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Introduction :

Edvard Munch 1863 - 1944. was born into one of the most exciting periods of Modern Art, and one of the most psychologically disturbing periods of modern man.

From the latter half of the nineteenth century onwards the foundations of our society in all its aspects, spiritual, philosophic, and aesthetic were being challenged Darwins Origin of the Species published in 1859 was spreading through the world like wildfire, everything which had been built on the concept of our divine origins was threatened. The fundamental questions raised by Kierkegaard about mans relationship to God, his image of human life as absurd, anguished and meaningless (Munch was particularly interested in ' Concept of Dread ' ^I) were reiterated in the works of Dostoyevsky and Nietzsche.

Munch depicted the condition and predicament of modern man he proclaimed this predicament to be the content and meaning of his work.

In discussing Munch and his position in the History of art, I have tried as far as possible to place him in the wider context of contemporary twentieth century developments in other fields and artforms.

Stylistically and technically changes in Munchs work occur early, and follow in rapid succession, after 1891 external influences become less important as he develops his own personal style defined as expressionism. As a phenomena of Art, Expressionism was not new, but the degree to which its forms were subordinated to content is unique to this century, and also to Edvard Munch.

CHAPTER I

Influences on Munch can be divided into two categories firstly philosophical and literary (A) and secondly visually (B).

(A) One of Munch's earliest influences outside his immediate family was that of Hans Jaeger, and the bohemian movement which flourished in Oslo during the 1880's. The bohemians drew their inspiration from other European centres (mainly Paris), where a reappraisal of traditional values was already underway. The gathering momentum was such that artists and poets who previously would not have returned now arrived back bursting with new ideas and a new way of life : a doctrine of full artistic and spiritual freedom. They were of course completely ostracized from 'respectable bourgeoisie' society. Munch's strong ties with his family prevented his being part of the inner circle but many of his friends were.

From this group Munch gained support and understanding for his work. The first of their commandments :-
 'Thou shalt write thy life' ², was the only one Munch adhered to.
 "You need not look far to find the origin of the freize of life. The answer lies in my bohemian days - it was merely a question of painting one's own life and life as it is lived by others." ² Munch never made the idealistic revolt of the bohemians his guiding principal but he always remained attracted to it, gravitating towards a similar milieu in Berlin and Paris during 1890's, always remaining on the periphery of any group, determined to develop his own style and the ability to express his own comprehension of life.

Neitzche's philosophical views were by this time becoming a wide spread topic of conversation, the bohemians basing their repudiation of the christian faith on his teachings. When Neitzche spoke of love he saw it as an eternal was :-

'Man fears women when he loves, he fears her when he hates.' ³
Neitzche's image of mankind successivly overcoming itself in striving towards perfection or superman, obviously influenced Munch's original idea in 'Mountain of Mankind' (ill I) (study for Oslo University murals 1910), perfection symbolised by light.

Heinrick Ibsen a fellow Norweigen and contemporary playwright who has been called the father of the problem play, dealt with the social evils of the times. Munch's interest in his work is considerable. As early as age 13, Munch made a fantasy about 'The Pretenders' ⁴, identifying with many of Ibsens characters namly Peer Gynt, and not surprisingly Oswald, the sickly artist of good family who moves away from hame in Ghosts. Between 1906 - 1907 Max Reinhardt, (director of the most modern theatre in Berlin), invited Munch to design stage settings for two of Ibsens most important plays Hedda Gabler and Ghosts. In turn Munch often claimed that Ibsen in his play 'When we dead awaken' ⁵, was influenced by 'The Three Stages of Women', which was first exhibited in Oslo in 1894.

In an article called "From the subconscious life of the soul" ⁶ published in 1890, Knut Hamsun a Norweigen author, four years Munch's senior, proposed what if modern literature were generally to concern itself more with the spiritual aspects of life and less with engagements, dances, trips to the country and misfortunes like that ?..... We know little of the endless, boundless journeys of the heart and the mind, the mysterious operations of the nervous system, the whisperings of

our blood, the prayers of our bones : the whole subconscious life of the soul is a closed book.⁶ Munch in the same year, proposed a similar direction in St. Cloud, "There should be no more paintings of people reading and women knitting. In future they should be of people who breathe, who feel emotions, who suffer and love."⁷ It is also during this period (1896) that Freud published his theories on fear, the basic anxiety that he maintained lay at the back of the human mind; tormenting, feelings of uncertainty and insecurity. It is important to note that Munch's predominate triangle of themes: women, death and art, were the dilemma of a whole age. Themes of the destructive forces of love; women portrayed as vampires and murderers, were common among artists and writers at the time. The Post Darwinian image of women as femme fatale was propagated by the symbolists whose mistrust of women sprang from the belief that in revealing mans animal nature they prevented his union with a metaphysical ideal. One of the causes for the excitement which greeted Munch's work was the fact that he had discovered a new world in man, the life of the psyche. A world that threatened to overpower him. "A bird of prey has fixed itself within me, its beak has pierced my chest and the beating of its wings have clouded my brain."⁸ Baudelaire expressed himself similarly, referring to the poet as 'exiled on earth amid the shouting crowd, he cannot walk for he has giant wings.'⁹ In 1896 Munch made some illustrations for 'les fleurs du mal.' He was particularly inspired by 'Une Charogne' (a carrion), a poem about a decaying corpse in a beautiful landscape 'Death and Life' (ill 2). In his personal life Munch obviously had a morbid fascination for death, being simultaneously attracted and repelled by it. "My whole life has been spent walking by the side of a bottomless chasm, jumping from stone to stone, sometimes I try to leave my narrow path and join the swirling mainstream of life, but I

always find myself drawn inexorably back towards the chasm's edge and there I shall walk untill I finally fall into the abyss." (Munch to K.E. Schreiner), ¹⁰ This chasm's edge is often represented as a coastline. During the years he lived in Berlin and Paris he maintained close links with the norweigen landscape, nearly always returning home during the summer months to Asgardstrand where the shoreline had become a compositional element of many themes. In this landscape he could evoke any atmosphere. It was to become a major link between the individual paintings belonging to the 'freize of life'. The shoreline became a favourite symbol, a dividing line between obscure longings and life beneath the trees in all its variety, the symbolic line between life and death, sanity and insanity, life and Art.

This fascination with death could be associated firstly - with the death of his mother when he was five in 1868, followed by that of his favorite sister Sophie in 1877. Munch himself was a sickly child often close to death. He was never to forget the long death bed vigils. The absence, the silence and the void, would haunt him all his life. Secondly - his christian upbringing which was administered by his father, who after his wife's death, became increasingly inward looking and fanatical about religion. The church simultaneously portrayed death as an eternal punishment of Hell, fire and damnation and also as a glorious rebirth. Thirdly - there was the pain and suffering of his early years which was the mainspring of his Art. Without it " I would have been like a ship without a rudder." ¹¹ " There is no profound wisdom without experience of sickness." ¹² Munch realised that his tormented mind was a by part of his personality and therefore of his work. He saw his torment as the begining of a new crystalisation and actively encouraged his own nuerosus.

(B) Visual influence:

Art historically Munch must be considered in the light of his own more provincial Nordic tradition. Casper David Freidrich and the German romantic tradition was derived more from a pantheistic than christian tradition. The brooding landscapes show vast expanses of sky and sea with lonely figures born out of contemplation of the element. The figures unpregnated with atmospheric mood are not figures which give substance to the landscape, but rather it is the landscape which projects the inner world by which the figures are possessed. Among Munch's work ' The Scream ' (ill 3), is an outstanding example of this subordination of nature to express mood. Munch like Freidrich was obsessed with finding artistic means to express his sense of the eternal, beyond here and now. Much of Munch's nature style was a synthesis of a pictorial language developed by the French masters, Manet, Gauguin and the Impressionists. But the nordic perception of these developments was different to the parisian perception. To the latter, Van Gogh meant technical freedom and brilliant colour, to the northern eye he was the embodiment of passion, a martyr-like paroxysm of the soul. To the French Gauguin seemed all linearism and sublime decoration, whereas, the north experienced him through a lyrical primitivism and expressive colour. Moulding the new vocabulary to his own emotional needs, Munch shared the aesthetic aims of his period, i.e. the fusion of message and pictorial means. Both allegory and emotion must be conveyed by methods proper to painting so that line and colour are perceived as their symbolic equivalent. In 'The Scream' (ill 3), the dramatic deep perspective, has been fused with the sweeping curves of shoreline, the clouds flatten (like a Gouguin), and unify the design on the surface through the use of simplified expressive colour areas. The

II.

tension of the pictorial space, whose depth is both stressed and denied represents the visual equivalent of the psychic conflict in man.

