

**Schoenberg and the *Gesamtkunstwerk* Path to Abstraction**

**by**

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**To the technicians Tom and Marlowe**

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## Introduction

Not only was I...the first to paint such things (I called it: "making music in colours and forms," and nobody could do that like I could!), but these things are also quite valuable because of my historic status in music.

Letter from Arnold Schoenberg to Otto Kallir, 5 June 1945. <sup>1</sup>

This thesis concerns the recognition of the Austrian composer, musicologist and painter, Arnold Schoenberg (born in 1874 in Vienna, died 1951 in San Francisco, USA) as one of the earliest proponents of modern visual abstraction. Otto Kallir (1894-1978) wrote to Schoenberg about the exhibition in Vienna of Schoenberg's paintings some forty years earlier: were the paintings still in existence and could they be exhibited again in America? Schoenberg's response identifies the questions this thesis seeks to answer: the status of Schoenberg's paintings as some of the earliest abstracts; and their relationship to the synthesis of the arts, *Gesamtkunstwerk*. This thesis will establish that Schoenberg planned a *Gesamtkunstwerk* so this thesis identifies those elements from Schoenberg's writings and images and from the cultural discourse of based upon the harmonic ideas contained within his treatise *Harmonielehre* and the Swedenborgian religious ideas of redemption in the novella *Seraphita* by Honoré de Balzac (1799-1850).<sup>2</sup> Schoenberg's *Gesamtkunstwerk*

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<sup>1</sup> Christian Meyer and Therese Muxeneder, *Arnold Schoenberg catalogue raisonné*, Vienna, 2005 p.79. Henceforth, this is referred to as Meyer and Muxeneder. The punctuation is Schoenberg's. This letter is not to be found in ed. Erwin Stein, *Arnold Schoenberg Letters*, trans. Eithne Wilkins and Ernst Kaiser, London and Boston, 1964, which is the more usual source of Schoenberg's letters, but is to be found in the Arnold Schoenberg Center in Vienna, henceforth ASC and cited in Meyer and Muxeneder.

<sup>2</sup> Arnold Schoenberg, *Harmonielehre (The Theory of Harmony)*, trans. Roy E. Carter, London, 1978. First published Vienna 1911, the translation by Carter is of the third German edition of 1922, the only significant difference between the first edition and the third being the dedication in the latter to "the Hallowed Memory of Gustav Mahler". Whilst other translations have been published, these are

would utilise the new technologies of electric light, colour and moving images, a cinematic production, and would have been, had it been realised, one of the first of its type in history. It will be argued that Schoenberg's painted images, the *Fantasies*, are part of his preparation for a filmed *Gesamtkunstwerk* and in themselves are some of the earliest examples of visual abstraction. This requires that art historians reconsider Schoenberg's place in history by offering an alternative art-historical narrative of abstract art's development to the one in which painting, two-dimensions of coloured material applied to a flat surface, holds the privileged place. Recent discussion about the development of abstraction, as in for example, the work edited by Leah Dickerman, seeks to apply analogous concepts of the abstract use of colour in painting to the development of musical harmony and "tone colours" by composers like Schoenberg.<sup>3</sup> This thesis will argue that Schoenberg's use of *Gesamtkunstwerk* led him to visual abstraction via a synthesis of the arts, not by analogy. A new way of considering the evolution of pictorial abstraction is proposed, taking Schoenberg's synthesis of the arts in a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, as an alternative starting point to the more traditional one which commences with artists and theoreticians like Kandinsky.

There is an important point to be made from the outset of this thesis: in the narrative it may be easy to overlook the synchronicity and intensity of Schoenberg's creative activities. The images, texts and compositions considered here were all completed in the years 1910-1912; it will be argued that they share the same philosophical bases and are not independent or autonomous creations. The thesis starts with the images

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abridged versions for student use, and do not include Schoenberg's discussions of wider musical or cultural issues. All quotations are, therefore, from the original Carter translation of the 1922 edition. Honoré de Balzac, *Seraphita*, no trans. provided, no location, 2004. BookSurge Classics Title No.214. Henceforth, these two texts are referred to as *Harmonielehre* and *Seraphita*.

<sup>3</sup> David Lang, "Colours and Games: Music and Abstraction, 1909 to 1912", and Christopher Cox, "Music, Noise and Abstraction", in Leah Dickerman, *Inventing Abstraction 1910-1925, How A Radical Idea Changed Modern Art*, London and New York, 2012, p. 46 and 144 respectively.

but will continually refer to Schoenberg's other contemporaneous works and his progress towards abstraction.

In the *Red Gaze*, 1910 (fig. 1) can be seen "in colour and form" an image, which retains evidence of one eye and the shape of a skull in profile sufficiently persuasive of human anatomy but lacks the contextual evidence of linear perspective, of differentiation of background and foreground, or topography. The image is as flat as the surface on which it is rendered. The shape of the head is suggested by the darker shadowing down the right hand side and some similar shading on the left to indicate a nose and lower forehead. There are none of the usual indications a portrait carries to indicate anything of the character or personality of the subject. The head is stripped of identity. Here is an image which confounds the viewer's expectations, established since Renaissance times, of artistic portraiture, a recognised individual posed in an appropriate setting.

### **Schoenberg's First Exhibitions: *Heller Gallerie*, Vienna 1910 and the *Blaue Reiter* Exhibition, Munich, 1911**

How did contemporary viewers respond to the *Fantasies*? By 1910 Schoenberg had produced some fifty images, *Portraits* and *Fantasies*, for a first exhibition at the *Heller Gallerie* in Vienna in October 1910. Emil Hertzka (1869-1932), a director of Schoenberg's music publishing house, Universal Editions, was also a director of the *Gallerie*. Schoenberg had pressurised Hertzka into mounting the exhibition as a source of additional income at a time of very difficult financial circumstances and as an opportunity to demonstrate his wider creative activities. Apart from possibly only one positive review, which is discussed later in this Introduction, the public response was not good. It is said that all fifty images were sold to the Viennese conductor and composer Gustav Mahler (1860-1911), though Schoenberg was not aware of that

until after Mahler's death.<sup>4</sup> Mahler had been responsible for subsidising the struggling young composer, Schoenberg, or arranging for him to receive scholarships, on several occasions. Despite all his aspirations, and his urgent need for money, no commissions for portraiture came from this exhibition, and Schoenberg apparently did not paint any *Portraits* after that time.<sup>5</sup>

Following that first exhibition in Vienna, Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944), the Russian artist working in Germany, invited Schoenberg to provide paintings for the First *Blaue Reiter* Exhibition in Munich, December 1911: Schoenberg offered *Brown Self-Portrait* (1910) (fig. 2); *Walking Self-Portrait* (1911) (fig. 3); *Gaze* (May 1910) (fig. 4); and *Nocturne I* (1910). Kandinsky and the German artist Franz Marc (1880-1916), the prime movers behind the *Blaue Reiter* group, had only come to know Schoenberg through his music, not from his painting: Kandinsky was apparently so taken by a performance of Schoenberg's compositions in Munich in January 1911 that he produced an ekphratic response, *Impressions III (Concert)* (1912) (illus.1).<sup>6</sup> Kandinsky claimed that this was one of his first abstract paintings – in fact, Kandinsky claimed to be the first abstract artist - and pirated part of the recently completed *Harmonielehre* for publication in a Moscow art magazine to promote Schoenberg more widely. Kandinsky had taken an article from a Berlin magazine in

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<sup>4</sup> Gemma Blackshaw suggests that it is not possible to verify this, the information coming originally from Schoenberg's pupil, Anton Webern, who may have got it from Mahler's widow, Alma, who was also a friend of Schoenberg's. See, Gemma Blackshaw, *Facing The Modern The Portrait In Vienna 1900*, London, 2013, p.128.

<sup>5</sup> Jane Kallir, Otto Kallir's granddaughter, suggests Schoenberg's lack of success may have arisen, in part, from his naivety about the art market: his prices were too high as compared to artists such as Egon Schiele and Oskar Kokoschka. See, Jane Kallir, *Arnold Schoenberg's Vienna*, Galerie St. Etienne/Rizzoli, New York 1984, p. 43.

<sup>6</sup> Wassily Kandinsky, *Impression III (Concert)* (illus.1) The work by Schoenberg that apparently first caught Kandinsky's attention was *3 Klavierstücke (Three Piano Pieces)*, Op.11, 1909, though Kandinsky and his artist friends also heard two quartets, piano pieces and songs, according to Franz Marc in a letter to Auguste Macke. See, Bojan Bujić, *Arnold Schoenberg*, London and New York, 2011, p.82. The uncertainty about which work Kandinsky heard first has meant that some authorities, such as Frisch and MacDonald, apparently avoid nominating any specific work.

which ideas from an early draft of *Harmonielehre* outlined.<sup>7</sup> Kandinsky seemed keen to involve Schoenberg in the *Blaue Reiter* group as both a visual artist and a composer, and cites Schoenberg's artistic significance in his book of 1911, *On the Spiritual in Art*.<sup>8</sup> The potential of the synaesthetic relationship between music and colour interested Kandinsky; it was part of the pursuit of what he calls "the inner necessity" of artistic creation and the renewal of spiritual life. As Kandinsky and Marc say in the preface to the *Blaue Reiter Almanac*, the works of art that interest them are those that reflect the artist's "inner necessity", irrespective of specificity of artistic media or cultural-historical origin.<sup>9</sup> For Kandinsky, Schoenberg exemplified this principle.

Schoenberg contributed an essay, *The Relationship to the Text*, and a song-sheet of *Herzgewachse (Foliage of the Heart)*, Op. 20, 1911 to the *Blaue Reiter Almanac* of early 1912.<sup>10</sup> Schoenberg was keen to be involved in artistic affairs beyond his home city of Vienna and did not object to Kandinsky's apparent abuse of his copyright because of his aspirations for international success. Schoenberg was flattered by Kandinsky's interest in him and perhaps saw that interest for its future financial potential, as much as the creative opportunities that might occur. He was not above seeking Kandinsky's advice on treatment for his young daughter's

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<sup>7</sup> It should be noted that, in eds. Kenneth C. Lindsay and Peter Vergo, *Kandinsky Complete Writings on Art*, Paris and New York, 1982, p. 13, caution is expressed regarding the chronology of Kandinsky's claims to primacy in abstraction. They identify the source of the Berlin article as *Die Musik*, February 1910, *op.cit.*, p.92. Henceforth, this collection is known as Lindsay and Vergo.

<sup>8</sup> "On the Spiritual in Art", in Lindsay and Vergo p.114.

<sup>9</sup> "The Blaue Reiter Almanac" in Lindsay and Vergo, p.229.

<sup>10</sup> Arnold Schoenberg, *Style and Idea*, ed. Leonard Stein, trans. Leo Black, London, 1975, p.141. Henceforth, known as *Style and Idea*.

ulcerated legs (possibly associated with malnutrition); perhaps Schoenberg hoped for the richer man's financial assistance.<sup>11</sup>

In securing paintings for the *Blaue Reiter* exhibition Kandinsky was apparently less interested in Schoenberg's status as a musician as he was in a radical but untrained portrait artist, one untainted by the cultural constraints of academic art establishments, from which the *Blaue Reiter* group was itself seeking to escape. But, Schoenberg also included some other images from his series of *Fantasies*. The impact of one image alone, *Gaze* (May 1910) (fig. 4), had upon the *Blaue Reiter* group is sufficient to indicate the problems confronting the reception of Schoenberg's work even by purportedly radical and sympathetic viewers. From a scrubbed brown background, a face of anguish looks out at the viewer. Only the lower outlines of the face are shown, the top of the head being covered in a white haze, too much for it to be hair. The lower face and open mouth show the same twisting that Schoenberg's portraits display, as exemplified by *Blue Self-Portrait* (1910) (fig.5), discussed later in this Introduction. The face is lit on one side by a white streak, perhaps suggesting a hand against which the head rests, the shadow on the other side by a black one. But, there seems to be no suggestion of any naturally lit environment here. Above all, though, it is the eyes that dominate the image, surrounded as they are by the blood-redness of exhaustion and despair, but hollow at their yellow centres. Human or animal, from a nightmare or some other world? Kandinsky had great difficulties with these images and perhaps undermined Schoenberg's own belief in his own broader visual creativity:

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<sup>11</sup> Letter from Schoenberg to Kandinsky, 11 September 1911, in ed. Jelena Hahl-Koch, *Arnold Schoenberg Wassily Kandinsky Letters, Pictures and Documents*, trans. John C. Crawford, London, 1984, p.31.



*And whoever told you that I did not like your pictures? It's only that the origin of the "Visions" is not clear to me and I should be happy to hear something about it soon. [sic]*<sup>12</sup>

Auguste Macke's comment to his *Blaue Reiter* colleague, Franz Marc, is that Schoenberg's faces are like "green-eyed bread-rolls".<sup>13</sup> How Schoenberg had moved from safe domestic portraits of the *Portrait of Hugo Botsiber* (before October 1910) (fig. 6) type, again discussed later in this Introduction, to the haunting imagery *Gaze* (May 1910) (fig. 4) during the same period of his life was apparently an enigma to Kandinsky and the *Blaue Reiter* group.

