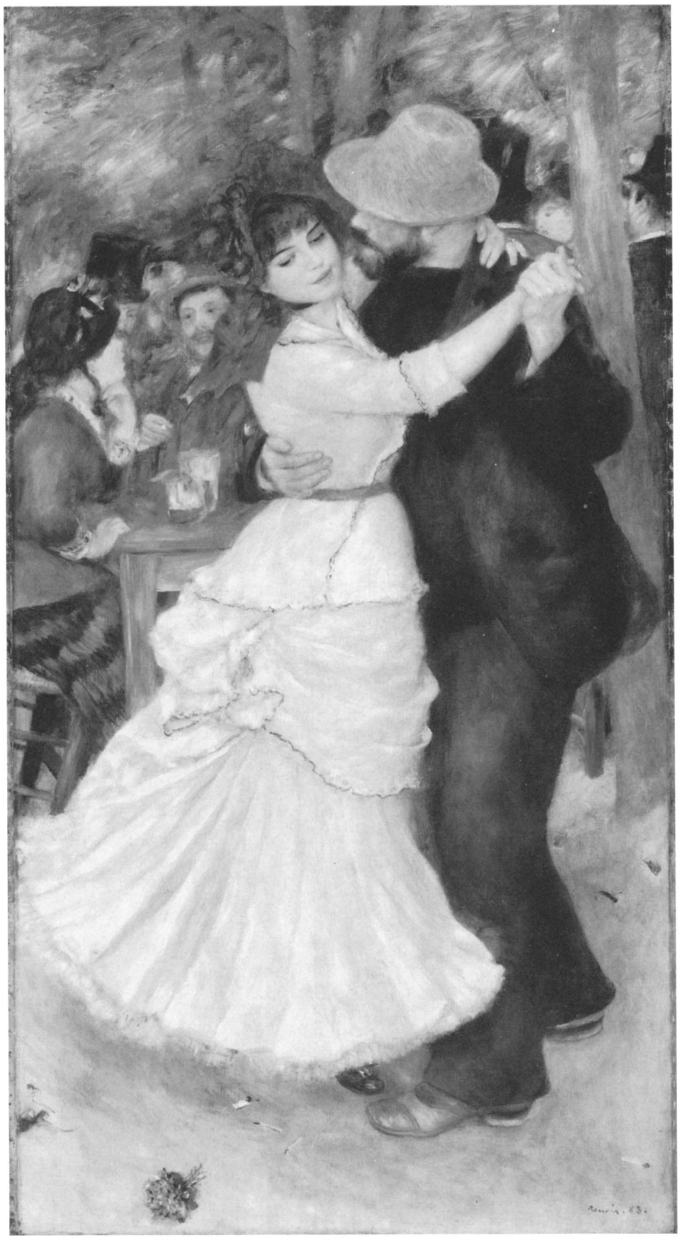
[57] E. C. C. Corti, *A History of Smoking,* trans. P. England, London, 1931, 260.

[58] Beard, 39.

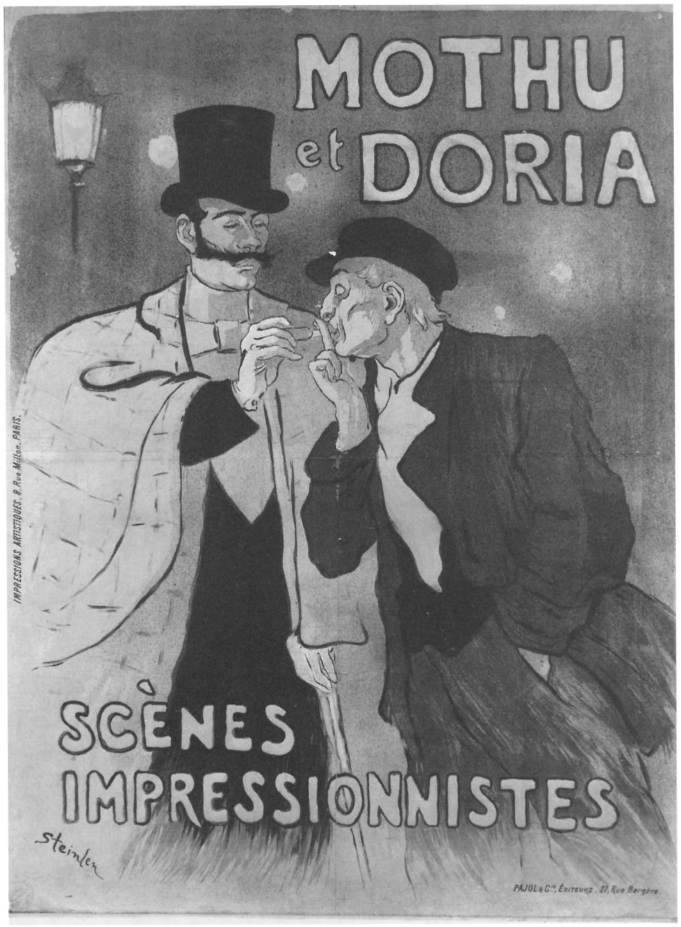
[59] Wescher (as in n. 38), 87.

[60] Corti (as in n. 57), 253.

[61] W. Duke, Sons, and Company entered the cigarette market in 1881, initially producing an oversupply of cigarettes. When the U.S. Cigarette Tax was reduced from \$1.75 to \$.50 per thousand, Duke began to market its stockpile of cigarettes at reduced prices through advertising. See G. Porter and H. C. Livesay, *Merchants and Manufacturers. Studies in the Changing Structure of Nineteenth-Century Marketing,* Baltimore, 1971, 200–205.



4 Renoir, *Dance at Bougival,* 1883, oil on canvas, 71⅝ × 38⅝″. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts (photo: Museum)



5 Steinlen, *Scènes Impressionnistes,* 1893, lithograph. By courtesy of the Board of Trustees of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London (photo: V & A Picture Library)

each element of the performers' outfits is encoded with social meaning: the Bourgeois's beaver-skin hat, elegant cape, white tie and starched collar, his erect posture and fashionably gloved hands contrast programmatically with the cap, disheveled hair and clothing, casual yet assertive bearing, and the naked hands of the shorter Bohemian. As the bourgeois cigar lights the lower-class cigarette, a complex web of social relations is established, in which the proletarian depends upon the offering of the gentleman, and in which the Bourgeois commits a dual act of charity and control by sharing his light.[62] This is one visual stereotype of cigarette smokers that appeared in both high art and popular culture in the later nineteenth century. The cigarette identified its smoker as someone living outside middle-class boundaries, or as someone with pretensions to working-class status.

The eradication of such boundaries was one of the ideals of Munch's circle of friends and associates during his early adulthood in Kristiania. There, in the 1880s, the cigarette was an accepted part of the artist's social environment. A painting by Christian Krohg, *A Corner of My Studio* (*Bohemians*) (Fig. 6), records the studio life of Munch in 1885. Krohg represents four of his young friends and students seated under a Japanese umbrella in his studio. The twenty-one-year-old Munch lights a cigarette to the left, the painter and actor Kalle Løchen stands smoking a cigarette to the right, while the actress Constance Bruun and painter Oda Lasson (later Christian Krohg's wife) look on.[63] Munch's etching, *Christiania Bohème II* (1895; Fig. 7), chronicles another aspect of his social environment: the café. Positioned around a table are

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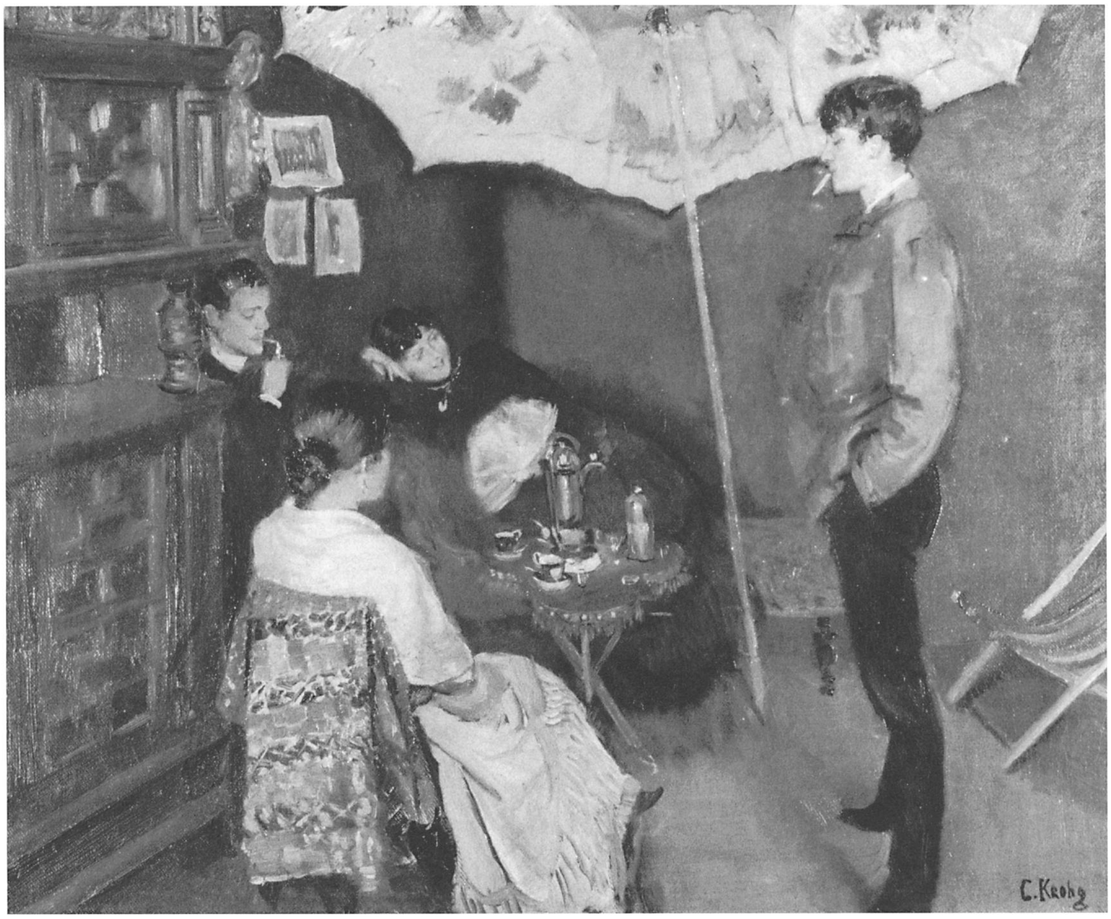
[62] This type of contrast can be found in the literature of the period as well, including Henrik Ibsen's *The Wild Duck,* in which the pipe and the cigar are used to symbolize contrasting social milieux in the first act. Schulerud (pp. 61ff.) catalogues many examples of Naturalist literature of the latter 19th century that rely on cigars and pipes as indicators of social and political standing.

