Schoenberg's Expressionist Cult of the Forest, Moon, and Mind

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SCHOENBERG’S EXPRESSIONIST CULT
OF THE FOREST, MOON, AND MIND

By
Michael Palmese

A THESIS

Submitted to the Faculty
of the University of Miami
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the degree of Master of Music

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SCHOENBERG’S EXPRESSIONIST CULT
OF THE FOREST, MOON, AND MIND

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Delineating what exactly constitutes expressionism in music remains a perpetually confounding area of musicological scholarship, susceptible to prosaic definitions that do little to illuminate anything beyond conspicuous surface elements. There is a clear necessity for developing a method that allows scholars to come to terms with the movement in its own right. The primary goal of this thesis is to lay such a foundation by accounting for expressionism as practiced by the movement’s alleged figurehead—Arnold Schoenberg. In this thesis, I will examine three of the works that are most often described as “expressionist”: Erwartung, Pierrot lunaire, and Die glückliche Hand. I shall utilize both a historical and analytical perspective that incorporates music semiology to illustrate that three unique but highly interrelated metaphors concerning the forest, the moon, and the mind are paired with and help define each of the individual works. Together, these combined metaphors and their varied significances point towards a primary aesthetic precept that defines expressionist music: the distortion of convention.
For my parents
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Chapter 1
Introduction

Background

The second half of the nineteenth century was a time of rapid change for citizens of Vienna. The rise of liberalism following the 1848 revolutions infused the middle-class with a new sense of entitlement in dictating the course of the future as the city itself underwent a massive process of modernization. Embodied in the magnificence and poly-stylistic architecture of the Ringstraße, the triumph of liberal thought slowly degraded, replaced at the end of the 1890s by right-wing nationalist movements. Plainly visible in the virulent anti-Semite Karl Lueger’s ascent as mayor of Vienna in 1897, liberalism’s death heralded new and profound artistic products from the city’s creative circles at the fin-de-siècle. Alongside these political realities, contemporary life’s growing sense of fragmentation and the perceived dissolution of previously time-honored boundaries led to an era of acute anxiety. It was a fertile environment for cultivating new methods of artistic expression.

Karl Kraus gave voice to this apprehensive time in the written word with his incisive critiques of Viennese culture and the press in his influential journal Die Fackel. In the visual arts, Gustav Klimt turned away from his early liberalism-inspired ceiling paintings for an acutely psychological domain first exhibited with the controversial Faculty Paintings for the University of Vienna. Oskar Kokoschka, a colleague and fellow member of the Vienna Secession, was one of the first creative minds to tap into the primal power of expressionism’s use of gross distortions and sharp contrasts for dramatic
effect with his short, nearly incomprehensible, and highly controversial 1909 play *Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen (Murderer, the Hope of Women)*.

Working through his own creative crisis as a young modernist, the composer Arnold Schoenberg was quickly developing an aural equivalent to Oskar Kokoschka’s violently dramatic visual and theatrical creations. In that same year, Schoenberg composed his short monodrama *Erwartung* that presented an utterly original subjective and interior reality through music. The composer sought to present musically all of the thoughts and varied emotions that may occur in a single moment of excitement or stress, and then stretch them out into a concert-length stage drama. *Erwartung* signaled a new direction for Schoenberg that offered the liberation from the past he so desperately craved as a young modernist living in the early twentieth century. The next two dramatic works Schoenberg produced in quick succession following *Erwartung* featured similar themes of psychology, intense anxiety, subjective reality, and deterioration; all threads that developed out of a culture that many felt was hurtling towards an uncertain and potentially frightening future.

The sometimes-contradictory feelings of optimism, cynicism, irrationalism, and rebellion swirling around fin-de-siècle Vienna and the entire European continent resulted in diverse bodies of artistic work. While well articulated and methodically delineated in other areas of the arts, expressionism remains curiously difficult to define within the musical sphere.\(^1\) Perhaps due as much to the highly subjective themes underpinning the relevant compositions as to their strikingly dissonant and densely composed sound-worlds, approaches to expressionist music tend to favor an individual work-by-work

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\(^1\) See for example Richard Aronowitz-Mercer’s subject entry on “Expressionism” in *The Oxford Companion to Western Art*. Interestingly, music is not mentioned among the artistic disciplines that contributed to expressionism.
account, avoiding broader views of the musical vernacular as a whole. The genuine importance expressionism holds within the larger development of music in the twentieth century demands a clearer sense of what actually constituted the movement.

**Statement of Purpose**

The primary goal of this thesis is to lay a foundation for a more accurate and well-defined understanding of expressionist music as practiced by the movement’s alleged figurehead—Arnold Schoenberg. In my thesis, I will accomplish this goal principally by examining three of the most oft-cited works that are described as “expressionist”: *Erwartung*, *Pierrot Lunaire*, and *Die glückliche Hand*. Relying upon a synthesis of both historical and analytical approaches, I aim to show that three unique but interrelated metaphors define each of the individual works: the forest, the moon, and the mind. By pairing each metaphor and what it signifies in each stage work with a demonstration of the connections between all three, I shall delineate the major cornerstones found within the larger expressionist musical vernacular. To accomplish this goal, I will draw links with other important musical personalities pursuing similar goals at the time while contextualizing each of Schoenberg’s stage works around these metaphorical signifiers. In this way, expressionism is shown as a type of cultural practice that was a symptom of the European-wide fin-de-siècle spirit.

The unclear profile attached to expressionist music would benefit greatly from a set of metaphorical signifiers borne out of the zeitgeist in which Schoenberg lived and worked. The advantage of using metaphorical signifiers when discussing musical expressionism is the relative degree of abstraction that allows for subjective interpretation. At the same time, this signification permits an engaging method of
accounting for the musical works with objective historical and analytical evidence. These
metaphorical symbols that serve as signifiers of musical expressionist aesthetics are
particularly helpful in navigating other obstacles that inhibit a more clear definition of the
movement. One such obstruction arises from the heterogeneous nature of the
personalities involved and their respective artistic aims. Upon applying these
interconnected metaphors of the forest, moon, and mind to Schoenberg’s key
expressionist works, it becomes immediately clear that composers from as variegated
backgrounds as Richard Strauss and Béla Bartók also contributed to the movement. Their
expressionist forays occurred in the operatic genre and during the same period as
Schoenberg’s rapidly developing experimentation that began with Erwartung in 1909.
The same themes of deterioration, anxiety, subjective reality, and psychological
exploration find comparable realizations in the dark interiority of Bartók’s Bluebeard’s
Castle and in the violently lurid “madwomen” of Strauss’s Salome and Elektra. This
awareness is the final advantage to contextualizing Erwartung, Pierrot Lunaire, and Die
glückliche Hand through these metaphorical signifiers. This research invites future
investigations into other composers of the early twentieth century with similar artistic
aims who may not necessarily have been within the direct orbit of Schoenberg and the
Second Viennese School.

State of Scholarship

While there is a sizable amount of scholarship defining expressionism as found in
literature and the visual arts, there remains a surprising lack of clarity about what exactly
constitutes expressionism in the musical realm. Although many scholars have tackled and
discussed the most conspicuous or historically useful examples of what falls under the
vaguely defined notion of “expressionist music,” a basic set of principles that unifies such a diverse body of work is absent. In fact, many resources like *The Cambridge Companion to Arnold Schoenberg* prefer to lump the articles dealing with allegedly expressionist works like *Erwartung* and *Pierrot Lunaire* into the more well-defined and relatively inclusive section dealing with early twentieth century modernism and “modernity.” Similarly, scholars such as Robert Morgan provide a necessary historical context for musical expressionism as defined in *The Harvard Dictionary of Music*. However, a deeper meaning of expressionism as embodied in music is not articulated beyond standard references to surface elements of the works. Expressionism’s ill-defined nature often results in its relegation to a catch-all term that simply defines any of the freely atonal works produced by Second Viennese composers between 1908 and 1923.

Although this approach is sufficient for making broad musico-historical generalizations, developing a group of metaphorical signifiers attached to musical expressionism as found most visibly in Schoenberg’s three early stage works would push this field of research toward greater clarity. The association of highly interrelated and self-referential symbols with the innovative and genre-defining works of the movement’s ostensible founder provides a clearer sense of what expressionist music actually seeks to communicate. Recent scholarship has begun to integrate historical contexts within Schoenberg’s expressionist works. Alexander Carpenter’s re-engages with the Freudian psychoanalytical themes informing *Erwartung* in his 2010 article. Tom Beck explores the literary models that influenced Schoenberg’s writing of the libretto for *Die glückliche*
Some scholars have attempted to utilize expressionist metaphorical signifiers in a strictly biographical or overtly historical sense. Julie Pedneault-Deslauriers took this approach in her 2011 article that describes Pierrot as a metaphorical alienated artist. While these methods of interpretation are beneficial in certain respects, they still lack an overarching sense of genre-wide definition beyond the respective works the authors are examining.

The original concept of a cult orbiting around an artistic metaphor first appears in Steven Aschheim’s account of Nietzsche’s concept of *Bergensamkeit* or “mountain solitude.” This “cult of mountains,” as interpreted by Christopher Morris in his book *Modernism and the Cult of Mountains* (2012), elevated the notion of “mountain solitude” into a symbol, both tangible and conceptual, for the rejection of urban modernism and the ever more complicated feelings and apprehensions brewing within fin-de-siècle Europe.

Since musical expressionism functions as a tributary of the much larger modernist trajectory that dominated twentieth century artistic thought, taking a similar, although not entirely identical, approach to that of Morris will yield compelling evidence towards clearly defining a set of basic aesthetic precepts that inform musical expressionism.

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Methodology

My first methodological premise is to contextualize Schoenberg’s three expressionist stage works within their socio-cultural milieu. Using a wide range of primary documents that include Schoenberg’s and Freud’s personal letters, Karl Kraus’s writings from *Die Fackel* and *Der chinesische Mauer*, along with visual sources from Oskar Kokoschka and Gustav Klimt, I will develop a sense of the environment that cultivated these metaphors and what they signify. Also important is presenting a precise definition of these metaphorical signifiers of the forest, moon, and mind and how they are employed in my research. I define and utilize these metaphorical signifiers as symbolic representations that contain both a literal significance to the individual works in which they appear, as well as an interpretive semiotic meaning. More specifically, I intend for these metaphorical signifiers to demonstrate that a key aesthetic component of expressionist music is a distortion of convention.⁶

The other chief methodology that I shall make use of which will separate my research from previous scholarship is the inclusion of an analytical approach that accounts for and is focused around these metaphorical signifiers. In so doing, I will have the opportunity to tailor my analyses of *Erwartung*, *Pierrot Lunaire*, and *Die glückliche Hand* around these signifiers. However, since all three of these works are part of the freely atonal period of Schoenberg’s output, earlier procedures of studying the music simply will not work. To overcome this obstacle, the primary analytical methods I will employ shall borrow from branches of music semiology. Due to the large amount of

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⁶ In the context of this thesis, I refer to “convention” in not only the stylistic or formal sense, but also the performance and staging dimensions. Carolyn Abbate’s *Music: Drastic or Gnostic?* provides a fascinating and compelling case for looking into the performance elements of music as opposed to strictly engaging with the score.
interpretive research undertaken in this thesis revolving around symbols and metaphors, three particularly efficacious concepts are offered by music semiology: markedness, intertextuality, and levels of discourse. These concepts are delineated in-depth with Robert Hatten’s *Musical Meaning in Beethoven*, which will serve as a primary text for consultation and guidance through navigating these highly interdisciplinary semiotic approaches.

**Chapter Descriptions**

The first chapter of this thesis shall commence with a broad view of Vienna at the midpoint of the nineteenth century during liberalism’s ascent and trace its eventual fall to right-wing nationalist movements. Following the description of these changing political and societal realities, I will focus squarely upon specific personalities working within these historical circumstances. Particularly important figures accounted for shall include the leading satirist of fin-de-siècle Vienna and author of the influential journal *Die Fackel*, Karl Kraus, the expressionist painter Oskar Kokoschka, Gustav Klimt and the Vienna Secession, and Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalytical research. The second chapter focuses upon *Erwartung* and the forest as a metaphor carrying distinctly psychological connotations. To present this idea more clearly, I shall examine the importance of the forest as a literal setting of the drama and also offer a semiotic investigation into the work as a metaphorical instinctive mental interiority presented musically. Since the libretto provides the listener with a distinctly subjective account of the drama, this stage work

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7 These three terms are taken from Robert Hatten’s *Musical Meaning in Beethoven: Markedness, Correlation, and Interpretation*. In blending music theory, aesthetics, and semiotics, Hatten offers a highly engaging approach to expressive meaning in music. Equally relevant to my thesis work are Hatten’s accounts of the roles expressive genres and tropes play in discerning musical meaning.
offers a unique look into expressionist musical aesthetics from a dramaturgical standpoint. The third chapter shall cover *Pierrot Lunaire* will explore the work through a semiotic reading of the titular character’s mental anguish and his interplay with the moon. Focusing upon instances of markedness in the work and honing in upon Schoenberg’s use of historical conventions and forms, I will contextualize the relevant fin-de-siècle anxieties and psychologically inflected themes of obsession, paradoxes, and evaporating boundaries through this metaphorical signifier of the moon. The fourth and final chapter focuses specifically upon the most acute fin-de-siècle fears of the mind as a potentially damaging force to man’s psyche as found in *Die glückliche Hand*. To illustrate the compositional realization the mind as a metaphorical signifier, I shall first investigate the tempestuous personal troubles that surrounded Schoenberg during the inception of *Die glückliche Hand*. These circumstances, coupled with exposure to artists working in the realm of painting, result in a music drama that offers a unique insight into the composer’s expressionist conception of the mind. Equally integral to understanding this work in a semiotic context is to account for the unique staging requirements, as well as the extremely virtuosic use of the orchestra to achieve the desired effects. I close with a short commentary upon the highly fluid and interrelated connections these three metaphorical signifiers share, particularly with regards to the mind, and how their semiotic function better defines expressionism as practiced by Arnold Schoenberg.
Chapter 2
Vienna at the Fin-de-siècle

Liberalism, the Ringstrasse, and Urban Modernism

Liberalism’s ascendency in Austria following the wave of 1848 revolutions became clear as Vienna underwent a massive urban transformation spanning the final decades of the nineteenth century. Treating the capital city as their most visible bastion of intellectual and political capital, liberals hoped that remodeling the city into a testament to their principles would demonstrate importance they felt their ideas merited in the myriad European discourses. However grand their conceptions and future plans may have been, the rise of liberal thought in Austria was not due so much to any measurable degree of internal strength. Rather, politically favorable circumstances benefited their somewhat tenuous dominance as Carl Schorske indicates:

From the first, they had to share their power with the aristocracy and the imperial bureaucracy. Even during their two decades of rule, the liberals’ social base remained weak, confined to the middle-class Germans and German Jews of the urban centers. Increasingly identified with capitalism, they maintained parliamentary power by the undemocratic device of the restricted franchise. 8

In hindsight, the demise of Austrian liberalism appears inevitable, but at the time, their final resounding defeat with the election of the virulent anti-Semite Karl Lueger in 1895 shattered the minds of many creative personalities while destroying what remained of the progressive political spirit. Even as the power of liberal thought waned, fragmented, and eventually fell victim to modern mass movements of anti-Semitism, nationalism, Pan-Germanism, and socialism at the close of the century, the changes it wrought upon the

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face and cultural zeitgeist of Vienna had lasting effects upon artists across many disciplines.