To avoid confusion of nomenclature, of the type exemplified by Kandinsky in its examination of Schoenberg's artworks, this thesis uses the classifications in the *Arnold Schoenberg Catalogue raisonné* produced by the ASC, in 2005.<sup>14</sup> The ASC *catalogue raisonné* supersedes previous catalogues, such as that produced by Josef Rufer in 1959.<sup>15</sup> The ASC classifications generally follow Schoenberg's own, used when he exhibited at the Heller Art Gallery in Vienna in 1910. This thesis concentrates on those artworks known by Schoenberg as the *Fantasies*, which were completed during the years 1910-12. The *Fantasies* are usually dated by month and year and signed on the front. It will be argued that these *Fantasies*, including some called *Gazes* (not to be confused with *Self-Portraits*) or *Visions*, are the images for a planned cinematic *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Whilst reference is made to Schoenberg's

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<sup>12</sup> Letter from Kandinsky to Schoenberg of 13 January 1912, in Hahl-Koch, *op.cit.*, p. 42. Note that Kandinsky uses the term "pictures" and "Visions", rather than *Fantasies*.

<sup>13</sup> Bojan Bujić, *Arnold Schoenberg*, London and New York, 2011, p.75. See also, Meyer and Muxeneder, p.46.

<sup>14</sup> Meyer and Muxeneder, p.151.

<sup>15</sup> Josef Rufer, *The Works of Arnold Schoenberg a catalogue of his compositions, writings and paintings*, trans. Dika Newlin, London, 1959.

compositions and musicological writings, references are contemporaneous with the production of these visual artworks, and care is taken to identify explicitly all references, whether to Schoenberg himself or others, which do not fall within that period. The ASC is now the repository for all of Schoenberg's papers, original scores, library, personal items and visual images.<sup>16</sup> Remarkably, given the fact that Schoenberg's works were exhibited in various European cities, transported to America, placed in an archive at the University of Southern California and then transferred back to the ASC archive in Vienna, there are only eleven works listed as missing, and only fourteen works of dubious authenticity. The titles of some works, however, have been lost or confused.

Within Schoenberg's *oeuvre* there also exist portraits and self-portraits, cartoons and set designs. Twenty-eight *Portraits* and *Studies* (for portraits) are listed. The group of works once defined in publications after 1910 as *Portraits* now includes a wider range, such as *Gustav Mahler, 1910*, (illus.2) which has the stylistic characteristics of a satirical cartoon. There are fifty-nine *Self-Portraits* in various media (oils, pastels and pencils). There are twenty-seven *Caricatures*. There are also some twenty-three *Nature Pieces*, which include *Nocturnes*, to which reference is also made. There is a large number, sixty-eight, of designs for stage works, including *Die glückliche Hand*, which are discussed further at Chapter 4. And, there are designs and sketches in large numbers: for playing cards and chess pieces, and for other domestic objects

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<sup>16</sup> It should be noted, however, that whilst the retention of Schoenberg's visual works has been remarkably high, the same cannot be said of his personal library. Pamela White reports that by 1913 Schoenberg possessed 12 volumes of the works of Karl Kraus, 18 of Maurice Maeterlinck, 28 of August Strindberg and 12 of Honoré de Balzac. See, Pamela C. White, *Schoenberg and the God-Idea The Opera Moses und Aron*, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1985. White cites H.H. Stuckenschmidt, one of Schoenberg's students as the source of this information, though this writer has not been able to verify this in Stuckenschmidt's published works. Schoenberg's library was clearly once much bigger than the one extant at the ASC.

designed out of the necessity of poverty, as exercises in manual dexterity, or, as Claudio Magris puts it, in the sheer delight of production.<sup>17</sup>

Can Schoenberg's *Fantasies* be regarded as "abstract art"? The definition of what constitutes an abstract painting is problematic, both in terms of its historicity and its locality: setting aside earlier images from Western disciplines (chromatic studies, theosophical images, scientific images, and so on) which may resemble abstract art, Dickerman locates the transformational practice in artistic production that became known as "abstract art" among a handful of artists in several European and American cities in late 1911.<sup>18</sup> In the competition between artists to claim retrospective credit for being the first to have created an abstract painting, Kandinsky's name is usually to be found on any list, including that of Dickerman. Schoenberg's paintings predate involvement with the *Blaue Reiter* group, and Kandinsky's claim for primacy in abstract painting, but Schoenberg does not use the term "abstract" to describe his own paintings. In the years immediately after 1911 abstraction was proposed, as Dickerman puts it, many times over by different artists working in different places, with different philosophical foundations and with different nomenclatures. Visual abstraction rapidly developed an international network because of the improvements in communications, the dissemination of images across media, the growth of exhibitions and manifestos, and the porous nature of most national boundaries. Some visual artists, not just the *Blaue Reiter* group with which Schoenberg became associated, began to borrow liberally from other disciplines. Dickerman identifies key individuals who acted as intermediaries in this process, one of whom is Kandinsky.

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<sup>17</sup> Claudio Magris, "*Schoenberg's Table*", in *Journeying*, trans. Anne Milano Appel, New Haven and London, 2018, p. 121-126. Magris describes a visit to the Arnold Schoenberg Institute of the University of Southern California in 1989 before the archive was relocated to the ASC.

<sup>18</sup> Dickerman, *op.cit*, p.13.

As visual art ceased to be concerned with the mimetic depiction of the visible world – in part because of the growing competition of photography – artists sought to reshape their images in abstract or non-objective terms, or to strip them back in the purely formal terms of colour, basic geometry, and freedom from objective content. Paintings no longer had to be literally “about something”.

In his letter to Kallir of 1945, with which this Introduction started, Schoenberg alludes to his images’ relationships to music – “making music in colours and forms”. Whilst the changes of harmonic structures within music described by Schoenberg in his *Harmonielehre* might be regarded analogous to the changes in visual art, with its movement from the traditionally representational to the abstract in its increasingly numerous guises, Schoenberg’s arguments seems grounded – initially at least – in the workman-like practicalities of composition.<sup>19</sup> Thomas Harrison takes the view that around the year 1910 a collective sense of strife occurred across Europe to which harmonic dissonance, alongside abstraction, was Schoenberg’s compositional response – “the emancipation of dissonance”.<sup>20</sup> Schoenberg regarded that term as irrelevant, consonance and dissonance being part of the same concept of harmonic structure.<sup>21</sup> Music, however, presents a different case, for, as Christopher Cox notes, music has always been considered as non-mimetic, non-representational.<sup>22</sup> It can be regarded as “*super-representational*”, like pure mathematics, or “*sub-representational*”, like emotions or feelings. At its simplest, music operates at a level either above or below the domain of representation. As will become clear in this

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<sup>19</sup> *Harmonielehre*, p. 7.

<sup>20</sup> Thomas Harrison, *1910: The Emancipation of Dissonance*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London, 1996, p.49.

<sup>21</sup> *Harmonielehre*, p.21.

<sup>22</sup> Cox, “*Music, Noise And Abstraction*”, in Dickerman, *op.cit*, p.144.

thesis, Schoenberg associates music with a “*super-representational*” cosmos, with what was classically known as the Pythagorean *music of the spheres*.<sup>23</sup> Music begins by being abstract, so when Schoenberg speaks of “making music in colours and forms” it will be necessary to consider how Schoenberg envisages such a synthesis of artistic modes might be achieved, particularly as one element is already abstract. David Lang identifies how Schoenberg begins this process of applying “tone colour” firstly as a harmonic concept (timbre) in the final part of *Harmonielehre* and secondly in a physicalized form in the clashing lights, colours and sound of his opera *Die glückliche Hand*, Op.18, 1910-13, which is discussed further at Chapter 4.

This thesis is concerned then with Schoenberg’s *synthesis* of music and painting - or more precisely, sound, vision and other sensory experiences - to be experienced simultaneously as one continuous sensory flow in a filmed production. The *Fantasies* are merely elements of a *Gesamtkunstwerk* realisation. It follows that this larger creation does not permit the *Fantasies* any individual autonomy as artistic products. Each image must relate to the other parts of the overall conception. Without the other *Gesamtkunstwerk* elements being acknowledged at the same time, if not actually being present in the forms of coloured lighting, cinematic movement, sound and music, the *Fantasies* can only be regarded as evidence of *movement towards* abstraction – *abstracted* rather than abstraction *per se*.

Theories about the autonomy of individual images (their medium specificity and narrowness of areas of competence), of the type promulgated, for example, by Clement Greenberg (1909-94), are irrelevant to this discussion in this thesis.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Cox, *op.cit.*, p.144.

<sup>24</sup> Clement Greenberg (1909-1994), “Modernist Painting”, in Charles Harrison and Paul Wood, *Art in Theory An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, Malden, MA and Oxford, 2003, p.774.

Schoenberg's *Fantasies*, it is contended, can have only limited statuses as individual painted works of art, but exist as iterations of the same set of creative ideas, which was pursued concurrently alongside the words and the music within the same *Gesamtkunstwerk* framework. As might be seen in the photographs of Schoenberg's home in California in the 1940s, the images – a handful of them at any one time – are a reminder, not least to Schoenberg himself, of what might have been but do little to amplify their genesis or relationships to one another or other components of *Gesamtkunstwerk*.<sup>25</sup> As Schoenberg puts it in his letter to Kallir, they are “valuable because of my historic status in music”. Exhibited on the walls of the ASC, they are without the clarity of their relatedness to other artistic media, such as the music or the literature. They hang in silent testimony to an unrealised plan.

The term *Gesamtkunstwerk* now has a generic meaning in the literature, the synthesis of the arts. There is no single statement by Schoenberg in the period under review as to what constitutes *Gesamtkunstwerk*, but this thesis will demonstrate that he draws upon a model from Richard Wagner (1813-83), his operas and writing. The impact of Wagnerian thinking across all art forms in *fin-de-siècle* Europe, not just Vienna, probably rendered it unnecessary for Schoenberg to refer overtly to the Wagnerian model, but it will become clear how much Schoenberg is influenced by Wagnerian thought.<sup>26</sup> In Wagner's model, no single art form dominates within the synthesis of words, music, movement and dramatic effects. As an adherent of Schopenhauer's views about music's possessing direct access to, or being, the world of the Will, Wagner expects music to have a leading role. In the

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<sup>25</sup> See, for example, the photograph of Schoenberg in his Brentwood, Los Angeles home, 1948 contained in Malcolm MacDonald, *Schoenberg*, Oxford and New York, 2008, between pages 174 and 175.

<sup>26</sup> Kevin C. Karnes, *A Kingdom Not Of This World, Wagner, the Arts and Utopian Visions in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*, Oxford and New York, 2013, p.2.

discussion at Chapter 1 concerning the *fin-de-siècle* Viennese culture and the *Secession*, Wagner's purpose in creating *Gesamtkunstwerk* is an artistic socio-political response to the perceived degeneration of modern culture, encompassing communal regeneration based upon a romanticised vision of Classical Athens, and the redemptive qualities of transcendent love. This aspiration did not satisfy those artists, who, like Schoenberg, were more concerned with their perception of humanity's needs for spiritual regeneration at an individual and collective level, and not just for the material and political gains. Like others, Schoenberg developed an alternative Utopian vision, like Wagner's, reflecting the wider cultural response to an increasingly industrialised and alienating world also to be found in the social criticism of Schoenberg's other associates, Adolf Loos (1870-1933) and Karl Kraus (1874-1936).

This thesis considers Schoenberg's *Gesamtkunstwerk* across academic disciplines, whilst offering, in the context of art history, an overview of Schoenberg's role as an innovative abstract visual artist. The aims of this thesis are to establish Schoenberg as one of the earliest proponents of abstraction within a multimedia form of artistic production, *Gesamtkunstwerk*, who anticipates the potential of contemporary technological devices of coloured electric lighting and the cinema. Schoenberg's visualisations, his paintings, set designs and *Fantasies*, were created within this single creative endeavour, not as separate artistic entities now segregated by art historical conventions. The research methodology replicates this *Gesamtkunstwerk* framework by reviewing the process through which Schoenberg attempted to synthesise his visual, musical and literary material.

## Review of Literature

Primary significance over other forms of evidence is assigned in this thesis to Schoenberg's own writings in the period before 1914. *Harmonielehre* lies at its heart as a major source of evidence of Schoenberg's conceptual approach to *Gesamtkunstwerk*. In addition to this, specific reference is made to Schoenberg's essays in *Style and Idea Selected Writings*, and to *The Relationship to the Text*, published originally as part of the *Blaue Reiter Almanac*, and to Schoenberg's programme notes and letters.<sup>27</sup> Consistent with this methodology, and except where they are specifically identified as being anachronistic, all these texts date back to the time when the *Fantasies* were painted, that is, before 1914.

*Harmonielehre* is littered with references to people, whom Schoenberg (for the most part) respected and deemed worthy of public recognition. These include individual associates, students and friends. This might suggest that a model of interpersonal interactions of the type developed by Edward Timms in his study of Karl Kraus, as discussed at Chapter 3 of this thesis, would be appropriate.<sup>28</sup> Timms presents an image of *fin-de-siècle* Vienna as a diagram of creative interactions, a Venn diagram, in which the "key players" aggregate around themselves groups of associates in what Timms calls a "condensed system of micro-circuits".<sup>29</sup> This model is based upon the example of Freud's Wednesday evening meetings of his Psychoanalytic Society, of which Marie Pappenheim (1882-1966), Schoenberg's librettist for *Erwartung*, 1909, Op.17, a monodrama in one act, was a member. Timms calls his

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<sup>27</sup> *Style and Idea* contains "The Relationship to the Text" (1912) at p.141. Schoenberg's programme notes are found in ed. J. Daniel Jenkins, *Schoenberg's Program Notes and Musical Analyses*, Oxford and New York, 2016. Schoenberg's letters are found mainly at ed. Erwin Stein, *Arnold Schoenberg Letters*, trans. Eithne Wilkins and Ernst Kaiser, London and Boston, 1964.

