

Bachelor Culture in the Work of Adolf Loos

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The issue of gender in the architecture and writing of Adolf Loos arose from an ongoing debate over gender identification and roles in Viennese culture of the fin-de-siècle. Loos's critique challenged what he saw as the degradation of contemporary culture through its feminization. His masculinized alternative reclaimed the public realm for the rational and the pragmatic. Through this crucial maneuver, Loos tied modernity back to its class base, to an ideology of production and progress, and brought nineteenth-century positivism forward into the twentieth century, jumping over the "effeminate" interlude of art nouveau.

The first ornament that was born, the cross, was erotic in origin. The first work of art, the first artistic act which the first artist, in order to rid himself of his surplus energy, smeared on the wall. A horizontal dash: the prone woman. A vertical dash: the man penetrating her. The man who created it felt the same urge as Beethoven, he was in the same heaven in which Beethoven created the Ninth Symphony.

"Ornament and Crime," ADOLF LOOS, 1908¹

Introduction

With words like these, Adolf Loos held a posture of notoriety in his native Vienna. His shocking prose, the alienating facades of his buildings, and his rigid Calvinism in matters of everyday life fascinated a complacent fin-de-siècle society. He badgered them with accusations of decadence, social pathology, and assertions that their pretentious social rituals revealed a moribund culture, one unable to make a positive contribution to a world in the making. In his infamous "naked" architecture, Loos rejected contemporary architectural language, invoking a nihilistic silence instead.² His intention was clear: "The majority of human works are made up of two parts: destruction and construction. And the greater the destructive part is, indeed when human work is solely destructive, only then can follow natural, noble, human work."³

Vienna, the milieu in which Loos lived and worked, formed the absolute context of his work. In 1900, Vienna was a European backwater, held in the gentle thrall of the Habsburg court. Artists and intellectuals enjoyed a congenial and intimate bourgeois society, and art was cultivated largely in the cause of luxuriant pleasure. Artistic circles centered upon salons in which women acted as arbiters, orchestrating interaction between artists and society people. The art critic and hostess Berta Zuckermandl engineered evenings of glittering conversation, and (subsequently) famous encounters

such as the introduction of Gustav Mahler to a young Alma Schindler. In 1916, her protégé, the Secession architect Josef Hoffmann, redesigned her salon with due extravagance.⁴

With the formation of Jugendstil in the 1890s, a group of young artists and architects led by the painter Gustav Klimt posed an artistic and cultural challenge to salon society. Although their work maintained the sensual aestheticism characteristic of Viennese art, their style was new and the narrative often feminine in subject and origin: "Just as in Loie Fuller's [serpentine dances] the hemline of her dress curls and flows, so does the line in modern ornamental forms curve and bend, rise and sink in a movement that streams by snake-like, impossible to grasp, held together merely by its own rhythm."⁵

The Jugendstil rebellion found favor in some of the more forward-looking salons. The city fixed the site for their gallery just off the Ringstrasse.⁶ The Secession Building (1899), designed by Josef Maria Olbrich, was Jugendstil's temple to art. Its idealized geometry lent gravity to spiritual mysteries, figural ornament provided a mythology. Surrounding the portal, Daphne's laurel tree represents divine inspiration, her gift to men. The female Gorgons over the door protect the hero Perseus from evil, and recall their patroness, the goddess Athena and her association with art and intellectual endeavor. This benign ideal—woman representing the mysteries of nature and creation—characterized the Secessionists' relatively untroubled stance vis-à-vis Viennese society.⁷ It is typical of this portrait that the priestess delivers the gift of inspiration but is not herself a creator.

Loos's self-appointed task was to demolish this narrative. In his essays, he attacked the muse as well as her effeminate hero in a disconcertingly gendered argument that is remarkable in the history of modern architecture. Loos maintained that strict gender distinctions were basic to the ordered logic of modern society, and he decried the ambiguous gender roles that had invaded art and culture. Jugendstil decadence lay in its unrealistic attitude towards the capitalist economy, its regressive fascination for a dying aristocratic tradition, and a benighted love of ornament that sapped the productive energies from Viennese culture. His call for cultural reclamation through a reinvigorated rhetoric set the stage for embedding a new masculinism in the language of early modernism and the reassertion of middle-class values after a generation of retreat from the productive enterprise (Figure 1).

The cult of bachelorhood, a longing for a bachelor or "homosocial" world, also finds its parallel in this aspect of Loos's work.⁸ Characterized by a sentimental reverence for male society in the military, men's clubs, and the board room, the "bachelor" world



1. Lina and Adolf Loos in Venice, August 1913.

of fin-de-siècle literature is associated with adventure, pragmatic achievements, and the kind of linear narrative and heroics favored by the bourgeoisie. Its emergence signaled the end of more fluid gendered identities for men and women, as suggested by Jugendstil, for example, and the reassertion of the dominant philosophical paradigms of the classic capitalist economy: of reason, science, and economy.

Bohemia and the Cafés

Loos disdained the Viennese salon and its patroness. He attacked the intrusion of women into the public sphere and articulated an inevitable corollary: that women's transgressions had come at the

price of men's masculinity. His ideas formed part of a constellation common to bohemian society. This was Loos's alternative milieu, the world of cafés and cabarets. Among his particular friends were Karl Kraus and Peter Altenberg, men who were exploring similar boundaries in journalism and literature. Kraus was a controversial figure, an eminent journalist and social critic and the publisher of the satirical journal *Die Fackel* (*The Torch*). He has been compared to Swift for his biting satire, for his brilliant use of language, and an inflammatory rhetoric that caused him to be arrested for slander on more than one occasion. Kraus and Loos had a close intellectual and personal friendship, particularly between the years 1907 and 1914.⁹ A generation older, Altenberg was the quintessential coffeehouse poet, famous for his peculiar dress, his impoverished state, and his sentimental demeanor (Figure 2). He was a public person, a man of the street. His sketches, impressionist set pieces, and aphorisms were widely published and deemed by many to be the best literature of the time.¹⁰ While Altenberg slept in a boardinghouse among prostitutes, he lived in the city's cafés.