Before its process of urban modernization, Vienna had retained surprisingly antiquated military artifacts for such a major European capital of the nineteenth century. The original fortifications designed to protect the city and repel Turkish invasions for centuries remained intact along with a large glacis that enveloped and insulated the inner town from the suburbs.

Example 2.1. Vienna Before Redevelopment, 1858

The removal of the military bastions from Vienna beginning in 1858 accompanied other important modern renovations including more than ninety new streets and squares, five hundred public and private buildings, as well as the Danube Regulation that sought to
rectify flooding issues and provide a clear shipping passage.\(^9\) The eventual result of the Ringstraße, designed to replace the original city walls surrounding the older portion of Vienna, resulted in what Schorske refers to as an instance in which “...a military insulation belt became a sociological isolation belt.”\(^10\) It was these themes of isolation, fragmentation, and the small but growing fractures in the face of modern society that invaded sensitive minds, sowing the seeds for disturbing new reactions to a rapidly developing urban reality. Interestingly, the Ringstraße architectural style was most notable for its complete and utter lack of coherence: 

In Austria as elsewhere, the triumphant middle class was assertive in its independence of the past in law and science. But whenever it strove to express its values in architecture, it retreated into history. Hence it expressed itself in the visual idiom of the past, borrowing that style whose historical associations were most appropriate to the representational purpose of a given building.\(^11\)

As an embodiment of the new liberal ideas taking hold in Vienna, the juxtaposition of these differing architectural styles functioned as a fitting statement. Serving simultaneously as both a message of historical renewal and a pledge to carry on with their progressive agenda, the pluralism that characterized the Ringstraße culture on both the surface and in the minds of its denizens became an important cultural marker. For instance, the teenage Gustav Mahler, arriving in 1875 to begin his studies at the Vienna Conservatory, felt the full force of this rapidly advancing metropolitan growth acutely, presenting a unique dichotomy between his youthful culture shock and confident return in 1897 as director of the Vienna Court Opera. Even the young Adolf Hitler experienced a

\(^9\) Patrick Abercrombie, “Vienna: Parts I and II,” *The Town Planning Review* 1, no. 3 (October 1910): 227. The Leopoldstadt district was particularly affected by the Danube flooding and comprised a significant Jewish population. This was the community into which Arnold Schoenberg was born in 1874.


\(^11\) Ibid., 36.
magnetic pull to the liberal epoch’s striking vitality in its architectural choices, long after the movement had declined into insignificance:

...from early morn until late at night, I ran from one site to the next, for what attracted me most of all were the buildings. For hours on end I would stand in front of the opera or admire the Parliament building; the entire Ringstrasse affected me like a fairy tale out of the Arabian Nights.12

In spite of the initial burst of optimism that accompanied this urban expansion and renewal, liberalism also began to incur some of its earliest disapprovals that would continue to gain traction among a younger generation of sons seeking liberation from their fathers. Primarily, it was the need to mask modern human experience behind a veneer of historical appropriation that prompted criticisms of liberalism to arise with architects like Camillo Sitte and Otto Wagner. While their assaults on liberal ideology came from two different positions, the combined grievances highlight major anxieties affecting Viennese intelligentsia in the final decades of the nineteenth century. Sitte’s criticism of the historical and aesthetic precepts of the Ringstraße builders focused squarely upon what Schorske refers to as “...their betrayal of the tradition to the exigencies of modern life.”13 As understood more clearly in the eventual formulation of modernist and expressionist aesthetic circles, there was a strong desire to make sense of a fragmentary contemporary existence in which no clear set of values was discernable.14

While the emancipation liberalism offered from moral and aesthetic absolutism was great, the freedom left a vacuum in its wake that had a profound effect on the creative consciousness of artists. The antidote to this sense of fragmentation, Sitte posited, could

12 Adolf Hitler, Mein Kampf (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1941), 26-27.
13 Carl Schorske, Fin-De-Siècle Vienna: Culture and Politics, 62.
14 Ibid., 70.
be found in Richard Wagner’s concept of a *Gesamtkunstwerk* that united all art forms. One could apply a similar methodological analog in the need to unite modern society and all its disparate sociopolitical elements. This idea that cross-pollinates heavily between Wagnerian music drama and urban theory is primarily significant as a harbinger of aesthetic developments in the fin-de-siècle. Creators grew progressively more introverted and art itself became a producer, rather than mere transmitter, of cultural values.

Otto Wagner’s issues with Ringstraβe architecture bring into sharper focus the quickly developing modernist tendencies in Vienna during the 1890s. Winning an 1893 competition that called for a method of regulating the municipal areas of Vienna, Wagner’s design was notable for its focus on transportation as a source of infinite expansion for the rapidly growing city. Considering that transportation was a decidedly modern technological innovation, it comes as no surprise that Wagner saw it as a vital cornerstone to his conception of Vienna presenting an authentic face of contemporary urban life. The advent of affordable travel across distances that had before been prohibitive allowed for citizens to move about in ways that offered new opportunities both economically and culturally. Even the succinct credo Wagner ascribed to this city design highlights squarely his need to depict modern humanity in its truest form without the crutches of historicism: “*Artis sola domina necessitas*” (Necessity is art’s only mistress).\(^\text{15}\) Wagner’s groping towards a new method of architectural expression contrasts with Sitte’s and calls attention to the continuing cognitive dissonances artists felt within the environment they found themselves as the nineteenth century drew to an end:

Thus, at the close of the Ringstrasse era, while Sitte was evoking visual models from the communitarian past to counteract the anomie of modern urbanism,

Wagner sought new aesthetic forms to express the truths of the hectic, purposive, capitalist urbanity he joyfully embraced. As architect and polemicist, as teacher and urban theorist, Wagner emerged from Ringstrasse culture as the modernist par excellence.\(^\text{16}\)

By the 1890s, the discordant perceptions of the world that creative minds intuitively sensed came to bear palpable fruit in the arena of politics. Liberals had already suffered severe electoral losses in the previous decade and continued to lose ground to populist movements. The rise of new social forces, particularly with regards to Czech nationalism, illustrates just one of several social issues that liberals were incapable of handling. Referred to by Schorske as “The Sharper Key,” new political movements spearheaded by Georg von Schönerer (Pan-Germanism), Karl Lueger (Christian Socialism), and Theodor Herzl (Zionism) arose to address these growing concerns, using ideological collages that consisted of modernity, futurism, and idealized recollections of the past:

> In their manner of secession from the liberal political tradition and in the form of the challenge they posed to its values, this triad of politicians adumbrated a concept of life and a mode of action which, transcending the purely political, constituted part of the wider cultural revolution that ushered in the twentieth century.\(^\text{17}\)

Whether it was Herzl’s image of a Jewish state, Schönerer’s propagation of virulent anti-Semitism and violence, or Karl Lueger’s strong Catholicism mixed with populist messages, each of these political figures embodied aspects of the most salient fin-de-siècle themes that gripped all of Europe. It was at this point in time, with the growing rejection of rationalism and liberal democracy in favor of emotionalism and subjectivity, that the earliest seeds of fascism were sown. With Karl Lueger’s ascension as Vienna’s

\(^\text{16}\) Carl Schorske, *Fin-De-Siècle Vienna: Culture and Politics*, 74.

\(^\text{17}\) Ibid., 120
mayor in 1897—the same year in which Mahler returned to the city as Director of the Court Opera and the young Arnold Schoenberg composed his *String Quartet in D Major*—liberalism’s defeat was final.

The most striking aspect of this highly partisan-driven Viennese tempest of clashing ideologies was the contradiction, complexity, and confusion. This period was troubling for the Viennese citizenry and produced an exhausting sense of anxiety. Within these rapidly shifting political conflicts, a profound crisis of identity arose tied directly to the sense of contemporary life’s fragmentation felt most keenly by Sitte. Not only did a general cultural confusion prompt unease in the Viennese minds, but also troubling were the crises in human behavior and decorum. Rampant theatricality played out in the lives of bourgeois Viennese citizens as a result of their exposure to the great actors of the time at the Burgtheater. Like their counterparts in Victorian England, the Austrian bourgeoisie were quickly becoming nothing more than vacuous actors performing roles they mimicked from the stage.\(^{18}\) Hiding their anxieties behind a façade of histrionics was, at least for the time, a suitable method of coping with an increasingly complex and violently evolving sociopolitical landscape filled with cultural and moral degeneracy. The writer Karl Kraus responded to these complex new societal realities with a brand of incisive commentary characterized by a cynical and often scathing tone indicative of the much larger European-wide apprehension of decadence and Western society’s perceived decline. Within the pages of Kraus’s immensely influential journal *Die Fackel*, intersections between artists like Arnold Schoenberg, Peter Altenberg, Richard Dehmel,

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and Oscar Kokoschka facilitated a productive exchange of ideas that offered a response to an uncertain and potentially foreboding future. The images adorning the cover of *Die Fackel* in April of 1899 make clear Kraus’s transgressive intent:

The mask is the all-pervasive symbol of fin-de-siècle Vienna. In Krauss’s design the grinning mask of comedy and the goatish face of the satyr not only proclaim the intention of comic and satirical stylization. They also convey an acute awareness of the elements of theatricality and disguise in Austrian affairs. And the rays emanating from the flaming torch are thrown forward in a pattern that suggests the boards of a stage. The aim is clearly to break through the clouds of mystification and shed light behind the scenes.19

Example 2.2. April 1899 Issue of *Die Fackel*
Karl Kraus, Commentary through *Die Fackel*, and Oskar Kokoschka

Like Mahler, Karl Kraus was a Jew and hailed from the Bohemian portion of what is now the Czech Republic. Attending the University of Vienna in the 1890s, he quickly became involved with a coterie of fin-de-siècle writers that experimented with tributaries of modernism. Referred to as *Jung Wien* (Young Vienna), the society often held its meetings at the Café Griensteidl and counted among its colorful members Peter Altenberg, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Hermann Bahr, and Arthur Schnitzler.\(^\text{20}\) Between 1911 and 1912 Schoenberg’s young disciple Alban Berg chose to set five of Altenberg’s aphoristic poems scrawled upon postcards into a large orchestral song-cycle now referred to as the *Altenberg Lieder*. Richard Strauss enlisted the help of Hofmannsthal in crafting the shockingly violent Expressionist libretto for the opera *Elektra*. Hermann Bahr served as the spokesman for the group and, along with writing his own plays and criticism, worked at the Burgtheater. Together, these writers joined a wave of youthful rebellion in the arts and “...challenged the moralistic stance of nineteenth-century literature in favor of sociological truth and psychological—especially sexual—openness.”\(^\text{21}\)

Direct engagement with lurid subjects like sexuality became a flashpoint of contention for the younger generation; these subjects quickly became “the ‘symbolic territory’ where the fundamental issues of the age were debated: the crisis of individual identity, the conflicts between reason and irrationalism, between domination and subservience.”\(^\text{22}\) The exploration of dichotomies and the importance placed upon instinct over puritanical moral codes of the past factored prominently in the works of Arthur


\(^{21}\) Ibid., 212.

Schnitzler whose medical background led to direct connections with Sigmund Freud and psychoanalysis. With *The Green Cockatoo* (1899), Schnitzler engaged with the psyche’s instinctual role in the political fates of several players in the French Revolution. Labeled pornographic at the time of its limited release in 1900, his play *Reigen* (*Round-Dance*) examined socioeconomic classes, morals, and sexuality through differing amorous encounters among a wide gamut of Viennese citizenry. With the demolition of the Café Griensteidl in 1897 came a symbolic destruction of Kraus’s relationship with *Jung-Wien*, set into words with his satirical essay *Die demolirte Literatur* (*The Demolished Literature*).\(^{23}\) Within two years, Kraus opted to create his own journal in which he directed and controlled the printed content.

First published in April of 1899, *Die Fackel* (*The Torch*) became an immensely successful publication for which Karl Kraus wrote the majority of material from 1911 until the final 1936 issue: “Although always highly controversial, it was read and widely discussed far beyond Kraus’s own immediate circle by many who could not have been said to agree with his political and moral views.”\(^{24}\) While Kraus crafted the majority of the content, several creative personalities relevant to the artistic fin-de-siècle culture of Vienna published works within *Die Fackel* in the first years of the twentieth century. Of particular interest are contributions and mentions of Richard Dehmel, whose earlier poem *Verklärte Nacht* inspired Schoenberg’s 1899 string sextet of the same name. In March of 1910, Dehmel’s poem *Sprüche* was published in *Die Fackel* and only a month later, the

\(^{23}\) Ibid., 115.

fourteenth song from Schoenberg’s *Das Buch der hängende Gärten* featured prominently as a full-fledged musical composition presented to readers.

Example 2.3. Schoenberg’s Op. 15, no. 14 Published in *Die Fackel* (April 1910)

The symbolist-inflected texts of Stefan George that Schoenberg set describe a failed love and the subsequent disintegration of the garden in which it developed. Rife with metaphorical meanings within the context of modernist musical innovations
following the legacy of Wagnerian music dramas, the gentle destruction of this garden represented for Schoenberg an audible symbol of his dissolution, abandonment, and ultimate freedom from tonality and traditions of the past through the emancipation of dissonance. As Carl Schorske indicates, the power inherent in this new method of creating music without a tonal center imbued the composer with powers suggestive of a divine being:

By establishing a democracy of tones, it has vastly enlarged all the expressive possibilities, thematic and rhythmic as well as coloristic and tonal. The composer can create any community or cluster of tones he wishes, now crowding them into confined musical space, now associating them across distances that are positively astral. The awesome demand on the constructive power of the composer in this world of infinite space and atomized matter, of macrocosm and microcosm, is nothing short of godlike.25

Music, like all the other arts at this turbulent time, quickly developed into a cultural product that exported its own values independent of and sometimes sharply opposed to traditional societal principles. The general rejection of these freely atonal works by audiences confirms the growing antagonism between creative minds and their works presented to a larger public for consumption. Within the wider cultural landscape of the fin-de-siècle, Schoenberg’s output at the time, whether through Das Buch der hängende Gärten, Erwartung, or Pierrot Lunaire, highlights the growing focus upon exploring subjective states of the human mind, as well as interior and exterior boundaries between these two spheres. Like Die Fackel did in prose with its expressed desire to shed light upon the motives behind the masks and theatricality of contemporary urban life, freely atonal musical works often investigated the strange and uneasy mental facilities that lay behind the veils of decorum and propriety. Schoenberg’s short opera Die glückliche Hand, composed between 1910 and 1913, offers one such disturbing vision of the

25 Carl Schorske, Fin-De-Siècle Vienna: Culture and Politics, 351.
sometimes-porous boundary between these realms of the interior and exterior as a man struggles with a monster on his back. Schoenberg felt so strongly about the themes and artistic merits presented in this music drama that he even considered converting it into a film version through collaboration with a young artist named Oskar Kokoschka as the set designer.26

Both a personal friend to Karl Kraus and a skilled visual artist, Oskar Kokoschka frequently received mention within the pages of Die Fackel. Although he studied with Vienna Secession artists at the Kunstgewerbeschule, Kokoschka cultivated a personal technique that reflected his lack of previous formal training with traditional painterly qualities. Kokoschka’s quickly developing and highly idiosyncratic artistic style complemented a disturbing tale Kraus first published within the pages of Die Fackel in July of 1909. Entitled Der chinesische Mauer (The Great Wall of China), Kraus satirized the sexual hypocrisy of a situation in which Elsie Sagel, a female missionary, had engaged in sexual affairs with the members of the Chinatown community that she was attempting to convert to Christianity. The grisly discovery of her body within a trunk in an apartment above a Chinese restaurant and the subsequent press coverage became a major theme for Kraus’s satire.27 Highly abstract in their conception, the illustrations for the book form of Der chinesische Mauer offer a look at the grotesque and often anguish sense of degeneracy felt by Kokoschka as he struggled through a tumultuous affair with Alma Mahler:

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26 Ibid., 355.