<sup>28</sup> Edward Timms, *Karl Kraus Apocalyptic Satirist Culture and Catastrophe in Habsburg Vienna*, New haven and London, 1986.

<sup>29</sup> Timms, *op.cit.*, p.9.



original model (illus. 3) “a diagram of creative interaction in Vienna around 1910” and suggests an organic cultural flow within and between groups outside the usual constraints of Viennese society (class, rank, gender and race). Schoenberg is located at the centre of one of these overlapping groups. On to this model is then grafted the patronage by those groups of certain Viennese cafés.<sup>30</sup> Charlotte Ashby describes the attraction of cafés to these groups; they provided space and sociability within which views could be exchanged, newspapers read, and time passed, without the interruptions of domesticity or business. Ashby stresses the literary nature of many of these groups.<sup>31</sup> Biographers attest to Schoenberg’s presence at several cafés, particularly before 1900. (Schoenberg went to Berlin for the first time in 1901.) However, it is important to recognise the limitations of this model vis á vis any biographical details of Schoenberg’s life in Vienna: as Willi Reich points out, the references to the famous *Café Griensteidl*, of which members, including Schoenberg, of the literary group *Jung Wien* were patrons, cannot be relied upon, as that was demolished in 1896.<sup>32</sup> Reich identifies the *Café Landtmann*, next to the *Burgtheater*, as the more likely venue. Schoenberg’s association with Karl Kraus was probably conducted in cafés, though it is not clear which ones they used. It should also be noted that Kraus is critical of the pretentiousness of those places, that being one of the reasons for his falling-out with *Jung Wien*; their sociability was such that little real work was produced. For an individual apparently as driven as Schoenberg, the café was an inappropriate venue for meeting students and professional associates; no *Stammtisch* (*Regulars’ Table*), the term used by Ashby, is referred to

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<sup>30</sup> Eds. Charlotte Ashby, Tag Gronberg and Simon Shaw-Miller, *The Viennese Café and Fin-de-Siècle Culture*, New York and Oxford, 2015. In his contribution to this publication Timms changes the title of his original diagram from “creative interaction” to “Coffeehouse Circles”. See, Ashby et al, *op.cit*, p.207.

<sup>31</sup> Charlotte Ashby, “The Cafés of Vienna Space and Sociability”, in Ashby et al, *op.cit*, p.11.

<sup>32</sup> Willi Reich, *Schoenberg a critical biography*, trans. Leo Black, London, 1971, p.9.

in biographies of Schoenberg. Schoenberg wrote to his wife Mathilde in June 1909, apologising for his behaviour after meeting Oskar Kokoschka (1886-1980) to discuss the possibility of collaboration: they visited several bars and cafes, spent too much money (Schoenberg always impecunious) and stayed out late.<sup>33</sup> And finally, Gilbert Carr warns against over-reliance upon journalistic, autobiographical and straightforwardly fictional descriptions of the Viennese café: the Viennese café has acquired a mythological and nostalgic aura, which can be misleading.<sup>34</sup>

There are other limitations to this “coffeehouse” model. The influential people and ideas discussed in this thesis do not rely upon physical contact; concepts and ideas drawn are disseminated by third parties or are found in books and newspapers. They exist across temporal boundaries, having been communicated in some cases across several generations without any formal arrangements for their transmission, for which purpose schools or universities might be said to exist. Schoenberg was not a member of any formal educational organisation in the years during which he wrote *Harmonielehre*.

Authorities assign different identities to Schoenberg, in ways which reflect individual academic backgrounds and prejudices. It is axiomatic that those who have written about Schoenberg have done so from exclusive academic viewpoints (musicians about music, art historians about visual images, biographers about biography) and few have attempted to cross professional boundaries. A review of literature reveals two intertwined types of identity assigned to Schoenberg: Schoenberg the rational-technical “genius” musician, musical theorist and leader of the Second Viennese School; and Schoenberg the ethical-religious musician doomed to leave major works

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<sup>33</sup> Joseph Auner, *A Schoenberg Reader, Documents of a Life*, New Haven and London, 2003, p.67.

<sup>34</sup> Gilbert Carr, “Time and Space in the Café Griensteidl and Café Central”, in Ashby et al, *op.cit*, p.32.

like *Moses und Aron*, the opera of 1932, incomplete because of their irresolvable monotheistic question-posing. Schoenberg the painter of problematic visual images, and strange, dream-like concoctions with a mystical or theosophical message sits in both categories, with many authorities leaning heavily on the notion of “Schoenberg the genius” as a way of including these problematic aspects of his character.

Undoubtedly, Schoenberg was a skilled teacher with an autodidactic grasp of many contemporary subjects. His ability to communicate in a range of modes impressed those who met him not least because of his lack of formal education, even in music. When something of the significance of Schoenberg’s intermedial creativity is recognised, it is not usually well handled. At best, the existence of the *Fantasies* is noted in passing by such authorities, but not considered in any detail. In other instances, the *Fantasies* are misinterpreted or simply ignored.

Schoenberg’s status as a composer, not a visual artist, dominates the academic studies of Schoenberg. Composing is regarded as being more important than painting, compositions post-1922 (following Schoenberg’s introduction of his twelve-tone or serialist mode of composition) more important than those pre-1914, and so on. Attitudes towards Schoenberg expressed post-1922 have had an important retrospective effect on the appreciation of all his work, what might be called ‘post-hoc rationalisation’. It is, therefore, important to identify such attitudes, whenever possible.

It is necessary to be more critical of the most prevalent trope about Schoenberg’s creative existence, which might be regarded as a conceptual *cul-de-sac*: the narrative of Schoenberg as an “artist genius”, or an amateur capable of testing the limits of painting seeks to position Schoenberg in the broader history of early twentieth-century art, whilst foreclosing on any substantive discussion. Schoenberg

is bracketed alongside other “geniuses” like Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890). The epithet of the “artist genius” pervades everything that Schoenberg seems to have done. His own pupils, and their pupils, are particularly strongly represented in musicological biographies, and their general approach is very much to stress his qualities both as a teacher in a rational-technical sense and a musical genius. The biographies by Willi Reich (1898-1980), H. H. Stuckenschmidt (1901-88), and Egon Wellesz (1885-1974), all of whom knew Schoenberg personally as students or associates, stress the driven-nature of Schoenberg’s commitment to musical innovation that can only derive from artistic genius.<sup>35</sup> Reich quotes Schoenberg’s notes for a part-performance of *Gurrelieder*, no opus number, 1910: “I am being forced in this direction not because my invention or technique is inadequate...but that I am obeying an inner compulsion”.<sup>36</sup> “The most original and self-willed genius of recent musical history” is how Stuckenschmidt commences his biography.<sup>37</sup> “Genius learns from itself” is the phrase quoted by Wellesz to describe Schoenberg’s achievement in the face of social, educational and financial circumstances that made life difficult for him.<sup>38</sup> A later biographer, Charles Rosen, believes that Schoenberg thought of himself as an inevitable historical force, and seeks to defend his reputation against unfair criticism (most notably from Theodor W. Adorno, 1903-69), which imposes new (anachronistic) aesthetic and politico-philosophical characteristics on him. Thus, Schoenberg’s serialism (that is, post-1922) is a

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<sup>35</sup> Reich, *op.cit.*

H. H. Stuckenschmidt, *Arnold Schoenberg*, trans. Edith Temple Roberts and Humphrey Searle, London, 1959, p.17.

Egon Wellesz, *Arnold Schoenberg, the formative years*, Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, 1971, p.10. This biography was published originally in Vienna in 1922 and translated by W. H. Kerridge in 1925. The 1971 edition has a new preface by Wellesz but is essentially the same publication as that of 1921.

<sup>36</sup> Reich, *op.cit.*, p.49.

<sup>37</sup> Stuckenschmidt, *op.cit.*, p.17.

<sup>38</sup> Wellesz, *op.cit.*, p.10. Wellesz quotes from Schoenberg, “Problems in Teaching Art” 1910, in *Style and Idea*, p.365.

“creative *cul-de-sac*”, a technique elevated into an end in itself.<sup>39</sup> There is consensus among authorities that, being largely self-taught, rather than merely talented, Schoenberg owed his genius to no-one, but rather was driven by some force that was entirely his own. Though the substance of such references relates to Schoenberg’s musical activities, the term “genius” circulates back and forth from one context, music, to another, visual art.

Nevertheless, Schoenberg’s interest in painting and drawing visual images, and his lack of professional training, have perplexed many biographers, even those more concerned with his musical compositions. Various views emanate from those who were close to Schoenberg in the period around 1910. As a Schoenberg student, Wellesz experienced at first hand the success of works like *Gurrelieder*, no opus number, and *Erwartung*, Op.17, as well as the apparent compositional silence of the war years, which followed. Writing in 1921, Wellesz states that Schoenberg had obeyed his “inner voice” in turning to painting, the techniques of which he learned with a “perfectly astonishing talent” of his own.<sup>40</sup> Wellesz confines Schoenberg’s interest in painting to the period of professional uncertainty, between the time of compositions like *Erwartung* and the introduction of “composing with twelve tones” after 1921. In other words, painting was an alternative, seemingly unrelated, creative activity for Schoenberg, springing from the composer’s own internal drive to communicate when he had reached a compositional impasse in his music. Another early associate of Schoenberg’s, Hans Heinz Stuckenschmidt (1901-1988), similarly

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<sup>39</sup> Charles Rosen, *Arnold Schoenberg*, Chicago, 1996, p. xi. Adorno’s writings post-Nazism and -1945 seem to combine elements of praise for Schoenberg’s intellectualism (and bravery in challenging his listeners to work at the task of listening) with disdain for his naivety in pursuing his twelve-tone technique of composing. See, Theodor W. Adorno, “Towards an Understanding of Schoenberg”, (1955/1967) in ed. Richard Leppert, *Essays on Music, Theodor W. Adorno*, trans. Susan H. Gillespie, Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London, 2002, p.641.

<sup>40</sup> Wellesz, *op.cit*, p.27.

relates painting to the same “daemonic compulsion” that drove Schoenberg’s musical composition. In Stuckenschmidt’s opinion “some extremely odd pictures resulted, visions of a fantasy world...masks; a portrait of a woman; several self-portraits – one of them of his back.”<sup>41</sup> Writing more recently, MacDonald follows the same conceptual prejudice, distinguishing between Schoenberg’s compulsion to communicate and his (in)ability to do so.<sup>42</sup> After composing *Erwartung*, Schoenberg was apparently unable to compose anything of significance, asserts MacDonald, and “plunged into the writing of his massive harmony text-book, *Harmonielehre*...and started to paint much more”. MacDonald concludes that the various “*Visions* and *Gazes* seemed to share the uncanny ethos of Schoenberg’s recent musical works – disembodied portraits of Christ or Mahler, or nameless beings with enigmatic stares, denizens of some dream-world”. In short, as MacDonald says, though without naming the experts whom he says he consulted, they are clumsily rendered visions of “frightening emotional intensity, a sense of acute distress”. By casting *Harmonielehre* in this same mould of a Schoenberg driven by compositional frustration into alternative creative outlets, MacDonald seems here to be relegating *Harmonielehre* to a level of relative insignificance.<sup>43</sup>

### **National Gallery Exhibition, Autumn 2013: *Facing The Modern, The Portrait In Vienna In 1900***

The predilection of authorities to assign Schoenberg to membership of other artistic groupings, another characteristic art-historical trope, should also be noted. Several paintings by Schoenberg were displayed at the *Facing The Modern, The Portrait In*

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<sup>41</sup> Stuckenschmidt, *op.cit*, p.33.

<sup>42</sup> MacDonald, *op.cit*, p.13.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, p. 13.

*Vienna In 1900* exhibition alongside the works of several other *fin-de-siècle* Viennese artists, including Richard Gerstl (1883-1908), Gustav Klimt (1862-1918), Egon Schiele (1890-1918) and Oskar Kokoschka (1886-1980). The exhibition was curated by Gemma Blackshaw, and in her contribution to the catalogue of the exhibition, Blackshaw locates Schoenberg in a proposed “narrative of Viennese portraiture”, one ostensibly dating back to the period in Viennese history, when Austro-Hungary blossomed under Prince von Metternich, and emerging fully formed in that city around 1910. <sup>44</sup> Here are the roots, Blackshaw asserts, of Modernism.

For Blackshaw, Schoenberg’s significance as the creator of images lies in his apparently revolutionary threat to traditional portraiture: he is an amateur claiming non-mastery of artistic technique as a creative force; his portraits are not about physical reality, but about something that cannot be rationally explained or artistically evaluated. In seeking to establish Schoenberg’s historic reputation as a visual artist, Blackshaw quotes a contemporary critic of Schoenberg’s paintings (it will be recalled that this may have been the only positive response) at Schoenberg’s first exhibition in Vienna in 1910, Paris von Gütersloh (1887-1973):

[Schoenberg] works with “a palette void of linguistically fixed technical functions” ...his paintings are “acts of the mind” and “very” few trust these pictures. Most people hate them instinctively on first seeing them. So do the artists, who are frightened to death of the idea that they might have to paint like this themselves someday.” <sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Blackshaw, *op.cit.* p.31.