Vienna's cafés catered to different groups and classes: some were artistically inclined, others politically. The cafés represented various social and artistic tastes, from the neo-renaissance Central, the Jugendstil "Fledermaus," to Loos's austere Café Museum.¹¹ And, as some coffeehouses served a proper bourgeois crowd, others acted as salons to the poor, offering running water, newspapers, even changing rooms, and a invitation to linger for hours over a cup of coffee. Bohemian culture inhabited some of the more modest establishments. Here, their impoverishment and their lack of an ability or desire to participate in the culture of display came to characterize the oppositional stance of a subculture: while the aesthetes of Jugendstil were associated with the leisure class, bohemians lived on society's edge. In the cafés, they attracted the curious and the admiring, and established the ground for the transgression of class and social boundaries. The cabarets extended this into a more extensive programmatic format, but shared much the same spirit of experimentation and loosened social constraints. Café life was one of the street and of men. At the cafés, men met to discuss and dispute, to write, and even paint. (Loos dragged Oskar Kokoschka armed with canvas and paints to one so he could paint the poet Peter Altenberg in his milieu.) Women were onlookers and diversions; mostly they were actresses and dancers, and some were prostitutes. The women came, said Elsie Altmann-Loos, Loos's third wife, to "display their sensuality and charm."¹²

A year after the Secession Building was built in 1898, Loos received the commission for the Café Museum in the adjacent block. He countered the Jugendstil temple with a bare facade and

sachlich interiors that earned it the sobriquet “Café Nihilismus.” It was admired for the excellent quality of its furniture and fittings, modeled on American example, and for an austerity that was novel in contemporary Vienna.¹³ The Café Museum soon became a café of the literati.

In the small world of Viennese society, there were inevitable meetings of all sides. One remarkable evening was the opening night in 1907 of the cabaret “*Die Fledermaus*.”¹⁴ Josef Hoffmann designed the interior; its ornamentation included works by Kokoschka and Karl Moser. Its brilliance was chiefly the result of a thematic pattern of square checks in primary colors. Hoffmann designed all the furnishings and fixtures. The *Fledermaus* was to combine fashionable design with the most current cabaret performances and theatricals. The opening-night program featured a sketch by Altenberg. Lina Vetter recited the prologue. The Barrison Sisters from America danced the cakewalk. (Bessie Barrison was soon to become Loos’s common-law wife.) Kraus and Berta Zucker-erkandl were there to review the design for the morning papers. Zuckererkandl subsequently lauded the “perfect language” of Hoffmann’s work, while in *Die Fackel*, in a review called “An Act of Culture,” Kraus reported: “There has long been a debate about whether the need [for toilet paper] is better served by using that on which Berta Zuckererkandl’s art reviews are printed or by the costume for the lady lavatory attendant which Professor Hoffmann surely ought to design—since he has designed everything else—At any rate it has been agreed that the toilet bowl should be painted white and a checkerboard pattern printed on it.”¹⁵

“Ornament and Crime”

Loos viewed ornament as a pernicious invasion of the feminine into masculine culture: ornament was useless; it had debasing and enervating tendencies deriving from its feminine source; it was the embodiment of degeneracy. In 1908, Kraus published his “Ornament and Crime” in *Die Fackel*. Loos thundered against the practices of ornamentation and craft with a language that associated “degraded” forms with feminine, primitive, and childish inclinations. He expounded on his aversion with references to Papuan natives, latrine-wall scribblers, and tattooed degenerates. The strident tone of the text intensified as he expanded with lurid detail: ornament is “indecent,” it dirties the “white walls” of the city with “erotic symbols.” Other, less shocking examples came from the worlds of cookery and fashion. His claim that Beethoven’s symphonies could never be written by someone wearing “silk, satin and



2. Peter Altenberg and Adolf Loos, photograph of H. Schieberth, 1918. *Festschrift für Adolf Loos* (Vienna, 1930). Altenberg’s epigram reads “Architect Adolf Loos and Peter Altenberg, two who reject everything that (until now) was unjust!”

lace” paralleled intellectual sloth, cultural degeneracy with reference to the degraded, effeminate male.¹⁶ He contrasted his “male” appetite with “effeminacies” in the art of *haute cuisine* when he observed that “the culinary show pieces of past centuries” that “display all kinds of ornaments to make pheasants, peacocks, and lobsters appear more tasty” do not appeal to him. Rather, Loos declared, “I eat roast beef.”¹⁷ He posed further comparisons of the positive versus degenerate spirit (the warrior versus the self-indulgent aristocrat, the campfire versus the kitchen, the northern European versus the southern), and he countered Jugendstil “effeminacies” with masculine alternatives (delicacy of line versus the hardy craftsman’s robust one, stenciled surfaces versus bare material, and ornamentation versus pragmatic simplicity).

Loos claimed that Jugendstil's degraded artistic language derived from a conflation of private and public, of art and utility, and that such a conflation opened the door to transgressions of good taste by allowing the female principle (that is, eroticism) to become part of public discourse. He proposed to replace this "infantile fetishism"—the making of something one's own by scribbling things on it—with objectivity and utility. As Benedetto Gravagnuolo put it: "The specific nature of craftsmanship revealed by Loos is that it is impersonal. This, in his opinion, is the aspect to be saved in contrast to what Loos terms the 'ladies' fashion fantasy' of Jugendstil."¹⁸ The result, Loos promises, will be the release of the rational masculine spirit from the sexual ambiguities of art nouveau, and the grip of the salon wherein women force men into impotency.