...these drawings represent an impressive attempt by Kokoschka to deal with Mahler’s abortion of their child. One drawing, *Der Mord (Murder)*, depicts a female corpse—with Mahler’s features—partially covered by a tomb. The man bent over the grave, with whom Kokoschka probably identified, is shown as a skeleton from the waist up. His lower body, not yet sucked into the realm of the grave, still possesses its full physical form. The eerie atmosphere of this nocturnal cemetery scene is heightened by the burning torch held aloft by the half-dead man.²⁸

Example 2.4. Kokoschka, *Der Mord* Lithograph in *Der chinesische Mauer* (1914)

In 1909, the same year of Schoenberg’s *Erwartung*, Kokoschka made a seminal contribution to the rapidly developing field of Expressionist art with a short play that

featured striking uses of color, disturbing sexual content, violent imagery, and gross distortion for dramatic effect. Entitled Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen (Murderer, The Hope of Women), this brief stage work takes place in a nameless primitive past in which the contemporary issues of degeneracy, instinct, and sexual conflict are mythologized through a meeting between a Man, his warriors, and a Woman with her maidens.29 Extraordinarily scandalous at its evening premiere on July 4th, 1909, the most bizarre and shocking elements for observers came from the savage and brutally choreographed gestures of the actors:

Kokoschka directed his actors in violent and highly stylized movements new to the Viennese stage. The large expressive gestures of the Woman became progressively more contorted and animalistic, while those of the Man became more expansive and godlike. Nothing was too extreme.30

As a means of building publicity for the premiere and paying his printer’s bill, Kokoschka designed his own shockingly disturbing poster that stands as a perverse inversion of not only Michelangelo’s iconic Pietà, but also Gustav Klimt’s decidedly more contemporary painting The Kiss.31

29 In 1919, Paul Hindemith composed an opera of the same name with Kokoschka’s play serving as the libretto. He wrote two other short expressionist-inspired operas at this time: Das Nusch-Nuschi and Sancta Susanna.

30 Dorothy Pam, “Murderer, the Women’s Hope,” The Drama Review: TDR 19, no. 3 (September 1975): 10.

31 Ibid., 6.
**Example 2.5. Klimt, *The Kiss* (1907–08)**

In Kokoschka’s hands, the gently embracing lovers of Klimt’s painting are distorted into a red corpse held in submission by a ghastly vampire-like creature with a bright yellow moon set against the dark blue background. The feminine mystique, a motif already explored in less subversive terms in Klimt’s work, is made both explicit and intentionally transgressive by Kokoschka. This poster and the play it advertises are two of the particularly contentious pieces of expressionist art exhibited within Vienna during the first decade of the twentieth century.
Although Kokoschka viciously twisted a major piece of artwork from the Vienna Secession’s figurehead, it was not out of spite or malice; he was, in fact, an important member of the society. Formed in 1897 with a declaration of self-imposed removal from the overt historicism in art that Otto Wagner had originally railed against in architecture, the Secession became a major cultural force at the fin-de-siècle.
**Gustav Klimt, the Vienna Secession, and Egon Schiele**

When discussing Gustav Klimt and his place as a seminal figure of fin-de-siècle art in Vienna, it is useful to contextualize his early background in relation to the composer Gustav Mahler with whom he would later interact. Both of these artists career’s spanned the stormiest decades of Vienna’s crisis of liberal culture and both responded to it in unique ways. Born two years after Mahler, Klimt’s earliest major success came from a commission to decorate the great stairway of the Burgtheater on the Ringstraße “...with a series of ceiling paintings of drama, from the festival of Dionysus to modern times. The program of these panels shows how closely the liberal fathers had integrated the theatrical and historical outlooks.”


![Image of Thespiswagen](image)

The young Mahler, in contrast to Klimt, espoused decidedly nationalist sentiments and dedicated himself to Wagnerian conceptions of dramaturgy instilled while undertaking his studies at the Vienna Conservatory. The Viennese productions of Wagner’s music

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dramas during this crucial phase of Mahler’s life further solidified the young conductor’s devotion:

Vienna, during Mahler’s student period, was not only enlivened by performances of the early Wagner operas…but also the first Viennese performances of the Ring, though the latter cycle was not first heard in its correct sequence… We know that Mahler heard Götterdämmerung in 1879, probably in Wolf’s company, and it is impossible to believe he did not attend other performances of Wagner operas between 1875-1883.33

Mahler’s adoration of Wagner, a subculture filled with fiercely populist and anti-liberal tenets, initially set him apart from Klimt by an ideological rift characterizing the growing crisis of liberal society as the nineteenth century neared its end.

In spite of this initial polarity, by the end of the 1890s Klimt joined the youthful rebellion against his liberal fathers and quickly became associated with aptly labeled Jugendstil or “youth-style” that proliferated throughout Viennese cultural circles. Adopting a regenerative defense to their withdrawal from liberal rationality and historicism, the Vienna Secession artists named their magazine Ver Sacrum (Sacred Spring). Based upon the ancient Roman consecration ritual in which the older generation pledged their children to the gods for divine commissions to protect society, the young Viennese artists saw themselves as fulfilling the same modern-day function. Further illustrating this generational revolt, Klimt’s poster for the first exhibition of the Vienna Secession in 1897 depicts Theseus slaying the Minotaur, thereby emancipating the youth of Athens from ritual sacrifices.

The physical manifestation of this rebellion took the form of an exhibition hall designed by Otto Wagner’s assistant Joseph Olbrich. Conceived as a pagan temple of refuge, the interior space of the Secession Building was unique in its inclusion of movable partitions that provided new spatial possibilities for the presentation of modern art. This particular facet of the building’s structural layout refers back quite consciously to Otto Wagner’s declaration that modern architecture should reflect the nature of contemporary urban life in all its fragmentary complexity. New art demanded a new apparatus for presentation.

Example 2.9. Vienna Secession Hall

In the three years following the 1897 formulation of the Vienna Secession, the complex relationship between culture and politics in Austria grew ever more pronounced and dissonant. Culminating in 1900 with the monarchy’s suspension of the Citizens’ Ministry and replacement of it with the Bureaucrats Ministry headed by Dr. Ernest von Koerber, the new state goals of economic and cultural modernization actually encouraged the flourishing of contemporary art.\(^{35}\) In supporting Secession artists, Viennese political officials hoped to combat the varied nationalist movements by presenting a distinctly Austrian notion of art practiced by a diverse group of creative minds. It was during this period that Klimt completed the first portion of his 1894 commission by the Ministry of Culture to provide three ceiling paintings for the University of Vienna. Entitled *Philosophy* and first presented in 1899, the work sparked umbrage among the academic faculty:

\(^{35}\) Ibid., 236
The venerable Viennese professors protested at what they saw as an attack on orthodoxy. They had proposed a painting which would express the triumph of light over darkness. Instead the artist had presented them with a portrayal of the “victory of darkness over all.” Influenced by the works of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, trying in his own way to solve the metaphysical riddle of human existence, to give expression to modern man’s confusion, Klimt inverted the proposition.36

Example 2.10. Klimt, Philosophy (1899)

An important ideological scandal hovered over Philosophy and the abstract terrain it explored, again calling attention to the often-porous boundary that existed between culture and politics in fin-de-siècle Vienna. The painting appealed to neither academic

rationalism nor the prescribed optimistic ideals, spurring debates on the state-sponsored patronage of art that clashed with traditional values.

If the themes of *Philosophy* elicited palpable offense from the University of Vienna faculty, then Klimt’s second ceiling painting presented in 1901 caused a veritable firestorm to erupt. Entitled *Medicine*, Klimt again dispensed with the desired Enlightenment themes and instead twisted them into a transcendental exploration of life, death, and medicine’s struggle to abate human suffering.

Example 2.11. Klimt, *Medicine* (1901)
The striking appearance of Hygieia as an impassive and mysterious priestess observing the river of life found behind her is part of a much larger reflection by Klimt upon “...medicine’s field of action as a phantasmagoria of half-dreaming humanity, sunk in instinctual semi-surrender, passive in the flow of fate.” These distinct psychological inflections are brought most conspicuously to the foreground with the inclusion of a snake that symbolized for many the relevant cultural anxieties of the time:

The snake, amphibious creature, phallic symbol with bisexual associations, is the great dissolver of boundaries: between land and sea, man and woman, life and death. This character accords well with the concern with androgyny and the homosexual reawakening of the fin de siècle: expressions of erotic liberation on the one hand and male fear of impotence on the other.

These relatively abstract visual explorations of the mind by Klimt found a grittier outlet in Egon Schiele, Klimt’s young apprentice. Like Oskar Kokoschka, Schiele studied for a time at the Kunstgewerbeschule before transferring to an even more conservative setting. Like many other creative minds of the younger generation maturing in the fin-de-siècle, Schiele was dissatisfied with the artistic education he received and preferred to join with Secessionists in their renunciation of traditional liberal aesthetics. After participating in several Secession exhibitions during his mentorship with Klimt, Schiele turned towards a deeply personal and introverted visual idiom exhibited most clearly in 1910 with Self Portrait Grimacing.

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37 Carl Schorske, Fin-De-Siècle Vienna: Culture and Politics, 240.

38 Ibid., 241-42.

Forsaking the classical tradition of showing the idealized balance and proportion of a body, the artist’s many self-portraits presented a grotesquely sexualized, sickly, diseased, and ugly human form. In spite of their sharply transgressive nature within the art world, Schiele’s often-scandalous pieces of portraiture show a significant influence from a relatively benign source: psychiatry.\(^39\) Flourishing in Europe at the fin-de-siècle, the psychiatric discipline grew increasingly interested in observation of patients through the

\(^{39}\) Schoenberg’s amateur paintings show a markedly similar concern for presenting distortion in a photography-influenced context. In particular, the eyes of a subject are often a focal point of each work as seen with his multiple *Gaze* paintings.
use of modeling, photography, and drawing. Visual cataloging seemed a particularly effective means for aiding in research and publishing the investigations. Jean-Martin Charcot, perhaps the most vocal advocate for the diagnostic values of the image during his long tenure at La Salpêtrière in Paris, believed that records made with photographs offered a permanent method of classifying neurological disorders and revisiting them repeatedly.\(^{40}\) This preoccupation with observing the physical body, as well as a view that modern society was the both the cause and solution to its problems, explains why Sigmund Freud’s ideas carried little early topicality. He rejected these notions in favor of an examination of the hidden forces within the mind, arguing that mental flaws were a natural part of being human.

**Freud and the Influence of Psychoanalysis at the fin-de-siècle**

Like Klimt, Sigmund Freud’s radically innovative contributions to his discipline came about slowly. Arising out of a deep-seated need to understand his own mind, Freud’s eventual development of psychoanalytical theories and techniques stood in stark contrast with much of his early life. Raised within the liberal historicist nexus of Vienna from a young age, Freud experienced a decidedly standard education that prepared him for more advanced schooling. Performing physiological research at the University of Vienna from 1876–1881 with Ernst Brücke and earning his M.D. degree, he then took a traveling grant in 1885 to study neurology in Paris with Jean-Martin Charcot at La

Arguably one of the most important neurologists of the nineteenth century, Charcot was instrumental in the study of hysteria and potential applications for hypnosis. Postulating that hysteria itself was due to organic abnormalities in the brain, there was belief among members of the Salpêtrière School that these defects were what made one susceptible to hypnosis. The cultivation of this research at the time mirrored a general growing interest in the public sphere with occult notions of “animal magnetism” and “mesmerization.” The fascination led to a particularly striking illustration of the famed neurologist in the 1880s that carried sinister undertones.