'Spring' (ill 4) 1889, represents the climax of Munch's naturalistic style. It is naturalistic in subject only for it is already beyond realism, containing a preoccupation with time:- eternal round of life. The cool breath of spring breezes gently into the forshadowed interior, but to the sick girl it signifies her doom. In style this painting has none of the expressionistic gestural intensity to come. Munch has succeeded in elevating this work from the purely representational by generalising his theme, suggesting something more fatefull than the accident of a single life, which brings him to the edge of symbolism. Gauguin's son said of 'Spring' that a change of direction was inevitable after such a complete work.¹³ Munch (1890) - "In 'Spring', with the sick girl and her mother sitting by the open window, bathed in sunlight which streams through it, I took my leave of Impressionism and Realism."¹⁴

When in 1885, Munch began his travels in Europe he had first studied the Impressionists. He was also strongly influenced by Art Nouveau and its German counterpart Jugendstil, which had its roots in an arts and crafts reaction to Industrialisation. It was essentially decorative, inspired by Celtic and Saxon illumination, the bold flat patterns of Oriental art, and concerned especially with the beauty and physical of female hair. The spiralling lines, often merely playfull in the work of aesthetic artists, is brought to a frenzy of tension by Munch, used as a communicating device of magnetic force to snare and entrap man.

'Attraction' and 'Seperation,' (ill 5). Munch also had a strong affinity with Symbolism. He knew most of the leading lights, including Boudelaire, Mallarme and Rumbaud. They searched for a new content based on emotion rather than direct observation. Relying on intuition and innerforce

Baudelaire defined it as a "Mode of feeling" - something found within rather than outside the individual. Obsessive concern with women is characteristic of symbolism. The aim of the symbolists was to resolve the conflict between the material and the spiritual world. The Nabis, a parallel movement were also rooted in linear and colour pattern, mainly propagating Gauguin's ideas. The 'Fauves' or 'wild beasts', explored the expressive power of colour which they used arbitrarily for emotional and decorative effect, sometimes to mould space as Cezanne had done. Stylistically, Munch's works between 1890-1909, can be seen in the light of these influences.

The speed with which Munch assimilated the various styles, adapting them to suit his purpose is clearly illustrated in the following works :-

1. 'Military Band on Karl Johan St.' 1889 (ill 6). Still naturalistic in style the figures are set at intervals within the receding space, the perspective is not sharp, the bright splash of the red umbrella in the foreground is echoed in the distance. The shimmering light and colour - light organisation is reminiscent of a Degas race horse scene. There is a strong sense of abstract form and colour, which actively conjure up a festive mood.

" One sunny day I heard the music coming down Karl Johan Street, and it filled me with joy. The spring, the sun, the music, all blended together to make me shiver with pleasure. The music added colour to the colours. I painted the picture, but I lit the colours reverberate with the rhythm of the music." Munch¹⁵

2. 'Spring day on Karl Johan Street' 1891 (ill 7). The colours have become mellow and pastel in shades, the almost pointillist technique of Pissarro and Seurat and the post impressionists was a style that Munch

used fleetingly.

3. 'Evening on Karl Johan Street' 1891 (ill 8). Munch's own personality saturates and the scene becomes emotionally charged, the sharp diagonal perspective creates a depth which is contrasted by the strong frontality of the figures who crowd into the foreground, in an insidious zombie like march, carried forward by their own momentum; the beginning of a personal distinguishable style.

Footnotes Chapter I.

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Introduction: Chapter 2.

In 1889 Munch painted 'Night in St. Cloud', as I have already suggested in relation to 'Spring', this was a pitotol year in Munch's work and life, with the death of his father and subsequent loosening of family ties, he journeyed to Paris to begin formal studies under Leon Bonnat. After several months and a disagreement, Munch moved to St. Cloud with a Danish friend, the poet Emanuel Goldstein - who was the model for this painting. Everything about 'Night in St. Cloud' is synonymous with the prevading sense of Munch's emergence as a mature artist, his own way forward becoming clear to him. Impressionistic in the use of light and colour, in subject the content is aproprate to the fleetingness of the Impressionist movement, the symbolism of travelling in relation to Munch's own development. The dark medatative air of the painting cast in moonlight and shadow is also synonamous with the romantic tradition. The Naturalism acts not as an end in itself, but as a pictorial equivilent, the featureless figure, dark browns and purples, the space in the distance, the shadow of the cross all contain and become the pictures subject.

The 'freize of life', a theme which Munch worked on all his life, was a series of paintings and prints independant of each other, yet when put together an echo runs through them all, and they take on a new significance in their unity. Munch intended that the freize should hang in a specially designed architectural setting, unfortunately this was never realised. It is impossible to know exactly which themes or variations he intended as part of the freize. In 1918, in a comentary on the subject which he had worked on at long intervals for over thirty years, he included 'the Kiss', 'Yellow boat', 'the Riddle', 'Man and

Woman', 'Fear', all painted between 1890 - '91. The following year, 'The Scream', 'Vampire' and 'the Madonna' were added to the series. We have some knowledge of the parts but can only speculate on the ultimate order in which he would have arranged them.

In 1894, following an exhibition in Berlin in 1893, in which Munch presented a series of works as mans life, an article written and published by four friends,¹ entitled 'The work of Edward Munch' and subtitled 'themes from the modern life of the soul'. The article catagorised the work into four distinct catagories :

1. 'Loves Dawning', 2. 'Rise and fall of love', 3. 'Terrors of life or fear' , 4. 'Death'.

In discussing the freize, I have chosen four works, one to represent each catagory:

1. 'Loves dawning' - 'The Kiss' 1895 etching (ill 10).
2. 'Rise & fall of love'- 'Attraction & Seperation' (ill 5,A,B)
'Attraction' (ill 12)
3. 'Terrors of life' - 'The Scream' (ill 3)
4. 'Death' - 'Death and life' (ill 2)

I have chosen 'Death and life' because of its cyclical nature, the pantheistic belief in a hidden life force whose existence was inextricably bound up with the cyclical renewal of nature, a belief that shines through much of Munch's work. The scene symbolically depicts the birth of a new generation from the seed of the old.

'The Dance of life' (ill 11), represents in many ways a compilation or definitive statement representative of the whole freize and contains elements from most works included. Finally, the Oslo University Murals are the perfect culmination of Munch's work in all its aspects,

stylistically and symbolically. Its cohesiveness being a total representation of Universal life forces, of which the freize was the ideal forerunner.

CHAPTER 2'Modern Life of the Soul' :

1. Loves Dawning - 'The Kiss' (ill 11). Munch expressed his wish to paint the act of love in St. Cloud manifesto ² in these words.

"A strong bare arm - a brown powerfull neck, a young woman lays her head against the arched chest. I should like to depict this as I saw it now, but in a blue haze, these two at the moment in which they are not themselves but only a link in the chain of a thousand generations. People would understand the sanctity, the grandeur of the theme and would take off their hats as they do in church." ³ This particular version of 'the Kiss', is one of Munch's best known images, it is also the first that he translated into a printed medium. In 1894, after the most rudimentary introduction to print process, while staying in Berlin, Munch began making direct dry point engravings on copper plates. At first using the plate as a sketch pad he quickly began experimenting with aquatints. Most of Munch's prints draw on the imagery as in his paintings, providing an accompaniment which in some images acheived a greater expression in the printed version. The artistic crossfertilization between media complemented both forms; the discipline of the printing technique forced him to condense and simplify. This quality was of great bebefit to his painting which acheived a greater clarity and maturity as a result. Munch in his own brand of symbolism reworked themes endlessly in his search for an essential synthesis of form and subject, becoming like an Icon painter striving to express the subjective in an objective way. In subject matter the development of 'the Kiss', begins with 'Adjo' (farewell) painted in 1891, depicting a couple fully dressed, embracing in front of a window, A large part of the street is

is visible. Munch painted a number of variations changing the function and size of the window, and the position of the couple before distilling the essentials into this version. The figures seem about to swallow each other, the faces and hands are not precisely depicted but generalised in order to emphasise the moment in which they are not themselves.