The argument was reiterated in Loos's discussions of articles of everyday life. He analyzed shoes, clothes, chairs, trolleys, food, and plumbing as Kraus did texts, as basic "linguistic" elements, barometers of cultural health. The campaign for a new manliness formed part of the life-reforming [*Lebensreform*] movement of the late nineteenth century. Edward Timms cites the case of Jörg Lanz von Liebenfels who published pictures of "decadent, too-soft, bourgeois chairs, which invited one to slump lethargically" countered by pictures of "the Aryan way of sitting in an upright chair, designed to stiffen the backbone and improve muscular posture." Others argued that "the pedestal on toilets was a decadent over-refinement which deprived one of the invigorating naturalness of squatting on one's hams."¹⁹ Loos put these ideas in a new context, one that correlated a decadent aristocratic tradition, and its mirror in salon society, with the retardation of the Austrian economy. Effeminacy and its idle posture blocked the modern, productive economy that men of the middle class would otherwise produce. His essays calling for practicality in style as it relates to the rational use of resources—the famous passage on the waste of resources in the decoration of men's shoes comes to mind—outline a class-based and economy-based critique that corresponds to the critique of effeminacy found in essays like "Ornament and Crime."²⁰

"Ornament and Crime" drew on two major sources. Loos relied on Max Nordau's *Entartung* (*Degeneracy*) (1892) for his understanding of social degeneracy. Nordau contended that genius creates progress, whereas degeneracy delves society into primitivism and amorality.²¹ His abrasive and violent language in "Ornament and Crime" were indebted to Kraus, particularly his essay "*Sittlichkeit und Kriminalität*" ("Morality and Criminality") (1902), a work in which Kraus initiated a decade-long campaign against sexual hypocrisy and the legal system.²² Kraus viewed language as complicit in social behavior and hoped to reinvigorate it through a

rigorous purging of polite and hypocritical formalisms. Here he lampooned the story of the notorious Leontine Hervay, a "scheming woman" who bigamously married an on-the-rise bureaucrat:

Leontine von Hervay came riding through the air . . . on a broomstick. . . . What help was it that she had made the District Administrator happy? A magician's daughter with the mastery of foreign tongues. Thus under strong suspicion of 'devilish intercourse.' One man no doubt found that his cattle had fallen sick, the next perhaps that his corn was ruined. Soon the whole place is up in arms.²³

Satirizing Hervay's history, Kraus revealed the public's equation of immorality and criminality, of public and private acts.²⁴ Specifically, Kraus decried laws against prostitution, adultery, the seduction of minors, and abortion. He criticized the pretense whereby polite society relied upon prostitutes for the sexual education of young men and the diversion of husbands, while it publicly denied women's sexual nature.²⁵

Kraus's argument that sexual behavior belonged to the private sphere and should engage the law only in the case of demonstrably public issues such as disease, exactly parallels Loos's position with regard to design and ornament. The same discrepancy, between polite gender relations and brute reality, supported Loos's view of Jugendstil as decadent, a state of affairs that led directly to frivolous consumption, and the frittering away of man's creative energies. The two men recognized each other as counterparts, Kraus stripping sentimentality and empty ritual from language and social practice, while Loos routed the Viennese habit of frivolous display and made way for a world of sobriety and utility.²⁶

Adolf Loos and I, he literally, I in the sphere of language have done nothing more than show that there is a difference between an urn and a chamber pot, and that it is only by maintaining this difference, that there is any scope for culture.²⁷

An Ideal Woman

*I believe that Josephine [Baker] is a great artist. Just observe the courage and the power of her movements. She always reminds me of an animal in the wilderness.*²⁸

ADOLF LOOS

Late-nineteenth-century Europeans nurtured an ideal of woman as the embodiment of purity and solicitude, while believing her alter

ego to be violent and depraved, a femme fatale. Amid efforts towards women's emancipation and the relaxation of traditional social constraints, a fear of this repressed impulse grew. Woman appeared alternatively as guardian spirit and demon, and her personas often jumbled male and female identities in a bewildering and troubling way.²⁹ As the "goddess of Decadence" in Oscar Wilde's "Salomé," the unleashed woman became what Carl Schorske has called the "fin-de-siècle's favorite phallic woman,"³⁰ one whose power and violence testified that she had indeed assumed a masculine spirit. In Gustav Klimt's *Judith*, she appears as an elegant, though half-dressed, lady who drapes her hand on Holfernes's decapitated head with casual grace.

This transformation of Jugendstil's virginal muse into a vampire was a common theme in the art and literature of the fin-de-siècle. As Bram Dijkstra observed, these "idols of perversity, . . . these images of female narcissism, . . . of women kissing their mirror images, gazing at themselves in circular baths, or engaging in autoerotic play, mutate by the end of the century into savagely 'gynecidal' visions of female sexuality."³¹ Woman as the fomenter of sexual disorder appeared in the works of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, in the plays of Franz Wedekind, and the poetry of Peter Altenberg. Kraus, Sigmund Freud, Otto Weininger, and the artists Klimt and Kokoschka were among those who indulged a fascination for the dark side of the feminine sublime.

Most notoriously, the disturbed Otto Weininger developed an influential theory of woman as predator, with man as the partner who struggles to please her.³² This, according to Weininger, was the dynamic of life itself. In *Geschlecht und Charakter (Sex and Character)* (1903), he elaborated his thesis that the sexes were absolutely polarized. Woman was exclusively lascivious and lacked an ego. Her destructive power was exacerbated by a permanent state of hysteria brought on by men's insistence on her chastity. While Viennese intellectuals debated the details, his argument found a responsive audience; Kafka, Kraus, Wittgenstein, and Loos were among those influenced by him.³³ Oskar Kokoschka's play, *Murder: The Hope of Woman*, is an incarnation of Weininger's theory. The play concerns sexual longing and frustration, and the imagery is violent and explicit. In a summary, Archetypal Woman lusts after Man and is branded on the breast by the male chorus as a warning. She then stabs Man. In revenge she is killed by the chorus, which revives Man. He leaves the stage at dawn having first avenged Woman in turn by slaughtering the chorus.³⁴ The poster that Kokoschka designed to advertise the play portrayed a horrific image of the femme fatale. The blood red, flailed corpse of a man lies in the lap of a

woman whose skin is parchment white, "the color of death." She appears to be devouring him (Figure 3).³⁵ The play opened on a makeshift stage in a square off the Ringstrasse in 1909. During the performance, a melee involving the actors, Bosnian soldiers, and the police broke out. Kokoschka was saved from charges for inciting a riot by Loos and Kraus who, as friends of the chief of police, negotiated his freedom.³⁶