Example 2.13. Sketch of Jean-Martin Charcot (ca. 1880-85)

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Freud brought these same approaches and methodologies back to Vienna as he set up his professional life in the city. During that same year of study in Paris, Freud received an appointment as lecturer in neuropathology at the University of Vienna; a position that whetted his ambitions to become a “great man” and led to years of tumultuous struggle in the attempt to make some kind of great discovery.\textsuperscript{43} His personal correspondences from the 1890s offer a dynamic portrait of the up-and-down shifts in his attitude: “It was on November 12, 1897. The sun was in the eastern quarter; Mercury and Venus were in the conjunction... I gave birth to a new piece of knowledge.”\textsuperscript{44} From this level of exhilaration, doubts often crept in and turned towards severe self-criticism and dejection: “…I am no genius, and I no longer understand how I could have wished to be one. I am not very talented; my whole capacity for work probably lies in my character attributes and in the lack of any marked intellectual deficiency.”\textsuperscript{45} These personal issues for Freud were compounded by professional troubles exacerbated by the new social and cultural realities that came from the decline of liberalism as Karl Lueger ascended to the mayoral position in Vienna at the end of the decade. After 1897, it became increasingly difficult for Jews in the medical faculty to gain promotions and Freud himself did not receive a full professorship until 1902. Contributing to a profound sense of “otherness,” this mindset was crucial in developing psychoanalysis at the fin-de-siècle:

At the simplest sociological level, anti-Semitism constructed psychoanalysis through enforcing a collective conscious amongst the set of Jewish intellectuals and doctors surrounding Freud, pushing them together as a ‘movement’ rather

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., 19-20.


than allowing them to dissipate their affiliates amongst a number of welcoming groups.46

During this turbulent period, Freud’s growing intellectual isolation provided a unique catalyst, beginning in 1895, for what would become The Interpretation of Dreams. Resting upon a basic premise that the dream functions as a form of wish fulfillment, the text was radical in rejecting the utopian vision that psychiatry could correct the problems society itself inflicted upon the human mind. To illustrate this relatively simple analytical principle, Freud used himself as a subject to demonstrate the primacy of the unconscious in guiding human affairs. One such example comes from the “Dream of the Uncle with the Yellow Beard.” The morning after a visit from a friend in 1897, Freud dreamed two thoughts and two pictures, with each thought following the picture.47 Focusing only upon the first half of this dream, the image of the friend with whom he visited a day earlier appeared with an elongated face surrounded by a conspicuous yellow beard. While almost meaningless when viewing only the manifest content on the surface, Freud found that thumbprints of his professional frustrations were apparent when delving into the deeper latent content of the dream. His eventual conclusions drew a portrait of a mind deeply resentful over the blending of academia politics with anti-Semitism and wishing to “...put myself in the Minister’s place. Turning the tables on His Excellency with a vengeance! He had refused to appoint me professor extraordinarius and I had retaliated in the dream by stepping into his shoes.”48

46 Stephen Frosch, “Freud, Psychoanalysis and anti-Semitism,” Psychoanalytical Review 91, no. 3 (June 2004): 310.

47 The first mention of this dream appears in a letter dated March 15, 1897.

While Freud’s discoveries and revelations received relatively scant attention from scholars during the earliest years of their dissemination, artistic circles, particularly literary, found his ideas fascinating. Arthur Schnitzler, the aforementioned writer associated with Karl Kraus and Jung Wien was one such individual. Aside from a mutual background in medicine, both men were also Jewish. The ties between the two eventually grew so strong that in a letter penned during May of 1922, Freud went to the point of referring to the writer as his “Doppelgänger.”49 Early evidence of this relationship appears with Schnitzler’s Frau Berta Garlan, which the author wrote while reading The Interpretation of Dreams early in 1900. Prominently featuring the titular character having a dream that expresses a deep desire for erotic adventure, a musical motif is used as a benign representation of sexual desires and other risqué activities considered taboo.50 Equally influenced by Freud’s work, although integrating it in a less figurative manner than Schnitzler, was a young woman named Marie Pappenheim. While known professionally as a graduate of the medical school at the University of Vienna, Pappenheim was also a poet and had published a number of her works within the pages of Kraus’s Die Fackel in 1906.51 Pappenheim’s family connections placed her into a unique position to absorb aspects of psychoanalytical thought and blend them into her writings. Her relative, Bertha Pappenheim, was the famous “Anna O.” that Josef Breuer, along with Freud, treated for hysteria and used as a cornerstone for Studies on Hysteria, first

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51 Pappenheim published the four poems under the pseudonym “Maria Heim” for the April 1906 issue.
published in 1895.\textsuperscript{52} Drawing from this early psychoanalytical text, a clear appropriation of symbols and themes appear within her libretto for a one-act monodrama entitled \textit{Erwartung}.

The most pronounced similarity between the monodrama’s solitary female character (referred to in the libretto only as “Woman”) and Anna O. comes from specific portions of the case study in \textit{Studies on Hysteria}. Both women suffer from “zoöpsia,” which is a hallucination involving animals—for Anna O., these were black snakes and for the Woman, shadowy, monstrous animals. Anna O. also had trouble with speech and difficulties in recognizing people; these same conditions are attributed to the Woman in Pappenheim’s libretto.\textsuperscript{53} Even the librettist’s choice of setting the work in a dark forest carries with it suggestions of psychoanalytical themes, given an aural presence through Schoenberg’s score. From this point, the ingeniously designed musical representation of the forest is embodied by the orchestra, which paints the darkly nightmarish world, and the Woman, who gives it a physical voice. In both a literal and metaphorical sense, the notions of a forest carry important ramifications for not only \textit{Erwartung}, but also the entire notion of expressionist music, found in a primordial form with the innovations in \textit{Das Buch der hängende Gärten}.

\textsuperscript{52} The exact relationship between Marie Pappenheim and Bertha Pappenheim is rather murky and remains a confounding area of study. For a general survey of genealogical investigations, see Alexander Carpenter, “Schoenberg’s Vienna, Freud’s Vienna: Re-Examining the Connections Between the Monodrama \textit{Erwartung} and the Early History of Psychoanalysis,” \textit{The Musical Quarterly} 93, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 152-53.

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 154.
Chapter 3
The Forest

The Forest’s Significance as the Setting for Erwartung

The themes and metaphorical meanings attached to the forest in literature are diverse and varied. However, the trope most relevant to understanding the choice of a forest as the setting for Erwartung actually dates back to the 14th century. Dante Alighieri’s epic poem The Divine Comedy takes place in the year 1300 on Holy Thursday and situates the narrator in the midst of a dark forest: “In the midway of this our mortal life, I found me in a gloomy wood, astray/Gone from the path direct: and e’en to tell, / It were no easy task, how savage wild/That forest, how robust and rough its growth...”54 Far removed from the light of God, Dante’s forest is filled with attributes that indicate an environment dominated by fear, isolation, and confusion. This association is grounded in the very real threats that a person could encounter in the forest during the medieval period and subsequent centuries. Attacks from wild animals or robbers, and even becoming lost were all cultural anxieties that one could attach to the forest. To see how these medieval qualities ascribed to the forest translate into a more contemporary context, one need look no further than the Freudian case studies that influenced the libretto’s inception. The same anxieties the forest evoked hundreds of years earlier had lost no potency for the Viennese citizenry at the fin-de-siècle. The young Ida Bauer, often known by the pseudonym “Dora,” had her case history of psychoanalytical treatment by Freud published in 1905 under the title “Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria.” In her

second dream recounted to Freud, the forest appears as a disquieting and potentially unpleasant place:

I was walking into a town which I did not know. I saw streets and squares which were strange to me. Then I came into a house where I lived, went to my room, and found a letter from my Mother lying there... I went to the [train] station and asked about a hundred times: “Where is the station?”... I then saw a thick wood before me which I went into and there I asked a man who I met... He offered to accompany me. But I refused and went on alone.\(^{55}\)

Although Bauer rejected Freud’s highly sexual interpretation of this dream and quickly ended her treatment, the young woman’s apprehensive vision of a forest is a crucial link for grasping its dramaturgical function within *Erwartung*. For Schoenberg, the sinister psychological undertones of the forest played into his conception of the monodrama, as evidenced by the sufficiently bleak and eerie stage sketch from 1911 that depicts a road leading through a thickly wooded area towards a distant source of light. In composing *Erwartung*, he would develop an equivalent musical landscape. His collaborator Marie Pappenheim would likewise create an equally bold scenario.

Example 3.1. Schoenberg’s Sketch for *Erwartung* (1911)

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Pappenheim saturates the libretto of *Erwartung* with the well-established negative connotations of a forest by including vaguely threatening manifestations in the three brief preludial scenes. In the first scene, the Woman speaks of wilted flowers and the stifling nature of the darkness in which she finds herself. The second scene finds the Woman groping in the dark as something seemingly grabs onto her. A loud screech from a nocturnal bird further frightens her as she mistakes a tree trunk for a corpse. Scene three makes conspicuous use of moonlight as it reveals strangely large yellow mushrooms and her menacing dancing shadow that then appears to develop yellow eyes. These references, along with the fragmentary nature of their enunciation, warp the opening of the monodrama into a densely compacted stream-of-consciousness that bears a strong resemblance to a forest-inflected dreamscape. The lack of reliability in the Woman’s perceptions creates an acutely subjective first-person account of the drama. For Schoenberg, the eschewing of a traditionally well-defined and dependable narrative arch allowed for a fruitful experiment in manipulating the passage of dramatic time. In fact, the notion of playing with time is alluded to explicitly by the composer when discussing his approach to crafting the work: “In *Erwartung* the aim is to represent in slow motion everything that occurs during a single second of maximum spiritual excitement, stretching it out to half and hour.” To achieve this goal, Schoenberg utilizes vocal and orchestral techniques designed to blur the distinctions between the Woman and the forest that she occupies. The forest quickly becomes an environment governed by confusion, violence, and fear where standard conventions are distorted into nearly unrecognizable

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forms. By the end of the monodrama, it is entirely possible that the Woman herself stands as an embodiment of the forest and the forest is her mental interiority.

The Woman’s Embodiment of the Forest Through Levels of Discourse

This reading of the Woman’s role within Erwartung is not entirely new. Theodor Adorno speculated as early as 1948 that it was entirely plausible to view the entire monodrama as a Freudian case study:

She [The Woman] is consigned to the music as an analytical patient to the couch. The avowal of hatred and desire, of jealousy and forgiveness and beyond that is the whole symbolism of the unconscious, is wrung from her; and only in the moment of her insanity does the music recall its right to console.  

Knowing that this is an established mode of hearing and comprehending Erwartung, delineating specific compositional gestures and procedures employed by Schoenberg provides greater clarity to understanding the work in this manner. Approaching the Woman as an embodiment of the forest and vice versa naturally requires an examination of features within the score, with two essential caveats: firstly, the experience of hearing or performing what is printed upon the paper determines any semiotic meaning that may arise.  

Secondly, the term “embodiment” within this specific contextual reading of Erwartung is not intended to reflect the cognitive notions proposed by systematic musicology. Rather, embodiment operates here in a metaphorical frame of reference as one object or idea taking on the attributes of another. Recognizing this is an integral dimension to Erwartung, especially when outlining the deeply complex musical vernacular in which the work is steeped. Whether the forest is a literal or imaginary

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setting for the work becomes inconsequential as the forest’s metaphorical meanings become one and the same with the Woman and, by extension, come to permeate the totality of the work itself.

Robert Hatten’s “levels of discourse” provide a semiotic apparatus by which we may recognize the metaphorical significances of the forest and their embodiment within the Woman. In the literary field, an author creates this effect by moving from direct to indirect narration. Music can signal similar shifts through extreme contrasts of style, register, rhythm, and abrupt interjections. However, it is critical to understand that due to the unique temporal qualities of music, these levels of discourse do not necessarily have to subscribe only to shifts in a strictly narrative sense. Musical levels of discourse allow for the outlining of more abstract and subtle shadings in non-narrative focus as well, making them an especially useful compositional tool when many ambiguities and obscurities come together into such a complex dramatic work like Erwartung. Upon even a cursory perusal of a page in the score, one may observe any number of these myriad contrasts, often occurring simultaneously. More specifically, Schoenberg uses the individual instruments of the orchestra throughout this monodrama in such a way that the individualized timbres are mixed and juxtaposed into a constantly shifting array of changing discourses that mirror the Woman’s subjective experience. For our purposes, it is sufficient to give attention to specific dramaturgically significant examples, how they function in signaling narrative and non-narrative shifts in focus, and their relation to the metaphorical anxieties and overtones ascribed to the forest and the Woman’s embodiment of them.

The first three scenes, as per their function in introducing the dramatic action of scene four, thrust the listener viscerally into the expressionist sound world of the forest’s distortive power. Particularly important to the introduction is its function in establishing from the outset of the monodrama that the Woman is already unstable and prone to fits of both fear and calm. While brief, these three episodes pit the Woman’s often-fragmentary statements with an equally fractured orchestral landscape. In spite of the enormous forces called upon, the overall acoustical topography is largely distinguished by the relative delicacy of its construction; juxtapositions of small instrumental groups or solos tend to take precedence over large orchestral tutti passages. Such a manner of construction allows for a frequently shifting array of instrumental colors that provide an aural parallel to the immediacy of the Woman’s more grounded and vocally articulated changes in mental faculties. This phenomenon is apparent from the very opening of the work as multiple layers of rhythmic and timbral contrasts occur simultaneously between the bassoon, flute, oboe, and strings before the Woman’s two short utterances. The combined effect of these concurrent levels of discourse offer the listener a sense of intimacy with the solitary character in the drama while at the same time drawing them into her subjective experience.
Sheer volume and brevity of statements within the orchestra are not the only tactics by which Schoenberg presents the Woman’s unbalanced mental state. Subtle levels of discourse may be observed in the way Schoenberg sets the text of the libretto. The composer sometimes treats the erratic and stumbling prose in a manner more akin to rapid passages of extended recitative to reflect madness or a sequence of quickly shifting thoughts and events. It is an ideal place in which to shift the narrative focus, as shown in example 2.3. The first level of discourse appears as the Woman’s increasingly anxious state of mind leads to her declarations inflected by fluctuations in the rhythmic pace of speech for the given phrase. The second arises in measure 136 and 137, as unpredictable jumping around the tessitura creates extreme registral contrasts unlike the previous material.
What little conventional, aria-influenced vocal writing does appear within the work is comparably contorted to the point of being almost indistinguishable from recitative. Schoenberg accomplishes this by allowing only brief glimpses of the standard melodic and intervallic arches of a traditional aria that might be found within a nineteenth century opera. There remains one dramaturgically significant exception to this compositional strategy that takes place towards the end of the monodrama in scene four as the Woman laments over the body of her dead lover. Beginning at measure 373, the traces of rhythmic irregularity in recitative are made plainly clear as she asks “Mein lieber... mein einziger Liebling... hast du sie oft geküßt?” Coupled with the unsettled coloring of the voice, the orchestra again punctuates with contrasting moments of rhythmic repose and agitation.
The second portion of the Woman’s progressive rhythmic movement towards pure lyricism materializes in measure 389 as she says “Liebster, Liebster, der Morgen kommt...” Where before the veritable forest of perpetually evolving levels of discourse in timbre and tempo surrounded her, the Woman now exhibits a relative degree of calm as the orchestral forces are subordinated to an accompanimental function. When placed into context with all of the previous music that has sounded, this moment functions as a startlingly effective stylistic level of discourse that signals a major narrative shift.
Further corroborating the pronounced stylistic contrast begun at measure 389, the major cathartic moment of sorrowful release towards the close of *Erwartung* is the ultimate target of this vocal rhythmic trajectory. Contextualized in a more literal sense, this stylistic shift accompanies what is, dramatically speaking, one of the most directly emotive portions of the monodrama. Moving beyond that point, and commencing at measure 411 with the words “Tausend Menschen ziehen vorüber...,” an extended passage of pure lyricism appears in a completely stable framework.\(^6\)

\[^6\] For a closer reading of this specific rhythmic structure within the context of other atonal works by Schoenberg, see Philip Friedheim, “Rhythmic Structure in Schoenberg’s Atonal Compositions,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 19, no. 1 (Spring 1966): 59-72.
Example 3.6. Erwartung, mm. 411–15
Although the Woman is most responsible for warping the obvious operatic surface conventions like aria and recitative, the enveloping orchestral fabric’s disparate levels of discourse provide another important avenue for her embodiment of the forest as a place of expressionistic distortion. Frequently, the orchestra appears to react and reflect the variegated mental states of the Woman and faintly suggests that perhaps the entire setting is a grand delusion invented by a deranged mind. This may first be detected between measures 11 and 16 as the Woman observes her environment initially as a frightening darkness that quickly changes into an idealized locale illuminated by the moon, a shift in the level of discourse clearly designed to function as a narrative change. Ushered in most discernably by the celesta’s ostinato figure and the harp’s descending arpeggios in measure 16, these kinds of briskly flowing variations in the orchestra lend a profound sense of ambiguity to the entire dramatic action.