[63] Oscar Thue identified the models and the locale in *Christian Krohgs sosiale tendenskunst,* Oslo, 1955, 126 and 135; and in *Christian Krohgs portretter,* Oslo, 1971, 249. Again, the figures are placed within a milieu that identifies an alignment of their political and aesthetic affiliations: non-European objects associate the artists with the culture of Parisian Impressionism, and the casual postures of the youthful male and female figures suggest their identification with a Bohemian social environment.



6 Krohg, *A Corner of My Studio* (*Bohemians*), 1885, oil on canvas. Lillehammer, Lillehammer Bys Malerisamling (photo: Lillehammer Bys Malerisamling)

the figures who populated the café scene known as "the Kristiania Bohème" during the 1880s, including Oda Lasson, who stands at the back, and the author Hans Jæger, seated to her left. Munch, appearing in the extreme left foreground, sends cigarette smoke coiling up into the compressed space of the room. In both images, cigarettes serve as signifiers of transgressive social situations—the meeting of intellectuals of both genders in the studio setting, and the amoral social commerce of the café.

Hans Jæger, a left-wing writer (and later an anarchist) who dominated radical Kristiania art politics in the 1880s, was a leader and chronicler of the fledgling urban Norwegian Bohemian milieu in the mid-eighties. On the basis of his books, including *Fra Christiania Bohème* (*From Kristiania's Bohemia*) (1885), which chronicled the marginalized artists who modeled their intellectual lives on the literary vanguard in Paris, and *Sick Love* (1893), which promoted in graphic terms the doctrine of free love, the right of men and women to choose their sexual partners, Jæger was viewed as one of the leading figures within the oppositional youth culture in Kristiania. As one of his closest associates in the 1880s, and as one of the most prolific visual recorders of Jæger's café milieu, Munch was seen by his contemporaries to be operating within the Bohemian subculture that Jæger helped to define. Indeed, several of the critics who reviewed Munch's 1895 Kristiania exhibition suggested linkages between the Decadent or subversive themes in Munch's work and Jæger's influence.[64]

As attested by Munch's etching of the "Kristiania Bohème," and a caricature of Jæger published in a Kristiania newspaper in 1888 (Fig. 8), cigarettes and alcohol were emblems of Jæger's Bohemian persona and community. The two scenes at the right of the caricature contrast two forms of oppositional activity—destructive and constructive—within Norwegian art circles. While the painter Frits Thaulow sits ironically imprisoned and chained to his easel in Norway, a palette-halo signifying his social position at home, the free and urbane Jæger sits in exile in a Parisian café, smoking, drinking, and, as the caption tells us, spreading his gospel of "Free Love."[65] Here Jæger's cigarette, in its elegant holder, reinforces the stereotype of the author as a poseur, a disengaged and effete Bohemian. For Jæger's contemporaries, Bohemia represented the assertion of a disquieting subcultural voice that threatened to destabilize middle-class life.

The "Kristiania Bohème" of the 1880s had been heavily dependent on the Parisian bohemian ideal. As George Snyderman and William Josephs have observed, "the institu-

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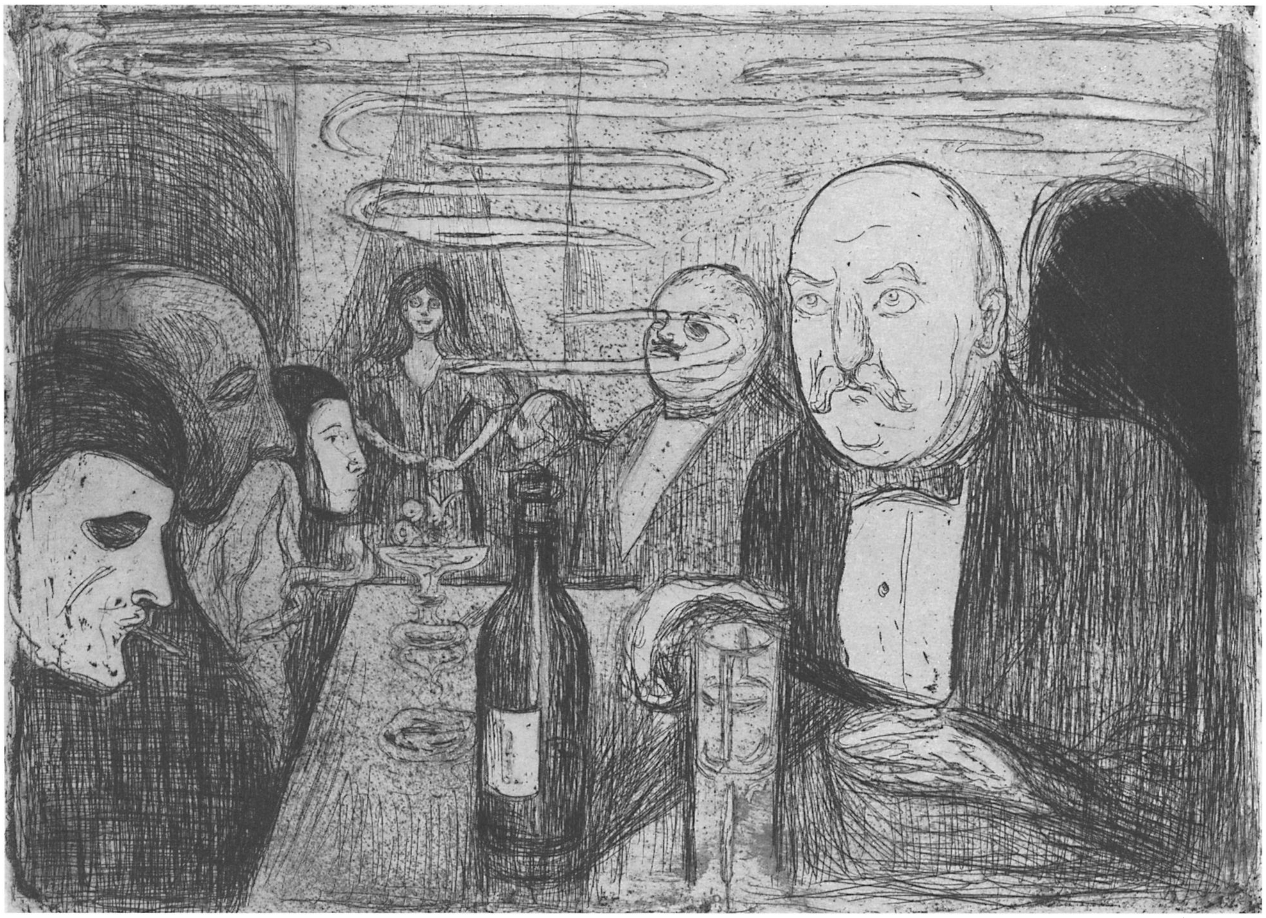
[64] See, e.g., "Nye Arbeider af Edv. Munch. Udstillingen hos Blomqvist" (as in n. 1).

[65] In 1888, Thaulow had been sent to jail after slapping a newspaper editor. He remained in the same cell in which Jæger had been incarcerated in 1886 for the publication of his book, *From Kristiania's Bohemia*. See O. Thue, *Christian Krohg*, exh. cat., Oslo, Nasjonalgalleriet, 1987, 204.



7 Munch, *Christiania Bohème II,* 1895, etching. Oslo, Munch Museum (photo: Museum)

tions of one Bohemia tend to become the institutions of every Bohemia."[66] These institutions, according to César Graña, include dress, comportment, and rhetoric promoting dissent from prevailing middle-class modes of behavior, and the café, which provides the social setting for bohemian self-fashioning.[67] The idea of Bohemia as a social space was most popularly mapped out by Henri Murger, author of *Scenes from Bohemian Life,* of 1849. More recently this material was reviewed by the historian Jerrold Seigel in his 1986 study *Bohemian Paris.*[68] As Seigel has suggested, artists framing themselves as Bohemians occupied the borderland between bourgeois stability and the anarchy of the streets. Living on the margins, but aspiring to the center, the Bohemians of the nineteenth century defined themselves in relation to the stable middle class. Rejecting the "inaction" of domestic life, these intellectually cultivated individuals chose instead the cafés, nightclubs, and music halls of Paris. These became the favored loci for the spectacle they made of their aesthetic debates.

The definitions and boundaries of Bohemia changed with each generation of the nineteenth century. By the 1880s, the concept of Bohemia was enriched by the discourse of Decadence. Cigarettes and cigarette smokers, associated with the Bohemian milieu, came to play a well-defined role in literature as symbols of social deviancy. Théophile-Alexandre Steinlen's vast chronicle of Montmartre, which includes a view of the interior of the café Le Mirliton (Fig. 9), in which trails of cigarette smoke rise upward, attests to the symbolic value of the cigarette for Bohemian café life, and for the cross-coding of social class. Within the Bohemian café, the collapse of class differences became pronounced.