Although society viewed the femme fatale as deadly, Kraus, Loos, and Altenberg saw her as the authentic female, the most desirable of women. Kraus's preoccupation with her led him to a fascination with the "haetera," "one of the most extravagant products of the erotic subculture" of fin-de-siècle Vienna.³⁷ As conceived by the classical Greek author Lucian, the haetera was an educated prostitute, a figure of sexual abandon. What Lucian intends to amuse, the Viennese literati embraced with great seriousness. In 1907, a Viennese edition of his *Woman* was published, with lavish illustrations by Gustav Klimt.³⁸ Kraus molded his mistress Irma Karczewska as a haetera, and published numerous articles in *Die Fackel* on the subject. One, entitled "The Child-Woman" by Fritz Wittels, described the haetera as an exemplification of Freud's recently published theory of infantile eroticism, a figure driven by pure and unashamed lust and the desire for gratification, attracted to an infinite range of partners without regard to gender or notions of romantic love, a "primal woman."³⁹ Peter Altenberg was likewise fascinated with the openly sexual woman, and he sought her out among the African women of the Ashanti tribe he encountered at an exhibition at the Prater. He published the novel *Ashantee* in 1897.

While Kraus promoted an haeteric ideal in *Die Fackel*, Kraus and Loos sought her in Vienna's brothels and cabarets.⁴⁰ Kokoschka recounts an evening when Kraus and Loos took the naive Koko to see a Canadian snake dancer at the Tabarin Club who performed an erotic wrestling match with a python.⁴¹ Later in her elegant salon, Loos asked her to pose for Kokoschka. Kokoschka reluctantly called several days later to find her reclining on the divan, "the very incarnation of the evil eye," he said, "not unlike a giant snake, limp, relaxed, refreshing herself with damp towels as if after a hard fight. How could I sit, with the whole abyss of love unveiled before my eyes like this?" Kokoschka, more circumspect in his sexual practices than Loos or Kraus, made a hasty departure. The pair also took the beleaguered Kokoschka to the salon of Madame Rose where a virgin was sold to the highest bidder.⁴²

For Loos, Kraus, and Altenberg, the female principle could not itself make culture, but could only serve as man's inspiration.



3. Poster announcement of the play *Murder: The Hope of Woman* (1908) by Oskar Kokoschka, here in the version published in *Der Sturm* in 1916.

Loos was explicit in his Weiningerian notions about male and female relationships: the woman as muse faded (indeed, the muse tended to become increasingly male), and sexual relations were negotiated on market exchange terms. Courting his third wife Elsie Altmann, when he was forty-seven and she seventeen, Loos explained the sexual dynamic between men and women. Altmann's

recollection of her seduction, while one must question her claim to total recall, is revealing. Placing his hand on her mons, Loos said:

"Do you see this, this is the most important thing on earth. It rules the whole world. If it weren't for the sexuality of woman, the man would not work, he wouldn't be interested in earning money. . . . Who would want to buy anything, when he couldn't make an impression on a woman? Who would be interested in acquiring a big car, a beautiful tie? Factories would stand still, inventory wouldn't discover anything more. . . . Naturally we are too cultivated to let this be understood. But the primitives painted their totems about it, to express the truth. They weren't ashamed."⁴³

Loos and Kraus maintained that woman belonged solely to the private realm; in the public realm of deeds, the female principle should be invisible as irrelevant, distracting, and ultimately destructive. And because for Loos eroticism was totally embodied in the feminine, the female principle—as it might appear otherwise than in ornament—should also be banished from architecture. Ornament, as basically erotic and superfluous, drained culture of its purpose. Architecture and furnishings were essentially emasculated through ornamentation; utility, economy, and structure sacrificed to whimsy.

Loos realized the order of masculine and feminine realms in the apartment he occupied with Lina in 1908. In the outer room what might have been the salon was a *Wohnküche* built in a sturdy, *völkisch* vocabulary: wooden dadoes with square reveals and wide frames, a heavy beamed ceiling and sturdy brick fireplace looking like it was just removed from a farmhouse, the simply crafted, workmanlike furniture. The language reflects an idea about medieval and Germanic notions of comfort. Although Loos designed the apartment in celebration of his new marriage, Lina is absent from this public realm. Indeed, the description of Loos's creation of his "*Nischerln*," his little niche, is of a bachelor's nest, one more akin to the hunting lodge than the domestic sphere.⁴⁴