Example 3.7. Erwartung, mm. 11–16
Just after this moment, the Woman comments upon the song of a cricket and again the orchestral landscape adjusts to reflect this narrative idea with an ostinato figure in the celesta and tremolos in the violins.

Example 3.8. Erwartung, mm. 17–18

The other significant instance of the orchestra’s unique relationship to the Woman appears with her reactions to the varied shadows and dark objects that seem to frighten her. Schoenberg’s penchant for juxtaposing small instrumental gestures within a larger timbral framework is used to great effect in these places, as seen in example 2.9. This juxtaposition vividly illustrates the immediacy of the Woman’s subjective experience and the orchestra’s role in embodying it. The moment of reverie in the moonlight for the Woman, expressed again by the celesta’s ostinato figure, is sporadically interrupted by the sharply defined and short interjections of the piccolo, flute, soprano clarinet, bass
clarinet, and bassoon in measures 93 through 95. From a semiotic perspective, the orchestra seems to give the impression of being an abstract voice of the Woman’s anxiety at witnessing a mysterious and dark shadow that seems to dance as if made of one hundred hands. The forest of competing levels of discourse works in tandem with the Woman’s literal vocal statements to enhance the sensation of her anxieties and seamless shifts in mental focus.

Example 3.9. Erwartung, mm. 90–95

One may witness a similar sensation created by Schoenberg only moments later within the calming respite offered by the moon. Upon dispelling the shadow from her mind for a brief instant, the Woman’s focus has again shifted in measures 96 through 101 to pleasant recollections of her lover. To reflect this, the solo violin and oboe accompany her with two strikingly elegiac melodic lines that pierce through the rest of the relatively static orchestral texture.
Intertextuality in Erwartung

Where levels of discourse may reveal both subtle and bold shifts of focus from a largely macrocosmic examination of the monodrama, there exists another method by which we may grasp this correspondence of embodiment between the metaphorical notions of the forest and the Woman. Intertextuality is a semiotic consideration that looks at examples of appropriation within a given text to enrich the discourse of the work. In literature, one may witness this phenomenon most conspicuously by an author’s use of allusion through which the reader is given the initiative to recognize and draw connections to the external reference. A composer may achieve a similar dialectic
between himself and a listener through the use of quotation. The investigation of any specific instance of a quotation opens the door to a deep complex of interrelations. Schoenberg’s use of intertextuality within Erwartung is designed to augment a dramaturgically important moment towards the close of the monodrama. Intertextuality at this point in the work also calls attention to several of the forest’s metaphorical fin-de-siècle themes of fear, confusion, anxiety, and distortion found through competing levels of discourse. On a more literal level, Schoenberg’s use of quotation necessitates a reevaluation of the belief that Erwartung is an entirely athematic work.

That climactic final portion of Erwartung that begins in measure 411, mentioned earlier as part of a rhythmic movement toward pure aria-inflected lyricism, is of further interest due to Schoenberg’s inclusion of a quotation from one of his earlier compositions, the song Am Wegrand, the sixth of the larger Op. 6 collection from 1905. The text comes from John Mackay, a wildly individualistic anarchist whose poetry was also set by Schoenberg contemporaries in the Austro-German sphere like Richard Strauss with his 1894 Vier Lieder, Op. 27. The first portion of thematic material Schoenberg appropriates from Am Wegrand is the sharply rising bass line prominently featured with doubled octaves in measures 22 through 26.

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61 For a closer examination of intertextuality and how it relates to the larger area of musical levels of discourse, see Hatten, Musical Meaning in Beethoven, 196-202. For a more general contextualization of intertextuality as it relates to the musicological field, see Robert Hatten, “The Place of Intertextuality in Music Studies,” American Journal of Semiotics 3, no. 4 (1985): 69-82.

Example 3.11. *Am Wegrand*, mm. 22–26

The composer grafts this fragment rather organically into the fabric of *Erwartung*. The quotation begins quite literally and is distinct in the monodrama because of the striking sense of rhythmic balance not present in the rest of the work, defined by extreme fluidity and linearity. Even the same notes from *Am Wegrand* are used until the second octave Ds appear. From this point, and in matching the ascending arch of the original phrase, the integrity of the quotation begins to distort and by the middle of measure 412 only vaguely resembles the original material from *Am Wegrand*. Like many of the rapidly changing levels of discourse found throughout *Erwartung*, the quotation is apparent just long
enough for a listener to grasp its function as an intertextual allusion before the Woman’s focus changes yet again.

Example 3.12. Erwartung, mm. 411–412

The actual vocal melody in Am Wegrand that begins on the words “Sehnsucht erfüllt die Bezirke...” at measure 22 also fulfills an important intertextual function at a climactic point in the monodrama. Distinguished by its frequent use of the semitone intervals, especially between the range of C♯ and F♭, the first two measures of the vocal melody is actually transcribed note-for-note to the clarinet in Erwartung at measure 411 and is given the aurally significant hauptstimme marking by Schoenberg. This indicates to a performer that the phrase is intended to be brought out and penetrate through the larger orchestral texture.
Example 3.13. Vocal Line in *Am Wegrand*, mm. 22–26

![Vocal Line in Am Wegrand, mm. 22–26](image)

Sehnsucht erfüllt die Bezirke des Lebens,
welche Erfüllung nicht füllen will,

Example 3.14. Clarinet Melody in *Erwartung*, mm. 411

![Clarinet Melody in Erwartung, mm. 411](image)

Such a clear instance of self-quotation by Schoenberg should not be considered merely a case of artistic license or an indulgence in surreptitious communication. Seen from a context of intertextuality, the composer’s choice in utilizing this specific song lies in textual similarities that shed an important light on those anxiety-inducing metaphorical themes ascribed to the forest. The initial words that begin the song: “Tausend Menschen ziehen vorüber....” are the same words spoken in *Erwartung* by the Woman beginning at measure 411 where the *Am Wegrand* quotation appears, pointing towards underlying dramatic parallels connecting the works. In *Am Wegrand*, the subject searches for a kind of artistic satisfaction that carries religious overtones. However, by the end of the poem, the narrator seems frustrated by failure at his inability to achieve this comfort and resigns himself to death. Within *Erwartung* we observe a similar situation as the Woman seeks a comparable sense of spiritual fulfillment as we witness the desperate search for her lover. Her quest too ends in frustration.
Conclusion

Free atonality was still a relatively new direction for Schoenberg when he composed *Erwartung* in 1909. In defending his newfound musical vernacular, the composer frequently invoked a historical defense of his practices, describing himself as the natural product of a line of experimentation and innovation that led straight back to Beethoven. Reinforcing this notion, Schoenberg was never dismissive of his earlier works that were largely inflected by Wagnerian conceptions of scale and construction as well as ideas of cohesive motivic construction and development from Brahms. This is a highly significant notion as it relates to the reference to *Am Wegrand* in *Erwartung*. Through an intertextual allusion to his own previously composed music, Schoenberg has created an interesting semiotic dialogue that crosses boundaries between two stylistic periods. This constitutes an example of poietic intertextuality, whereby the given texts that an author may bring into their writing, in this case one of Schoenberg’s own earlier compositions, inform our semiotic understanding.\(^{63}\) Both the libretto and quotation also provide simultaneous sources of historical intertextuality, in which a text is studied in relation to its own historical time.\(^{64}\) The poietic appropriation of *Am Wegrand* into *Erwartung* acts as a confounding disruption to our standard conception of the linearity of history and segmentation of an artist’s creative phases. Through the quotation of one of his own earlier works of the late romantic period, Schoenberg refers back quite


\(^{64}\) Ibid., 12. The confusion over the exact degree of authorship between Pappenheim and Schoenberg in collaborating on the libretto to *Erwartung* remains a contested area of scholarship. While Pappenheim may have created a completed draft of the text, it is clear through archival evidence that Schoenberg heavily edited and added his own embellishments to the original scenario. For a complete overview of the libretto’s creative genesis, see Bryan Simms, “Whose Idea was *Erwartung*?,” in *Constructive Dissonance: Arnold Schoenberg and the Transformations of Twentieth-Century Culture*, ed. Juliane Brand and Christopher Hailey (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997), 100-11.
consciously to the tradition from which he has developed and which he is simultaneously subverting within the framework of free atonality. More abstractly, the forest where the dramatic action and intertextuality takes place acts as the stimulant from which the immediate expression of feeling offered by free atonality is given an unrestricted ability to mix distortion together with fear, anxiety, and confusion.

The often volatile mixing of these elements by Schoenberg lends the Woman’s narrative a highly questionable degree of reliability. Whether the forest of Erwartung is one of the mind or of a literal place is left to the observer. In another of Schoenberg’s sketches for Erwartung, we may observe how the composer represented this ambiguity in the visual idiom. The stark bifurcation between the brightly lit and idyllic setting on the left, counterpoised by the dark and gloomy forest on the right is accentuated by a solitary figure that seems to straddle the two. This body of work left behind by Schoenberg speaks to an interdisciplinary conception of musical creation that would come to play an even larger role in the fully-fledged music drama Die glückliche Hand.

Example 3.15. Schoenberg’s Sketch for Erwartung (ca. 1911)
Within this tempest of subjective experience, there are particularly worldly references to the moon that we find in the melodrama as a recurring motivic fixture. Frequently invoked for purposes of illumination, the Woman’s interplay with the moon is confounding in terms of whether it calms or aggravates her anxieties. On the one hand, moonlight provides moments of respite in the first three scenes. Within the dramatic action of the fourth however, the moon begins to take on sinister undertones and is described by the Woman at one point as deceitful. The next major freely atonal work by Schoenberg, *Pierrot lunaire*, inverts these sorts of ambiguities in *Erwartung* in such a way that the moon is quite clearly leading the titular character towards madness. The forest of Pierrot’s mind is plainly laid out for the listener from the outset, and the moon functions as the metaphorical catalyst for expressionism to distort historical conventions and traditions explicitly.
Chapter 4
The Moon

The Moon’s Significance in *Pierrot lunaire*

Like those of the forest, the themes Schoenberg assimilated into the expressionist musical vernacular concerning the moon’s ability to distort mental stability or induce madness have roots in much older traditions than those of the Viennese fin-de-siècle. As far back as the Roman Empire, Suetonius alleged that the famously insane emperor Caligula conversed with the moon on a regular basis and even invited it into his bed.\(^{65}\) Modern historical research has also postulated that it is likely the emperor suffered from epilepsy, an illness frequently associated with lunar phenomenon.\(^{66}\) In more recent times, researchers have probed connections between the moon and a number of different afflictions including suicidal tendencies, explosive violence, and psychiatric illnesses. While evidence remains largely inconclusive or self-contradictory, the notion of lunar cycles influencing human behavior remains an enduring cultural marker even today.\(^{67}\) When coupling the rather volatile state of the Viennese cultural zeitgeist at the fin-de-siècle with far less authoritative scientific knowledge available over a century ago, it is understandable why these ideas would have remained so entrenched. The moon’s mysterious nature and unseen ability to drive the human mind to madness also accompanied the rise of the psychiatric discipline and the deep introversion of Freudian


psychoanalysis. It seems only natural that the moon’s distortive effects on the human mind would have found their way into artistic circles. Especially for Schoenberg, the interest in distorting convention at the heart of expressionist music found a uniquely suitable catalyst in the moon and its effects upon a stock character from Commedia dell’arte.

Albert Giraud’s 1884 poem cycle *Pierrot lunaire: rondels bergamasques* focuses upon the external and internal worlds of Pierrot, a buffoonish clown who is frequently tormented by his love for Columbine and her interest in Harlequin. As with so many other symbolist and decadent artists at the close of the nineteenth century, Pierrot came to represent the artist and the continuing struggle to make sense of a rapidly changing world.

Example 4.1. Cézanne, *Pierrot and Harlequin* (1888)
Even before composing the melodrama *Pierrot lunaire*, Schoenberg was not unfamiliar with the decadent movement in the literary field and had already cultivated a keen interest in symbolist poetry, demonstrated through settings of Stefan George texts. Tied to Verlaine and Mallarmé in France, George’s poetry acted as a bridge between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, serving as the textual source for Schoenberg’s pioneering work with atonality in *Das Buch der hängenden Gärten*, Op. 15 (1908–09). The Belgian symbolist Maurice Maeterlinck also acted as a creative stimulant for Schoenberg with the tone poem *Pelleas und Melisande*, Op. 5 (1902–03). In 1916 Schoenberg adopted the character of Pierrot as an embodiment of the creative minds trying to function within a hostile society that viewed them as little more than clowns:

> It is banal to say that we [artists] are all moonstruck fools; what the poet means is that we are trying our best to wipe off the imaginary moon spots from our clothing at the same time that we worship our crosses. Let us be thankful that we have our wounds: With them we have something that helps us to place a low value on matter. From the scorn for our wounds comes our scorn for our enemies and our power to sacrifice our lives to a moonbeam.⁶⁸

Returning to Giraud’s original cycle, the invocation of tradition through the use of a specific poetic form, in this case, the rondel, plays a role in the semiotic approach that will later guide our understanding of how the moon functions within Schoenberg’s *Pierrot lunaire*. In Giraud’s work, the rondel is used deliberately and strictly as it matches with the artist’s own personal distaste for open forms of verse not tied to a regular meter, rhythm, or pattern.⁶⁹ The aural and dramatic effect of using such a tightly closed form is the perceptible disconnect it creates between poems in the cycle. Each

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stands as an individual unit, forsaking the traditional multi-poem narrative for short episodic scenes that do not necessarily bear relations to one another. For example, the rondel entitled “III. Pierrot the Dandy” presents the titular character as he paints his face with the moonlight while the preceding poem, “II. Décor,” speaks of purple and gold birds. The poem that follows, “IV. Disappointment,” shares no connections as it depicts a dinner party. Occasionally however, Giraud does group specific rondels into a coherent form that gravitates around a specific theme. This may be observed with four rondels that frame Pierrot as a religious figure through overt use of religious imagery: “XXVII: The Church,” “XXVIII: Evocation,” “XXIX: Red Mass,” and “XXX: Crosses.”