<sup>45</sup> Albert Paris von Gütersloh, “*Schoenberg the Painter*”, in Meyer and Muxeneder, p.60.

Blackshaw's description of Schoenberg continues the familiar trope: she anoints him with the status of "an artistic genius", an amateur painter whose work apparently not only tests the limits of painting but can be linked with other artistic geniuses.<sup>46</sup>

Blackshaw proposes that *Blue Self-Portrait* (1910) (fig. 5), when viewed alongside the portraits of family, friends and associates of the same time, is strongly influenced by van Gogh, whose "genius" was only "discovered" after his death in 1890.<sup>47</sup> In *Blue Self-Portrait*, Schoenberg faces frontally, the eyes showing little emotion; if there is emotion, it comes from the pinched nose and pursed lips. The blueness of the face, neck and facial shadows is emphasised further by the contrasting colour of sand in the featureless background. The head fills most of the painted surface. The effect is one of intense concentration. The light reflected on the balding head suggests the strength of intellect possessed by its owner, the shoulders and upper chest being cropped from the image to emphasis this. The hair is receding on both sides, but the impression is that hair is escaping down the sides of the head as the dome becomes more and more significant. Whether deliberately intended, or resulting from lack of professional training, the face is twisted, the ear on the viewer's left, Schoenberg's right, standing out from the head at too low a level, the other ear being completely missing. In proposing another "artist outcast" van Gogh as an influence, Blackshaw suggests that Schoenberg might have seen van Gogh's well-known, self-portrait with the missing left ear (illus.4) in Vienna when it was exhibited in 1906 at the *Galerie Meithke*. Catherine Soussloff adds further weight to the argument that Schoenberg, and other Viennese *Secessionist* artists like Kokoschka, were also influenced by the exhibitions by other post-Impressionists (including Paul

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<sup>46</sup> Blackshaw, *op.cit*, p.122.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, p.127.



Gauguin, 1848-1903, and Auguste Renoir, 1841-1919), and not just van Gogh.

Examples of these artists' works had been shown at the *Galerie Meithke* during 1906 and 1907.<sup>48</sup> As far as Blackshaw is concerned, Schoenberg was as *au fait* with the same latest artistic ideas as van Gogh. But, she also seeks to establish Schoenberg's significance as a new type of portrait artist, an amateur who does more to express his own existence in the faces of his sitters than he does to reveal theirs. Schoenberg can be seen by authorities like Patrick Werner as belonging among the earliest Austria Expressionists, communicating their own, internalised thoughts.<sup>49</sup>

Blackshaw infers from the apparently biographical reference to the missing left ear that Schoenberg shares the same sense of isolation and lack of recognition experienced by van Gogh. This narrative might easily have proceeded further: the colour blue, particularly the silvery blue of this self-portrait can be associated, according to the art historian John Cage, with masculine spirituality, thereby emphasising the genius of the artist, and linking Schoenberg with German Romanticism (particularly that of Johann Wolfgang Goethe, 1749-1832), and late nineteenth-century psychology.<sup>50</sup> It is then but a short step into the arena of the *Blaue Reiter* artists, and particularly that of Kandinsky, crediting Schoenberg with sufficient awareness of contemporary artistic thinking to anticipate the privileging of that colour blue above all other colours and suggesting that Schoenberg was aware of that colour's theosophical associations. But, Schoenberg painted *Blue Self-Portrait* (1910) before Franz Marc (1880-1916) had painted *The Little Blue Horses* (1911)

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<sup>48</sup> Catherine M. Soussloff, *The Subject in Art Portraiture and the Birth of the Modern*, Durham and London, 2006, p.40.

<sup>49</sup> Patrick Werner, *Austrian Expressionism, The Formative Years*, trans. Nicholas T. Parsons, Palo Alto, California, 1993, p.28.

<sup>50</sup> John Cage, *Colour and Meaning, Art, Science and Symbolism*, London, 1999, p.190.

(illus.5), and before Kandinsky had written in theosophical terms about the inclination of heavenly blue towards spiritual depth in *On the Spiritual in Art*, 1911-12.<sup>51</sup>

Schoenberg's *Fantasies* date from early 1911, so his apparent prescience about the colour blue must be seen, as John Cage suggests, in the context of other *fin-de-siècle* influences about the link between colour and spirituality. Schoenberg's association with the *Blaue Reiter* group post-1911 certainly means that some interpretations of his work, visual and musical, can be assigned to a pre- and post-1914-19 German Expressionist narrative.<sup>52</sup> However, it is questionable whether Schoenberg's association with *Blaue Reiter* was anything more than an intermittent acquaintance with Kandinsky during the years 1911 to 1914. In other received views, there never was a *Blaue Reiter* "school" for Schoenberg to attend in the institutional sense of one comprising bricks and mortar, teachers and students, and Schoenberg had too little money to travel regularly to Munich where Kandinsky, Franz Marc and Auguste Macke (1887-1914) were based. Rather, the *Blaue Reiter* was perhaps a manifesto-driven initiative to disseminate ideas about art and to exhibit the work of artists, some of whom, Auguste Macke included, did not regard the "amateur" Schoenberg as being an appropriate exhibitor. After 1914, Schoenberg and Kandinsky, Austrian on the one hand, and Russian on the other, were separated by the war; after 1918 Schoenberg apparently seemed uninterested in Kandinsky's offers of involvement in creative activities in early post-Revolutionary Russia or later in the Weimar Bauhaus art school. Accusations of anti-Semitism on Kandinsky's part, which were allegedly scurrilously circulated by no less a person than Alma

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<sup>51</sup> "On the Spiritual in Art", in Lindsay and Virgo, p.114.

<sup>52</sup> Alex Danchev, for example, describes the *Blaue Reiter* group as the Munich wing of the German Expressionist movement, in ed. Alex Danchev, *100 Artists' Manifestos*, London, 2011, p.35.

Mahler, the composer's widow, made continuing contact between the two difficult for a time.<sup>53</sup>

Four works by Schoenberg were exhibited in the *Facing The Modern* exhibition: two portraits of associates, including the *Portrait of Hugo Botsiber* (before October 1910) (fig. 6); a family member, his son George; and the self-portrait, the *Blue Self-Portrait* (1910) (fig. 5), referred to above. These works were painted by Schoenberg during the same intense period of creative activity in 1910-12 alongside most of his other images. The *Portrait of Hugo Botsiber* was exhibited at the *Heller Galerie* in Vienna in October 1910, and was painted at Schoenberg's home in Liechtensteinstrasse, Vienna, where he lived between 1903 and 1910. This served as a studio, teaching centre and accommodation for his wife and two children. The sense of claustrophobia is palpable from the subject's position on the painting's surface, facing full-frontally and seated upright in a hard-backed chair. Like some seventy other paintings in Schoenberg's oeuvre, the choice of cardboard, as opposed to canvas, was apparently made because it facilitated Schoenberg's spontaneity. Cardboard was also cheap, much cheaper than canvas stretched on a wooden frame. Schoenberg cut sections from larger sheets and did not use any primer before commencing. Paint could then be applied very rapidly.

Hugo Botstiber was a fellow musician, though his apparel, broad-brimmed hat and white scarf worn inside the dark jacket, suggests that he remained within the Jewish faith, albeit as a member of a Reformed community. Botsiber exemplifies the

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<sup>53</sup> Alma Mahler was known to Schoenberg before her marriage to Gustav Mahler, and he consulted her about Kandinsky's invitation to join the Bauhaus. On Alma's advice Schoenberg declined the offer: perhaps he never learned the truth. On the other hand, Kandinsky's wife, Nina, was convinced that Alma was responsible for the disagreement between Schoenberg and her husband. See, Hahl-Koch, *op.cit*, p.139. See also, Oliver Hilmes, *Malevolent Muse The life of Alma Mahler*, Munich, 2004, p.136.

existence of large numbers of Jewish musicians present in Vienna in the period before 1914. The sitter is lit from the front with the face outlined without shadow but done in such a way as to show the lines of nose and beard with some degree of skill. The open, dark black eyes are the point of focus for the viewer, though the effect is perhaps not as great as that claimed by Blackshaw. Schoenberg used oil paints, which, in their pre-1910 composition, tended to dry to a matt finish, thereby reducing the surface effects of any impasto brush-strokes and any attempt to emphasise specific facial characteristics. Schoenberg's paint box has been preserved in the ASC: its contents are very limited and the materials simple, again an obvious reflection of Schoenberg's limited financial resources. If Schoenberg's purpose was to heighten the effect of the eyes on the painted surface, this painting shows his limited skills as a painter. Schoenberg claimed that he was only capable of looking at people in the eyes and had no memory for other details.<sup>54</sup> The absence of detail in the background, a blank wall without decoration, only adds to the viewer's deflated expectations. The effect of the limited colour field, matt surface finish and close perspective within a shallow field is to reduce the overall impact of portrait, though the effect of the eyes in the centre of a face bounded tightly by a hat, white scarf and dark jacket does still perhaps suggest something of the original immediacy Schoenberg was seeking.

Whilst some visitors to the National Gallery exhibition, including the art historian, Frank Whitford (1941-2014), writing in the *Times Literary Supplement* at the time, may have seen little evidence of the exhibition's "wayward idea" of a "narrative of portraiture" in linking such disparate artists as Ferdinand Georg Waldmüller (1793-1865) and Friedrich von Amerling (1803-1887), with Gerstl, Klimt, Kokoschka and

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<sup>54</sup> Note by Schoenberg of June 1926, in Meyer and Muxeneder, p.10.

company, what was perhaps more surprising to the British public was the inclusion of Schoenberg in the exhibition in the first place, not as a composer but as a visual artist.<sup>55</sup> In truth, Schoenberg's presence is simply missed altogether by Whitford in his review.

If Schoenberg was known to the British public before *Facing The Modern*, it is most probably as the leading composer of the Second Viennese School, one of his earliest works in the new "atonal" style, *Five Orchestral Pieces*, Opus 16, 1909, having been given its world premiere in London as early as 1912 by Sir Henry Wood, the founder of the Annual Promenade concerts. MacDonald quotes from a 1912 review in *The Times*, "Not a single soul in the hall could have understood it at first hearing": it is doubtful whether much has changed since then in the British public's reception of much of Schoenberg's music.<sup>56</sup>

### **Berlinische Galerie, October 2013: *Vienna-Berlin, The Art of Two Cities***

Having ignored Schoenberg's presence in his review of *Facing The Modern*, it is this intensity of expression that persuades Whitford of Schoenberg's artistic significance, as he notes in the catalogue to another recent exhibition, *Vienna-Berlin, The Art of Two Cities*, at the Berlinische Galerie, October 2013 – January 2014, and the Belvedere, Vienna, February – June 2014. That exhibition included two of Schoenberg's works. Whilst acknowledging Schoenberg's lack of natural talent, notwithstanding the lessons given to him by Richard Gerstl (1883-1908), about which Whitford is very certain despite Schoenberg's own claims to the contrary, Whitford identifies Schoenberg's sense of an *inner compulsion* to communicate as being the

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<sup>55</sup> Frank Whitford, "Death in Vienna", *Times Literary Supplement*, 15 November 2013.

<sup>56</sup> MacDonald, *op.cit.*, p.20.

major attraction of Schoenberg to other artists, particularly Kandinsky and the *Blaue Reiter* group.<sup>57</sup> It is this characteristic, which Whitford sees as the unifying theme across all of Schoenberg's visual art. In fact, the works presented in the *Vienna-Berlin* exhibition are categorised very differently by Meyer and Muxeneder, the one an early portrait from 1909, *L. H.* (illus.6), the other a caricature from 1919, *Defeated* (illus.7), also known as *The Conquered*. Nevertheless, Schoenberg's historical role, in Whitford's opinion, seems very much to be that of a secondary one, someone whose primary significance is that he influenced others through his music.

In that same exhibition catalogue, *Vienna-Berlin, The Art of Two Cities*, Hartmut Krones is more expansive about Schoenberg's ability as a "multi-artist", and perceives more readily the links between Schoenberg's musical development and his visual art. For Krones, Schoenberg's harmonic dissonance is the equivalent of his strange colour constructions.<sup>58</sup> Again though, Krones general tendency is to subordinate Schoenberg to a secondary role within a narrative which segregates different artistic media and characterises Schoenberg's visual productions as genuine but nevertheless inadequate attempts at expression.

What is problematic is that portraiture is but one aspect of Schoenberg's visual work. Even though there may be common characteristics about the expressive eyes of many works, attempts to apply the same art-historic academic conventions of discussion about portraiture across all of Schoenberg's works are ultimately inadequate. The works regarded as the most critical in this thesis, the *Fantasies*, are not dealt with in either of the exhibitions, *Facing The Modern*, and *Vienna-Berlin*, or

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<sup>57</sup> Agnes Husslein-Arco et al, *Vienna-Berlin The Art of Two Cities From Schiele to Grosz*, Vienna and Berlin, 2013, p.171.

<sup>58</sup> Blackshaw, *op.cit*, p.198.

the catalogues. No examples hang in the National Gallery, and no acknowledgement of their existence is made in the catalogue. Nor is the fact that Schoenberg was also a composer discussed by Blackshaw, or by other contributors to the *Facing The Modern* catalogue, and hence, no comments are made about the possible relationships between Schoenberg's paintings and his music. Whilst the *Vienna-Berlin* catalogue gives wider consideration of Schoenberg's contribution to the development of artistic ideas, chiefly through his compositions and *Harmonielehre*, that exhibition also fails to distinguish between the different types of visual images Schoenberg produced, and their relationships to *Gesamtkunstwerk*.