Stanislaw Przybyszewski, a friend of Munch's described it as :

"One sees two human forms whose faces have melted into each other. One cannot see any clear depiction. One sees only the area of fusion which looks like a giant ear that became dead in the ecstasy of the blood, it looks like a puddle of flesh."⁴

This theme is further developed in the portrayal of women as vampires, the kiss is central to the 'love theme' in the frieze.

2. Rise and fall of love - 'Attraction & Separation' (ill 5Ab).

Thematically the Kiss is overlapped more symbolically in the pair of lithographs representative of the rise and fall of love- 'Attraction & Separation' (ill 5 Ab). In 'Attraction' the confrontation in profile of the man and woman is a device frequently used by Munch. The profile permits us the viewers to retain our distance and observe the image. The sun/moon casts the spell of a pagan diety and falls between their gaze and is therefore the focal point for our line of vision. The perspective leads in three planes to the centre, ranging from the dark foreground to the trees which cast the shadow, beyond which is the coastline and source of light. The man's head is clearly outlined, and the features are less clearly defined than those of the woman who is not outlined as distinctly. Her hair softens and extends her outline, the swirling tendrils reflect the coastline and flow magnetically out towards and around the man's head. The image is static and icon like, their absorption in each other is absolute.

In 'Seperation', the depth or direction becomes horizontal, moving from the centre in two directions like the man and woman depicted. Our attention is divided pictorally, the figures are divided by the curve of the coastline. He is turning towards the darkened forest his face more clearly defined than in 'Attraction', while the woman faces out to sea towards the Horizon (this staring out towards some other world is a device frequently used by Casper D. Friedrich and the Romantics). Both figures are still absorbed but not with each other. The tension between them is maintained by the woman's hair which still clings like static to the man's hunched, turning shoulder. Both prints are monochrome in colour. 'Attraction' (ill 12), being an earthy brown while 'Seperation' becomes a melancholy blue. Another version of 'Attraction' (ill 12) in the same year, places the two figures in the foreground of the landscape. In 'Starynight' (ill 18), the soft sombre tones, the beauty of the starry sky, is given a much more foreboding mood in the printed version. The sharp diagonal perspective of the pier the interlocking shapes of land and sea. The menacing silhouette and dark bulk of the headland sweeps the attention and line of vision away from the couple to something undefined, contained in the meeting of sky and sea. In portrayal of mysteries, 'Attraction', the second version is more successful than the first.

3. Terrors of life - 'The Scream' 1893 (ill 3). Having already discussed this work in A. reference to the Romantics use of landscape in which the landscape is used to express mood,⁵ and B. Stylistically in its unity of painterly means with message.⁶ 'The Scream' is most strongly allied with expressionism. In it Munch represents the existentialist position of modern man as penetratingly as Kierkegaard in his analysis of fear in the 'Concept of Dread'. Reaching a supreme balance of emotion and

lucidity at once humble and heavy with emotion. Munch expresses the odd state of soul in which the void becomes eloquent:

"Only a madman could have painted this", ⁷ written on the painting, presumably by Munch. It is an ambiguous statement depending upon a definition of the term 'madness'. Munch at this point felt himself to be on the verge of insanity.

"At that time the terrifying face of insanity reared up its twisted head. You know my picture 'the Scream', I was being stretched to the limit - nature was screaming in my blood - I was at breaking point." ⁸ Franz Servaes, describing the scream in an article wrote - 'insane colours screaming together loudly in bloody reds and cursing yellows - my staring eyes and screaming mouth are all that I feel, staring and screaming, screaming and staring.'

'There are no clouds in the evening red,

No reflections of the day that's dead.

There are tongues of flame, and rivers of blood,

A firey sword, a hot crimson flood,

The anguish of judgement, the torments of death.'

Vilhelm Krag Dagbladet ¹⁰

Albert Camus in his philosophies of absurd reasoning, defines this perceptual phenomena, the 'scream of nature' (with less poetic emotion than the above quotes), in words, more comprehensively than in Munch's own writings:

"I was walking along the road one evening - on one side lay the city, and below me was the fjord. I was feeling tired and ill - I stood and looked out over the fjord. The sun went down - the clouds were stained red, as if with blood - I felt as though the whole of nature was screaming through me " (Munch) ¹¹

Camus locates this sensation in : ' Weariness comes at the end of the acts of mechanical life, but at the same moment it inaugurates the impulse of consciousness - perceiving that the world is dense, sensing to what degree a stone is foreign and irreducible to us, with what intensity nature or a landscape can negate us. At the heart of all beauty lies something inhuman and these hills, the softness of the sky the outline of these trees at this very moment lose the illusory meaning with which we had clothed them, henceforth more remote than a lost paradise. The primitive hostility of the world rises up to face us across millennia. For a second we cease to understand it because for centuries we have understood in it solely the images and designs we had attributed to it beforehand. The world evades us because it becomes itself again.' 12

4. Death - 'Death and life' (ill 2). This small lithograph is one of a series used to illustrate Baudelaire's 'Les fleurs du mal'. In itself it is not part of the freize, but in theme it echos and re-echos within Munch's work. The cycle of life, - wheel of life, as in Eastern philosophies was a topic much discussed in 19th century Europe. In this print a young pregnant woman stands symbolically under a heavily laden fruit tree as she stares out to sea. The swirling lines of the coast from the rising sun, run in a zig-zag formation, dividing the picture in half. Under the ground a corpse of a woman is lying, from her rotting flesh new life rises in the form of fetus like bubbles, which will be born through the young pregnant woman.

The 'Dance of life', painted in 1900, contains forms already mentioned in previous work, the profile of the central couple is similar to those in 'Attraction' (ill 5 A), but here the power of their

attraction is distracted from by the other figures, and also by the colour, which in one sense adds definition (e.g. red dress) and in another detracts by the very nature of that definition. The tripartite structure with the couple in the centre flanked on either side by the woman in white who is young and symbolically a virgin, on the right the older woman stands, the nun or sorceress, spent in the fulfillment of her biological fate. Both these women are turned and focusing on the central couple. The young woman reaches out towards a flower that grows between her and the couple. In the picking of the flower, her youth would symbolically involve her into the next phase of the dance, i.e. the couple. The woman in black with her hands clasped rigidly before her, looks back, we follow her gaze and see the elementary yet subtle dance of absurdity, hope and death which carry on their dialogue through her eyes. Her self contained figure places her outside the circle of dancers who swirl featurelessly behind the central couple linking the young and old women while the symbolic sun/moon seems to spill into the sea. The three images of women in their obvious colour symbolisms virgin/white, sexual desire/red, nun/black, represent the personification of three facets of the personality of women. The vivid green on which all the figures are placed contrasts with the moody blue of the sea which seems to mirror an entirely different climate. ¹³

Oslo University Murals :

In 1911, following Munch's return to Norway after his nervous breakdown,¹⁴ he submitted works for a competition to produce a series of murals for the Aula in the University. His proposals were accepted and Munch began the work which would occupy him almost exclusively until 1916, when the works were finally installed. The epic approach required by both subject and setting replaced the former concentration on individual psychological states. In the fresh strong colours Munch seems to have found the harmony with nature he always longed for, and it was not as he had feared at the expense of his art, but rather as a definite triumph for it." 'Spring' (ill 4), was the longing of the mortally ill for light and warmth - for life. The sun in the University hall is the sunshine through the window of spring." (Munch15)

The Entire work comprising of three large panels, the central one being 'the Sun'. The other two, at right angles to the sun and facing each other are, 'History' and 'Alma Mater'. The three main panels are linked by eight smaller less demanding works which thematically and structurally help to bridge the hall's neo-classical architecture. Thematically, the entire project can be divided into two main areas, Natural forces and Humanity, linked by themes of the beauty of nature and man's desire for knowledge and science. I will discuss the development and execution of the central panel 'the Sun' (ill 13), which usurping the place of a holy image represents Munch's greatest conceptual and painterly achievement.

Munch's concept of the dominant sun had its roots in changing literary and philosophical speculation at the turn of the century. His original conception for the central panel 'Mountain of Mankind' -

(ill 1), being a Neitzchean allegory depicting figures striving towards the light, was soon replaced by its object, the sun, which inhuman itself, is the source of all life, the principal of fertilization. Throughout his career Munch had painted the sun and Moon as pagan symbols that dominated human destiny on earth, but here the sun is converted into a diety a radiating force of pure energy. The long dark winters of Europe's northernmost regions, followed by the dramatic resurrection of the sun which reigns during the summer months long into the night, irradiating nature by the magic of both sun and moonlight, inaugurating a period of spring rites which in Munch's art as in Scandanavian life, represents human imersion in the great pagan forces.