**Markedness Within Pierrot lunaire**

In Schoenberg’s setting of *Pierrot lunaire*, there is an appropriation of conventional musical traditions comparable to Giraud’s own nod to a traditional form. Although appearing on a limited basis, these specific instances of invoking time-honored historical convention within the melodrama constitute what Hatten refers to as “markedness.” Defined concisely as a valuation given to differences and oppositions, Hatten states that:

> The marked term specifies phonological, grammatical, or conceptual information which is not made specific by the more general, unmarked term; thus, the unmarked term may be used either when the opposition does not matter or when the exclusion of marked information is required.\(^7^1\)

A particular musical example of this phenomenon is seen in the classical tradition with the narrow range of expressive definition typically ascribed to the minor mode versus that

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\(^{71}\) Hatten, *Musical Meaning in Beethoven*, 34.
of the major mode. Minor is constantly intended to convey the tragic whereas major carries not only the opposite connotations, but also is opened to wider modes of expression like heroism, the idyllic, comedic, and even occasionally, sadness. However, the deeply atonal musical landscape of Pierrot lunaire falls well outside the purview of the classical or even romantic period with regards to expressive meaning. To navigate around this vernacular issue, we must focus upon the conceptual information that Hatten contends markedness may transmit to a listener. As an important thematic fixture in the work, the historically attributed meanings and themes the moon signifies provide the vehicle for a semiotic understanding of the melodrama as it relates to the appropriation of historical music genres.

Dramatically speaking, the moon fulfills a metaphorical function within the expressionist musical language of Pierrot lunaire as a distortive force, similar in some ways to features exhibited by the forest and its interactions with the Woman in Erwartung. The way in which both works achieve this subversive goal is different however. The major condition setting Erwartung apart is that the distortion is obscured by heavy degrees of abstraction with intertextuality and varying levels of discourse. In Pierrot lunaire, we are given more stripped-down, visceral, and readily identifiable instances of expressionistic distortion. Semiotically, the moon’s prominent reference throughout the work acts as a force that twists and perverts not only Pierrot’s mind, but also those marked time-honored musical conventions and genres that are referenced. Structurally, this reading is given further credence when considering the tripartite layout of the melodrama that divides the twenty-one poems of Giraud that Schoenberg selected

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72 Ibid., 36. Hatten treats this phenomenon of the major mode evoking the tragic as a privative opposition, (presence of A vs. absence of A).
into groupings of seven. In each of the three parts of *Pierrot lunaire*, marked expressive musical genres are invoked, sometimes distinguished by their actual naming in parenthesis below the title of the given movement. In the first portion of the work, Pierrot is shown as drunk from the moon and speaks of love, sex, and religion. The fifth poem, entitled *Valse de Chopin*, is an exceedingly vivid first example of how markedness functions within this melodrama. Here, markedness operates upon two levels: we are given the marked connotation of a waltz as well as an even greater expressive specificity through the naming of Frédéric Chopin. In Schoenberg’s hands the genre and one of its most conspicuous composers are warped by Pierrot’s moondrunkeness into a barely recognizable form. While retaining the rhythmically lilting triple meter pull of a standard waltz in the piano, the harmonic and intervallic content, augmented by the added instrumental timbres, create a strikingly disconcerting dance, untethered from its historical function or place.

Example 4.2. *Pierrot lunaire, V: Valse de Chopin, mm. 1–8*
The markedness of this specific genre and its usage within *Pierrot lunaire* has important connections to the cultural circumstances in which Schoenberg found himself at the fin-de-siècle. By the middle of the 1910s, the Viennese waltz had become synonymous with the bourgeois veneer of theatricality and decadence so despised by writers like Karl Kraus and satirized within the pages of *Die Fackel*. To place such a ubiquitous cultural marker at this point in *Pierrot lunaire* shows just how deftly markedness may imbue a decidedly abstract work with cultural resonance. When compared to the entire dramatic trajectory of the melodrama, the waltz’s appearance is significant because this first portion of the work is essentially a fantasy world of Pierrot’s invention. Certainly on the eve of World War I as nationalism and political discourses grew to ever more toxic levels, the culture that the waltz represented seemed steeped in its own dream-like reverie, blissfully unaware of what was to come. Maurice Ravel’s *La valse*, with its cataclysmic and destructive single-movement account of the waltz genre, similarly alluded to the crisis of European civilization that followed the “Great War.”

The second portion of *Pierrot lunaire* is far darker than the first and encompasses a nightmarish place where death and religion are mixed, culminating in Pierrot’s imagined beheading by the moon. Opening the section with *Nacht*, Schoenberg invokes the marked musical form of a passacaglia, a form in which a given bass ostinato is used repetitively and often developed. For example, Johann Sebastian Bach’s *Passacaglia and Fugue in C Minor*, BWV 582, one of the preeminent works in the genre, utilizes an ingenious series of rigorous variations upon a relatively simple eight-measure passacaglia theme.

73 Ravel’s earliest working titles the work were actually *Vienne* and *Wien* (French and German for Vienna).
Example 4.3. Bach, *Passacaglia and Fugue in C Minor*, mm. 1–8

![Example 4.3](image)

Schoenberg subverts and distorts the convention of this expressive medium by truncating his bass ostinato to only three notes, E–G–Eb, and then using them organically as the creative germ from which the entire song grows. To achieve this, the movement avoids a rigidly strict sense of repetition with the three-note figure. Instead, Schoenberg employs rhythmic and transpositional variations upon the original bass ostinato, an influence arising from his concept of “developing variation.” The three-measure introduction stacks three iterations of the bass ostinato between the subterranean register of the piano, the cello, and bass clarinet. From this point, the bass motive appears in each measure of the movement in one guise or another.

Example 4.4. *Pierrot lunaire, VIII: Nacht*, mm. 1–7

![Example 4.4](image)
The first ten measures culminate in the vocalist actually singing the original bass ostinato at the word *verschwiegen* (concealed), sans sprechstimme. This moment provides a highly impactful timbral contrast that also functions as a twist on the word’s meaning. Following this point, a series of rhythmic and transpositional variations occur in the bass clarinet and piano between measures 11 and 16. The bass clarinet simultaneously transposes the bass ostinato and truncates the original rhythmic character to three eighth notes that the piano begins to imitate in measure 12.

Example 4.5. *Pierrot lunaire, VIII: Nacht*, mm. 10–16
The other appearance of markedness at this middle point in the melodrama occurs with *Galgenlied*. Here, the marked associations typically attached to the German lieder tradition create a cruel sense of irony and black humor to match Pierrot’s increasingly deranged thoughts that are warped by the moon.

Example 4.6. *Pierrot lunaire, XII: Galgenlied*
By recognizing the markedness of the expressive genre of German lieder and its reference in the title, several instances of expressionistic distortion become observable. Firstly, the sheer brevity of the movement, lasting little more than twenty seconds, highlights an important subversion of tradition that may be only vaguely sensed throughout the rest of the melodrama. As already discussed, the poetic framework of *Pierrot lunaire* is based upon the rondel, a form distinguished by its rigid structural layout. Schoenberg largely ignores the rhythmic and metrical patterns of Giraud’s original text and instead sets the words in a manner inflected by the natural cadences of speech, augmented with the choice of sprechstimme. In recognizing the invocation of the German lieder expressive genre, a listener would expect the composer to bend the musical setting of the text towards those metric and rhythmic patterns of the original poem. The complete lack of this standard convention in *Galgenlied* subverts the entire historical notion of German lieder that a listener has come to expect. Further corroborating this subversion of the expressive genre is the noticeable absence of the piano in this aphoristic gallows song. The piano is an instrument inextricably tied to the lieder tradition and by removing it from *Galgenlied*, Schoenberg places yet another obstacle in our path to confound the understanding of this movement as a song.

The final portion of *Pierrot lunaire* is somewhat more relaxed in overall tone and finds the titular character tormented by nostalgic memories of the past as he returns home. In this final third of the monodrama, we may again observe an expressionistic twisting of the historical conventions of other marked expressive genres, found most conspicuously first with the movement *Serenade*. Built upon a rich body of literature dating back from Brahms and Tchaikovsky to Beethoven and Mozart, the serenade is an
expressive genre principally distinguished by an emphasis on pleasant and recognizable melodies. Arising out of the earlier portion of the eighteenth century, the serenade was often designated as either a vocal or instrumental work to be performed outdoors with honorific or even amorous intentions, befitting the desire for simple melodious content.\textsuperscript{74} Schoenberg presents an opening to his \textit{Serenade} that is strangely tuneful and at the same time subversive in its distortion of the original expressive genre. Dissonant intervals of a semitone, tritone, and seventh abound, coupled with a hollow natural harmonic at the peak of the very first ascent, stark pizzicatos, and affect-laden glissandi. More delicate shadings of expression may be observed where longer held notes occur, apparent from the indicated dynamic swells and contractions.


In the \textit{Serenade}, Schoenberg again invokes the notion of a waltz in his expressive indication to the performers with “Sehr langsamer walzer.” Whereas in the first part of \textit{Pierrot lunaire} the marked genre of a waltz by Chopin led to an aurally discernable instance of stylistic appropriation, there is little to no rhythmic or metrical drive that

actually evokes it here. Dramatically speaking, this is a subtly nuanced method of showing the continuing mental deterioration of Pierrot that began with the moondrunkeness of part one. As with Erwartung, we find the underlying instrumental fabric augmenting this sense of a progressive shift in mental faculties through evoking specific aspects of the text that are uttered by the main character, presenting a uniquely interior view of his warped mind. The entire poem hinges around the image of Pierrot grotesquely bowing his viola and the deeply expressive melodic lines of the cello give a firmly aural representation:

Tormenting his viol/With grotesque, discordant bow—/Like a heron standing on one claw—/He pinches out a painful air./Suddenly Cassander intervenes/And scolds the nightly acrobat/Tormenting his viol/With grotesque discordant bow./Throwing aside the viol,/With ultradelicate grace/Pierrot now takes him by his tie/And zebra-stripes the oldster’s paunch/With grotesque, discordant bow.\footnote{Albert Giraud, \textit{Pierrot lunaire}, 13}

The fact that the cello in the \textit{Serenade} replaces the Baroque viol imagery featured so prominently in Giraud’s poem again speaks to the cultural milieu in which Schoenberg lived and worked. At the fin-de-siècle, one of the great anxieties was a sense of decadence and decay as previously time-honored boundaries and conventions evaporated before the eyes of Viennese citizenry. Whether it was the breakdown of old political orders and discourses or radical redefinitions of aesthetic beauty in the arts, there was a profoundly disquieting sense of society hurtling forward into an unknown future as tradition fell away into the past. Compositionally, Schoenberg creates a cognitive dissonance as the image of Pierrot and his viol clashes against what is actually sounded by the cello.\footnote{One could make the case that, if Schoenberg had composed specifically for the viol at this point in \textit{Pierrot lunaire}, the music would contain an even greater degree of markedness.} Although often remaining within the viol range, there are just enough
interjections of the cello’s lower range to indicate that one is not actually hearing the instrument Pierrot speaks of. In the *Serenade*, we find Schoenberg playing with, subverting, and even occasionally dissolving fundamental cultural and aural boundaries between instruments.\(^ {77} \)

The final instance of markedness found within *Pierrot lunaire* follows just after *Serenade* with *Heimfahrt*, given the subheading “Barcarole.” A similarly well-established expressive genre with a historical body of work that rose to prominence in the nineteenth century, the barcarolle typically falls into a 6/8 or 12/8 meter and is often intended to evoke the oar strokes of a Venetian gondola on the water. Mendelssohn explicitly evoked this particular extramusical characteristic in the sixth of his own *Sechs Lieder ohne Worte*, Op. 30 with the subtitle “Venetianisches Gondellied” (Venetian gondola song). Arpeggiations outlining harmonies in the left hand provide support to the lightly hanging cantabile melody in the right hand.

**Example 4.8. Mendelssohn, *Sechs Lieder ohne Worte*: VI, mm. 6–14**

\(^ {77} \) It is worth noting that Schoenberg himself was a trained cellist. Knowing the connections the composer saw between himself and Pierrot, this makes for an interesting potential case of the artist covertly interjecting himself into the work.
Frédéric Chopin also contributed to the genre, perhaps most famously with the
*Barcarolle in F Sharp Major*, Op. 60. As with Mendelssohn, there is a preoccupation
with using the underlying arpeggiations of the lower register as the driver of both
harmonic movement and the lilting rhythm of the barcarolle.

Example 4.9. Chopin, *Barcarolle in F Sharp Major*, mm. 4–9

Franz Liszt turned to this same genre in his late period and crafted his own macabre
warping of harmonic, melodic, and developmental tradition with the first *La lugubre
gondola*. Even the original rhythmic drive of the barcarolle is confounded with the tied
eighth notes that occur every other measure. The musical material above is both
directionless, recalling certain aspects of Wagner’s own “endless melodies,” and
repetitive, paying heed to the original extramusical idea of a Venetian gondola.
Example 4.10. Liszt, *La lugubre gondola*, mm. 1–11

Geographically, Schoenberg’s inclusion of his own barcarolle at this point in *Pierrot lunaire* is quite significant to the overall narrative. As we reach the close of the melodrama, Pierrot is attempting to return home to Italy and recapture his old identity. In so doing, he conjures up visions of the past, making the use of an expressive genre so steeped in Italian culture a particularly apropos choice when considering the character’s own creative genealogy. The particular image given in *Heimfahrt* is that of Pierrot traveling south down a river on a boat constructed of vivid symbolist imagery:

> A Moonbeam is his oar./His boat a water lily./On a pale river, with breezes aft./He now returns to Bergamo./The wave sings a humid scale/Beneath the incisive craft./A Moonbeam is his oar./His boat a water lily./The snowy kind of pantomime/Proudly smooths his wisp of hair./The green horizon burns/Like flaming punch in a bowl./A Moonbeam is his oar.

From this point, the distortive and subversive qualities of the expressionist musical language, given personification through the moon, once again functions as a confounding presence when hearing Pierrot’s recollections. The downward spiral of madness that began with moondrunkeness in part one has not subsided, it has in fact grown more pervasive, warping even Pierrot’s memories.

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78 Albert Giraud, *Pierrot lunaire*, 73.
Schoenberg is able to reflect the idea of warped memories in *Heimfahrt* in a manner similar to that in *Serenade*. The first two measures begin with a light rhythmic cadence from the pizzicato strings that vaguely evokes the barcarolle as found in the nineteenth century romantic tradition. The outlined chord falls far outside the range of the tradition established by Chopin and Mendelssohn, but is sufficient in providing a sense of the expressive genre’s gently lilting character.