### **Richard Gerstl**

By suggestion or insinuation, some biographers propose that the amateur artist, Arnold Schoenberg, must have been influenced by a professional Richard Gerstl (1883-1908). Gerstl has been nominated as Schoenberg's most likely tutor perhaps because of the biographical proximity between the two rather than any artistic similarity. Some of Gerstl's work also appeared in the *Facing The Modern* exhibition. Other artists such as Kokoschka have been nominated as possible tutors, but as noted by Joseph Auner with respect to Schoenberg's efforts to get his paintings exhibited in Vienna in 1910, Schoenberg himself certainly refuted any such suggestions of Gerstl's or Kokoschka's tutelage.<sup>59</sup> With respect to Gerstl, he declared that his ideas were far from radical and that he had wasted time listening to him. In his biography, Bujić repeats Schoenberg's own stress on being self-taught and free from other artistic influences; his interest in painting friends, family and self-portraits arose, Bujić affirms, from his interest in humanity and self-exploration.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Joseph Auner, *A Schoenberg Reader*, New Haven and London, p.78.

<sup>60</sup> Bujić, *op.cit*, p.74.

Bujić goes further, however, in relating Schoenberg's visual creations to the more general context of Expressionism: it is the concentration on the eyes, rather than any other part of the face in his *Portraits* (though perhaps he did not distinguish between *Portraits* and *Fantasies* sufficiently enough), together with the image of gazing eyes in Pappenheim's words for *Erwartung*, that locates Schoenberg as a visual artist in an Expressionist camp for Bujić. On the other hand, Bujić bluntly concludes that Schoenberg's "expressive intention was stronger than his mastery of the technique of painting". Jane Kallir adds that it is important to remember Schoenberg's own stipulation (even allowing for its anachronistic publication in December 1938, by which time he was living in America) about any suggestions that he was influenced by other artists:

This is the way their brain works;

- 1) Schoenberg composed something original
- 2) therefore it is not by him (without statement of reasons)
- 3) he gets it from somebody else. [sic] <sup>61</sup>

Meyer and Muxeneder give the fuller quotation, adding: "But: the idiots did not ask; Where has the other person got it from?" [sic]. This seems a more appropriate indication of Schoenberg's own frustrations about this question. <sup>62</sup>

However, it would be remiss of this writer not to note that Schoenberg's images date from a time after he had experienced the heights and depths of musical success, had embarked upon a major literary initiative, the writing of *Harmonielehre*, and had also been embroiled in a domestic crisis, involving his wife, Mathilde (née von

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<sup>61</sup> Quoted in Kallir, *op.cit.* p.44. Kallir cites a reference in the *Journal of the Arnold Schoenberg Institute*, II:3 (June 1978), University of Southern California.

<sup>62</sup> Meyer and Muxeneder, p.11.



Zemlinsky), and Gerstl, The Schoenberg family's association with Gerstl is recorded in Gerstl's portraits of Mathilde in 1907 and of Schoenberg, Matilde and their two children of 1908.<sup>63</sup> Gerstl committed suicide in 1908. Schoenberg biographers detail the affair between Mathilde and Gerstl with varying degrees of discretion and accuracy. For those who knew the parties involved directly this is not a legitimate subject to be pursued, however much they may have known about the details.<sup>64</sup> Schoenberg's students Alban Berg (1885-1935) and Anton Webern (1883-1945) were both directly involved in the various strategies to return the Schoenberg household to some stability: both maintain their confidentiality.<sup>65</sup> Others are less discrete about the near breakdown of Schoenberg's marriage and the unfortunate Gerstl's suicide. In Frisch's chronology of Schoenberg's life, the period of Schoenberg's "experimentation with painting", as Frisch describes it, sits alongside his befriending of Gerstl in 1907, and the marital crisis of 1908, whilst in MacDonald, Schoenberg's "brushwork and approach to portraiture do show the latter's [Gerstl's] influence".<sup>66</sup> The emotional impact of events on Schoenberg at the time is seen by MacDonald as being directly linked to Schoenberg's musical compositions, notably the *Second String Quartet*, Op. 10, 1908, and *Das Buch der hangenden Garten*,

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<sup>63</sup> Eds. Jill Lloyd and Ingrid Pfeiffer, *Richard Gerstl*, Munich, 2017.

<sup>64</sup> Only MacDonald provides details of the affair between Mathilde Schoenberg and Richard Gerstl, excusing any potential accusations of prurience by relating Schoenberg's compositional output at the time, such as the *Second String Quartet*, which Schoenberg dedicated to Mathilde after their reconciliation, to Schoenberg's mental state. MacDonald, *op.cit*, p.6.

<sup>65</sup> Both Berg and Webern were involved in the careful packing and movement of Schoenberg's furniture and possessions ("so that absolutely nothing gets lost" – Schoenberg) to Berlin in 1911, and with the selection of paintings for the *Blaue Reiter* exhibition. Whether they were following Schoenberg's directions with respect to this second task is unclear, though Schoenberg must surely have given directions on the matter of the *Fantasies*. Berg was permitted to retain Schoenberg's painting his wife, *Portrait of a Lady*, 1910, which Gütersloh had praised in his appraisal of Schoenberg's paintings but left instructions for careful treatment regarding a self-portrait and one of his wife and daughter. See, eds. Juliane Brand, Christopher Hailey and Donald Harris, *The Berg-Schoenberg Correspondence Selected Letters*, London, 1987, p.13.

<sup>66</sup> Frisch, *op.cit*, p.4.

MacDonald, *op.cit*, p.6. Again, it is unclear as to whom, if anyone, MacDonald has consulted in this matter.

Op.15, 1909, both of which included texts by the poet, Stefan George (1868-1933), who had been involved with the wife of another of Schoenberg's associates, another poet Richard Dehmel (1863-1920). The *Second String Quartet*, Op. 10, 1908 is (relatively) well-known for the interpolation of George's words in the third (*Litanei*, Litany) and fourth (*Entrückung*, Rapture) movements, including "I feel the air from another planet" in the fourth, an image created in words accompanied by music at the limits of harmonic resolution. Schoenberg did not produce, so far as is known, visual images for this work. The *Second String Quartet* is also notable because some assert that the "limits of harmonic resolution" in its finale identifies it as the first piece of "atonal" music.<sup>67</sup> As Raymond Coffer makes clear, however, the *Second String Quartet* was completed in July 1908, about four weeks before Schoenberg's domestic crisis surfaced and Gerstl committed suicide.<sup>68</sup> Writing in a review of the Gerstl exhibition and its catalogue, the Viennese art specialist Leo Lensing is critical of any attempts to link the events surrounding Mathilde's infidelity, Gerstl's suicide and Schoenberg's break with tonality in the *Second String Quartet*.<sup>69</sup> Lensing accepts Coffer's revised chronology of events. It seems that this narrative of Schoenberg's "descent" into atonalism out of personal despair has now been exploded.

However, to lesser and greater extents, the questions always arise as to whether Gerstl taught Schoenberg to paint, and whether any evidence can be found of Gerstl's influence on Schoenberg's painterly style. As noted previously, Whitford is

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<sup>67</sup> MacDonald, *op.cit*, p. 5. Whilst refuting the epithet on musicological grounds, MacDonald does relate this composition to Schoenberg's domestic crisis.

<sup>68</sup> Raymond Coffer, "A Song to the Siren: The Triangular Relationship between Richard Gerstl and Arnold and Mathilde Schoenberg" in Lloyd and Pfeiffer, *op.cit*, p.58.

<sup>69</sup> Leo A. Lensing, "Phantasmagorias The brief, radical life and work of Richard Gerstl", Times Literary Supplement, August 11, 2017, p.19-20.

convinced of Gerstl's tutelage, and other authorities seem to have built on the biographical link between Schoenberg and Gerstl as a way of promoting the resurrection of Gerstl's reputation as an artist worthy of greater critical and academic recognition. That narrative is to be found in Blackshaw and (in a previous generation of authorities) Jane Kallir, granddaughter of Otto Kallir, who was responsible for the Gerstl exhibition in Vienna in 1931 and for the letter to Schoenberg with which the Introduction started.<sup>70</sup>

Few of Gerstl's paintings were exhibited in his lifetime, and those not destroyed by the artist himself before his suicide were not available for public view until 1931, so early Schoenberg biographers were unable to identify any potential artistic references, if there are any, until years later. The biographical details outlined by Coffey suggest that Gerstl shared a studio with Schoenberg and his wife in 1908, taught them to paint and introduced Schoenberg to van Gogh and the other French post-Impressionists.<sup>71</sup> Gerstl's paintings display the influence of the French *Pointillists* in the way in which the paint is applied to the canvas in symmetrically aligned strokes, but there is no evidence that Gerstl subscribed to the original optical associations that the French did.<sup>72</sup> Indeed, as Jill Lloyd and Karol Winiarczyk conclude, Gerstl's interest in post-Impressionism and self-identification with van Gogh were typical of many *fin-de-siècle* artists, and represented Gerstl's search for a personal painting style, rather than a theoretical approach – a matter of reinterpretation in a different cultural context. From some of Gerstl's painted textures and colours on canvas and board, and his subject matter, there seems to be some

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<sup>70</sup> Kallir, *op.cit.*, p.120.

<sup>71</sup> Coffey, *op.cit.*, p.49.

<sup>72</sup> Jill Lloyd and Karol Winiarczyk, "Richard Gerstl's Internationalism", in Lloyd and Pfeiffer, *op.cit.*, p.31.

evidence that Schoenberg's technique of applying paint quickly before surface preparation or preliminary sketching may have been acquired from Gerstl, but, according to Lloyd and Winiarczyk, Gerstl also used more orthodox techniques in other work. Schoenberg shared some of Gerstl's autodidacticism and radicalism, though Gerstl had undertaken some art training and Schoenberg, albeit retrospectively, doubted his radicalism. Schoenberg's *Fantasies* were produced during the years 1910-11, making the question of Gerstl's tutelage during their production irrelevant. There appears to be little in Gerstl's extant oeuvre to suggest that Schoenberg emulated him. The case for Gerstl's influence relies on incomplete documentary evidence, and much post-hoc speculation. This biographical approach is too problematic to pursue further, but, more importantly perhaps, Gerstl's search for *style* runs counter to Schoenberg's belief that the *idea* is more important.<sup>73</sup>

Notwithstanding her long-term support for the recognition of Gerstl's reputation, Kallir draws her readers' attention to Kokoschka as the one perhaps more likely to have influenced Schoenberg as a painter than either Gerstl or Kandinsky. Schoenberg and Kokoschka did recognise the potential of new forms of drama, in what for Schoenberg would become *Gesamtkunstwerk*, but they were apparently unable to collaborate on a project.<sup>74</sup> The significance of this reference to *Gesamtkunstwerk* in Kallir is that it runs counter to another trope of many Schoenberg narratives, namely

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<sup>73</sup> "New Music, Outmoded Music, Style and Idea, 1946", in *Style and Idea*, p.113. Note, this is an anachronistic work.

<sup>74</sup> Whilst it is clear from the correspondence between them at the time that Schoenberg and Kokoschka did consider working together in 1909, perhaps under the auspices of their mutual friend, Adolf Loos, their conflicting work schedules eventually precluded this. Schoenberg went back to Berlin. See, eds. Olda Kokoschka and Alfred Murnau, *Oskar Kokoschka Letters 1905-1976*, trans. Mary Whittall, London, 1992, p.18. However, Kokoschka's biography makes no reference to this, perhaps indicating that the idea was only a transient one as far as he, at least, was concerned. See, Oskar Kokoschka, *My Life*, trans. David Britt, London, 1974. The corresponding letters from Schoenberg for 1909 have apparently not survived. However, it is clear, from the later letters of both parties, that the two remained in contact, albeit infrequently, throughout their lives.

that Schoenberg took up painting only when he was unable to overcome his music compositional impasses: Kallir recognises that Schoenberg's interest in painting, particularly those paintings of Kokoschka's that he may have seen, was related to his ideas for dramatic mixed-media performances.<sup>75</sup> The difficulties in resolving these various elements of biographical and critical evidence are such that at least one time on Schoenberg resorts to the academic safety of a type of bricolage approach, assembling various literary extracts and leaving the reader, heuristically as it were, to reach his or her own conclusion.<sup>76</sup>

### **Schoenberg's Jewish antecedents**

There are biographical details that are either missing or understated in most studies of Schoenberg, but which are important for this writer's propositions. That Schoenberg came from a poor Jewish background is well-known. His father, Samuel, died in 1889 when Arnold was 15 years of age, and he left school for work to help to support his family. He did not go to university, art college or music school. He started working life as an apprentice in a bank, until he could earn a living as an independent musician. Schoenberg claimed that it was intended that he should become an engineer, though there seems to be no evidence that he undertook training in this occupation.<sup>77</sup> There was nothing unusual in Schoenberg's career progress; many musicians began this way. Schoenberg was entirely self-taught, apart from the few lessons in contrapuntal harmony he received from his brother-in-law, Alexander von Zemlinsky (1871-1942), another Viennese composer, who had trained as a musician and was the brother of Schoenberg's wife, Mathilde.

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<sup>75</sup> Kallir, *op.cit.* p.45.

<sup>76</sup> See, for example, Auner, *op.cit.*

<sup>77</sup> Article in the *Deutsche Tonkünstler-Zeitung* of October 1902, published in advance of the performance later that same month of *Verklärte Nacht* in Berlin, in Jenkins, *op.cit.* p.112.