Symetrically structured, the sun occupies the central space, all embracing in its magestic grandeur, it rises over the horizon of the sea which exactly disects the paintings height. Its golden orb is white hot, a smaller orb drops like a globule of molten mather and lies like a yolk beneath its main body. Composed and centred in the upper half of the canvas, the sun's large circular and cross shaped radiations extend from its centre into the valley to form the traditional triange of a renaisense composition. The saturation of brightness studs the land with jewel like patches of colour washed in the warmth of the sun's rays. The expressive unity contained in the fragmentation of line and the breaking up of colour areas, brings Munch close to abstraction. Two side panels 'Women stretching out to the sun' (left hand side illl6), depict the figures contoured in glowing purples reds and yellows with a cool blue reminicent of spring waters in the background. In each panel the bottom figure rests the woman stretching out her hand to the warmth, seems also to wave at the man who shades his eyes as if dazzeled the two upper figures stand making similar gestures, actively bathing in the sun's rays, they mirror man's harmony with Nature.

Footnotes Chapter 2

- I. Article written by Przybyszewski, W. Pastor &
Julius Meier Graefe
PUB: 1894.
 2. St. Cloud manifesto refers to a collection of notes
written about 1889 in which Munch outlines many ideas.
 3. Ibid NO. 2.
 4. Reference to THE SCREAM Wilhelm Krag Dagbladet.
Pg 90. Pagna Stang.
 5. Pg. In Text.
 6. Pg. In Text
 7. Signed E. Munch in lower left hand corner.
 8. Text written by Munch in reference to the scream.
 9. Franze Servaes was one of four authors who published
Das Werk des Edvard Monch Pub.. 1894.
 10. Vilhelm Krag in Dagbladet.
 11. From text written by Munch in reference to Scream.
 12. Myth of Sisyphus A. Camus 'An absurd reasoning'
Page 20 Par. 2.
 13. The contrasting effect could be due to conditions
in Europe's northernmost regions where the summer
sun reigns long into the night.
 14. In 1908 Munch suffered a nervous breakdown. Entered
himself into Dr. Jacobson's clinic.
-

Introduction : Chapter 3.

In examining Munch's complete works there are two key works which (generally) mark turning points, dividing Munch's work into three distinct phases. The first is 'Spring' (ill 4), the completeness of which made a stylistic change (Of development) inevitable. It also heralded a new direction in Munch's life, as it was on the basis of this work that he was awarded a scholarship which enabled him to travel in Europe.¹

On returning home and having recovered from a nervous breakdown, Munch began and completed the University murals, through which he evolved into the third, and in my opinion most accomplished phase of his work. Munch now revealed a whole new attitude to both life and nature. He overcame his personal anxiety to the extent that it could no longer overwhelm him, lifting his themes to a new collective level. The events of world War I would have also prompted his interest in everyday life. In the execution of the murals Munch had realised his ambition to create out of individual works, a new harmony in their unity. He had hopes to continue working on this monumental scale, in the planned murals for the new Town Hall. This and the development of a social conscience prompted him to paint themes of workers. Without stressing social aspects he painted the workers with the strength of an epic monumentality which was perhaps a premonition of the coming socialist revolution. In 'Workers returning Home' (ill 15) 1914, the sharp diagonal perspective is reminiscent of 'Evening on Karl Johan Street' - (ill 8), but it is less obsessive with man's loneliness and fear. The workers, in their unity seem to have conquered the vacuum, by sheer force of numbers. Their forward motion makes them rather than the emptiness, the dominant factor, the inexorable progress of a class on the march.

From the works which Munch produced during and after the Oslo Murals, I think that the ones which show the greatest development are those which contain a residue of past experience, and remain true to Munch's melancholy nature. They achieve the same depth of psychological insight with greater subtlety.

In discussing this latter phase of Munch's work I will use the following illustrations :

1. 'Gallop Horse' 1912 (ill 16)
2. 'Horses ploughing' 1919 (ill 17)
3. 'Starry Night' 1923-1924 (ill 22)

and three self portraits in which the artist displays the scrutiny of his inner most being :

4. 'Night Wanderer' 1930 (ill 19)
5. 'Half past two at Night' after 1940 (ill 20)
6. 'Between the clock and the bed' (ill 21)

Galloping Horse 1912 (ill. 16)

Galloping Horse is reminiscent of ideas that dominated the first half of Munch's life, from the immediacy of the scream, that terrifying primeval force, Munch reflects from his new vantage point and the galloping horse with the small man behind suggests man's inability to control his subconscious life.

The horse emerging from a central perspective looms menacingly towards the viewer, whose eye drawn into the centre and then up to the focal point which is caught in the wild rolling eye of the horse. The loose sculptural quality of the brush strokes, the fiery reds and tossing mane capture the drumming hooves in the muffled air of a snowy landscape. The figures vaguely defined in muted colours seem to merge into the slush of melting snow and protruding rock.

Horses Ploughing. 1919. (ill. 17)

Horses Ploughing is also a subtler representation of earlier torments, in terms of Munch's own symbolism he is no longer at the chasm's edge, but ploughing deep furrows in the rich earth. Munch described his mind as two wild birds each flying in its own direction, here the horses work in conjunction with each other, but as if in some half forgotten memory, they turn gently in slightly different directions, there is no indication that they ever will.

The mood is mellowed with a prevailing sense of resignation, the horses seem placid in the autumnal landscape, the figure as in galloping horse is blurred and does not seem to be the motivating force.

In Stary Night 1923 (ill. 22) Munch's most bewitching landscape the sense of spatial awareness and lucidity is unsurpassed. The plasticity of the paint in the gently swelling planes leads the eye into the twinkling lights of a distant city and then up by means of a verticle tree to the stary sky, which in contrast to the soft sombre tones of a similar work painted much earlier in 1893 (ill. 18) the coloures take on a quality of magical brightness. The vantage point is defined by the perspective of the steps and the elongated shadow which floats out to merge with the night.

Self Portraits:

The basis of Munch's art was that of thorough observation, he was the type of artist who had to look closely within himself and work from the inside out, The autobiographical element is prominent through out all his work. Self portraiture was the natural product of his own self analysis.

" The truth of the matter is that we see with differant eyes at different times. We see things one way in the morning and another in the evening, and the way we view things also depends on the mood we are in. That is why one subject can be seen in so meny different ways and that is what makes art so interesting. "

Munch's Diaries.

This variety in viewpoints is also what makes Munch's introspective self portraits so interesting. In a letter to Ragna Hoppe he described himself as working continually on his paintings.

" I generally wander about waiting for the urge to strike me " (Munch) It is in this context that he portrays himself in Night Wanderer 1939 (ill. 19.) it is as if he has been disturbed by something. He peers hesitatingly out, how strangely he looks at us, and the spectator peering in becomes the source of the disturbance, creating a direct psychological impact. The sense of a haunting presence not clearly defined is again picked up in

At half past two at night. 1940 (ill. 20) a masterpiece of psychological self portrayal At the hour when life is at its lowest ebb something startles Munch, he sits bolt upright hands grasp the armrests, back is rigid, all senses alert and attuned, he holds himself in absolute attention straining towards some unknown perception. The looming shadow behind the chair is perhaps the source of his fear, it could be interpreted in many lights, the most obvious being the suggestion of death, or the same phenomena which produced The Scream (ill 3) In Munch's last great self portrait:

Between the Clock and the bed 1940 (ill. 21) he portrays himself in a frontal pose, balanced and static, himself a monument of time. Although melancholy in mood this portrait is not as disturbed or disturbing as the previous Night Wanderer or Half past two in the morning.

It has a strong air of resignation, the emaciated figure holds himself erect and his hands hang limp and heavy at his sides, he does not look at or through the viewer but seems only to be located or fixed in time within the pictorial space. He portrays himself 'nakedly' an old man

close to death. Behind him the bright sunlit room reverberates with the glow of a mellow evening sun. On the wall above the bed hangs a picture of a slender model painted in thin cool colours of green and blue².

In latter life Munch no longer portrayed women as vampires, and bearers of destruction, he returned to a renaissance classicism adding a pride and grace of carriage, the delicacy of the drawing is reminiscent of Ingres eg. in Study for Andromeda (ill. 23) and Munch's model study Krotkaja (ill. 24) the similarity is striking.

All in all this final portrait of Munch is not an unhappy one, it maintains a harmonious balance of pictorial elements and psychological content.