Cigarettes also were emblematic of erotic exchange. For example, in *The Picture of Dorian Gray,* Oscar Wilde repeatedly used the cigarette as a device of transport and arousal.[69] After first introducing Lord Henry Wotton, gazing at the world through "the thin blue wreaths of smoke that curled up in such fanciful whirls from his opium-tainted cigarette,"[70] Wilde couples virtually every philosophical monologue, or every transformative event in the story, with the ritual lighting of a cigarette. The cigarette itself is also a pivotal

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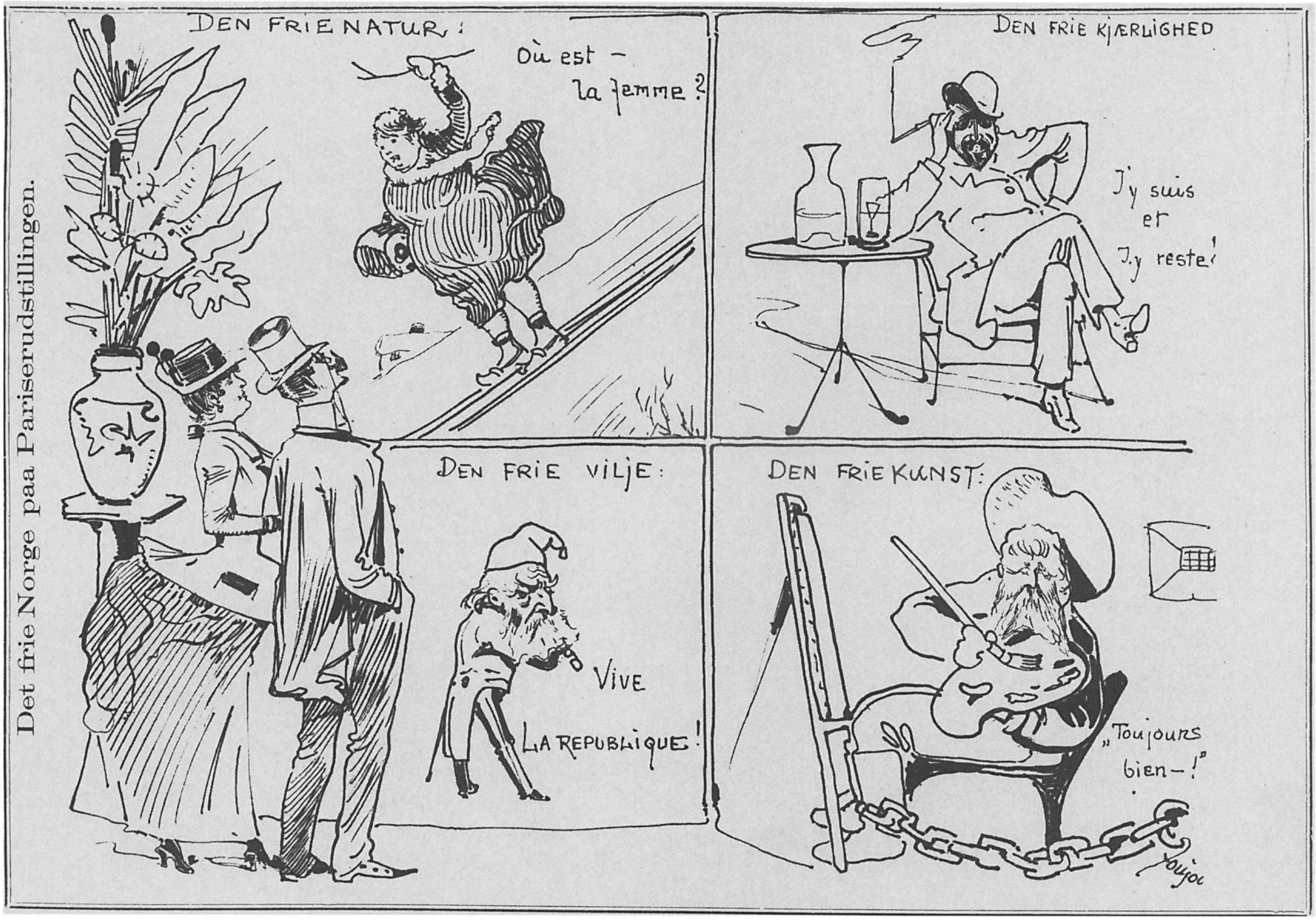
[66] G. S. Snyderman and W. Josephs, "Bohemia: The Underworld of Art" [1939], repr. in Graña and Graña, 92.

[67] C. Graña, intro. to *ibid.,* xv.

[68] The term originated in reference to gypsies, whom the French mistakenly identified as coming from the geographic region of Bohemia, and to whom the French gave the name "Bohemians." The gypsies/Bohemians were understood to be visionary, non-materialistic, rootless, close to nature, creative, and exotic. Their lives, seen to be circumscribed by rootlessness, illness, and poverty, yet full of joy and creativity, became the model by which other marginal populations in Paris were identified in the 1830s and forties, and most specifically the oppositional artistic communities. J. Seigel, *Bohemian Paris: Culture, Politics, and Boundaries of Bourgeois Life, 1830–1930,* New York, 1986, 5.

[69] O. Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray,* in *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde,* New York, [1966], 1989, 19, 67.

[70] *Ibid.,* 19.


Det frie Norge paa Pariserudstillingen.
DEN FRIE NATUR:
Où est - la femme?
DEN FRIE KJÆRLIGHED
J'y suis et J'y reste!
DEN FRIE VILJE:
VIVE LA REPUBLIQUE!
DEN FRIE KUNST:
„Toujours bien-!"

8 "Independent Norway at the Paris Exhibition," from *Krydseren,* May 12, 1888 (photo: Oslo, University Library)

symbol in the story, encapsulating the ambivalent sexualities and aestheticized ennui of the main characters: "The cigarette is the most perfect of perfect pleasures. It is exquisite and it leaves you unsatisfied. What more could anyone wish for?"[71] In J. K. Huysmans's *A rebours,* published in 1883 and one of the defining novels of Decadence, the cigarette was likewise the locus of self-referential activity, reverie, aesthetic inquiry, and erotic commerce. When he finds a young boy on the rue de Rivoli "sucking laboriously" on a cigarette that would not light, the protagonist Des Essientes not only offers him one of his superior "scented" cigarettes (and lights it), but he takes the boy to a brothel to introduce him "to the habit of these pleasures which his means forbid him enjoying."[72] In these texts, one subversive pleasure begets another. The presence of the cigarette also accompanies a shifting of gender roles. In each story, the male protagonist assumes "feminine" characteristics, a transformation that helps to define him as an aesthete. His deviancy from bourgeois male modes of comportment, in fact, is supported by another association that the public had with cigarettes: in the hands of an upper-class male, the cigarette was viewed as a feminine attribute.

From its first popular appearance at mid-century, the cigarette was widely understood to be an effete or feminized form of smoking. In 1854 the eminent American surgeon and author Russell Thacher Trall observed of New York: "Some of the ladies of this refined and fashion-forming metropolis are aping the ways of some pseudo-accomplished foreigners in smoking tobacco through a weaker and more *feminine* article which has been most delicately denominated *cigarette*" (emphasis in the original).[73] Indeed, the cigarette's heavily processed tobacco and thin, cylindrical shape made it the tobacco of preference among women.[74] As early as the 1840s, Louisa S. Costello, a British traveler in France, reported that the smoking of cigarettes had become "*la grande mode* with certain French ladies."[75] It was assumed by the middle class that a cigarette smoked by a woman signaled other vices:[76] "It is generally understood that the practice of cigarette-smoking by women is confined to two classes of the fair sex," wrote one tobacco historian at the turn of the

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[71] *Ibid.*, 70.

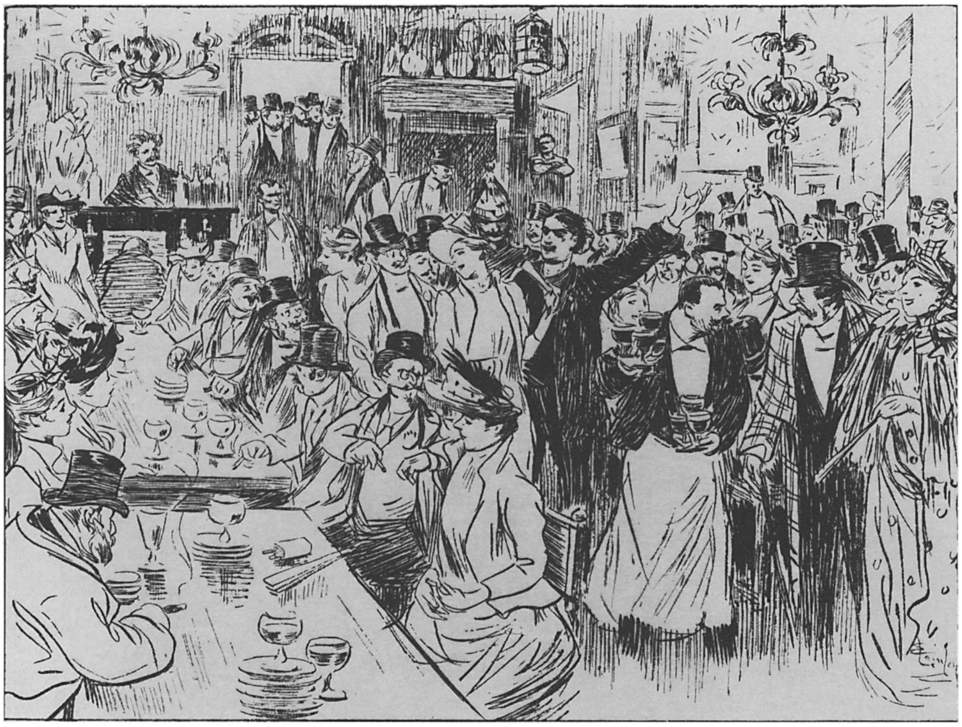
[72] J. K. Huysmans, *Against the Grain* (*A rebours*), intro. H. Ellis, New York, 1931, 162.