Schoenberg earned his living as a jobbing musician and part-time music teacher in and around Vienna and Berlin in the years before 1914. Schoenberg was never rich and often impoverished, which was why friends like Mahler were anxious to help him.

In common with many Jews anxious to succeed in *fin-de-siècle* Austria, Schoenberg converted to Christianity, though not to the establishment's Roman Catholic Church but to the Lutheran Church. Schoenberg's conversion is omitted from many biographies as it apparently conformed to the traditional convention of Jewish conversions to Christianity for financial or social purposes.<sup>78</sup> The Lutheran eucharist gives prominence to the simple acts of baptism and communion, rather than the baptism, masses, communion, confession and last rites. Lutherans stress the importance of words and reason in their liturgy, both significant to Schoenberg. Even Dore Ashton, when reviewing Balzac's influence on Schoenberg, does not relate Balzac's treatment of the Protestant philosopher Swedenborg's thought to Schoenberg's own conversion or to the allusions to religious thought in *Harmonielehre*.<sup>79</sup> This writer proposes that Schoenberg's conversion had an authentic religio-philosophical foundation, not a social or financial purpose. Schoenberg's conversion to a specific doctrine within Christianity was not an arbitrary, hypocritical act but one of significance that is demonstrable in the way in which he developed his *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Schoenberg's language, and the imagery of the *Fantasies*, are derived from the Lutheran and Swedenborgian origins of

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<sup>78</sup> Reich, *op.cit*, Stuckenschmidt, *op.cit*, and Wellesz, *op.cit*, make no references to Schoenberg's conversion, possibly because they came from that same generation of Austrians and took such matters for granted.

<sup>79</sup> Dore Ashton, *A Fable of Modern Art*, London, 1980.

Schoenberg's conversion, with their emphasis upon quietist, internal contemplation and a personal, interior dialogue with God.

The historical trajectory of anti-Semitism in Austria resulted not only in Schoenberg's exile to America, but also in his return to Judaism, an act of solidarity with his persecuted familial community. His resumption of Judaism in 1933, at the beginning of the Nazi era, is interpreted by some authorities as a return to his true faith, thereby imbuing his work retrospectively with Jewish monotheism from the outset. Ignoring his Lutheran conversion, Lewis Stevens and Julia Neuberger interpret everything Schoenberg produced before 1914 as evidence of Jewish orthodoxy throughout his life.<sup>80</sup> This narrative of Schoenberg as a Jewish composer emphasises the Old Testament influences on his work, and authorities like Pamela White consign the other influences, which are emphasised in this thesis, to a general category of "theosophical interests" shared, for example, with the *Blaue Reiter* group, or to weaknesses in Schoenberg's Jewish religious education or to adolescent rebellion.<sup>81</sup> For Alexander Ringer, Schoenberg's interest in mysticism and theosophy is simply part of his Jewish heritage.<sup>82</sup> The cry shouted in *Moses und Aron* (1934) – *Oh Word, the Word that I lack* – about the (im)possibility of communion with God, then casts a shadow over Schoenberg's ability to communicate either with his audience or his God from the very beginning of his career. According to George Steiner, Europe's failure to generate any response to Schoenberg's plea after the Holocaust is

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<sup>80</sup> Lewis Stevens and Julia Neuberger, *Composers of Classical Music of Jewish Descent*, Edgware, Middlesex, 2003, p.313. Stevens and Neuberger describe Schoenberg as an "unbeliever" prior to his conversion to Christianity and repeats the assertions about Gerstl providing training in painting and Kandinsky's anti-Semitism. They detail Schoenberg's responses to the Hitler and the Nazis when Schoenberg lost his post in Germany in 1933, but do not indicate when Schoenberg re-entered the Jewish faith. In Steven and Neuberger's terms, Schoenberg had always been a Jew.

<sup>81</sup> Pamela White, *Schoenberg and the God-Idea*, Ann Arbor, 1985, p.51-55. White does not assign the same level of significance to Schoenberg's conversion to Christianity that much of this thesis rests on but assumes that Schoenberg always held orthodox views of Judaic religion.

<sup>82</sup> Alexander Ringer, *Arnold Schoenberg: The composer as Jew*, Oxford, 1990.

symbolic of its wholesale failure as a civilisation, a view that may not be morally challengeable.<sup>83</sup> So, in turn, Schoenberg is an anti-Jewish Jew in his early years, as epitomised in Austrian cultural history by Otto Weininger (1880-1903).<sup>84</sup> Schoenberg then reveals his “true” Jewish identity at a later stage, exemplifying Jewish failure to achieve full assimilation into Western culture, and finally his inadequacy even as a Jew is revealed at the end. With the rise of the Nazis, Schoenberg was categorised as a “degenerate artist”, a producer of *Entartete Kunst*, *Entartete Musik*, whose work was prohibited, largely on the grounds of his association with left-wing politics and the Jewish race.<sup>85</sup> Paradoxically, of course, the label is still applied to such artists, often by default and without considering the continuing discriminatory implications, suggesting they might form some recognisably homogeneous group.

Where Schoenberg is positioned in any art-historical or musicological narrative is clearly a matter of critical prejudice – what artistic group should he be assigned to? -, and how to judge Schoenberg’s pre-1914 works are perhaps almost insoluble matters. This is compounded by the facts that Schoenberg worked across different art-forms and sits at the threshold between the nineteenth- and twentieth-centuries.

Some musicologists categorise *Gurrelieder*, no opus number, 1900-11, as one of the last great Romantic works, which should be judged in nineteenth-century terms.<sup>86</sup>

The imagery of *Pierrot Lunaire*, Op.21, composed quickly only a year later in 1912,

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<sup>83</sup> George Steiner, *George Steiner: A Reader*, Oxford, 1987, p.236.

<sup>84</sup> *Harmonielehre*, p.2. Schoenberg identifies Weininger as one of those “who has thought earnestly”.

<sup>85</sup> See, Michael Haas, *Forbidden Music The Jewish Composers Banned by the Nazis*, Yale, 2013, p. 285. Haas describes the diversity of Jewish composers across Europe: cultural diversity led to vast differences in musical styles and content. Across different artistic media the diversity among Jewish artists was, of course, enormous. The designation of Jewish artists under the *Entartete Kunst* label means that many of these artists are still totally neglected as if they had disappeared from history altogether. The consequences of being banned continued to be felt even after 1945, when a new generation of composers sought to distance themselves from anything that had gone before.

<sup>86</sup> See, for example, Alex Ross, *The Rest is Noise Listening to the Twentieth Century*, London, New York, Toronto, Sydney, and New Delhi, 2007, p. 50. Ross introduces *Gurrelieder* as part of a “Romantic paradise” and a “pleasant shock to listeners expecting a grueling [sic] atonal exercise”.



demonstrates a similar nineteenth-century artistic influence, Symbolism. But, *Pierrot Lunaire* also displays twentieth century aesthetics, in that performances depend upon the audience's recognition of the character *Pierrot* from the eighteenth-century *Commedia dell' arte* in a decadent Modernist setting. Authorities such as David Weir trace the continuities of Symbolism across Romanticism and Decadence into Modernism, and associate Schopenhauer and Schoenberg's *Gesamtkunstwerk* ideas, with the narrative of the natural fragility of the human species and the pessimism of the German Expressionists in the prelude to 1914.<sup>87</sup> In such a reading, Schoenberg has anticipated (anachronistically) in the character of *Pierrot* a model of mankind about to be enlisted into the mechanical warfare of the trenches, a man who displays the uncertainties about his future existence and the purpose of his life. Similarly, Vincent Sherry emphasises the conceptual continuity from Decadence into Modernity, which he sees in the imaginative use of "time", past, present and future, the urgency of "now" as the time to be enjoyed and experienced to the maximum. Like the *fin-de-siècle* flâneur idly walking through the streets of the city, existence is marked by the absence of a "tomorrow".<sup>88</sup>

To Allan Janik and Stephen Toulmin, Schoenberg's post-1922 serialism (described by Schoenberg in *Twelve-Tone Composition 1923*) is axiomatic of the formal linguistic and mathematical elements of the Viennese school of philosophers, the logical-positivists led by Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951) and extended by Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947) and Bertrand Russell (1872-1970).<sup>89</sup> In Janik and Toulmin's view, Schoenberg's compositions are purely abstract, mathematical exercises, devoid of emotional content, anticipating the culturally-cleansed Abstract

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<sup>87</sup> David Weir, *Decadence and the Making of Modernism*, Amherst, Mass, 1995.

<sup>88</sup> Vincent Sherry, *Modernism and the Reinvention of Decadence*, Cambridge, 2014.

<sup>89</sup> *Style and Idea*, p.207. Allan S. Janik and Stephen Toulmin, *Wittgenstein's Vienna*, Chicago, 1996.

Expressionists of post-1945 America. Florian Illies suggests that Schoenberg was motivated by obscure numerology, which led him, among other things, at all costs to avoid the number “13”.<sup>90</sup> In perhaps the anachronistic text, Thomas Mann (1875-1955) describes in *Dr Faustus*, 1943, a fictional composer, who has developed a system of composition of such perverse musical madness that a mediaeval alchemist might create, someone in league with the devil, and riddled with syphilis.<sup>91</sup> If that composer is Schoenberg, is it necessary to look the inner demon in Schoenberg’s persona? Mann’s fictional narrative situates his artist-genius composer in the German Romantic tradition for a political critique of the Germany’s rejection of rationality and its fatal consequences. But, as Walter Cohen points out, Mann associates German high culture with Jewish culture (as he does in *Death in Venice*, 1912, the protagonist Gustav von Aschenbach bearing a striking similarity to the real-life Gustav Mahler), and demonises his assimilated Jewish character at the very time as he purportedly opposes Nazism from his position of exile in America.<sup>92</sup>

There are other narratives, of course, many of which seek to locate Schoenberg in the broader sweep of Austro-German cultural history: art-historical scholars, such as Shearer West, Shulamith Behr, Peter Conrad and Peter Gay, relate him to the

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<sup>90</sup> Florian Illies, *1913 The Year Before The Storm*, trans. Shaun Whiteside and Jamie Lee Searle, London, 2013, p.7.

<sup>91</sup> Thomas Mann, *Dr Faustus: The Life of the German Composer Adrian Leverkühn as told by a Friend*, trans. T.J. Reed, London, 1992. Mann wrote this novel when both he and Schoenberg were exiled in Los Angeles, USA. Schoenberg was consulted about the musicological content, as was Adorno. The rift between Schoenberg and Mann was never publicly resolved. The purpose of Mann’s apparent use of Schoenberg as a model is unclear, though Mann was attempting to act as a focus for resistance to German authoritarianism, irrationality and Nazism, whilst residing in a colony of exiles at the time. Perhaps Schoenberg was simply the victim of collateral political damage.

<sup>92</sup> Walter Cohen, *A History of European Literature The West and the World from Antiquity to the Present*, Oxford, 2017, p.409. Thomas Mann, *Death in Venice*, trans. David Luke, London, 1990.

<sup>93</sup> Shearer West, *The Visual Arts in Germany 1890-1937: Utopia and Despair*, Manchester, 2000. Shulamith Behr, *Expressionism*, London, 1999. Peter Conrad, *Modern Times Modern Places, Life and Art in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, London, 1998. Peter Gay, *Modernism The Lure of Heresy From Baudelaire to Beckett and Beyond*, London, 2007.

contemporaneous discourses of various artistic and intellectual communities around the narrative of German Expressionism.<sup>93</sup> These scholars apparently share a perception of the prelude to 1914 as being full of dread and despair with the expectation of a Messianic resurgence. It is assumed that Schoenberg experienced the same emotions.<sup>94</sup> The mediaeval darkness created (anachronistically) by Mann in *Dr Faustus* does, of course, reads more convincingly if it is assumed that Schoenberg's era was overwhelmed by a sense of foreboding about the cataclysm to come. Within this narrative is a period wracked by socio-political degeneration, psychological sickness caused by urbanisation and industrialisation, and sexual ambiguity and paranoia. As William M. Johnston has it, death in literature, music and paintings was the bulwark against change.<sup>95</sup> It is a period in which Germania, that Central European wedge of territory subsuming Austria and Germany, clearly demonstrates that it has not benefited from the virtues of Western Enlightenment, has failed to remove its authoritarian political structures and social divisions, and has denied its people sufficient freedom to enjoy the liberal values of individual autonomy and emancipation. Germania remained a non-Western European country. This is shorthand for what T.J. Reed characterises as a failure not of Germania per se, but the result of political efforts by those who sought to shape a particularly authoritarian model of life and deny the successes of the Enlightenment in Germany.<sup>96</sup> Typically, the Enlightenment is judged by such commentators to be a *French* phenomenon, at best only to be despised by Austrians and Germans. The outcome, according to Reed, has been to ascribe all the guilt to Austria and Germany for the events of

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<sup>94</sup> Lisa Marie Anderson, *German Expressionism and the Messianism of a Generation*, Amsterdam, 2011.

<sup>95</sup> William M. Johnston, *The Austrian Mind, An Intellectual and Social History 1848-1938*, California, 1972, p.165.

<sup>96</sup> T.J. Reed, *Light in Germany, Sources from an Unknown Enlightenment*, London and Chicago, 2015, p.2-3.