"I have exploited my riches- not the filthy lucre of commerce but the riches of my soul. I have exploited them to advance my art and for the good of my country and my people "

Munch to Johs Roede³

"Munch's place in the development of modern painting will remain unchanged, even after people's tastes have veered away from the nervously sensitive naturalism and symbolism of his day. Munch will always remain the most important and most penetrating representative of expressive greatness, a position he has achieved by virtue of his impressive and invaluable artistic qualities. "

Josef Capek. critic.

CONCLUSION

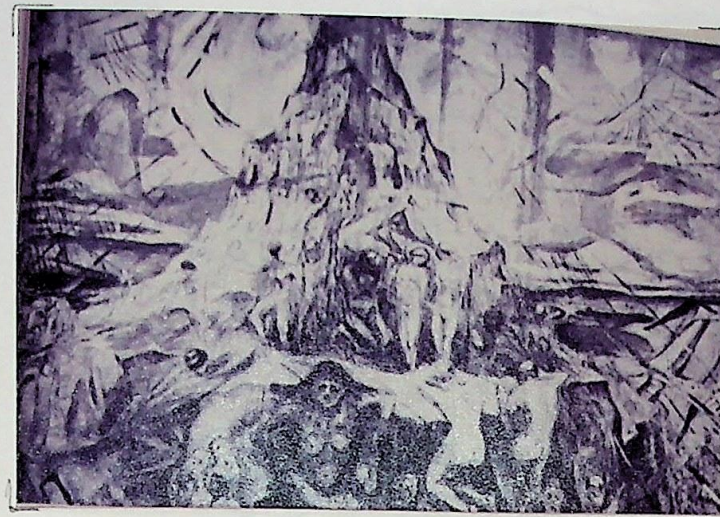
The ^{TIME} in which Munch lived was intellectually disturbed and restless in the extreme, in interpreting it he originated an emotional intensity in his work which still retains its impact today.

To place Munch in a historical perspective would locate him as a pivotal artist in the transition period between naturalism and expressionism.

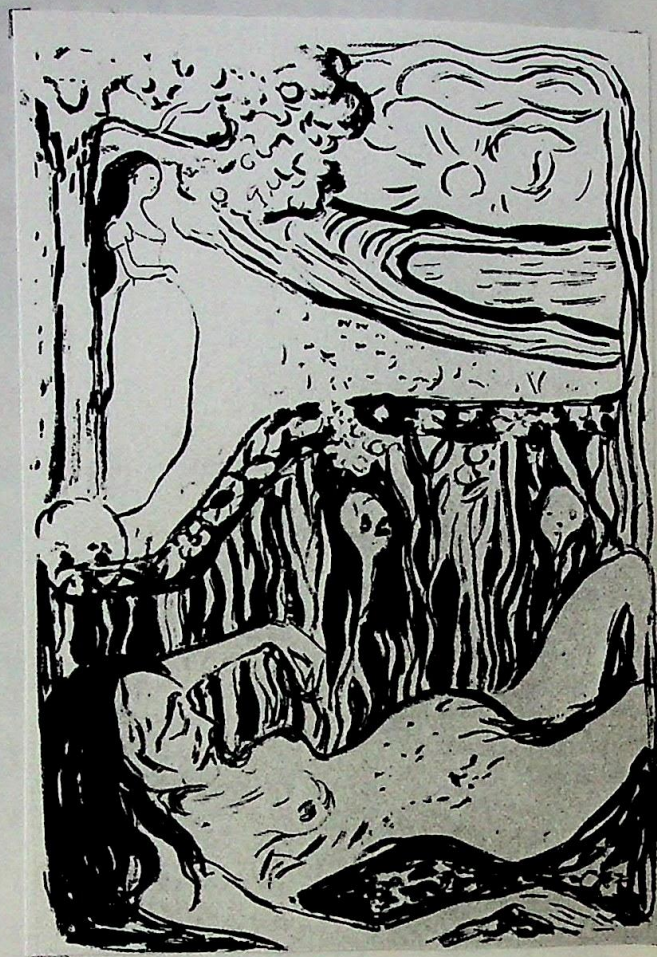
Through certain stylistic formulae he has directly influenced successive generations of artists and by creating the precedent, and spiritual climate in which Expressionism could flourish he has successfully counteracted the full impact of rationalism and utilitarianism.

' Of what real profit is it to us, to deprive life of all its poetry, of all its dreams, of all its beautiful mysticism and of all its lies? What is truth-do you know? We move forward only by the aid of symbols, and we change those symbols as we move forward. '

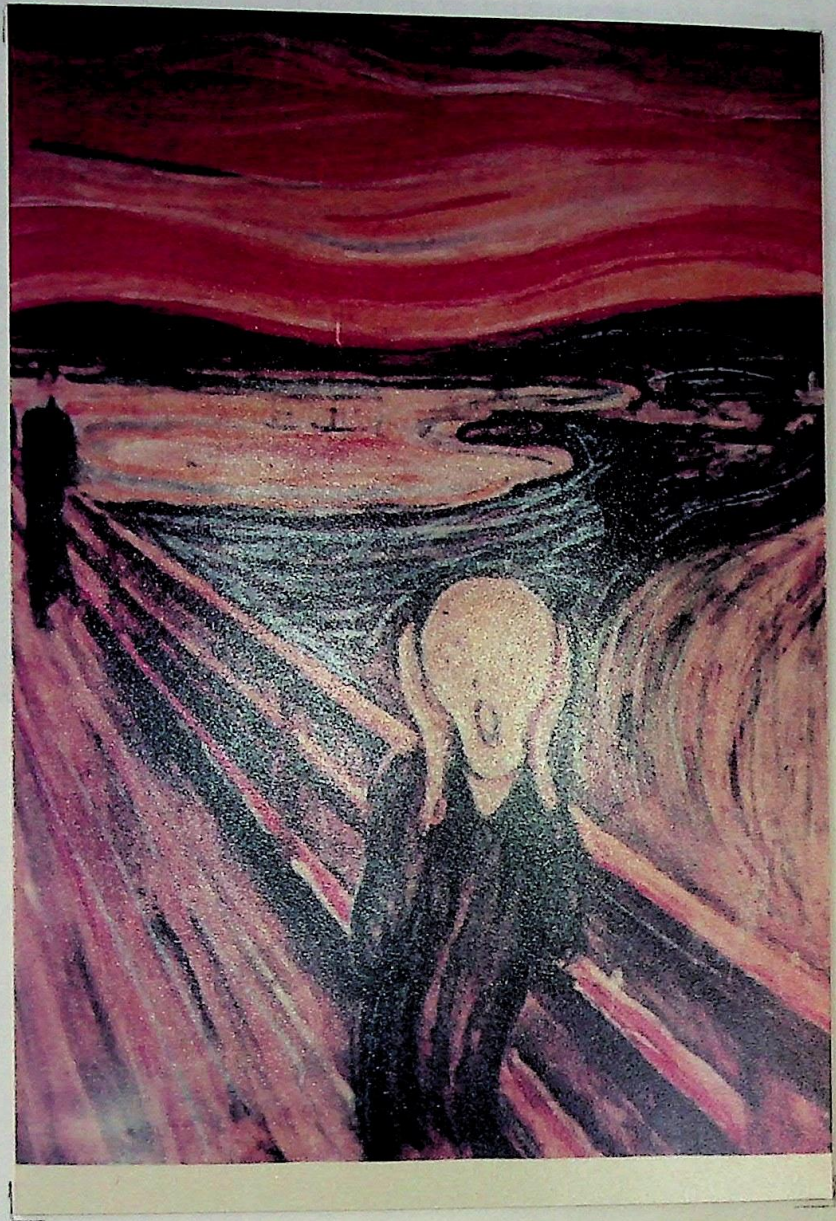
Knut Hamsun.