[73] Dr. R. T. Trall, *Tobacco, Its History, Nature, and Effects,* New York, 1849, quoted in Brooks, 230–231.

[74] B. Jacobsen, *Beating the Ladykillers. Women and Smoking,* London, 1986, 40. See also Mitchell, 1987 and 1991.

[75] L. S. Costello, *Pilgrimage to Auvergne,* London, 1842, quoted in Brooks, 230.

[76] For a summary of such associations, see Mitchell, 1991.



9 Steinlen, *Le Mirliton,* lithograph, from Bruant, *Dans la rue: Chansons et monologues,* 1899. By permission of the Houghton Library, Harvard University (photo: Library)

century, "One is the lady of wealth and luxury, whose position in society is so surely established that she can, figuratively speaking, blow her dainty clouds into the very faces of her stiff-backed critics, without fear of losing caste. The other is—well, the demi-monde."[77] This second category of female smoker entered popular imagery through the chroniclers of courtesans in Paris in the 1840s, and most notably through Paul Gavarni. As Baudelaire and others noted, Gavarni's images of courtesans functioned not only as archetypal images for the illustrations of these women, but as models of comportment for the women themselves.[78] *La Lorette* (Fig. 10), an image strongly dependent on Gavarni's visual repertory,[79] includes the full complement of signs for sexual availability—alcohol, the peignoir slipping from her shoulder, a dark chamber opening in the background, and a cigarette.[80]

The smoking cigarette as a sign of female sexual availability and satiation, as employed in this illustration, appeared throughout caricatural imagery in the late nineteenth century. One example is the Norwegian satirical magazine *Krydseren,* which announced the coming of autumn in its August 25, 1888 issue (Fig. 11) by parodying the annual cycle of Kristiania's highest cultural institutions. The opening of the National Theater is depicted through a contentious representation of Henrik Ibsen under the title "Art." Under the designation "Scholarship," the beginning of the University's new semester is represented by a male student with a fashionable woman, her moral turpitude indicated by her cigarette and alcoholic drink, perched on his knee. At about the same time, the painter Hans Heyerdahl used the cigarette as a sign for sexual commerce in his controversial painting *Nude with Cigarette* (*Svarte-Anna*) (ca. 1887; Fig. 12), an image that Hans Jæger apparently took with him to his jail cell when he was imprisoned in the autumn of 1886.[81] A commentary on contemporary debates surrounding the role of prostitution in Kristiania society,[82] this painting presents a strongly sexualized image of a model surrounded by emblems of that work. The cigarette, held in the model's slack hand, adds to the tension between her robust youth and her sexual experience. The smoke issuing from between her rouged lips reinforces the message of sexual satiation, otherwise relayed by her reddened cheeks.

By the 1880s, the cigarette was also believed to have aphrodisiac properties. Exploiting these ideas, cigarette manufacturers and importers linked the cigarette with female sexuality in their sales campaigns.[83] The Czech artist Alphonse Mucha's well-known advertising posters for Job cigarette papers of the later 1890s (Fig. 13) conveyed through feminized tobacco the titillating message of moral slackness, and the potential for conquest.[84] Job capitalized

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[77] J. Bain, Jr., *Cigarettes in Fact and Fancy,* Boston, 1906, 178.

[78] See T. D. Stamm, *Gavarni and the Critics,* Ann Arbor, [1979], 1981, 44.

[79] The author of this image was identified as Gavarni in *ibid.,* pl. 3.

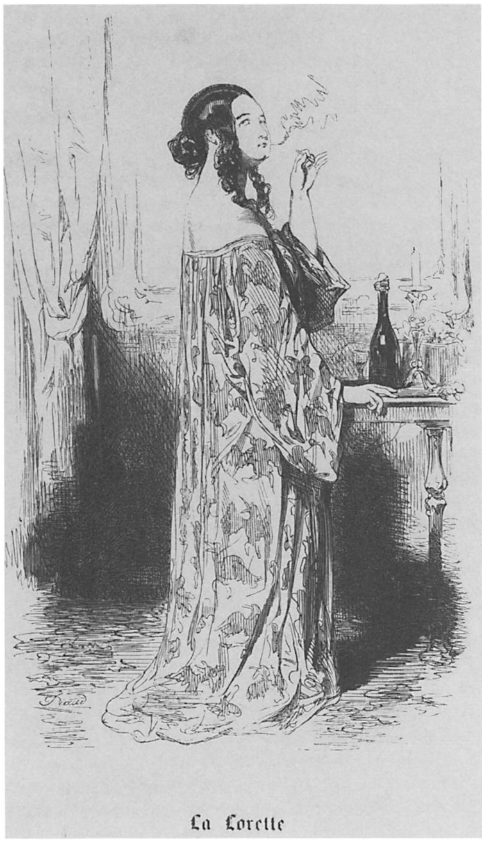
[80] As Mitchell, 1991, notes (p. 4) as a way of indicting the widespread appearance of the cigarette as a sign for (transgressive) female sexuality, Émile Zola linked smoking with the sexual drive of the courtesan in *Nana.*

[81] See A. Brenna, "Hans Jægers fengselfrise," *St. Hallvard,* 1972, 238–266.

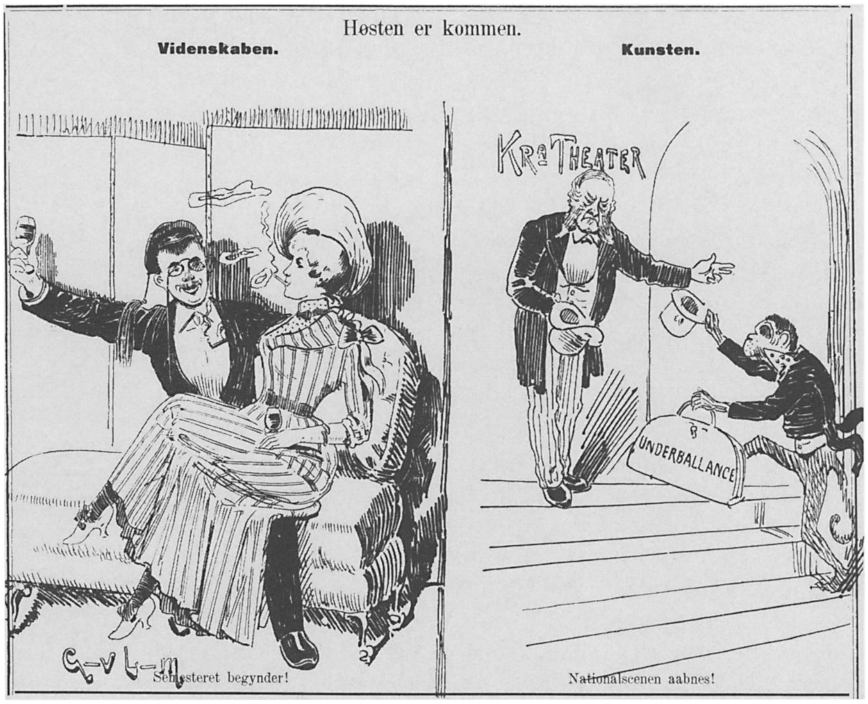
[82] T. Aslaksby, *Hans Heyerdahl 1857–1913,* exh. cat., Modum, Stiftelsen Modums Blaafarveværk, 1981, 88.

[83] The British "cigarette cards" were perhaps the ultimate form of this linkage within the arena of commerce, replacing the thin white cylinder of the cigarette with the form of a woman.

[84] Mitchell, 1987, 31, and 1991, 4, points out that the cigarettes in Mucha's *Job* posters represent the female appropriation of male sexuality.



10 Anonymous engraving after Pialli, "La Lorette," from de Kock, *La Grande Ville. Nouveau tableau de Paris,* II, Paris, 1844. New York, New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations, Miriam & Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs, Prints Division (photo: Library)

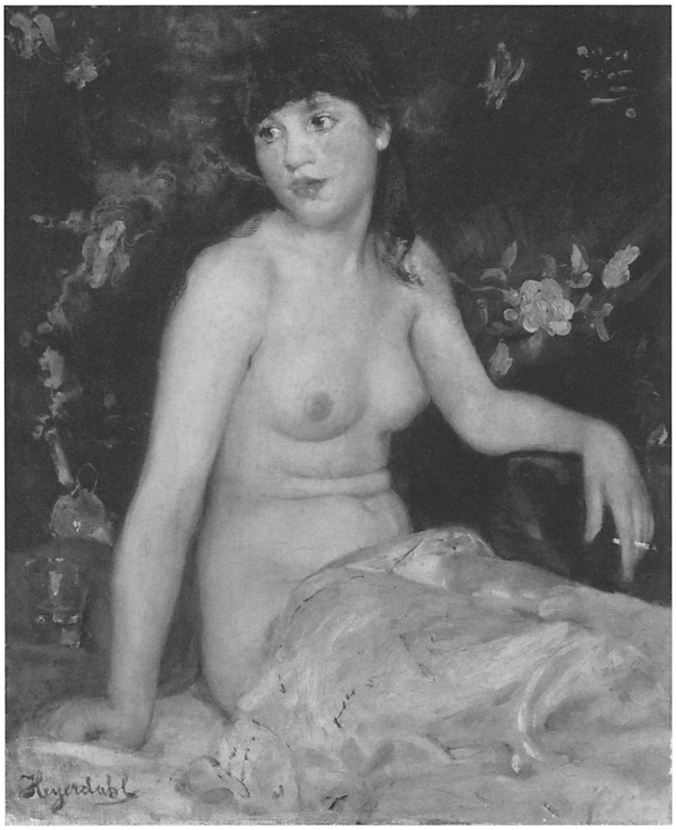


11 "Autumn is here," from *Krydseren,* Aug. 25, 1888 (photo: Oslo, University Library)

on the sensual association between women and tobacco to define the cigarette as an agent of seduction, and commissioned artists to create imagery that aligned smoking with sexual fulfillment.