1914, and to seek the causes of catastrophe in the broader sweep of social, economic and political change, in the hope that recurrence can be avoided. Thomas Otte describes this process as the downside of relying upon what are perceived as the “underlying, structural forces”, which ultimately are presented as a part of a *fait accompli*.<sup>97</sup> Otte’s solution is to turn back to the contemporaneous diplomatic and political documents of early 1914 generated by those individuals directly involved in decision-making and communication at the time, rather than rely upon modern interpretation of past events.

To summarise, this review of literature reveals two intertwined strands – Schoenberg the rational-technical musician, musical theorist and leader of the Second Viennese School, and Schoenberg the ethical-religious musician doomed to leave major works incomplete because of their unresolvable monotheistic question-posing – across which sits Schoenberg the genius, the painter of problematic visual images and composer of difficult music. It also reveals the gap which this thesis addresses: the relationship between different ideas and modes of artistic expression used by the same man, Arnold Schoenberg, working in *fin-de-siècle* Vienna. The extant literature comprises anachronistic layers of largely biographical and interpretative detail which do not permit the exploration of the essential cultural background to Schoenberg’s music and the visual productions. Above all, what is missing is an overview of the cultural world within which Schoenberg was seeking to integrate activities apparently presented as being disparate and segmented into a coherent approach to the production of *Gesamtkunstwerk* and the *Fantasies*.

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<sup>97</sup> T.G. Otte, *July Crisis The World’s Descent into War, Summer 1914*, Cambridge, 2014, p.5.

## Research methodology

This thesis comprises five main chapters with this introduction and a conclusion. For organisational purposes, a schematic metaphor is introduced into the main chapters, which imitates the basic harmonic building blocks of Schoenberg's *Harmonielehre*, introduced more fully in Chapter 1. This structure follows chords in their simplest triadic form and upon which, in each chapter, the various relationships between Schoenberg and important individuals or ideas - Schopenhauer and Wagner; Loos and Kraus; new colour technology and cinema; Swedenborg, Balzac and Strindberg - can be discussed. This is intended to provide a manageable focus to each area of discussion: hence, for example, the Schoenberg/Schopenhauer/Wagner triad at Chapter 2 concerns the genesis of *Gesamtkunstwerk*, whilst the triad Schoenberg/Kraus/Loos at Chapter 3 focusses on the development Schoenberg's use of language as an instrument for polemic confrontation with bourgeois social and political attitudes. The relationships between each triad are noted, and cross-referenced.

In *Harmonielehre*, Schoenberg describes the structure of major scales from a series of tones:

A musical sound (*Klang*) is a composite, made up of a series of tones sounding together, the overtones; hence, it forms a chord...If the *C* is taken as the midpoint (of a scale), then its situation can be described by reference to two forces, one of which pulls downward, toward *F*, the other upward, toward *G*:

*G*

^

C

v

F

Hence, the dependence of *G* on *C*, with which, strictly speaking, the force of the *C* is exerted in the same direction as that of the *F*, may be considered like the force of a man hanging by his hands from a beam and exerting his own force against the force of gravity. He pulls on the beam just as gravity pulls him and in the same direction. But the effect is that his force *works against* the force of gravity...What is important for the moment is to establish that these tones are very closely related, that they are next of kin. *G* is the first overtone (after *c*) of *C*, and *c* the first of *F*. Such an overtone bears the closest similarity to the fundamental (after the octave), therefore contributes most to the quality (*Charakteristik*) of the sound, to its euphony...These nearest relatives are just what gives the fundamental tone its stability; for it represents the point of balance between their opposing tendencies.<sup>98</sup>

The value of this metaphor is that it permits the drawing together of relationships between Schoenberg and other individuals and ideas, mirroring the forces (tensions), which Schoenberg perceives. For example, Schoenberg describes the tension between the forces of consonance and dissonance within harmonic structures, and the resolution of those forces. Schoenberg designated such forces as

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<sup>98</sup> *Harmonielehre*, p. 23.

*overtones* and the same term is used in this thesis to permit an assessment of complementary and opposing influences. This raises the important question of the significance for Schoenberg of any concept of *resolution*, whether as a harmonic or an intellectual/artistic matter. Resolution may not be a necessity, and the thesis consciously seeks to identify matters of ambiguity or lack of resolution where these are present. It is to be hoped that this approach sits in accordance with the last words of *Harmonielehre*, where Schoenberg writes with delight about things yet to be discovered:

In such a domain, who dares ask for theory! <sup>99</sup>

As Schoenberg, would say, the test of any theory is the degree of its successful application in any thesis.

In the absence of direct knowledge of what was in Schoenberg's mind and sufficient clarity about what he wrote, this writer cites what Nicholas Cook describes as the "taken-for-granted" of contemporary Viennese cultural discourse to present a coherent perspective on Schoenberg's work. <sup>100</sup> This concept is more fully discussed in relation to the discourse on synaesthesia at Chapter 1. Cook's research into Heinrich Schenker (1884-1935), a composer, critic, musicologist and contemporary of Schoenberg from a very similar Viennese Jewish background notes the difficulties in understanding the wider culture of *fin-de-siècle* Vienna:

The historical gap in our understanding of what the theory [that is, Schenker's theory] as a whole meant to Schenker and his contemporaries and what we

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<sup>99</sup> *Harmonielehre*, p.422.

<sup>100</sup> Nicholas Cook, *The Schenker Project, Culture, Race, and Music Theory in Fin-De-Siècle Vienna*, Oxford, 2007. Schoenberg knew of Schenker's work and refers to him *en passant* in *Harmonielehre*, though only in foot notes.

call his “polemics” flag up an entire dimension of meaning absent from Schenkerian theory and practice in their present day...other contexts play an equally important role in bringing to light connotations, or rather whole systems of signification, that in *fin-de-siècle* Vienna were self-evident, taken for granted, and accordingly absent or at best incompletely presented.<sup>101</sup>

This thesis uses a methodology derived from a contemporary of Schoenberg’s, Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911), the German philosopher and proto-sociologist, and echoes the foundation works in *fin-de-siècle* Viennese studies carried out by Carl Schorske.<sup>102</sup> Dilthey emphasises the intrinsic temporality of man’s understanding and its capacity to incorporate past world views, interpretations and shared views.<sup>103</sup> Dilthey’s concept of *Geisteswissenschaft* (the science of the mind, or spiritual knowledge) proposes that the human mind is the central phenomenon from which social and cultural sciences are derived and analysable.<sup>104</sup> The human mind is not abstract nor is it a set of disembodied behavioural experiences: the human mind relates to an individual’s life in its concrete cultural and historical context. Understanding is not bounded by contemporary or physical proximity, nor by institutional arrangements for its transmission or communication across the human sciences (philosophy, sociology, history, musicology, linguistics, theatre, etc.). The human sciences are capable of being known by all humans through processes of understanding and interpretation, hermeneutics.

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<sup>101</sup> *Ibid*, p.307.

<sup>102</sup> See, Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna Politics and Culture*, New York, 1981, and Carl E. Schorske, *Thinking with History Explorations in the Passage to Modernism*, Princeton, 2014.

<sup>103</sup> H.P. Rickman, *Dilthey Today: A Critical Appraisal of the Contemporary Relevance of his Work*, London, 1988.

<sup>104</sup> Wilhelm Dilthey, “*The Essence of Philosophy*”, 1907 in Rudolf A. Makkreel, *Dilthey: Philosopher of the Human Studies*, New Jersey and Chichester, 1993.



Dilthey's hermeneutics proposes that human understanding be expressed in terms of the ideas and cultural products of a specific society, which require explication through a cycle of interpretation and reinterpretation.<sup>105</sup> His methodology facilitates the exploration of the cultural context, *Kultur*, within which Schoenberg's musical compositions and visualisations were created. In Dilthey, the academic study of *Kultur* is part of the general study of the humanities, *Geisteswissenschaften*, which separates it from the natural sciences. Dilthey proposes that this new grouping of cultural studies shares a unique methodology and philosophy, breaking with the constraints of historicism, but recognising, as appropriate, the intellectual heritage of such subjects. These subjects, asserts Dilthey, are neither classical nor theological, but distinctively modern. They possess their own individual psychological and socio-historical descriptions; the history of a subject is the equivalent of a series of world views, with an intrinsic temporality containing past world views and interpretations within that same shared world. Life comprises meaningful actions and symbolic expressions by individuals; individuals establish their persona in the world through concrete actions and relations. Rather than providing a set of causal relationships (as in a scientific approach) or a narrative (of connected events presented in sequence), Dilthey's methodology reveals the inter-connectedness of lived experiences in the human-historical-social world, something that is unique, contingent and momentary. For Dilthey meaning always keeps changing: how intentions for the future are perceived conditions how meaning is ascribed to the past:

We explain things by means of purely intellectual processes, but we understand by means of the cooperation of all the powers of the mind in

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<sup>105</sup> Makkreel, *op.cit.*

comprehension. In understanding we start from the connection of the given, living whole, in order to make the past comprehensible in terms of it. <sup>106</sup>

Dilthey's methodology advocates the identification of a framework, a *nexus*, or series of connections between two or more concepts, and not the formation of a traditional, historical narrative. By comparison, Timms's much-cited model of creative interaction in *fin-de-siècle* Vienna is inadequate to describe the scope of intellectual influences now in play in a Diltheyan universe, for it can do no more than identify potential players and not the connections between the ideas and symbolic expressions, they might have had. <sup>107</sup> In Johnston words, Dilthey "embraces the whole man". <sup>108</sup> The Diltheyan *nexus* can be subjected to processes of "refeeling, reconstruing, connecting and separating" (Dilthey) the symbolic expressions, which a traditional narrative does not permit. Hence, in this chapter, ideas are introduced in a way that emphasises their inter-connectedness across a common social and temporal space, rather than as elements of a flow of art-historical-literary narrative. This facilitates their frequent reconsideration and cross-refencing in the rest of the thesis across triads of tensions.

Schoenberg's knowledge of the symbolic expressions of Schopenhauer, Swedenborg, Balzac and Strindberg in the following chapters is not derived from his attendance at a university, and certainly not from personal acquaintance. Nor is it necessarily dependent on his reading of original texts. Swedenborg's ideas are readily communicated via the fictionalised interpretations of them by Balzac and

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<sup>106</sup> Wilhelm Dilthey, *The Formation of the Historical World in the Human Sciences, Selected Works 10*, New Jersey, 2002, p.23-24.

<sup>107</sup> Timms, *op.cit*, p.8.

<sup>108</sup> Johnston, *op.cit*, p.155.

Strindberg. There are copies of some of Schoenberg's own Swedenborg texts in the ASC, though it is not possible for the archivist to confirm whether the annotations they carry are Schoenberg's own – as they are on Schoenberg's copies of Balzac, for example – or those of his students and subsequent readers. Intermediaries, whether other authors or personal acquaintances, might serve equally well in communicating or receiving ideas. The ways in which Schoenberg acquired his ideas are not dependent on his contemporaries, as a Timms-type model might propose. Some are important – Loos and Kraus, for example, in Chapter 3 – but the influence of ideas upon Schoenberg exists without the constraints of time, geography or direct personal contact. Dilthey's *Geisteswissenschaft* locates Schoenberg in a much larger cultural-historical context than that of a coffee house in *fin-de-siècle* Vienna in 1910.

The transmission of ideas as envisaged by Dilthey also means that attention must be given to intertextuality: ideas are not transmitted, whether in speech or in writing, without some element of variation or change as they are received. The interaction of Schoenberg's own ideas in *Harmonielehre* with those derived from Balzac, Schopenhauer, Strindberg and Swedenborg, together with the influence of Kraus, Loos and Wagner, generates newly related understandings in each of the separate works. This process of intertextuality creates new narratives: narratives derive new ideas and insights from the ways in which texts interact with one another. Such narratives recognise Schoenberg's own prior knowledge and understanding, leading to new insights into his decision to convert to Lutheran Protestantism under the influence Swedenborgian philosophy, an alternative reading to the traditional conversion of Austrian Jews to Roman Catholicism. There are several layers of intertextuality here, as Swedenborg passes to Schoenberg via Balzac initially and

then on through Strindberg's reading of Balzac's interpretation of Swedenborg.

Intertextuality generates its own cycle of interpretation and reinterpretation. It follows that one implication of this intertextuality for the methodology of this thesis is that in subsequent chapters there will be referencing back and forth to the same texts and the same works by Schoenberg.

Recent academic thinking about intertextuality by Susan Stanford Friedman suggests, as Dilthey does, that attention also needs to be paid to issues of temporality and locality.<sup>109</sup> Whilst locality here is a matter of focus around Schoenberg in Berlin and Vienna, matters of temporality are more complex, once the Diltheyan concept of cultural transmission across generations is considered. Schoenberg's ideas are not bounded by temporality. The interplay of texts informs Schoenberg's understanding. Schoenberg is influenced by his associates and students, who were equally conversant with the same literature, whether in its original form, or via citations, references in newspapers, conversations in Viennese coffee houses, and so on.

However, to the intertextuality of books must be added the interplay of other media – intermediality – as experienced by Schoenberg in van Gogh's images exhibited in Berlin and Vienna, and in the popular Viennese music of Johann Strauss II (1829-99), the symphonies of Beethoven (1770-1827) and other composers he heard. Schoenberg's world is one in which acts of continuous creation and re-creation are to be expected of a world. This sense of a cultural universe of images, music and texts sitting outside temporal or geographical frameworks suits Schoenberg's personal activist philosophy, the philosophy of a man working hard to make

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<sup>109</sup> Susan Stanford Friedman, *Planetary Modernisms On Modernity Across Time*, New York, 2015.

connections between things – his own *nexus* - and never accepting the rigid laws of existing theories or conventions.