Mountain of Mankind (iIII. I)



Death and Life (iIII2)



The Scream (iIII. 3)



Spring (iII. 4)



Attraction (iII. 5a)



Seperation (iII. 5b)



Military band on Karl Johan Street. (iII 6)



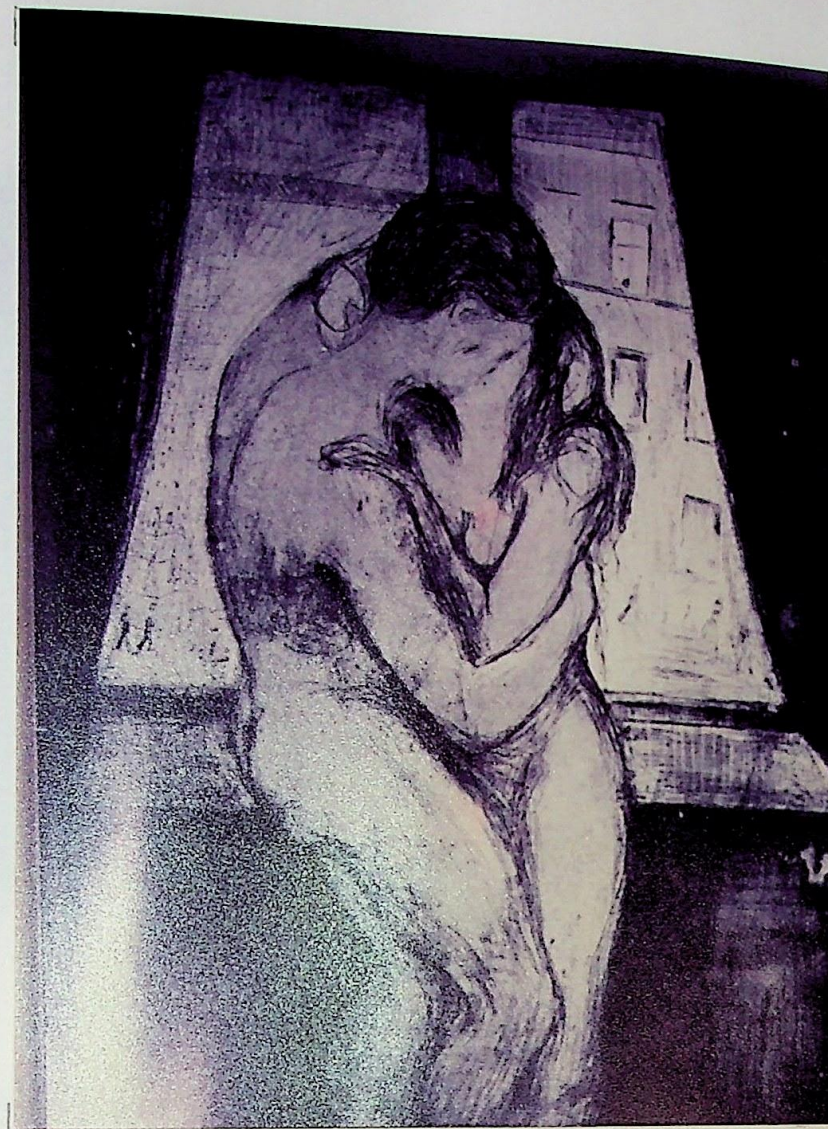
Spring day on Karl Johan Street. (III. 7)



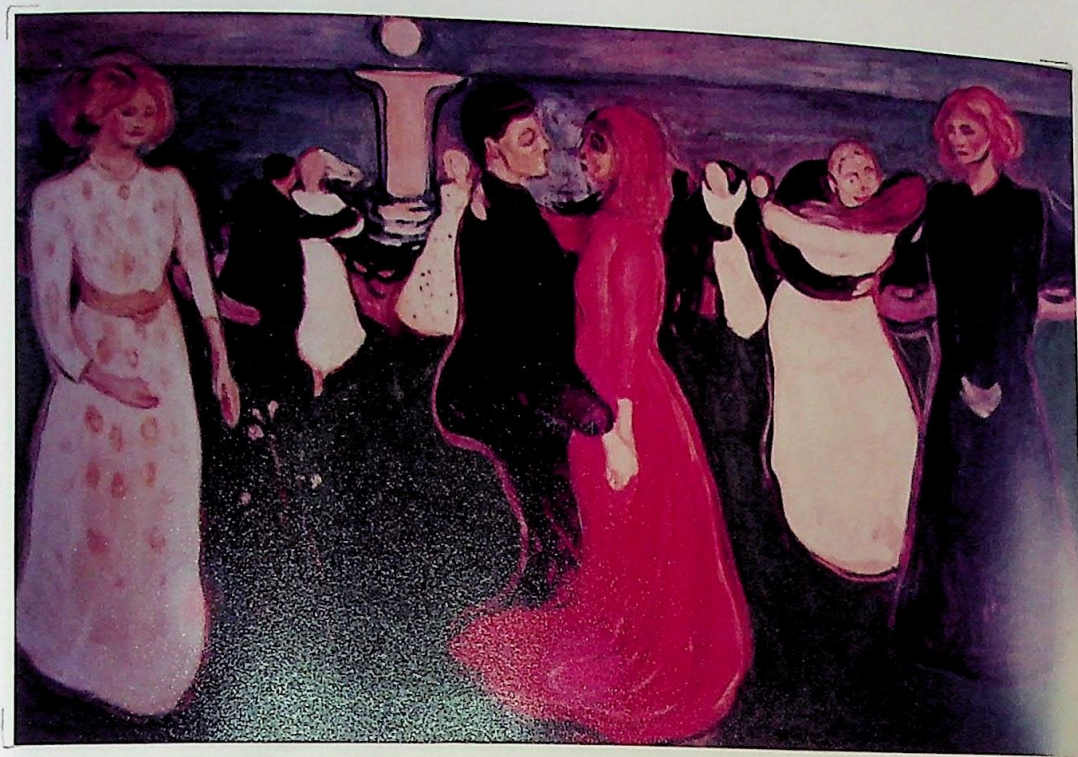
Evening on Karl Johan Street (III. 8)



Night in St. Cloud. (ill. 9.)



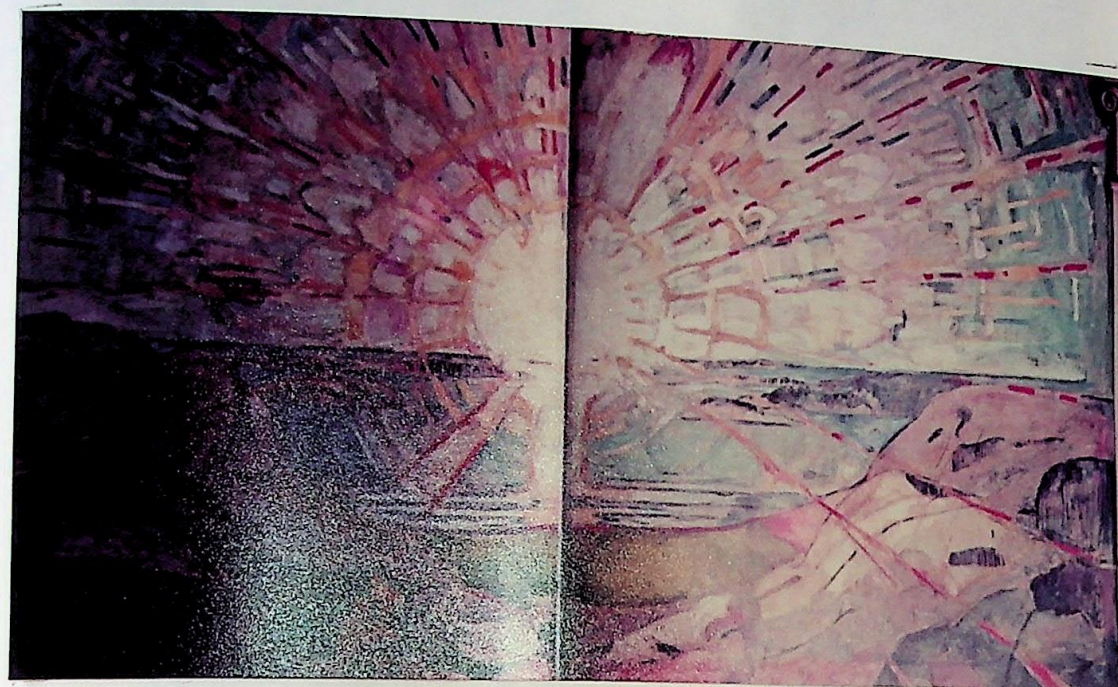
The Kiss (iII IO)