The cigarette as a trope for female sexuality was reflected in satirical literature of the turn of the century. In an homage to the cigarette of 1906, the satirist John Bain, Jr. reflected this gender-specific association: "There are times in most men's lives when a warm, manly grip is hungered for; and there are moments, too, when naught but the tender, quieting touch of fair fingertips can fill the need. And so have there come hours to you and me . . . when . . . we would feel the gentle influence of some mild and soothing frankincense. [At such times] have I often turned, and never vainly, to 'this cigarette of mine.' "[85] An 1896 ode to the cigarette by Georges Lorin performed at the Comédie Française more explicitly sexualized the cigarette: "The cigarette is day and night like a kiss of arousal."[86]

Yet while the cigarette was cast in a feminine role, and while women accounted for the majority of the labor force in cigarette-rolling factories, women were, of course, generally prohibited from smoking in public. Middle-class critics of both genders viewed the smoking of this feminized tobacco as a perversion of femininity: women smokers "would grow a decidedly masculine mustache, develop tuberculosis, be-



12 Heyerdahl, *Nude with Cigarette* (*Svarte-Anna*), ca. 1887, oil on canvas, 54 × 44cm. Oslo, National Gallery (photo: J. Lathion, National Gallery) come sterile, and collapse generally."[87] Women who smoked "neglect their homes and families; they neglect their social duties; their god they have ceased to pay any heed to; their husbands' authority they reject with ridicule."[88]

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[85] Bain (as in n. 77), 7.

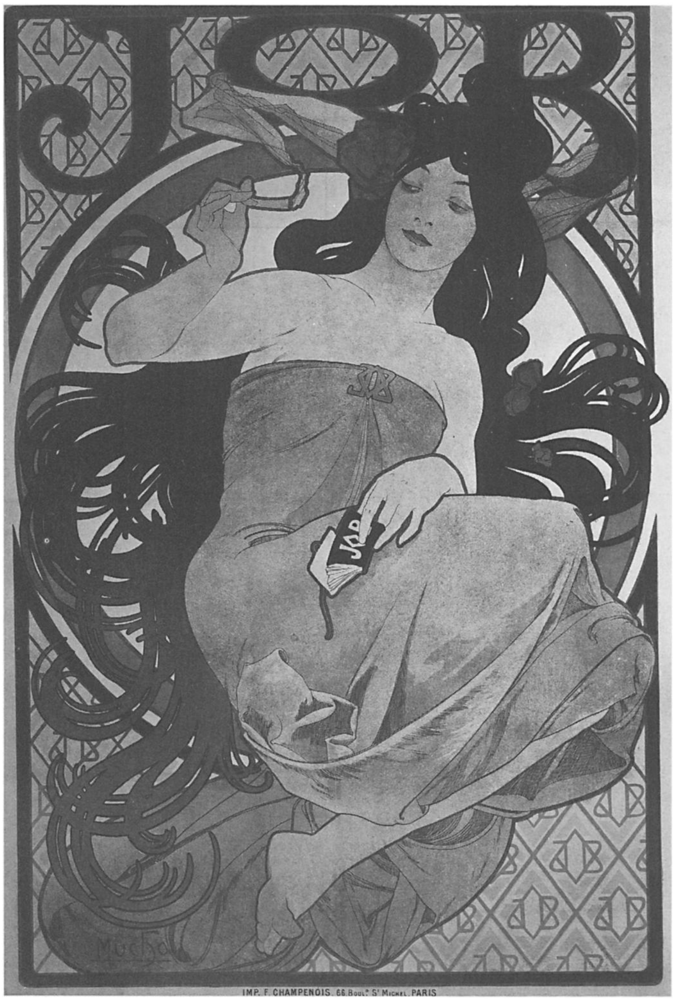
[86] G. Lorin, *Les Cigarettes,* Sociétaire de la Comédie Française, Paris, 1896.

Paradoxically, the cigarette seems to have functioned, according to such readings, as an unstable signifier, its meanings recoded according to gender. The female smoker was defeminized by the cigarette while, at the same time, she was deeply sexualized. Her sexuality was, however, reconstituted according to "masculine" modes of sexual conduct—the active, aggressive, and public display of the sexual self. Conversely, the male smoker was feminized by his cigarette, the slender cylinder functioning as a sign for his displaced phallus. Such readings of gender transgressions were central to theories of criminology, such as Cesare Lombroso's popular studies,[89] which identified the feminized male and the masculinized female as archetypal criminals and social deviants. They were also, as Emmanuel Cooper suggests, deeply implicated in the concept of Decadence.[90]

Such shifting gender significations seem to have excluded the middle-class male and female. As numerous social commentators had observed,[91] it seems that only the upper and lower classes were identified with cigarette smoking, and with its attendant deformities and deviancies. The presence of the cigarette, therefore, seems to have negated an otherwise middle-class identity on the part of the smoker in the 1880s and nineties. Like the confusion of middle-class male identity signaled by the cigarette, bourgeois female identity was nullified by the masculinizing cigarette.

It is perhaps precisely for this reason that women artists who forged bohemian identities for themselves, smoked, and represented themselves smoking, cigarettes.[92] The Norwegian painter Oda Lasson, mentioned earlier as a model for both Krohg and Munch, was, according to all accounts, a constant and public cigarette smoker. Her younger sister, Bokken Lasson, reported that cigarette smoking was a kind of trademark of Bohemian culture in the later nineteenth century, but that it held special meaning for the female Bohemian. Lasson recalled her affiliation with the "Kristiania Bohème"—sitting with her artist friends and smoking cigarettes:

> It was, of course, revolutionary that young women and men went out and drank wine and smoked cigarettes together until the early hours of the morning. But for us it was new and thrilling to come in from the street, blinded by the sun, into the long, narrow room at Blom's Café, where one at first could not distinguish anything in the blue smoke-filled darkness.[93]


JOB
JOB
JOB
Mucha
IMP. F. CHAMPENOIS. 66 Boul.d St Michel. PARIS

13 Mucha, *Job*, 1897, lithograph, printed in color, $61\frac{3}{16} \times 40\frac{3}{4}''$. New York, Museum of Modern Art, Gift of Lillian Nassau (photo: Museum)

Socializing freely with their male colleagues, both intellectually and sexually, and smoking cigarettes and drinking alcohol, the women of the "Kristiania Bohème"—Oda, Bokken, and their compatriots—visibly removed themselves from the accepted feminine public spaces of the pastry shop, milliner, and tea parlor[94] and placed themselves in a space that Baudelaire had described in *The Painter of Modern Life:*

> In that vast picture-gallery which is life in London or Paris, we shall meet with all the various types of fallen womanhood—of woman in revolt against society. . . . Some of these, examples of an innocent and monstrous self-conceit, express in their faces and their bold, uplifted gazes an obvious joy at being alive . . . at other times they display themselves in hopeless attitudes of boredom, in

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[87] Brooks, 231.

[88] Excepted from a letter to *The Daily Mail,* written by a British army officer when British Northwestern opened the first women's smoking carriage. Quoted in Bain, 169.

[89] C. Lombroso and W. Ferraro, *The Female Offender,* New York, 1895 (trans. of *La donna delinquente. La prostituta e la donna normale,* Turin, 1893); and C. Lombroso, *Criminal Man,* New York, 1911 (originally published as *L'uomo delinquente; studiato in rapporto alla anthropologia, alla medicina legale ed alla discipline carcerarie,* Milan, 1876).

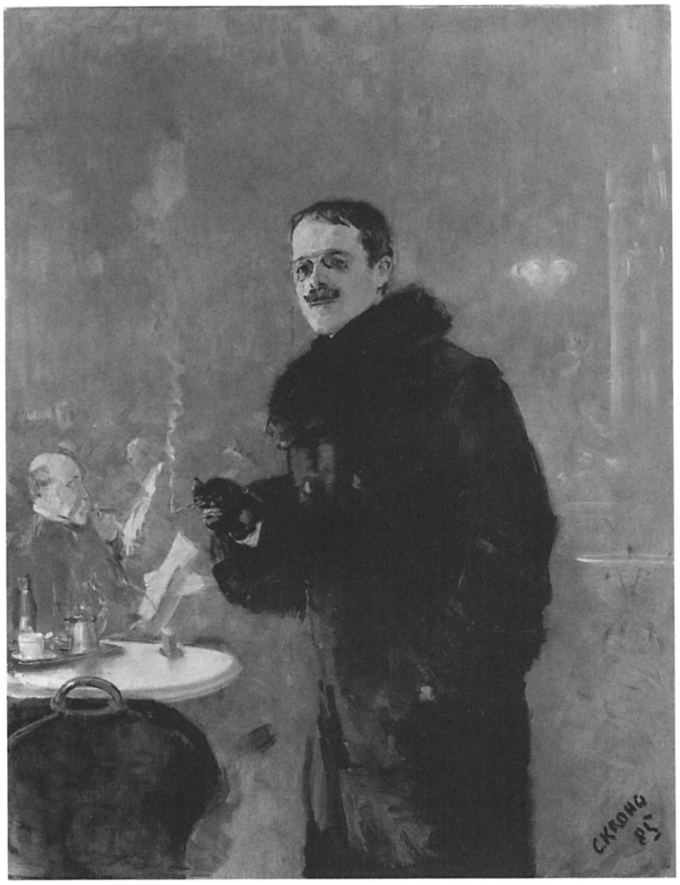
[90] E. Cooper, *The Sexual Perspective. Homosexuality and Art in the Last 100 Years in the West,* London, 1986, 70.