Example 4.11. *Pierrot lunaire, XX: Heimfahrt*, mm. 1–2

The regular rocking back and forth of Schoenberg’s barcarolle is given further reinforcement beginning in measure 3. As the pizzicato arpeggiations of the violin and cello continue, the newly added phrase structure of the clarinet melody and accompanimental figures from the piano accentuate the metrical contour of the overarching 6/8 time signature.
Once the vocalist enters at measure 6 and utters the word *Mondstrahl* (moonbeam), the previously well-defined lilt of the barcarolle is briefly obscured by the flute’s frenetic appearance. Throughout the remainder of *Heimfahrt*, these kinds of brief flashes of distortion become a recurring aural feature.
Example 4.13. Pierrot lunaire, XX: Heimfahrt, mm. 6–9
Conclusion

When contextualizing each of these examples of markedness into the larger dramatic arch of the narrative in *Pierrot lunaire*, we perceive an appropriation of expressive genres that functions around individually unrelated instances of distortion. In tracing the gradual mental deterioration of Pierrot, the subversion of these marked expressive genres like the waltz, passacaglia, serenade, and barcarolle grows increasingly antagonistic with regards to our expectations. As the melodrama progresses, it becomes difficult to distinguish between the stylistic idiosyncrasies of the traditional genres and their forms once filtered through the distortive lens of expressionism. Expanding our purview to include logistical dimensions of the work, even specific aesthetic choices made by Schoenberg may be understood as abstract uses of markedness. When all of these considerations are taken in totality, the cultural anxieties of dissolving of boundaries that permeated Vienna at the fin-de-siècle seem especially relevant to understanding the conception *Pierrot lunaire*.

These more abstract examples of markedness are identifiable primarily by Schoenberg’s creative use self-contradictions and inconsistencies. For example, when recalling the androgynous symbolism attached to the snake that accompanies Hygieia in Klimt’s *Medicine*, one finds a similar hermaphroditic quality to the composer’s treatment of the character of Pierrot: he is a male role sung by a woman. Both the visual and aural confusion of a female performing as a male is heightened by the specific poems Schoenberg sets that obscure the sense of whom exactly is “speaking” over the course of the work.79 More subtle shadings of disintegrated boundaries abound in the myriad self-

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79 Pedneault-Deslauriers, Julie. “Pierrot L.” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 64, no. 3 (Fall 2011): 624.
contradictions built into the logistical demands of the work. While employing an ensemble of diverse instruments, and all the marked connotations that carries with it, our expectations are subverted as each soloist fulfills a function more akin to a loose collection of individuals pitted against the others. Additionally, the doubling demands required of the flute, clarinet, and violin, coupled with the constantly shifting instrumentation of each movement, further destabilizes the conventional notions attached to an ensemble. In fact, throughout the duration of the melodrama, this fractured group plays all together in only six movements. *Pierrot lunaire* also significantly breaks down boundaries between high and low art. For all of the sophistication ascribed to this melodrama that is presented to the audience as a concert piece, again carrying marked cultural associations of genre and propriety, undercurrents remain of the performance art traditions in German cabaret. The most conspicuous of these elements is the prominent use of *sprechstimme* that bends the voice to a place between singing and speaking, itself a form of timbral androgyny. Schoenberg himself worked at the Überbrettl, the first German cabaret founded in Berlin by Ernst von Wolzogen in 1901 that sought to cater the genre to a well-read audience and also presented works by such luminaries as Arthur Schnitzler. Although Schoenberg’s exact duties remain unclear, his exposure to the singing style and the expressed desire to intellectualize the risqué was almost certain.  

One may observe such activities with the advertisement posters that conspicuously recalled aspects of the French art nouveau tradition.

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Example 4.14. Überbrett Poster (ca. 1901)

All the structural ambiguities presented play a direct role in understanding the progressive change in Schoenberg’s stylistic direction, culminating in the next major work that the composer completed. With *Die glückliche Hand*, Schoenberg synthesizes and combines varying aspects of his previous approaches to the expressionist musical vernacular. The result is a densely compact music drama in which the undisguised mind itself is used as the spark from which convention is distorted. Drawing upon *Erwartung*, Schoenberg appropriates the constant narrative shifts in focus arising from competing
levels of discourse. That compositional sense of a stream-of-consciousness that defines the musical and dramatic topography of the monodrama is subordinated in Pierrot lunaire. The leaner instrumentation of a small ensemble, the aphoristic symbolist texts, and the evocation of marked expressive genres lend an even greater potency to the direct expression of feeling that Schoenberg continually found himself groping towards. The incremental development of expressionist music that began with Erwartung and refined in Pierrot lunaire finally meets its most mature realization in Die glückliche Hand.
Chapter 5
The Mind

The Mind’s Role in *Die glückliche Hand*

In *Erwartung* and *Pierrot lunaire*, the primary metaphorical significance of the forest and moon are their roles as catalysts for the expressionist musical vernacular to twist and distort given conventions. Quite naturally, the mind, tinged with the cultural connections to the rise of psychoanalysis and psychiatry, comes to the foreground in each of these works through subtly nuanced ways. In *Erwartung* particularly, the ambiguity of whether we are seeing inside a person’s mind or are witnessing their actions in the real world is the crux that allows for Schoenberg’s expressionist musical language to take shape. With *Die glückliche Hand* however, one is plunged unequivocally into the mental interiority of the solitary character of the Man with little doubt. Those previously free flowing shifts in narrative focus of *Erwartung*, facilitated by levels of discourse, have become more organized and concentrated. Pure visual spectacle is also integrated as an inextricable part of the music drama with intricate lighting designs and instructions provided in the score that act as reflections and instinctive reactions of the Man’s mind. Even philosophically, Schoenberg called upon his vast reserves of literary knowledge and poured the ongoing aesthetic principles he developed into the libretto’s crafting. In every sense of the word, one may consider *Die glückliche Hand* to be Schoenberg’s preeminent expressionist essay in relation to the Wagnerian concept of a *Gesamtkunstwerk*.\(^{81}\)

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When considering the deep biographical connections this work has to its creator, one may understand the mind’s metaphorical function in this music drama as a highly personalized form of memory. This type of memory is not overly literal however; it largely refracts personal elements through the prism of other contemporary issues circulating at the time, most notable among them, the struggle between the sexes. Kokoschka broached this idea at its most viciously primal with his controversial 1909 play Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen. Otto Weininger tackled the same idea with his pseudoscientific text Sex and Character. Published in 1903, Sex and Character mixed bald misogyny and elements of anti-Semitism to demonstrate what Weininger saw as the masculine and feminine aspects inherent in all human beings. Also dedicating a sizeable portion of Sex and Character to the study of “genius,” Weininger later became a small celebrity after committing suicide in Beethoven’s house in Vienna. Schoenberg’s own memory at this time was clouded by not only Viennese cultural anxieties and rejection of his creative work, but also distinct troubles in his personal life. Beginning in the summer of 1908, his wife, Mathilde, aroused suspicions of an affair after committing to an extended stay with the young artist Richard Gerstl, a man whose stylistic innovations in painting made him a forerunner to much of what would come in expressionism and whose talents almost certainly contributed to Schoenberg’s own interest in the discipline.
Example 5.1. Gerstl, *Self Portrait Laughing* (1908)

In the fall of that year, Mathilde returned to Schoenberg, leaving the young artist distraught. Quickly entering into a vicious downward spiral, Gerstl’s depression reached a grisly climax one evening as he gathered his paintings onto the floor and set his studio on fire before stabbing and hanging himself over the entire burning wreckage.\(^8^2\)

Compounding problems on top of the obvious shock of his friend’s betrayal and subsequent suicide, Mathilde’s return to Schoenberg did not signal a return to marital

bliss. The entire affair seems to have had a lasting effect upon the relationship and Mathilde died in a sanatorium outside of Vienna in 1923. These tempestuous real-world circumstances translate and contribute to deeply biographical undercurrents in Die glückliche Hand, absent in the entirely fictional plot of Erwartung.

Another, more positive, influence upon Schoenberg’s mind at the time came from Russian painter Wassily Kandinsky who worked in Germany at the turn of the century. As much a philosopher as he was a painter, Kandinsky eventually published his theories in 1912 with the groundbreaking text Über das Geistige in der Kunst (Concerning the Spiritual in Art). Positing his own version of the modernist historical defense, Kandinsky likens artistic innovation to the image of a progressing pyramid. What is found to be cutting edge one day, at the top of the pyramid, invariably becomes commonplace and traditional, moving down progressively into the lower portions of the pyramid. At the apex of this pyramid stands the artist, who acts as a harbinger, ushering in new ideas that eventually become standard conventions. Fundamental to this entire conception of artistic creation was Kandinsky’s belief that art should arise out of an inner necessity comprising three “mystical elements”:

1. Every artist, as a creator, has something in him which calls for expression (this is the element of personality).
2. Every artist, as child of his age, is impelled to express the spirit of his age (this is the element of style)—dictated by the period and particular country to which the artist belongs (it is doubtful how long the latter distinction will continue to exist).
3. Every artist, as a servant of art, has to

83 Joan Smith, Schoenberg and His Circle: A Viennese Portrait, 174.
84 Bojan Bujić, Arnold Schoenberg (London: Phaidon Press, 2011), 78
85 Wassily Kandinsky, Concerning the Spiritual in Art, trans. Michael Sadler (Boston, MA: MFA Publications: 2006), 14-15. Beethoven is singled out as an exceptional example of the solitary artistic genius that stands at the apex of the pyramid.
help the cause of art (this is the element of pure artistry, which is constant in all ages and among all nationalities).  

Music in particular seemed to Kandinsky the art form best suited to demonstrate the importance of internal necessity. Rather than reproducing natural phenomenon, as so often found in the visual arts, music was distinct in its abstract nature that was a direct expression of the artist’s innermost soul. Schoenberg offered a strikingly similar appraisal of his own musical development in a 1909 letter to Feruccio Busoni concerning his aphoristic *Sechs kleine Klavierstücke*, Op. 19:

I strive for: complete liberation from all forms from all symbols of cohesion and of logic. Thus: away with ‘motivic working out.’ Away with harmony as cement or bricks of a building. Harmony is *expression* and nothing else. Then: Away with Pathos! Away with protracted ten-ton scores, from erected or constructed towers, rocks and other massive claptrap. My music must be *brief*. Concise! In two notes: not built, but *expressed*!! And the results I wish for: no stylized and protracted emotion. People are not like that: it is *impossible* for a person to have only *one* sensation at a time. One has *thousands* simultaneously. And these thousands can no more readily be added together than an apple and a pear. They go their own ways. And this variegation, this multifariousness, this *illogicality* which our senses demonstrate, the illogicality presented by their interacts, set forth by some mounting rush of blood, by some reaction of the senses or the nerves, this I should like to have in my music. It should be an expression of feeling, as our feelings, which brings us in contact with our subconscious, really are and no false child of feelings *conscious logic.*

Kandinsky believed that painters who wished to express this same kind of inner necessity should seek to incorporate musical methods into their own art, going even so far as to call music “the ultimate teacher.” In advocating for this approach, Kandinsky made clear that for the integration of borrowed forms and methods to be successful, the blending must not be applied superficially, but operate on a fundamental level in the artwork.

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86 Ibid., 66.


88 Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, 41.
Demonstrating himself how this endeavor may be undertaken and accomplished, Kandinsky created ten vivid *Compositions* that illustrate his own synesthetic connections between sound and color.

**Example 5.2. Kandinsky, *Composition VII* (1913)**

![Composition VII](image)

This deeply interdisciplinary accord championed by Kandinsky naturally attracted Schoenberg as he constantly sought ever-deeper levels of pure expression in the freely atonal musical language. In fact, the unique convergence of their respective aesthetic aims largely seems to have primed both for a period of intense correspondence after Kandinsky attended a concert of Schoenberg’s music in Munich during January of 1911.⁸⁹ Realizing the parallels between their artistic positions, the painter introduced himself in a letter from January 1911 and stated:

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⁸⁹ Bujić, *Arnold Schoenberg*, 82.
In your works, you have realized what I, albeit in uncertain form, have so greatly longed for in music. The independent progress through their own destinies, the independent life of the individual voices in your compositions, is exactly what I am trying to find in my paintings.90

The two creative minds later met in person and stimulated one another’s various creative projects, even collaborating in 1911 on Der Blaue Reiter Almanach (The Blue Rider Almanac).91

The deep impression left on Schoenberg’s mind from both of these artists fundamentally inflected his conception of Die glückliche Hand. In the first place, Schoenberg opted to compose the libretto for this music drama himself, lending further credence to the biographical overtones of the work. As with Erwartung, Schoenberg left behind a large body of detailed stage sketches that show just how much painterly considerations, originally learned from Richard Gerstl, factored into the construction of this music drama. The drawing for the first scene, shown in example 4.3., is a prime example of the starkly muted nature in which Schoenberg originally envisaged the opening scene. The twelve faces that make up the perverted vision of an ancient Greek chorus moralize to the Man about his desires for worldly success.92 All of their gazes point squarely upon his figure at the center of the stage.


91 Antonio Baldassarre, “‘Among the Best Striving Today, There are Secret Relationships’: The Kandinsky-Schoenberg Connection Reconsidered.” Music in Art 29, no. 1/2 (Spring–Fall 2004): 250. Schoenberg contributed an article entitled The Relationship to the Text and a facsimile of his song Herzgewächse. Kandinsky included his experimental theater work The Yellow Sound that included music, now lost, by Russian composer Thomas de Hartmann.

Kandinsky’s color theories are similarly blended into the work’s dramaturgy. For example, the opening scene makes conscious allusions to color as the solitary Man struggles with a monster on his back. Looking on through the dark violet background of the stage are the twelve faces, six men and six women, illuminated by green light. Similar references to color are embedded in the extreme specificity given to the character’s garments. The Man wears a brown-yellow jacket and tattered black trousers while the Woman over whom he pines wears a light violet dress with yellow and red roses in her hair.
The dramatic use of lighting further corroborates the deep creative impact Kandinsky’s color theories and thoughts on synesthesia had on Schoenberg’s mind and how they translated into the musical anatomy of the music drama. Throughout *Die glückliche Hand*, the observer is treated to a dynamic use of visualized color on the stage that some have postulated reflects symbolic meanings Kandinsky himself explained in extremely exhaustive detail. In Schoenberg’s hands however, color symbolism seems a secondary or ancillary element. More significantly, the colored lighting serves as a dramatic apparatus, every bit as important as the orchestra itself. It is integral to propelling the work forward and adding a new dimension to the shifting levels of discourse broached with *Erwartung*. 
Levels of Discourse in *Die glückliche Hand*

The frequent narrative shifts in focus found in *Erwartung* were largely driven by textual declarations from the vocalist and supported by varying levels of discourse in the orchestral forces, befitting the abstract and ambiguous nature of the overall plot. The narrative in *Die glückliche Hand*, by contrast, is more straightforward and clear, distilled to only the most essential elements. To navigate through this, Schoenberg reinvigorates the device of abruptly changing narrative focuses through the addition of complex lighting effects. When paired together, both elements enhance one another in such a way that to remove either severely impairs the dramatic thrust of the entire work. This interrelation, grafted so completely into the anatomy of *Die glückliche Hand*, is most perceptible with the now famous “color crescendo” that appears in scene three. Designed to externalize visually the protagonist’s mental interiority, Schoenberg indicates that in this progressive change in lighting, “…the Man must represent this crescendo of light and storm in such a way as if both emanated from him.” 93 The observer is shown both an aural and visual spectacle intending to depict the human mind inflected by aspects of Kandinsky’s color theories. As seen in example 4.5, one notices immediately the composer’s keen attention to detail as precisely defined measure-by-measure indications stipulate how this color crescendo should progress. Beginning with white, a range of diverse colors is explored, moving through shades of blue, green, violet, orange, red, and yellow, notated by a series of symbols included in the score. 94

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94 See pages 31-37 of *Die glückliche Hand*. Schoenberg’s intense preoccupation with the lighting design at this moment also has clear relations to Wagnerian dramaturgical ideas.
What is most fascinating about this moment in the music drama is that Schoenberg has generated two uniquely competing levels of discourse, functioning around the dialectic between abstract orchestral colors and literal colors from the lighting design. In essence, the audience experiences two different sensory perceptions simultaneously. The totality of this effect recalls the 1909 letter to Busoni in which Schoenberg explained that true expression consists of multiple sensations occurring together all at the same time. Color expressed visually in this way, alongside varying levels of musical discourse, acts to enhance the drama as the observer had just previously witnessed the Man fashioning a richly ornate crown from a piece of gold with a single blow from his hammer. In stating to his fellow artisans “This is how one makes jewelry,” the audience is made acutely
aware of the fact that the Man is an artistic creator. The anger his declaration stirs in the other workers is yet another signal of the intensely biographical undercurrents lying just beneath the surface of *Die glückliche Hand* as Schoenberg struggled with his own rejections and admonishments.