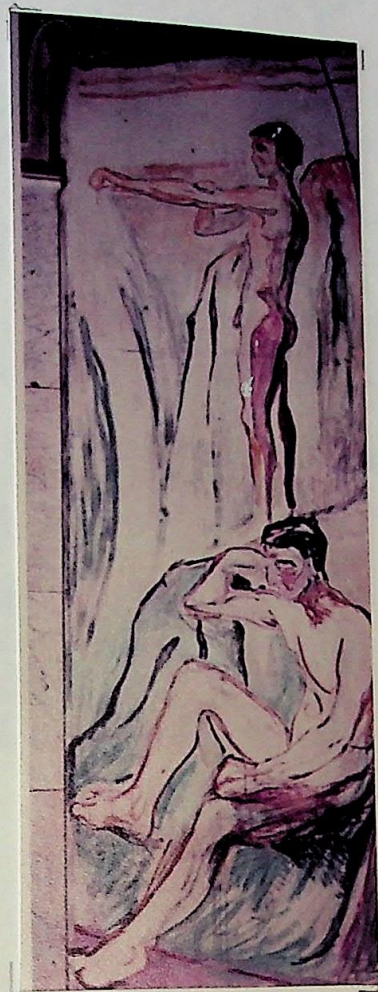
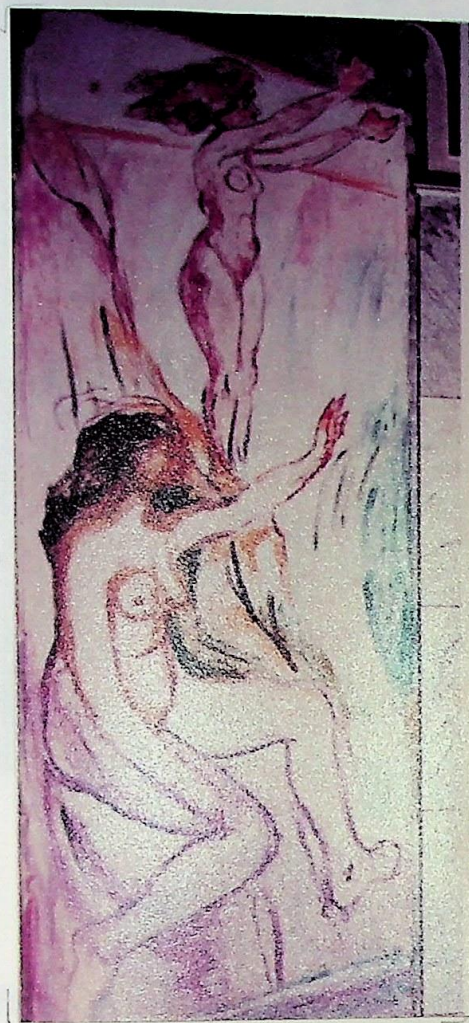
Dance of Life (iIII II)



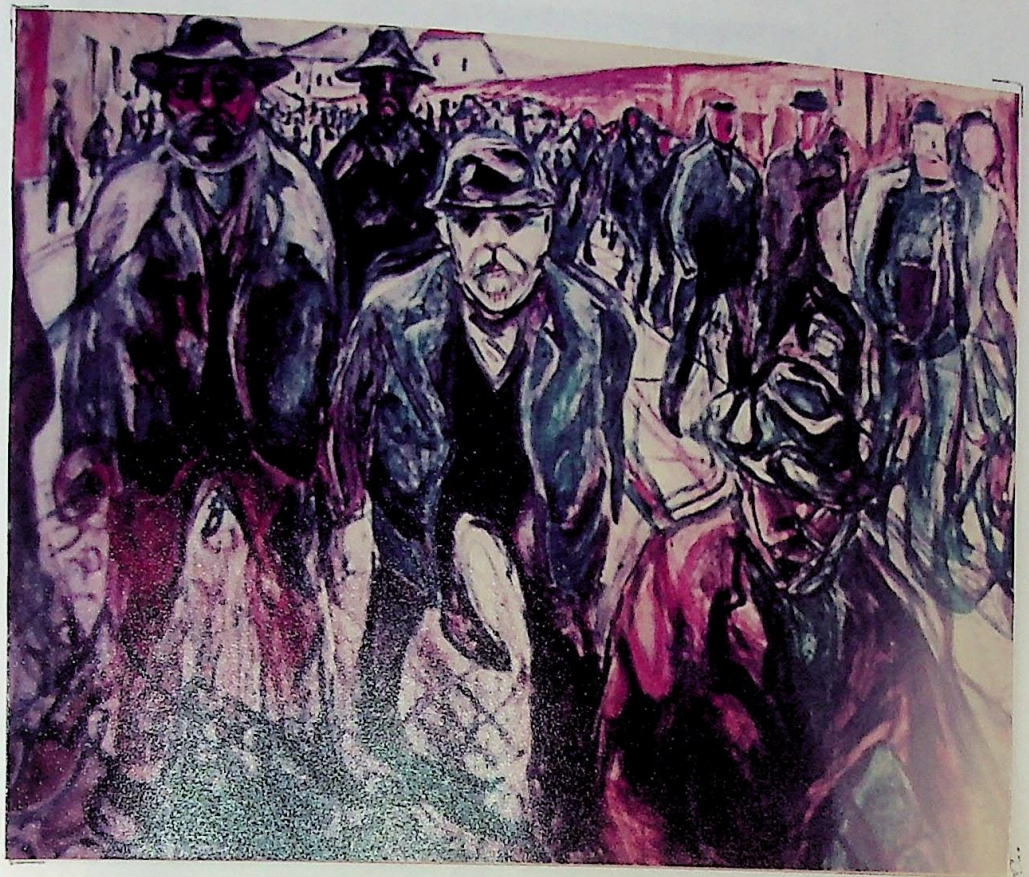
Attraction (iIII. I2)



The Sun (iIII. I3)



Women / Men Sunbathers (iII. I4 a,b)



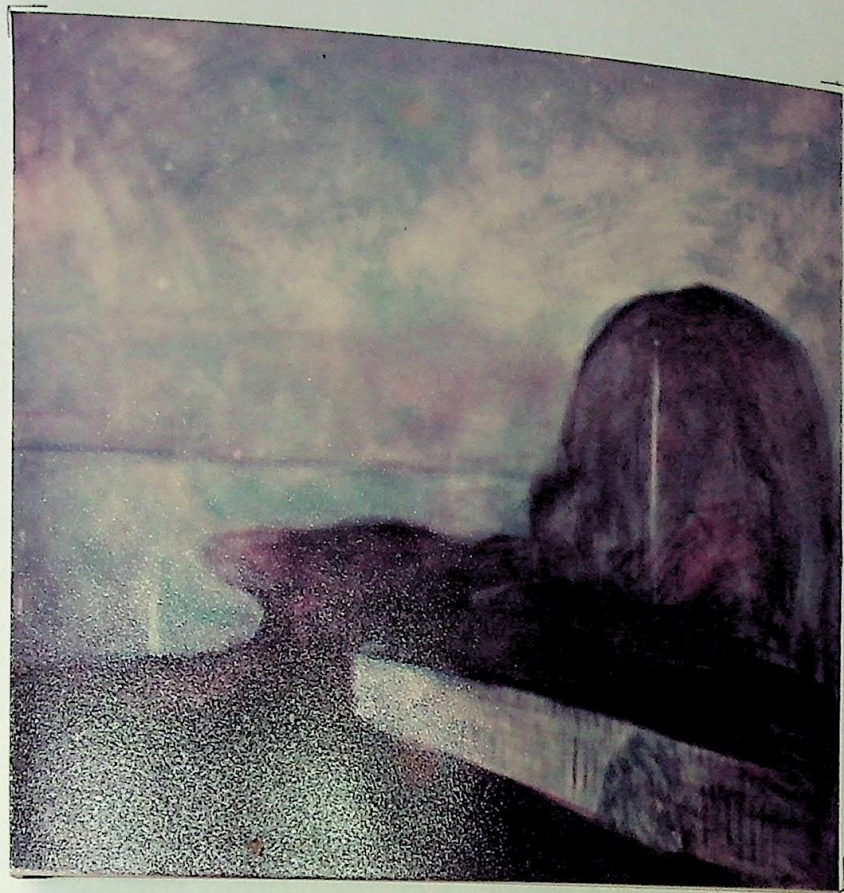
Workers Returning Home (iII. 15)