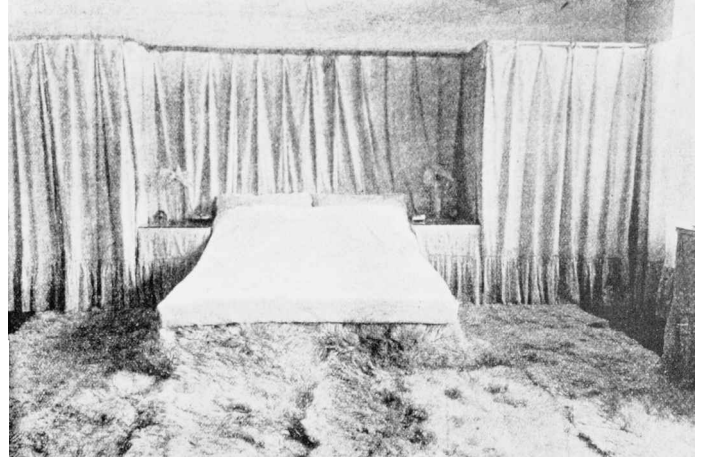
In the bedroom, one finds Loos's extraordinary interpretation of the feminine realm, in what he called Lina's Room (Figure 4). Here the ponderous pragmatism of the outer room is refuted in a sea of white, gauzy fabric where the only substantial surface is the smooth ceiling. A massive angora sheepskin muffles the bed and obscures the hard plain of the floor. The furniture and walls are sheathed in flowing silk curtains. The room is soft, evanescent, and ineluctable, with none of the substantiveness or solidity of Loos's

usual vocabulary. It is at once a sacred chamber dedicated to the female principle and an astonishingly frivolous space, as compared to the purpose of the outer room. It is an inner sanctum in which even Loos is an intruder. As Loos reportedly said to his wife Claire, “the bedroom is the most sacred, most private matter; no stranger should be allowed to sully its holiness.”⁴⁵

Loos also explored primitivist themes in gender terms.⁴⁶ In the Josephine Baker project, Loos saw an expression of the female predator, the exotic, and the vitality of the black race. In his largely schematic project, “tattooed” striations on the exterior express the tribal roots of its patroness in a concoction of race and sex. Inside, the sequence from swimming pool to bedroom promised afternoons of sensual abandon in this alternative salon, with Baker as the sexual temptress rather than the social arbiter. In his other Parisian work, the house for Tristan Tzara, Loos played out his fascination with the totemic and the primitive as a foil for modernity, here in a masculine guise. Together, these two works recall that for Altenberg, Kraus, and Loos the African, especially the tribal African, represented authentic maleness, femaleness, and authentic culture un-sullied by the dissimulating veils of civilization. As Kokoschka wryly observed, “The blacks, who had defended themselves so heroically against modern cultural experiments, began for their part to make their first intellectual conquests in Vienna.”⁴⁷ Thus, Loos’s work moved beyond the critique of gender to embrace race and colonial dominance as uneasy partners in his cultural ideal.

Loos’s Manly Man

If one response to the female powers unleashed in art nouveau was “the horror of its castrating potential,” the other was the emergence of that exaggeratedly masculine figure, the manly man.⁴⁸ Loos first met Oskar Kokoschka at an exhibition in 1908 where he purchased a bust the latter had made called “The Warrior.” The piece portrayed an agitated Kokoschka, his mouth open in an agonized cry. It came in for a good amount of derision, in particular, Kokoschka thought, by women. He recounted “Everyday I found bits of chocolate and other debris in the mouth of my bust, probably put there by girls as a further expression of scorn they felt for the Chief Savage, as I had been dubbed by a critic.”⁴⁹ On seeing this work, Loos pleaded Kokoschka to quit his job in Hoffmann’s Wiener Werkstätte where he produced decorative embellishments for Hoffmann’s architectural commissions: tapestries for the Palais Stoclet and tiles for the Café Fledermaus.⁵⁰ Loos argued that a career as an “ornamentalist” would ruin him artistically, essentially feminizing



4. “My wife’s bedroom” from the Vienna apartment designed by Adolf Loos in *Kunst*, no. 1 (1903).

him. Living on the edge himself, Loos promised he would match Kokoschka’s salary if he could not supply him with sufficient commissions. This remained the arrangement for some years, Loos at times selling oriental rugs to support them both. Loos kept “The Warrior” with him throughout his life.⁵¹

Loos’s discussion often ignores women, his attack aimed at effeminacy rather than the feminine, and he proceeds by contrasting the effete man with the manly man. Loos’s masculine ideal rested in the modern pragmatism of the American and British sort, and in an imperial Anglo-Saxon culture in which the polarity between the sexes is fundamental, and man is supreme: “The Englishman is unacquainted with the fear of getting dirty. He goes into the stable, strokes his horse, mounts it, and takes off across the wide heath. The Englishman does everything himself; he hunts, he climbs mountains, and he saws up trees. He gets no pleasure out of being a spectator. Germanic knighthood has found a refuge on the English isle and from there has reconquered the world.”⁵² Like Kipling, he finds romance and solace in the image of the purely male world, the public realm in which men are makers and doers and women vanish into seclusion. In extolling the contemporary cult of masculinity, Loos articulated one of the most powerful oppositional stances to a feminized art nouveau.

It was in his effort to resuscitate masculine culture by architectural means that Loos conceived some of his best early work: the Knize shop, Goldmann and Salatsch’s Outfitters, and the American or Kärtner Bar (1907) stand as exemplary of a reasserted masculine



5. Villa Karma by Adolf Loos, 1903.

language. The Kärtner Bar is a particularly interesting example. Here, Loos and his patron introduced a uniquely American establishment and an alternative to the café: a male preserve devoid of women wherein sexual anxieties could be dispelled by retreating into a fantasy of American bars and British men's clubs. Loos dedicated the Kärtner to Peter Altenberg and commissioned his portrait to hang on the back wall.⁵³ Women were excluded from the bar, although not without controversy. The story as Loos told it has affinities to Kokoschka's play, the language to the romantic adventure:

The revolt of the women was great. Daily the bar was overflowing, full of loiterers, but the women were refused. Countesses and princesses demonstrated, entreated, threatened, but in vain. They were not allowed in. The curious grew in number from day to day. There was a great sensation in all of Vienna, bringing the bar much acclaim. Finally, after five weeks, the situation was no longer tenable. The women were forced into retreat.⁵⁴

The bar remained a male sanctum. As Kokoschka recalled his impressions: "The subdued indirect lighting on the coffered marble ceiling and under the glass table-top gave you a feeling of well-being. You sipped your drink like a blasé man of the world. The ice in the glass seemed positively warmed by the golden evening light that filtered through the onyx-paned fanlight over the narrow

entrance. The discreet quiet of the bar afforded a change from the unrest that had begun to affect the coffee-houses."⁵⁵

That Loos wanted to be referred to as a mason, a practical man who worked with his hands, not an architect, a decorator-slave to the patroness, that his American heroes were Louis Sullivan and H.H. Richardson, and, that like them he emphasized soundness, sturdiness, and the importance of the craft tradition were basic to his masculinist ethos. Further, he attached this culture to reason and the intellect, the purview of the male. According to Loos, the sublimity of reason can be gauged by the great civilizations of the West, and he traced the lineage of the masculine spirit from ancient Greece through the Enlightenment to contemporary engineers.