Whereas the lighting process is strictly linear, defined by the progressive movement from one color to the next, the orchestra reflects this moment of intense mental and psychological strife with far subtler shadings of timbral color that often materialize concurrently. Competing levels of discourse abound, felt most apparently beginning at measure 126. A single brief moment of calm is offered by the soft ostinato figure one measure before, provided by the flute, bassoon, and harp.

**Example 5.6, *Die glückliche Hand*, mm. 125**

![Example 5.6](image)

The lull quickly dissipates as a deeply twisted series of interjections by instrumental voices borders on the incomprehensible. These wildly sharp registral and timbral contrasts contribute to a thick web of polyphony that linguistically equates to quickly shifting multiple levels of discourse. The effect is directly related to the same abrupt

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95 Ibid., 28.
changes in focus found in *Erwartung* as competing levels of discourse shed light upon the literal or figurative forest in which the Woman finds herself. The Man seems to be in an eerily similar situation, made all the more visceral by the added element of colored lighting.

**Example 5.7. *Die glückliche Hand*, mm. 126–35**

In the second scene, an especially symbolic scenario takes place as the Woman offers the Man a goblet from which to drink. Dominated by movement, gesture, and
pantomime rather than singing, the orchestral backdrop plays an especially crucial role in illuminating the Man’s mind at this moment. Beginning at measure 47 after he extolls the Woman’s beauty and soul, a passage of rapid shifts in focus accompany the dramatic choreographed action. As the score itself attests with the intricate staging directions included, there is a deep and fundamental connection between what the Man and Woman visibly execute, and what is presented aurally. In much the same way as *Erwartung*, Schoenberg’s compositional realization of these particularly acute moments of mental activity through competing levels of discourse is often reflected by an intimate and delicate handling of the instrumental forces, favoring juxtapositions of small groups of soloists rather than large washes of sound from the entire orchestra. As Hatten describes in literature, several voices may alternate, creating multiple levels of discourse within a single character.\footnote{Hatten, *Musical Meaning in Beethoven*, 202.} A similar effect is found in *Die glückliche Hand* as individual instrumental timbres, as found earlier in *Erwartung*, may engender multiple and simultaneous levels of discourse running in tandem. For example, as the Woman begins to hand the goblet to the Man at measure 47, only a single line is heard from the flutes and violins. At measure 48, the focus is then split as their gradually ascending line is held on A$^\natural$ above a raucous upward arabesque from the clarinets. By the third beat of measure 48, both levels of discourse have coalesced into a single sustained sonority, articulated by the percussively rolled chord in the harp. Beneath this, the lower brass then enters, providing a sharp timbral and registral contrast before the fermata in which the Man has paused and now holds the goblet in his hands. The trumpet line marked *expressivo* that breaks through the fermata in measure 49 first announces this moment as
another bifurcated shift in focus is provided by the timbral contrast of the pizzicato strings.

Example 5.8. Die glückliche Hand, mm. 47–49

At measure 50, the string pizzicatos and trumpet line give way to a sustained chord from the trombones as the Man begins to contemplate the goblet. Ushered in with the dominating *hauptstimme* melody in the clarinet and subordinated *nebenstimme* fragment from the viola, an abrupt new level of discourse is established in measure 51 by the percussive string technique of playing on the bridge. Dramatically, this period from measures 51 through 54 encompass the Man’s gravely serious focus that then suddenly becomes joyous, prompting him to slowly drink its contents. The shifts in focus over these three measures communicate this disconcerting and almost contradictory sequence of emotional and mental responses beginning at measure 52 as the sustained quartal harmony of the clarinets is paired with the quickly moving staccato thirty-second notes in the lowest contrabass register. Above this, a drastic timbral counterpoise is offered by the flute melody that carries into measure 53, again dividing attention between two competing levels of discourse. As opposed to the fluidity that characterizes the majority
of the acoustical typography in *Die glückliche Hand*, small periods of square and balanced rhythmic phrases, as seen in measure 53, act as an unexpected jolt that signals just one of many swiftly adjusting levels of discourse.\(^97\) Measure 54 returns to rhythmic irregularity as the woodwind trills envelope the *hauptstimme* melodic line presented by the first violins that diverges in range from the rest of the string section’s *nebenstimme* material.

**Example 5.9. Die glückliche Hand, mm. 50–54**

At measure 55, the Woman gradually begins to lose interest in the Man and moves to the opposite side of the stage. As the directions indicate, the Man continues to drink as he makes his way to the center of the stage and, as Schoenberg indicates, “...stands deep in thought, moved, entranced.”\(^98\) Without precisely disclosing the Man’s inner thoughts in sung words, the composer presents a deeply subjective and instinctual

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\(^97\) Hatten treats the rhythmic perspective of levels of discourse as disruptions or even negations of the temporal norm. In *Die glückliche Hand*, the various rhythmic figures of each individual instrument function in a manner largely independent of one another, a similarity shared with *Erwartung*.

immediacy of experience through the orchestra, again drawing parallels to the Woman in *Erwartung*. All of the elements mentioned in the previous two examples are further juxtaposed at this key dramatic point in the music drama. For instance, the sudden rhythmic stasis of measure 56 stands in direct opposition to the dense polyphony found only a measure earlier. Lasting only for a measure however, the celesta’s virtuosic hauptstimme melody completely wipes away the previous texture as the flutes provide an accompanimental figure. Once measure 57 commences, the thick comingling of rhythmic levels of discourse, disrupting any sense of a temporal norm, builds to a climax at measure 61, the moment at which the Man actually sings of the Woman’s beauty.

Example 5.10. Die glückliche Hand, mm. 55–61
Another portion of the music drama that illustrates the importance of varying levels of discourse is found with the work’s opening. As opposed to *Erwartung*, the first texture the audience is exposed to in *Die glückliche Hand* is a strictly monophonic arpeggio provided by the bass clarinet and bassoons.

**Example 5.11. Die glückliche Hand, mm. 1–3**

This sharply articulated instrumental figure that dissolves in measure 3 acts as a direct counterpoise to the first appearance of competing levels of discourse when the chorus enters. Starting at measure 5, the voices of the men and women are divided into two respective sub-units, presenting contrasting levels of discourse as the text is passed between them.

**Example 5.12. Die glückliche Hand, mm. 5–7**
At measure 8, Schoenberg divides the two choirs into three smaller sub-groups, further enriching and expanding upon the previous levels of discourse as more diverse and incongruent rhythmic layers are added.

Example 5.13. *Die glückliche Hand*, mm. 8–16
What make these competing levels of discourse particularly effective at the opening of *Die glückliche Hand* are the varying degrees of rhythmic speed at which the individual choirs move as they enunciate the text. Unmediated by the barrier of abstraction elicited from purely instrumental timbres in the orchestra, the human voice provides a firmer grounding upon which to place a sequence of simultaneous shifts in focus. As with the color crescendo following scene three, the use of lighting at this point affirms the value Schoenberg placed upon exciting multiple senses while establishing representational correspondences between the orchestra and chorus:

At the beginning, you see twelve light spots on a black background: the faces of the six women and the six men. Or rather: *their gazes*. This is part of the mime performance, thus, of a medium of the stage. The impression under which this was written was approximately the following: it was as if I perceived a chorus of stares, as one perceives stares, even without seeing them, as they say something to one. What these say here is also paraphrased in words, which are sung by the chorus, and by the colors which show on the faces. The musical way in which this idea is composed testifies to the unity of conception: in spite of the diverse shaping of some *Hauptstimmen* this whole introduction is, as it were, held fast in place by an ostinato-like chord. Just as the gazes are rigidly and unchangeably directed at the Man, so the musical ostinato makes clear that these gazes form an ostinato on their part.99

Schoenberg’s painterly fixation upon the entire concept of staring informed a striking series of paintings individually entitled *Gaze*. Regardless of the garb or background colors of the given faces, the eyes remain a key focal point, highlighting their role as a window into the human mind.

The levels of discourse ushered in by the chorus are particularly important for grasping the mind’s role in *Die glückliche Hand* because they sing the vast majority of the libretto. The Man’s role is largely dominated by silent action and pantomime with only occasional vocal declarations. Fulfilling the cyclical nature of the plot, the Man finds himself returning to a prone position upon the stage at the close of the music drama as the beast on his back at the beginning resurfaces and lodges its fangs into his neck. The chorus,
now enshrouded in a gray-blue light, issues the same warnings and questions with which they began:

Did you have to live again what you have so often lived? Can you never renounce? Never at last resign yourself? Is there no peace within you? Still none? You seek to lay hold of what will only slip away from you when you grasp it. But what is in you, around you, wherever you may be, do you not feel it? Do you not hear it? Do you understand only what you hold? Do you feel only what you touch, the wounds only in your flesh, the pain only in your body? And still you seek! And torment yourself! And are without rest! You poor fool!"}

Schoenberg has set up a psychological opposition similar to that of Erwartung in which the distinction between what is within the protagonist’s mind and what exists independently in the surrounding environment is unclear. Whether the chorus is an impassive observer that preaches to the Man to avoid worldly success or a disquieting inner voice of conscience is intentionally left unclear.

**Conclusion**

In all three of the expressionist works surveyed, we have witnessed one overarching theme: the distortion of convention and tradition. In Erwartung, Schoenberg subverted customary dramatic boundaries by injecting the monodrama with a profound sense of ambiguity through the constant shifting of levels of discourse. At the close of the work, the frequent shifts in focus make it unclear whether the entire narrative takes place within a forest of the Woman’s mind or a literal place. Even such standards as the distinctions between aria and recitative are likewise distorted to the point that one blends effortlessly into the other. As such, the forest comes to represent either a mental interiority or an exterior environment through which fin-de-siècle anxieties are filtered.

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The more tightly concentrated and abstract manipulation of competing levels of discourse in *Die glückliche Hand* creates a similar effect with the added sensory dimension provided by the elaborate lighting design. The mind metaphorically refracts and transforms the relevant cultural and personal issues of the composer’s own time into a darkly fatalistic music drama. With *Pierrot Lunaire*, the use of markedness led to the subversion of the audience’s inherent assumptions regarding specific expressive genres like the waltz, passacaglia, sarabande, and barcarolle. Dramatically, the frequent references to the moon in the melodrama, and knowing its historical associations with madness, act as the catalyst that twists and perverts those time-honored musical traditions through a larger narrative perspective of the main character’s gradual mental deterioration.

In establishing this basic aesthetic precept set forth by Schoenberg through contextualizing the deep interrelationships between these metaphorical themes, it becomes clear that an entire body of work from the early twentieth century falls under the purview of musical expressionism. Take for instance Béla Bartók’s *Bluebeard’s Castle* with its gloomy dramatic narrative. The castle itself takes on a striking degree of symbolism as the seven doors reveal different aspects of Bluebeard’s life to Judith. As she opens the more doors and delves deeper into the castle, it becomes apparent that the contents, never shown but illuminated by colored lighting, act as windows into Bluebeard’s own mind and soul.101 This ambiguity between mental interiorities and actual physical spaces is the same issue found with *Erwartung* and *Die glückliche Hand*.

One may also find evidence of expressionist musical aesthetics in Richard Strauss’s *Salome* as the moon hangs brightly in the night sky over the action below. Mentioned by several characters over the course of the opera, its distortive power is felt as Salome’s “Dance of the Seven Veils” warps and blends an oriental striptease with elements of the waltz. As with Schoenberg’s *Valse de Chopin*, an especially biting cultural commentary lies just under the surface of Strauss’s degradation of the waltz genre as it came to represent the masks of theatricality and decadence rife in the Austro-German sphere at the fin-de-siècle. Salome’s moon-induced madness reaches its feverish climax as she kisses and declares her love to the severed head of John the Baptist. Just before this moment, the moon is noticeably mentioned as obscured by clouds, unsettling the superstitious Herod and eventually leading to Salome’s execution. Strauss’s next opera *Elektra* explores similar notions of madness, distortion, and cultural decadence through the titular character’s obsessive desire to avenge her father’s death and a marked use of the waltz as an expressive genre. After her brother Orestes accomplishes the plot, Elektra is overcome with joy and throws herself into a wildly frenetic dance that culminates in her death.

Schoenberg’s pupil Alban Berg brings up all of these metaphorical themes as the opera *Wozzeck* presents a subjective account of the drama from the main character’s point of view, much like that of the Woman in *Erwartung*. Wozzeck’s mental infirmity, growing jealousy and suspicion, combined with the cruel manipulation by the Doctor and Captain, culminates in a brutal murder in the forest as a blood-red moon rises in the night sky. To heighten the effect of this narrative largely driven from Wozzeck’s perspective, Berg utilizes markedness in a similar manner as found within *Pierrot Lunaire* to illustrate
a warped mind. Classical forms like the rondo, sonata, and fugue are invoked and coupled with expressive genres like the passacaglia, rhapsody, and fantasia. Their presentation in Wozzeck is in grotesquely contorted states that, while vaguely reminiscent of their original historical place, remain aurally unsettled, consistent with the violence and insanity of the overall dramaturgy.

The body of work briefly outlined here and throughout this thesis is no longer tied together through casual circumstances of chronology or historically useful designations. Instead, a network of interrelated metaphorical ideas, often hinted at or explicitly referenced in the music or narrative, points towards a similar aesthetic goal that offers a clearer sense of what exactly constituted a major modernist tributary at the beginning of the twentieth century. What makes this cult orbiting around symbolic meanings of the forest, moon, and mind particularly effective is that they are not abstract concepts coldly attached to the works dispassionately. Rather, the topical cultural associations of the time ground these metaphors and their significance with a historical weight that demonstrates the music was a product inextricably tied to the cultural milieu in which it developed.
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