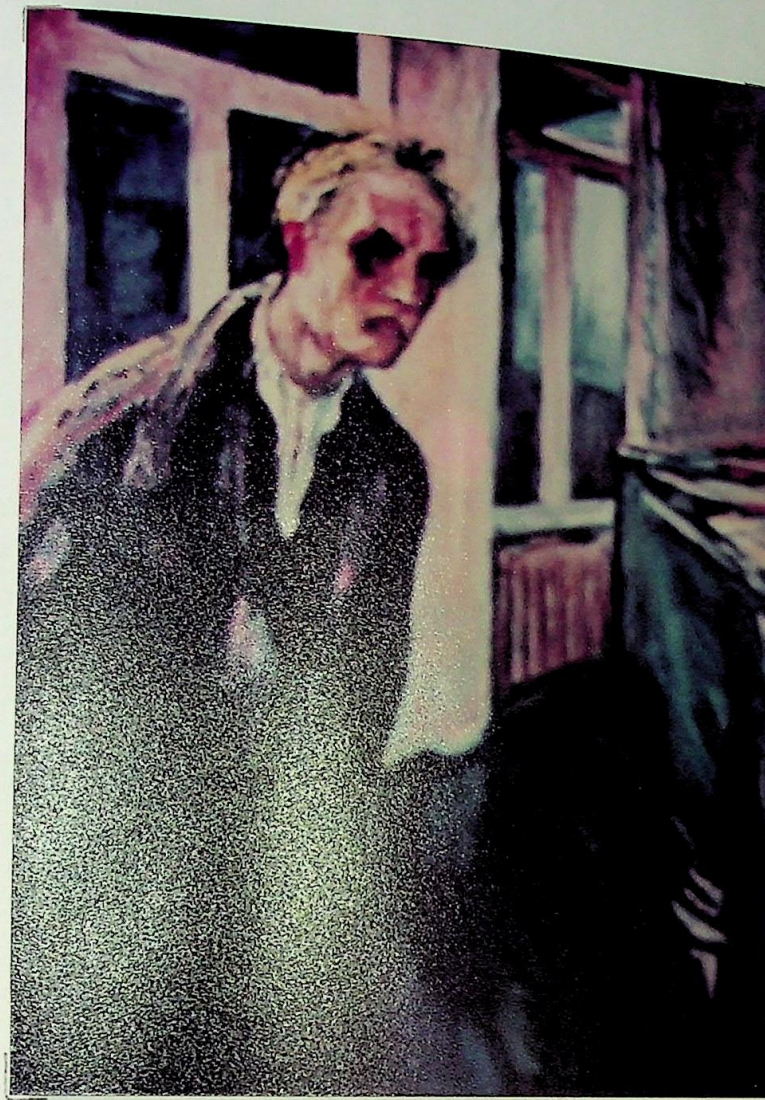
Galloping Horse (iII. I6)



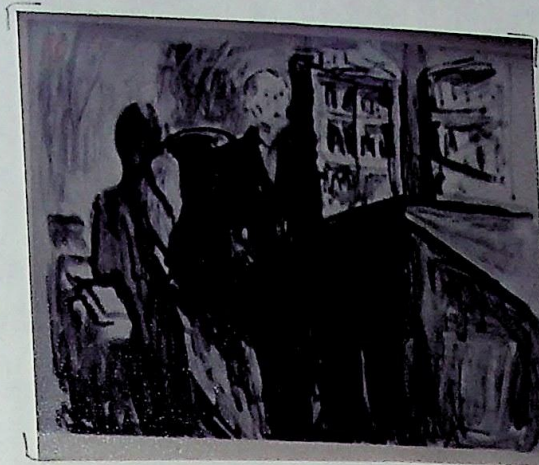
Horses Ploughing (iII. I7)



Stary Night (iIII I8)



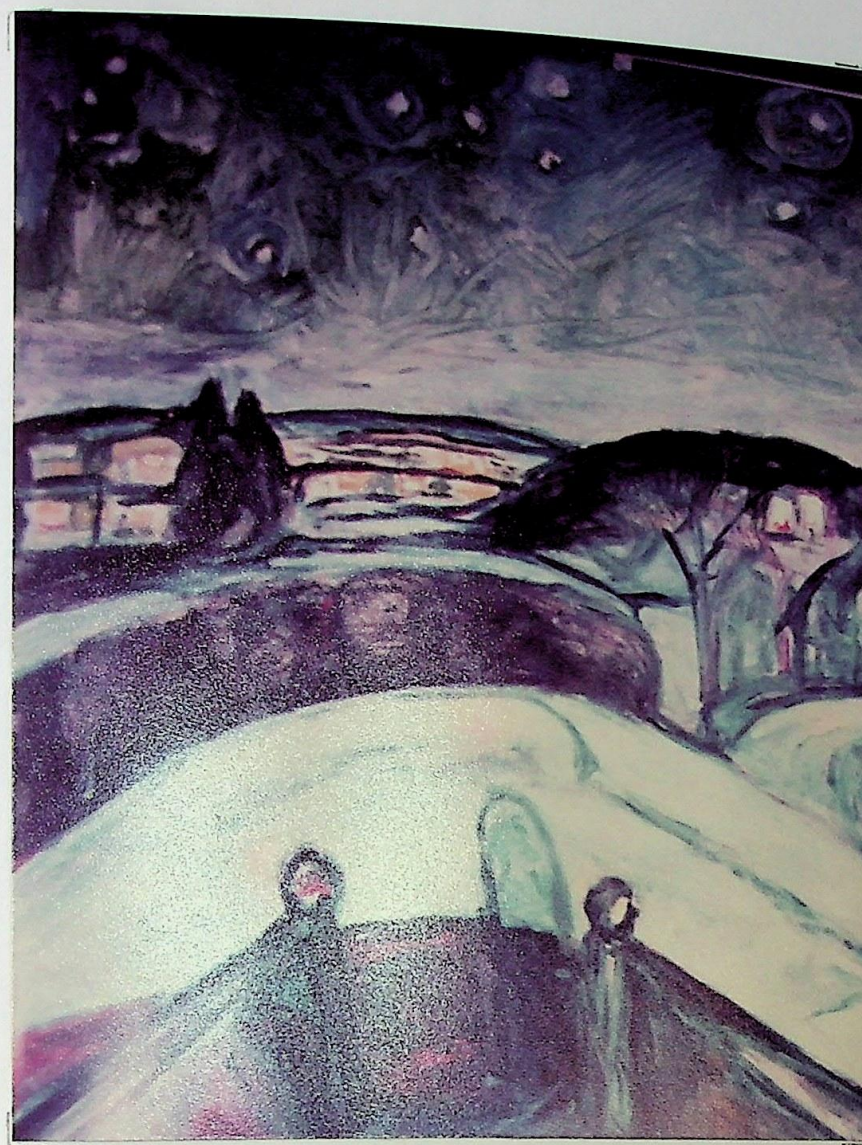
Night Wanderer (iIII. I9)



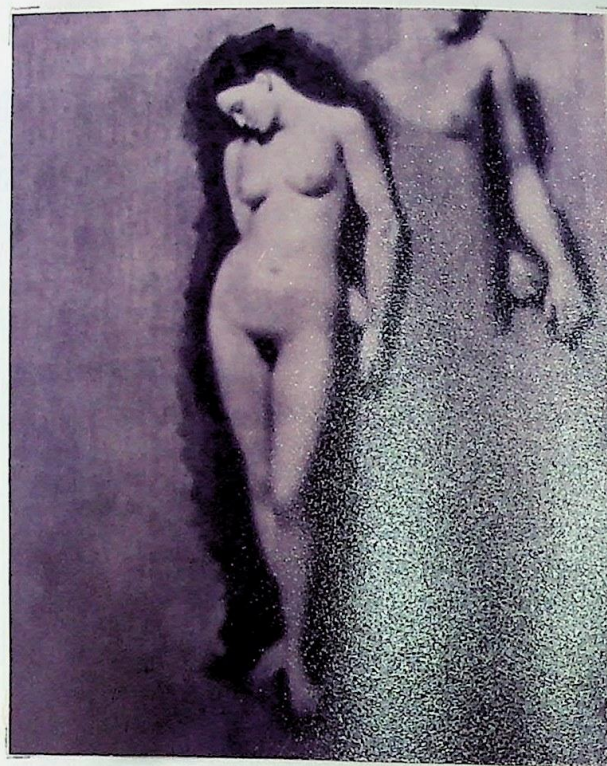
Halfpast Two at Night (self portrait) (iII. 20)



Between The Clock and the Bed (iIII. 2I)



Stary Night (iII 22)



Study for Andromeda (ill. 23)
Augustus Ingres



Krotkaja Modle study (ill.24)

- I. 1899 Munch was awarded a state scholarship of 1.500 kr. to enable him to study and travel in Europe.
2. Colour illustration cropped excluding figure of model corrected copy below.



3. Johs Roede was Munchs legal advisor.

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