[91] See Beard, 38–39.

[92] Mitchell, 1991, makes this observation on p. 5.

[93] Schulerud, 49.

[94] *Ibid.,* 67.



14 Krohg, *Portrait of the Painter Gerhard Munthe,* 1885, oil on canvas. 150 × 115cm. Oslo, National Gallery (photo: J. Lathion, National Gallery)

> bouts of tap-room apathy, almost masculine in their brazenness, killing time with cigarettes. . . .[95]

The tension that these women generated between their intellectual aspirations and their public assumption of deviant behavior defined the social space within which they could operate as independent women and creative artists. The dangers associated with the cigarette—both social and medical—tallied with the Bohemian rhetoric of self-annihilation.[96] In this case, the smoking of a cigarette suggested a new definition for bohemian womanhood. Engaging in masculine social rituals, the Bohemian woman insinuated herself into other masculine spaces as well. Munch's Norwegian colleague at the Berlin café "Zum Schwarzen Ferkel," Dagny Juel Przybyszewska, like other women who defined themselves as Bohemian intellectuals, created a mythos around herself that was rooted in that tension. One of her colleagues described her as "a singing angel—an angel with a cigarette in her mouth. She even smokes in a nearly ethereal way, and small, heavenly rings float like a halo around her lips."[97] Creating an image of herself that deviated from norms of feminine beauty, Przybyszewska asserted her independence through the assumption of an attribute that defied rigid social labeling.

By 1880, cigarettes had assumed a special cultural significance in Scandinavia. In that year the Danish author and critic Herman Bang, soon to be recognized as one of Europe's leading exponents of literary Decadence and of homosexual literature, published an essay on tobacco in the Copenhagen newspaper, *The National Times,* in which he wrote:

> Cigarettes are here at home on their way to being modern. . . . Moreover, cigarettes have something of a myth about them, a myth about French sophistication, boulevards, and night cafés. Cigarettes are dissolute, less homely, more chic, most of all, more French [than cigars]. When a young [Dane] smokes a . . . cigarette, he portrays himself as a kind of Parisian, more of a Dandy and more of a sophisticate. For older people, the cigarette represents . . . unfortunate importations of foreign amorality, but for the young they are a welcome dose of the same medicine.[98]

Thus while cigarettes blurred class and gender distinctions, they also separated radical youth from the older keepers of the status quo. Christian Krohg's 1885 portrait of the dandified painter *Gerhard Munthe* (Fig. 14), who holds a cigarette, juxtaposed with the aging, conservative, cigar-smoking seascape painter Reinholdt Boll, seated at the lower left, embodies such a message.

Bang also associated the cigarette with visionary experiences. Perhaps because of its ephemeral nature as a substance of pleasure, in comparison to the substantial bourgeois cigar or pipe, Bang claimed, "One can meditate with a cigar, but one can find inspiration with a cigarette. The cigarette and fantasy are the same."[99] Second sight, reverie, and even hallucination were associated with the cigarette in part because of its popularly understood origins in Turkey and in European colonial possessions.[100] A one-act drama performed in Paris in 1878 entitled *La Cigarette* capitalized on these Exoticist and Orientalist associations. In it, a wealthy woman, desirous of marriage, is assisted by her exotically clad Javanese maid, Tchérita, who provides specially rolled cigarettes ("as in her homeland") which compel their smokers to reveal their innermost secrets.[101] The cigarettes thus act as a bridge between the conscious and unconscious minds by eradicating any barrier that might exist between thought and action. The environment of mystery and inspiration that surrounded the cigarette was later evoked by the poet Sigbjørn Obstfelder, Munch's associate and supporter. In Obstfelder's poem entitled "Cigarettes," the smoking of a cigarette becomes the conduit for reverie, "the braiding of dreams."[102] As the poem indicates, there was an element of risk present in the intellectual release associated with cigarettes.

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[95] C. Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life* in *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays,* trans. and ed. J. Mayne, London, 1964, 37.

[96] Schulerud, 49.

[97] Quoted in M. K. Norseng, *Dagny: Dagny Juel Przybyszewska, the Woman and the Myth,* Seattle, 1991, 30.

[98] H. Bang, "Lidt om Tobak med Mere," originally published in *Nationaltidende,* Apr. 25, 1880, and reprinted in *Københavnske Skildringer,* København, 1954, 58. Such rhetoric characterized the literature of "Decadent" movements throughout Europe and in the United States. Cigarettes were identified as "implements of Decadence" in the May 28, 1892 issue of *The Mahogany Tree,* an idea elaborated upon in the July 9, 1892 issue: "We have sung the praises of cigarettes and coffee, not for themselves alone, but because they stand for a mood opposed to that prevailing one of our times which turns life into an express train and makes old men at forty." Both quoted in J. Gibran, *Kahlil Gibran. His Life and World,* New York, 1981, 42.

[99] Bang (as in n. 98), 61.

[100] For an analysis and history of tobacco within the European colonialist project in the Americas, see J. Knapp, "Elizabethan Tobacco," *Representations,* XXI, Winter 1988, 27–66.

[101] H. Meilhac and C. Narrey, *La Cigarette,* Paris, 1878. The play opened at the Gymnase-Dramatique on Apr. 20, 1878.

A shift in the perception of tobacco, and in the symbolism of smoking, arose with the increased popularity of cigarettes in the late nineteenth century. By the 1890s, health threats posed by tobacco, and the evils engendered by smoking, were known by the general public. It was widely rumored that cigarettes contained opium (as Oscar Wilde had indicated),[103] and that commercially produced cigarette papers were treated with arsenic in the bleaching process, making them especially deadly.[104] As early as the seventeenth century a Dutch medical treatise warned against the addictive properties of tobacco,[105] and by the late nineteenth century, this concern was heightened by the belief that smoking contributed to a loosening of morals, and to a loss of social and physical control. One of the strongest indictments of tobacco, Henry Gibbons's *Tobacco and Its Effects,* first published in New York in 1868, then in England and Germany in the mid-1870s, became one of the most widely read authoritative guides to the illnesses both to body and to body politic associated with tobacco.

According to another prevalent theory, smoking was linked specifically with insanity. In a publication of 1892 entitled *Tobacco, Insanity and Nervousness,* Dr. L. Bremer stated that "the majority of the insane smoke,"[106] and determined that tobacco had initiated their condition. At the turn of the century, a French physician even reported a case of "hystérie tabagique"[107] in a medical journal. A popular moralizing headline of the period, "Gone Insane from Cigarette Smoking," points to the special threat that cigarettes were believed to pose. It was reported that "the cheapness and easy acquisition" of cigarettes made them especially dangerous as agents of corruption, and "the action of cigarette smoke on the nervous system is totally different from that of the cigar." By virtue of inhaling, "the adult victim in time becomes fidgety and cranky, sometimes barely able to move along the narrow strip of the borderline of insanity."[108] According to such models, the cigarette itself functioned as a signal of the disease and the inevitable mental deterioration to follow. By the 1880s, the cigarette served as a sign for social deviancy and insanity in popular culture. It was reported, for example, that in F. C. Burnand's burlesque *Bluebeard,* produced in London, a young man smoked cigarettes on stage as a way of identifying his aberrant mental condition to the audience.[109]

Other social and physical ills were attributed to tobacco consumption. Additional diseases linked to smoking at the time included a dimming of sight, appetite loss, diminished lung capacity, and "a weakening or destruction of the functions of the sex organs."[110] So strong was the evidence that the Société contre l'Abus du Tabac was founded in the early 1880s to combat actively the threat against the morality, hygiene, and stability of French society posed by tobacco.[111] In its publication of statutes and regulations, the society quoted Balzac as saying, "Le tabac détruit le corps, attaque l'intelligence et hébète les nations." This was the underlying assumption of the organization, that bodies both physical and political were under siege by tobacco abuse. A publication of 1889 that received a prize from the Société examined one particular aspect of this problem. Maurice Fleury's *Des effets du tabac sur la santé des gens de lettres, de son influence sur l'avenir de la littérature française* examined the degeneration of French intellectual culture due to poisoning from tobacco. Following the line of reasoning that artists, by virtue of their refined nerves, are inherently more susceptible to artificial stimulation, Fleury described the special danger posed by tobacco to authors. Presaging Nordau's pathology of modern art in *Degeneration,* Fleury and his colleagues forged links between recent developments in art and the medical sciences. This assumption was confirmed by Cesare Lombroso, who provided a list of "insane geniuses" who "have been excessive in their abuse of stimulants and intoxicants," including Baudelaire, who "abused opium, tobacco, and wine." He concluded, "Nearly all of these great men . . . showed anomalies of the reproductive functions."[112]

Such associations were acknowledged by artists and authors as well. The pathology of smoking seems to be built into the program of *Symposium,* 1894 (Fig. 15), by Munch's colleague, the Finnish painter Akseli Gallen-Kallela. The painting depicts members of the nationalist circle of intellectuals who identified themselves as "Young Finland," a group dedicated to the restructuring of Finnish art. In the tradition of seventeenth-century Dutch "Smoking Company" pictures, such as William Buytewech's *Merry Company* of 1620–23, but

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[102] Quoted in Schulerud, 69.

[103] See n. 70. Characteristic European and American popularized accounts of additives to cigarette tobacco may be found in M. Lander, *The Tobacco Problem,* Boston, 1886, 44–45, 47.