The Villa Karma (1904–1906) is an idyllic exegesis of this same poetic. The variety of references at this magnificent structure are at first overwhelming: it is at once a villa, a fortress, a male club, and a Greek temple (Figure 5).⁵⁶ The classicizing geometry is much the same as that used by his Jugendstil peers in their later, transcendental phase. The square and the circle are common to both surfaces patterns and primary volumes, but the severity of their delineation resounds with an unforgiving moralism. Comparing Karma with Palais Stoclet, we see that whereas the latter bears the legacy of Jugendstil in materials expressed as a taut, weightless skin—seeming to embody the buoyancy of the spirit—Loos structures this building to express weight and mass. The "castle doors" of the main foyer, with their heavy studding and grill-frames, are scaled for a race of giants, the "knighthood of Germany." Loos upheld another tenet of Secessionists: the love of fine, luxurious materials. His materials were wood, glass, stone, and leather, and, at Karma, black, white-veined marble. He found in these luxurious and pure materials a delight that relieved him from the obligation to ornament, and a recovery of Truth, Kraus's authentic language. At the same time, Loos banished all "effeminacies" associated with such luxury, the soft textures and transparent or indeterminate surfaces of art nouveau or, indeed, of Lina's room. Instead, the fantasy of the bachelor world can be understood in profound surface depths achieved in his hard, finely polished, reflective materials.

We can read then in the face of the Tzara House, the stark mask of the savage, in the den of the Müller House, breathe the secluded air of the men's club off the Strand, and, in the Villa Karma, sense, in the echoes of Schinkel, in the transcendental geometries and the truth of the pure material, something of a poetic idyll of a purely masculine world, a cool Apollonian retreat away from the public frenzy of Dionysus—a world seeking refuge not only from the agonies of modernity, but from the torments of sexual anxiety.

Conclusion

*Only through developed industry . . . does the ontological essence of human passion come into being . . . the science of man is therefore itself a product of man's establishment of himself by practical activity.*⁵⁷

KARL MARX

Loos's efforts to reform quotidian culture had major consequences for modern architecture. One was the successful launching of male expertise over previously female spheres, in particular over domestic culture, which from furnishings to plumbing played such an important part in his social critique. The essay "Ornament and Crime" argued that form must be freed from the indignities of elaboration, appliqué, and decoration associated with the domestic arena. If the private home were to be a primary architectural subject, it had to be purified and masculinized.

Although we may read the text of Loos's masculine and positivist creed in his architecture, it is in his rhetoric that it became a major force in modern architecture. In a crucial maneuver, Loos's writings tied modernity back to its class base and to an ideology of production and progress, and brought nineteenth-century positivism forward into the twentieth century, jumping over the "effeminate" interlude of art nouveau: it is this link that has caused critics to characterize Loos as simultaneously traditional and modern.⁵⁸ And, indeed, ultimately this path would lead towards the triumph of a scientific rationalism and replace the transcendental aspirations and fantastical imaginings of the fin-de-siècle with the pragmatism of getting-things-done.

Notes

1. Adolf Loos, "Ornament and Crime" (1908) in Ulrich Conrads, ed., *Programs and Manifestoes on 20th-Century Architecture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1964), p. 19. Loos here draws on Nietzsche's idea that artistic creation is a kind of substitute for the sexual act, here in a quite literal sense.

2. See especially M. Cacciari, *Architecture and Nihilism: On the Philosophy of Modern Architecture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

3. Adolf Loos, "Die moderne Siedlung" (1926), in *Sämtliche Schriften* (Vienna: Herold, 1962), p. 402.

4. Zuckerkindl was an art critic as well as a patron. Her reviews appeared in mainstream journals like *Kunst*, *Interieur*, and *Dekoratív Kunst*. Hoffmann's Zuckerkindl apartment appears in the catalogue section of Eduard Sekler, *Josef Hoffmann. Das Architektonische Werk* (Vienna: Residenz Verlag, 1986), p. 376.

5. Franz Servaes, "The Art of the Line," *Ver Sacrum* (1902), quoted by Mark M. Anderson, *Kafka's Clothes. Ornament and Aestheticism in the Habsburg Fin de Siècle* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 68.

6. Ian Latham, *Joseph Maria Olbrich* (New York: Rizzoli, 1980), p. 18ff.

7. The inauguration of the artists' colony in Darmstadt in 1901 is another case in point. Fancifully reenacting a Greek mystery rite, a priestess emerged from the cavelike entrance of the Ernst Ludwig Haus to present the gift of a crystal ball to Peter Behrens.

8. In literature, the "bachelor" hero who shuns women's society for the "homosocial" world may or may not be celibate, rather the emphasis is on a world inhabited solely by men, where productive capacities are focused on enterprise and adventure rather than the family. See *ibid.*, and Edward W. Said, *Beginnings: Intention and Method* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), ch. 3; Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *No Man's Land*, vol. 2, *Sexchanges* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), ch. 1. The concept of the homosocial is articulated in Andrew Michael Roberts, *Conrad and Masculinity* (New York: Macmillan, 2000).

9. Edward Timms, *Karl Kraus, Apocalyptic Satirist: Culture and Catastrophe in Habsburg Vienna* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), p. 115ff.

10. On Altenberg's influence on a young Franz Kafka, see Andrew Barker, "Franz Kafka and Peter Altenberg" (Edition Atelier, 1993), p. 221ff.

11. Fritz Hackert, "Cafés, Feuilletons, and Cabarets in Vienna 1900," in Stephen Eric Bronner and F. Peter Wagner, eds., *Vienna: The World of Yesterday, 1889–1914* (NJ: Humanities Press, 1997), pp. 20–35.

12. Elsie Altmann-Loos, *Mein Leben mit Adolf Loos* (Vienna: Amalthea, 1984), trans. author, p. 38.

13. *Das Wiener Caffeehaus: Von den Anfängen bis zur Zwischenkriegszeit* (catalogue, 66th Special Exhibition of the Historical Museum of the City of Vienna, 1980), no. 236, p. 109.

14. *Ibid.*, pp. 29–32; Sekler, *Josef Hoffmann*, pp. 112–113; Frank Whitford, *Oskar Kokoschka, A Life* (New York: Atheneum, 1986), p. 25; and Hilde Spiel, *Vienna's Golden Autumn from the Watershed Year 1866 to Hitler's Anschluss, 1938* (New York: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1987), p. 108.

15. Karl Kraus, "Eine Kulturtat," *Die Fackel*, no. 236 (November 18, 1907): 4.

16. Loos, "Ornament and Crime," p. 24. There is an undercurrent of homophobia in Viennese writings about women; this would include Loos as well as Weininger.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

18. Benedetto Gravagnuolo, *Adolf Loos, Theory and Works* (New York: Rizzoli, 1982), p. 61.

19. Timms, *Karl Kraus*, p. 124.

20. According to Alan Sinfield, although the term *effeminacy* in the fin-de-siècle may infer homosexuality, it generally doesn't imply it. See his insightful *The Wilde Century: Effeminacy, Oscar Wilde, and the Queer Moment* (London: Cassell, 1994), p. 69ff.

21. William M. Johnston, *The Austrian Mind: An Intellectual and Social History, 1848–1938* (Berkeley: University of California, 1972), pp. 362–363.

22. Kraus's essays on sexual themes were collected in *Sittlichkeit und Kriminalität* (1907). The original essay is "Sittlichkeit und Kriminalität," *Die Fackel*, no. 115 (1902): 1–24.

23. Quoted by Timms, in *Karl Kraus*, 66, from *Die Fackel*, no. 168: 3, an installment of *Sittlichkeit und Kriminalität*.

24. In midlife, four times divorced, Frau Hervay lied about her age, family, and sexual experience in winning, or as Kraus satirized it, bewitching, her new husband. She was the daughter of a magician.

Kraus's attitude towards women was complex and unorthodox. He believed that women were exclusively sexual beings; he nevertheless argued that public prud-

ery should not deny women the sexual freedoms given to men. And, while he argued for their sexual liberation, he opposed the nascent Austrian women's movement on the grounds that it led them beyond their sphere. Loos shared his appraisal. On Kraus's analysis of sexuality and eroticism, see Nike Wagner, *Geist und Geschlecht: Karl Kraus und die Erotik der Wiener Moderne* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1982).

25. Kraus's writing is much revered among German-speaking people for its extreme precision and clever use of the language. Unfortunately, it also defies translation and he is little known outside Germany and Austria. Wilma Abeles Iggers, *Karl Kraus: A Viennese Critic of the Twentieth Century* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1967), p. 21ff.

26. Kraus quotes a passage from Ruskins' *Sesame and Lilies* in denouncing public opinion's vulnerability to journalistic propaganda. The public "thinks by infection, catching an opinion like a cold." Quoted by Timms in *Karl Kraus*, p. 123.

27. Ibid., quoted by Timms, p. 120.

28. Claire Loos, *Adolf Loos Privat* (Vienna: H. Böhlau, 1936), trans. author, p. 10.

29. Bram Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siècle Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

30. Carl Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1981), p. 224.

31. Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity*, p. 86.

32. A new work on Weininger is Chandak Sengoopta, *Otto Weininger: Gender, Sexuality, and Self in Imperial Vienna* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

33. Johnston, *The Austrian Mind*, p. 156ff.; Helmut Bachmaier, "Kaffeehausliteraten," in Helmut Bachmaier, ed., *Paradigmen der Moderne* (Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Co., 1990), pp. 237–255; Allan Janik and Stephen Toulmin, *Wittgenstein's Vienna* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973), pp. 69–75.

34. Whitford, *Oskar Kokoschka*, p. 37.

35. Kokoschka, *My Life*, pp. 28, 29.

36. Hoffmann, *Kokoschka*, p. 57; Carol Diethe, *Aspects of Distorted Sexual Attitudes in German Expressionist Drama, with Particular Reference to Wedekind, Kokoschka, and Kaiser* (New York: P. Lang, 1988), p. 120ff.

37. My discussion of the haetera draws from Edward Timms, "The Child-Woman: Kraus, Freud, Wittels, and Irma Karczewska," *Vienna 1900. From Altenberg to Wittgenstein*, in Edward Timms and Ritchie Robertson, eds., *Austrian Studies I* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990), pp. 87–107.

38. *Des Hetaerengesprache des Lukian* (Leipzig, 1907) contains fifteen drawings by Gustav Klimt. Timms points to Wedekind, in particular his *Büchse der Pandora* (1903), as sparking Kraus's fascination with the haetera.

39. Wittels and Kraus even interpreted the tribulations suffered by Irma with venereal disease in terms of a heroic willingness to sacrifice all in her "struggle for love." Timms, "The Child-Woman," p. 91.

40. As is apparent in Zweig's account, bohemians weren't the only ones who went to brothels, but they were the ones who celebrated the unabashed sexuality of this otherwise secret world. Stefan Zweig, *The World of Yesterday. An Autobiography* (New York: Viking, 1943), pp. 85–89.