[104] See, e.g., Dr. H. Selldén, *Om tobaksbrukets forbannelse,* Goteborg, 1895, 12. Research questioning such findings was published in H. W. Wiley, *et al., The Cigarette: What It Contains and What It Does Not Contain,* New York, 1892.

[105] S. Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches,* New York, 1987, 197.

[106] Dr. L. Bremer, *Tobacco, Insanity and Nervousness,* St. Louis, 1892, 8.

[107] Reported by Dr. J. Gilbert, Société Médicale des Hospitaux, and cited in H. Poulain de la Fontaine, *Contre la cigarette,* Paris, 1904, 16. See also Dr. H. A. Depierris, *Effects of Tobacco on the Soul, or on the Transcendent Manifestations of Life, Its Influence on Criminality, Suicide, Sudden Death, Insanity,* trans. B. B. Bloch, San Francisco, 1881.

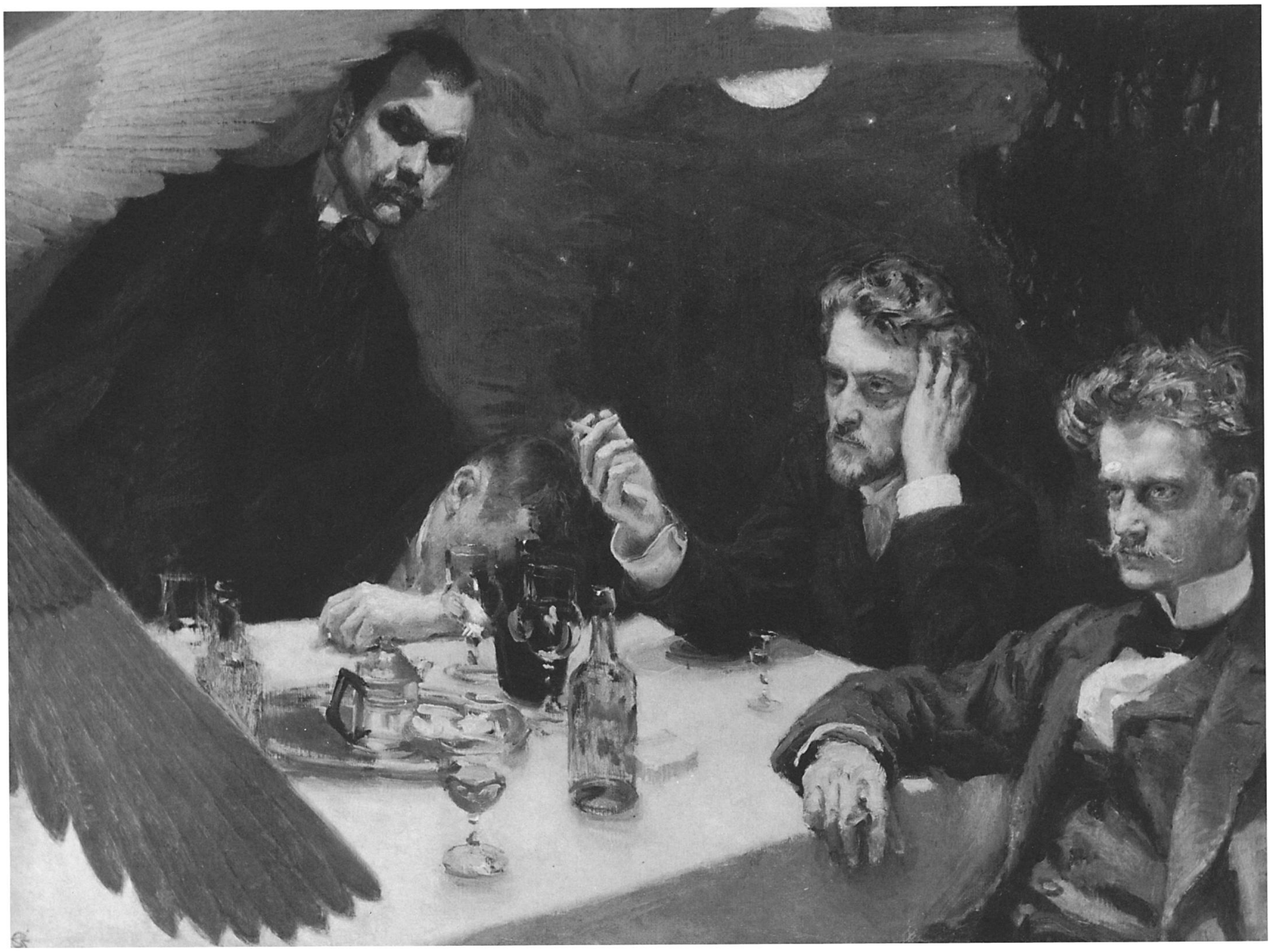
[108] Bremer, 10. Similar albeit less dramatic presentations of this argument appear in Selldén, 12, and Dr. O. Gollhilf, *Schaden und Nussen des Tobaks-Genusses,* Freiberg, 1892, esp. 13ff.

[109] G. L. Apperson, *The Social History of Smoking,* New York, 1916, 182.

[110] R. T. Trall, *An Essay on Tobacco Using, Being a Philosophical Exposition of the Effects of Tobacco on the Human System,* Battle Creek, 1872, 13.

[111] A rationale for the organization can be found in Dr. G. Petit, *Le Tabac. Conférence faite à l'Université Populaire,* Paris, Le Société contre l'Abus du Tabac, 1901.

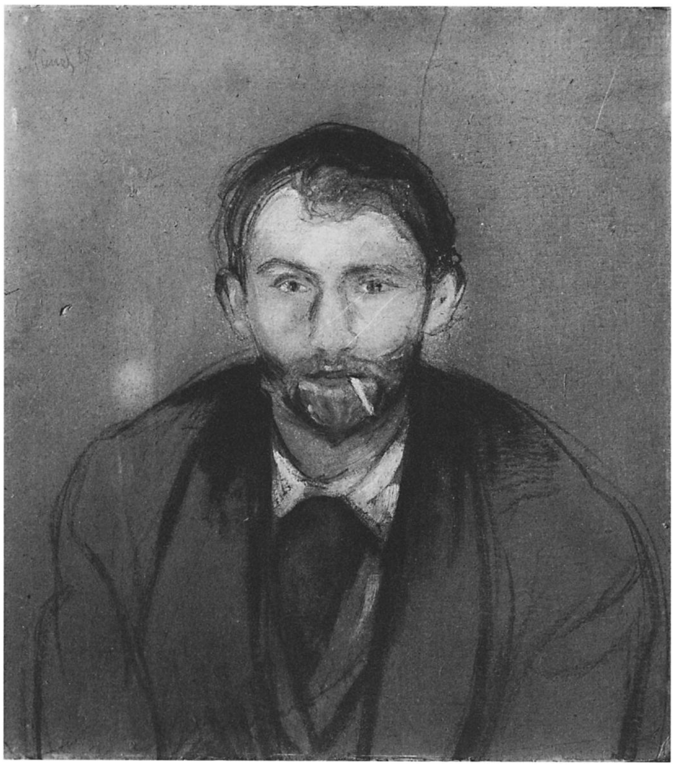
[112] C. Lombroso, *The Man of Genius,* London, 1892, 316.



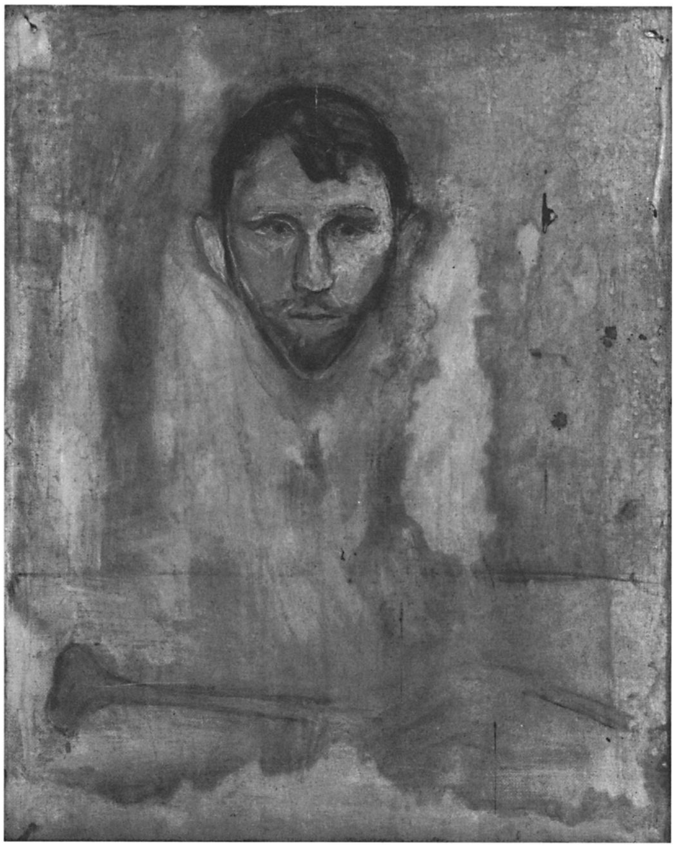
15 Gallen-Kallela, *Symposium,* 1894, oil on canvas. Private collection (photo: Helsinki, Central Art Archives)

perhaps closer in spirit to William Hogarth's satirical print, *Midnight Modern Conversation* of 1734, Gallen-Kallela poses himself on the left with the composer Oskar Merikanto, who has passed out on the table, and two other composers, Robert Kajanas and Jean Sibelius, positioned in various stages of inebriation on the right half of the canvas. A giant sphinx, the product of a mass hallucination, flies off to the left. The still life of empty bottles and half-empty glasses, and the smoldering cigarettes held absent-mindedly by two of Finland's self-identified leading intellectuals, attest to the artificially induced states of hyper-awareness that led to the group vision. The apex of the carefully constructed, pyramidal still-life composition points toward Kajanas's cigarette, emphasizing its centrality, literally and figuratively, in the painting. In turn, the cigarette serves as the point of intersection between the material world, as represented by the still life, and the visionary world of the abstract background and the truncated wings of the sphinx: the smoke drifting from this cigarette flows into, and seems to form, the red-tinted cloud that enframes Gallen-Kallela's self-portrait and partially obscures the moon in the fabricated background landscape. Thus the cigarette smoke provides the medium of transportation for the group of inspired, pallid, inebriated artists. Gallen-Kallela's carefully rendered inventory of still-life objects points the way to, and interrelates with, the visionary imagery surrounding the artists. In such a painting, the cigarette must be understood as a vehicle for the aberrant visionary experiences that provide the threshold for the new anti-Naturalist program in the arts. It is also a sign of resistance to the safety of middle-class norms—it is unhealthy, it is urban, it may contain opium, and, counteracting the effects of alcohol, it is a stimulant.