41. Johnston, *The Austrian Mind*, pp. 54–55.

42. Oskar Kokoschka, *My Life* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1974), pp. 54, 55.

43. Altmann-Loos, *Mein Leben mit Adolf Loos*, trans. author, p. 27. For a published version of this argument, see Adolf Loos, "Ladies Fashion," *Neue Freie Presse* (August 21, 1898), reprinted in *Spoken into the Void: Collected Essays, 1897–1900* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1982), p. 99.

Of Loos's four wives, two were dancers and one an actress. Three of them were in their teens at the time he courted them; there was a 34-year age difference between Loos and Claire. In 1928, in the much publicized "*Loos-Skandal*" he was arrested for the seduction of three minor girls. He was found guilty of a lesser charge and paroled. Burkhardt Rukschcio and Roland Schachel, *Adolf Loos. Leben und Werk* (Vienna: Residenz Verlag, 1982), pp. 339–342.

44. An illustrative contrast is a farmhouse designed by Josef Hoffmann a decade earlier. Rather than separate, here gender codes meld into each other in precisely that mélange that so disturbed Loos. Accouterments of masculinity (guns and heavy leather satchels, for example) are couched in a *völkisch*, neo-vernacular setting of wainscots and heavy beams, even a leather couch nearly identical to that in Loos's *Nischerln*. But overhead are gracefully arched and flattened, almost diaphanous wooden frames, stenciled in pastels with sinuous vines that evoke a *Märchen* or fairy-tale atmospheric. See the "*Berger Höhe*" of 1899 in Sekler, *Josef Hoffmann*, catalogue no. 32.

45. Loos, *Adolf Loos Privat*, trans. author, p. 42. The belief that the "binary opposition" of the sexes was fundamental to modernity was common to Loos and Georg Simmel. Jane Stewart, *Fashioning Vienna, Adolf Loos's Cultural Criticism* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 121.

46. Loos, *Adolf Loos Privat*, pp. 11–12.

47. Oskar Kokoschka, "The Viennese and the Artist," in Leo A. Lensing, "Scribbling Squids and the Giant Octopus: Oskar Kokoschka's Unpublished Portrait of Peter Altenberg," Jeffrey B. Berlin, ed., *Turn-of-the-Century Vienna and Its Legacy*, (Edition Atelier, 1993), p. 194.

48. Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle* (New York: Viking, 1990), p. 76ff.

49. Kokoschka, *My Life*, p. 37.

50. The Baron Stoclet rejected Kokoschka's tapestries as well as Egon Schiele's stained glass. Whitford, *Oskar Kokoschka*, p. 29.

51. Edith Hoffmann, *Kokoschka: Life and Work* (London: Faber and Faber, 1947), pp. 47, 59, 60.

52. Adolf Loos, "Plumbers," *Neue Freie Presse* (July 17, 1898), reprinted in *Spoken into the Void: Collected Essays, 1897–1900* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1982), p. 45ff.

53. Loos admired Altenberg's stance as an individualist and declared non-conformist. Theodor Adorno credited Altenberg's desire to retreat to a sanatorium, the "last hiding place where private life could escape from the control of totalitarian authorities and allegiances," as "anticipating a freer conception of mankind." Jacques Le Rider, "Between Modernism and Postmodernism," in Timms and Robertson, eds., *Vienna 1900: From Altenberg to Wittgenstein*, p. 8. Altenberg's essay, "Individualism" (1906), is reprinted in Peter Altenberg *Ausgewählte Werke in zwei Bänden*, vol. I, Dietrich Simon, ed. (Munich, 1979), p. 129.

54. Loos, *Adolf Loos Privat*, trans. author, p. 13.

55. Kokoschka, *My Life*, p. 37. Compare this to a passage on Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* [1899]: "But while male readers in the club, messroom, and cabin can share in the narrative transmission of Conrad's story, it is much more difficult for a woman reader. . . . As the feminist critic Nina Pelikan Straus observes 'Marlow speaks in the *Heart of Darkness* to other men, and although he speaks about women, there is no indication that women might be included among his hearers. . . . the peculiar density and inaccessibility of the *Heart of Darkness* may be the result of its extremely masculine historical referentiality, its insistence on a male circle of readers.'" Nina Pelikan Straus, "The Exclusion of the Intended from Secret Sharing in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*," *Novel* 20 (winter 1987): 124 cited in Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy*, p. 96.

56. The history of Dr. Beer and his wife, Laura Eißler, who together built the Villa Karma, exemplifies the sexual hysteria that seems to have permeated Viennese bourgeois life. Around 1906, Loos arranged for Kokoschka to paint her portrait. Dr. Beer meanwhile was in jail for a sexual offense. Although Loos tried to convince Laura of the unjustness of the charges, she began divorce proceedings. In the height of her “despondency,” she tried to force herself on the unwilling Kokoschka. He fled to the rail station; she pursued him on horseback. (He notes she was wearing her riding habit.) Some time later, her husband was acquitted; Laura poisoned herself in despair and died at the Villa Karma. Kokoschka, *My Life*,

pp. 51, 52; Vera J. Behal, “Die Villa Karma und ihre Architekten Lavanchy/Loos/Ehrlich,” in Burkhardt Rukschcio, ed., *Adolf Loos* (Vienna, Graphische Sammlung Albertina, 1989), pp. 135–158.

57. Karl Marx, “The Power of Money in Bourgeois Society,” *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* (New York: International Publishers, 1964), p. 165.

58. Stewart cites Wilhelm Schölerman, “Kunst” (1898/99), reprinted in A. Opel, ed. *Kontroversen: Adolf Loos im Spiegel der Zeitgenossen* (Vienna: Prachner, 1985), p. 9, and takes up the theme herself in *Fashioning Vienna*, pp. 2, 9.