As this image suggests, in café society at the turn of the century, tobacco consumption was the natural corollary to alcohol consumption, and alcohol consumption was the natural conduit to the dual acts of dissolution and creativity. In the visual arts, this coupling was used to suggest the linkage of moral and physical decay and intellectual rigor, one aspect of the program of Decadence. The images that Munch created of the "Kristiania Bohème" (Fig. 7) position that society specifically within this tradition. Such an association between tobacco and dissolution was built into other of Munch's images of himself and the authors with whom he associated in Kristiania in the 1880s and Berlin in the 1890s. This is certainly the case with *Self-Portrait with Cigarette.* Reinhold Heller has linked *Self-Portrait with Cigarette* to



16 Munch, *Stanislaw Przybyszewski,* ca. 1895, oil and pastel on canvas. Oslo, Munch Museum (photo: Museum)



17 Munch, *Stanislaw Przybyszewski with Skeleton Arm.* ca. 1895, tempera on canvas, Oslo, Munch Museum (photo: Museum)

Munch's lithograph of the same year, *Self-Portrait with Skeleton Arm,*[113] in which the artist's image is allied with death through the device of the skeletal arm which forms a macabre decorative border at the bottom of the composition. Likewise, in related images of the writer Stanislaw Przybyszewski from the mid-1890s (Figs. 16 and 17), Munch seems to represent a cigarette and a skeletal arm as alternative symbols for the linkage between the artist's creative faculties and degeneration. In accordance with the Decadent aesthetic ideal, Munch represented himself, and Przybyszewski, as the byproducts of an ebbing life force, and chose as his emblems the artificial stimulants that induced and represented the strong nervous sensations that they cultivated.

The decadent physical characteristics with which Munch chose to endow himself in *Self-Portrait with Cigarette*—the thin, dissolving body, the sallow skin—challenged Norwegian ideas of normalcy and health. His self-representation as a Bohemian or Decadent placed him at odds with his aesthetically and socially conservative homeland, and identified him with the Bohemian circle in which he had participated in Kristiania and Berlin,[114] milieux dedicated to the cultivation of self-analysis through the abnegation of a "normal" social environment. In this light, Munch's *Self-Portrait with Cigarette* is an image of youth in rebellion against social and aesthetic norms, and in rebellion against regional and national orthodoxies. The cigarette featured in this painting, bearing associations with Parisian urbanism, youth, dissolution, and a blurring of economic, gender, and social boundaries, forms an essential part of Munch's iconography of Decadence and of Bohemianism in the 1890s. By virtue of this self-image, Munch proclaimed his rejection of middle-class values and assumed for himself the role of social outsider.

It is precisely this image of the artist as outsider that made Munch's work vulnerable to attack by such critics as the medical student Johan Scharffenberg in 1895. Exhibited in a year in which the Kristiania press had been especially attentive to the potential social harm of the Decadent program, Munch's paintings fueled the ambitions of the opponents to Decadence. By enlisting Christian Collin's restrictive definition of the moral role of art in society, Max Nordau's reductive understanding of Decadence and degeneration, and his own nascent medical views,[115] Scharffenberg could effortlessly pose Munch as an enemy of social health and stability.

As a sign of such discord, Munch's cigarette was specifically apprehended and commented upon by at least one observer. The satirical magazine *Vikingen* published a cartoon (Fig. 18) shortly after Munch's exhibition in Kristiania opened on

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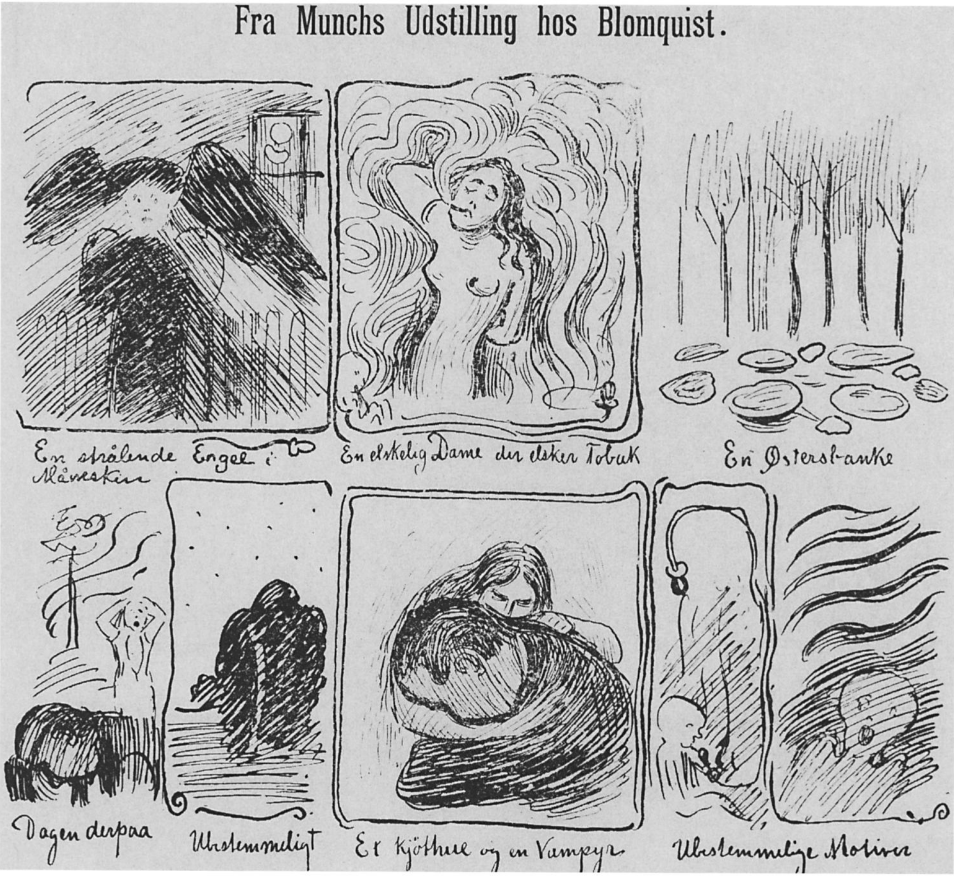
[113] Heller, 1984, 153.

[114] W. Rasch, "Literary Decadence. Artistic Representations of Decay," *Journal of Contemporary History,* XVII, 1, Jan. 1982, 205.

[115] Scharffenberg graduated from medical school as a specialist in mental illness, and later, in substance abuse. See Sundet (as in n. 21), and Scharffenberg's *Alkoholspørsmålets filosofi,* Oslo, 1969, a collection of his writings on alcoholism, criminality, and society.


Fra Munchs Udstilling hos Blomquist.
En strålende Engel i Måneskin
En elskelig Dame der elsker Tobak
En Østersbanke
Dagen derpaa
Ubestemmeligt
Et Kjötthue og en Vampyr
Ubestemmelige Motiver

18 "From Munch's Exhibition at Blomqvist's," from *Vikingen*, Oct. 12, 1895 (photo: Oslo, University Library)

October 12, 1895, in which the self-portrait was humorously elided with another of Munch's images, *Madonna*. In the center of the upper register, accompanied by the legend, "A Loving Woman Who Loves Tobacco," the sexually potent *Madonna* has been transformed into the image of a woman puffing energetically on the cigarette that has migrated from *Self-Portrait with Cigarette*. In addition to the satirical denigration of both paintings that has occurred through this grafting, two significant cross-codings have been effected by the caricaturist. Because the cigarette was a trope for prostitution, its inclusion transforms Munch's image of a libidinous, earth-bound Madonna into the image of a prostitute, thus twisting and extending the sexual reading of the painting. Moreover, the artist, no longer present bodily in the caricature, has been reduced to a sign—the cigarette—that has been transposed into a feminine realm. The caricaturist's feminization of the artist and repositioning of *Madonna*'s social identity were made possible by the multivalent associations that the cigarette held in the mid-1890s.

Artists' self-portraits often present staged images of carefully constructed selves. These images engage or explore assumed personae, and, as Richard Brilliant suggests, frequently confront their audience with the problem of dually registering likeness and fiction.[116] *Self-Portrait with Cigarette* is such a work. Viewers such as Scharffenberg understood Munch's depiction of his bohemian persona not as an exercise in the social construction of the self, but as an unmediated representation of physical degeneration. For less literal observers, the self-portrait provided not a diagnosis, but a formula. Balanced between the bourgeois and the Decadent, between marginality and control, sensuality and abnegation, Munch declared his affiliation with a programmatic amorality in 1895. Assisted by popularly understood sociological and medical theories of degeneration and decay, Munch, condemned by the same theories, predicated his identity on a smoking cigarette.

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[116] R. Brilliant, *Portraiture*, Cambridge, 1991, 147.

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