## **Thesis Structure**

In Chapter 1, discussion of Schoenberg's treatise on the development of musical harmony, *Harmonielehre*, is situated in the culture of *fin-de-siècle* Vienna and the *Secessionist* discourse on synaesthesia, using Dilthey's hermeneutic methodology. The development of Schoenberg's concept of *Gesamtkunstwerk* Utopianism and spiritual rather than material renewal, is related to the vital stimulus of the novella *Seraphita* by Honoré de Balzac (1799-1850) and is discussed at the end of the chapter. The chapter demonstrates how the relationship between the language and ideas in *Harmonielehre* and *Seraphita* cohere, the first stage of a synthesis or *Gesamtkunstwerk*.

In Chapter 2, the ideological and philosophical elements of *Gesamtkunstwerk* are examined from the perspectives of the composer Richard Wagner and the philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer and set against Schoenberg's own ideas and those of his contemporary, Gustav Mahler.

In Chapter 3, the contributions of his contemporaries, the social critics Adolf Loos and Karl Kraus, to Schoenberg's ideas about language and public polemics through music and publication are then considered. Loos and Kraus's concepts of language, truth and public morality are considered in terms of the purposes of Schoenberg's *Gesamtkunstwerk*.

In Chapter 4 the impact on Schoenberg's thinking about *Gesamtkunstwerk* of the newly introduced technologies of electrified light, moving colour and the cinema are

discussed. The opportunities for innovative *Gesamtkunstwerk* productions, which they occasioned, are set in a wider context of cultural opportunity and change.

Chapter 5 is concerned with concepts of spiritual exploration and renewal contained in the works of Emanuel Swedenborg, as interpreted in French novelist, Balzac's novella *Seraphita*, and in the work of the Swedish playwright and writer, August Strindberg. The concept of the personal, internal religious discourse becomes the driving force behind the realisation of Schoenberg's *Gesamtkunstwerk*, and his visual images, the *Fantasies*, which are examined in detail.

The thesis concludes a discussion of the relationship between Schoenberg's ideas about the genesis of abstraction through the synthesis of artistic media in *Gesamtkunstwerk*, and the contemporary fields of philosophy and intermedial artistic productions. The thesis ends with proposals for the possible use of the same methodology for further art historical studies.

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## **Chapter 1: Schoenberg's *fin-de-siècle* Vienna and *Harmonielehre***

The purpose of this chapter is to show how Schoenberg related his ideas about the historical development of musical harmony and the future of music in *Harmonielehre* with religious ideas in Honoré de Balzac's *Seraphita*: the synthesis of these ideas is the starting point for a planned *Gesamtkunstwerk*. To do this it is necessary to situate Schoenberg and his *Harmonielehre* in the culture of *fin-de-siècle* Vienna, using Dilthey's hermeneutic methodology to illuminate those aspects of the culture of which are obscure in Schoenberg's writings or about which even he may have been only partially aware. This will also demonstrate how Schoenberg's work contributed to the development of *fin-de-siècle* Viennese culture and *Gesamtkunstwerk*.

The chapter begins by examining important aspects of the Viennese *Secession* and the discourse on synaesthesia. It does so via a methodology derived from Dilthey: it concentrates on the inter-connectedness of symbolic expressions and ideas within Viennese culture, a *nexus*, rather than on the production of a more traditional narrative of causal relations. The chapter uses terms contemporary to Schoenberg and seeks to avoid anachronisms. It then turns to Schoenberg's *Harmonielehre* as a symbolic expression of Viennese culture, and of the harmonic ideas for the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, *Seraphita*.

### **The Discourse on Synaesthesia in *fin-de-siècle* Vienna**

The foundations of the academic study of the *fin-de-siècle* cultural context within which the Viennese *Secession* owe much to Carl Schorske's *Fin-De-Siècle Vienna Politics and Culture*. By studying literature, architecture, politics, psychology, painting

and music and determining the similarities and differences among the various branches of cultural production, Schorske proposes that it is possible to identify the shared concerns and experiences that bind culture-makers together in a common social and temporal space. Schorske rejects the study of the autonomy of the individual fields of art, and their internal changes, in favour of the shared and synchronous social experiences across them.<sup>1</sup> This thesis follows the same strategy by relating Schoenberg's visual images to his planned and realised compositions, and his theoretical statements in *Harmonielehre*.

Schorske describes a culture at the point of transition to, and experiencing the emergence of, the modernist era of artistic production, a collective "Oedipal response" in a "hothouse" of 1890-1910.<sup>2</sup> Within this culture, the synthesis of the arts, synaesthesia, became a significant discourse within all modes of artistic experience. It is in the very nature of cultural discourse that phenomena are continuously evolving, and the discourse on synaesthesia, a Diltheyan *nexus*, demonstrates the processes of "refeeling, reconstruing, connecting and separating", which have continued since it first started in that *fin-de-siècle* cultural space.<sup>3</sup> Within this discourse is to be found a dynamic cultural space characterised as being something speculative and contingent, rather than rigid and consensual; Schorske describes this space as "scope". The idea had been anticipated by the Viennese poet Hugo von Hofmannsthal (1874-1929) writing in 1905 on the impact of modern science and industrialisation on the old aesthetic culture of Vienna. Hofmannsthal concludes that:

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<sup>1</sup> Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-De-Siècle Vienna Politics and Culture*, New York, 1981.p. xxiii.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. xxvi and xxvii.

<sup>3</sup> See, Hilda Meldrum Brown, *The Quest For The Gesamtkunstwerk & Richard Wagner*, Oxford, 2016, in which Brown seeks to locate synaesthesia, and use of the term "*Gesamtkunstwerk*", in the study of eighteenth century landscape gardening by Eusebius Trahdorff (1782-1863) published in 1827.



The nature of our epoch is the multiplicity and indeterminacy. It can rest only on *das Gleitende* (the slipping, the sliding) ...what other generations believed to be firm is in fact *das Gleitende*.<sup>4</sup>

This idea of “scope” also means that the discourse opens to include an ever-widening range of disciplines, beyond the traditional arts into the newer disciplines of psychology, philology, and sociology. Schorske’s use of the term “oedipal response”, for example, is a reference not to the Oedipus of the Greek classical playwright, Aeschylus c.525/524-c.456/455 BC), but to the appropriation by the Austrian psychologist, Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) of the concept of patricide as a psychological response arising from male anxiety. The rejection of previous conventions of artistic production is thus given an additional intellectual gloss by way of explanation of something which might once have been simply ascribed to generational change or variations on old themes. The following discussion is tempered throughout by the pervasive sense of Hofmannsthal’s *das Gleitende*, the sliding of meaning and the lack of secure definition. The limits of language, part of the study of philology, are also, as Hofmannsthal has it, the limits of thought; this concept was formalised by the contemporary logical-positivist philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951), in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* of 1921.<sup>5</sup> It will become clear that this same issue of language and thinking exercised Schoenberg’s development of *Gesamtkunstwerk*.

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<sup>4</sup> Hugo von Hofmannsthal, *Ein Brief* (1902), *The Lord Chandos Letter and Other Writings*, trans. Joel Rotenberg, New York, 2005, p.117.

<sup>5</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuiness, Abingdon and New York, 1975.

## Austrian culture and politics

It is axiomatic that the cultural and historical circumstances of *fin-de-siècle* Austria were changing in the light of industrialisation and social change. In *The Austrian Mind*, William M. Johnston sets the tone of most analyses of Austria at that time: “a dynastic state...floundering for lack of a purpose”.<sup>6</sup> The city of Vienna itself seems to epitomise Austria's problems. In one of the earliest texts to describe the disparity between the legend and reality of Austria seen through the history of Vienna, Ilisa Barea identifies characteristics which still resonate through the literature, not least the metaphor of a border fortress confronting the east, but looking west, with centuries old traditions living at the centre of political storms, and battles of conscience between the Reformation and Counter-Reformation.<sup>7</sup> The clutter of pseudo-historical symbolism around the Ringstrasse emphasised the political irrelevance of the concept of Empire, according to Steven Beller, particularly given that the centrifugal forces of political partition among the different national and linguistic groupings were already being felt.<sup>8</sup> The competing demands of Germans (conservative and liberals), Czechs, Poles, Slovenes, Croats and Rumanians for national and linguistic recognition, following the Hungarian Compromise of 1867 after defeat by Prussia, could only be managed through the skill of ministers like Eduard Taaffe (1833-95), in a political context characterised by what Beller calls “well-tempered dissatisfaction and trade-offs”.<sup>9</sup> The fracturing of Austrian politics grew worse in the 1880s, particularly after the effects of the Stock Market crash of 1873 began to be experienced. The Jews, including the assimilated ones, who had been

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<sup>6</sup> William M. Johnston, *The Austrian Mind, An Intellectual and Social History 18-48-1938*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1972, p.11 Ilisa Barea, *Vienna Legend and Reality*, London, 1966.

<sup>7</sup> Ilisa Barea, *Vienna Legend and Reality*, London, 1966.

<sup>8</sup> Steven Beller, *A Concise History of Austria*, Cambridge and New York, 200, p.142.

<sup>9</sup> Beller, *op.cit*, p.151.

identified with liberal politics, were blamed for the financial failure, or envied for surviving its effects. Whilst some Jews associated themselves with the conservatism of defending the old order, and hence, their own social and financial interests, those Jews, who subscribed to the intellectual development of socialist or communist ideologies alongside non-Jewish Austrians, were faced with further assimilation (or not) at the expense of their religious beliefs.<sup>10</sup> These developments set the stage for the growing antisemitism of Georg von Schönerer (1842-1921) and Karl Lueger (1844-1910), upon whom, David Art and Richard Evans propose, the Austrian Adolf Hitler (1889-1945) modelled Nazism.<sup>11</sup> The conflicted allegiances of a converted Jew like Schoenberg, culturally conservative in his defence of German culture but averse to overt political action are self-evident. As will be seen in the discussion of *Harmonielehre* later in this chapter, his objective is to sustain German music, but he is willing to conduct working men's choirs with its suggestion of socialist, that is, anti-Imperialist leanings.

According to Adolf Loos (who is discussed further at Chapter 3) the classical-baroque façade of Vienna's Ringstrasse came to reflect in the short time since its creation in the 1860-90s, an outdated, old-fashioned and inflexible society set against modern commercial realities.<sup>12</sup> Opposition to this cultural and political stasis is expressed in literature in the Oedipal stance of *Jung Wien*, the group of artists comprising the writer Arthur Schnitzler (1862-1931), the poet von Hofmannsthal, the artist Gustav Klimt (1862-1919) and others, who led a Dionysian (in the Nietzschean sense) counter-culture.<sup>13</sup> The association of Jewish or converted Jewish writers with

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<sup>10</sup> Beller, *op.cit*, p.158.

<sup>11</sup> David Art, *Birth of Antisemitism The Politics of the Nazi Past in Germany and Austria*, New York, 2006, p.42 and Richard J. Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich*, New York, 2003, p.42.

<sup>12</sup> Adolf Loos, "Die potemkinische Stadt" in *Ver Sacrum I* 1898, p.15-17.

<sup>13</sup> Schorske, *op.cit*, p. 209.

*Jung Wien* meant that it became one of the targets of the anti-Semitism which began to reach a crescendo in the years before and immediately after 1914. Walter Cohen believes that the presence of Jewish writers is the single most important component of modernist fiction; the *fin-de-siècle Jung Wien* group is one of its sources.<sup>14</sup> The nominal leader of *Jung Wien* was the dramatist and critic Hermann Bahr (1863-1934), who came back to Vienna from periods in France and Spain imbued with Symbolism; his greatest attribute was, according to Johnston, to publicise the works of others.<sup>15</sup> This was a most fortunate attribute, since *Jung Wien* was united only by its belief in modernity, and not a more specific political manifesto. On the other hand, the typical product emanating from *Jung Wien* writers in the Café Griensteidl or Café Central is the *feuilleton*, a short newspaper or magazine article, for some a natural medium for impressionist studies of behaviour in the coffee-houses and on the streets of Vienna, to others the decadent result of a nonchalant dilettante's time wasting. Opinions about the value of the *feuilleton* varied considerably; as noted in the Introduction, Karl Kraus is critical of the coffee-house wastrels. In Chapter 3, it will be shown that he associated the decline of standards of writing with linguistic degeneration. Nevertheless, he supported one *feuilleton* writer, Peter Altenberg (1859-1919), and adopted and often parodied the style in his own publication, *Die Fackel* from 1889 onwards.<sup>16</sup>

Schorske identifies the political stasis with the failure to resolve the generational tension between, on the one hand, an Austria founded on the Counter-Reformation, with its Baroque art and architecture and delusions of empire, and, on the other, the

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<sup>14</sup> Walter Cohen, *A History of European Literature The West and the World from Antiquity to the Present*, Oxford, 2017, p.406.

<sup>15</sup> Johnston, *op.cit*, p.120.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, p.122.

European Enlightenment, with its rationality and liberal politics.<sup>17</sup> Much of this stasis emanates from the monarchy itself. It muddled through, says Beller, losing moral authority when the heir apparent to the throne, Crown Prince Rudolf (1858-1889), committed suicide with his mistress at Mayerling in the Vienna Woods.<sup>18</sup> Rudolf was associated with more liberal political views and cautioned against the confrontation by Austria in the Balkans, which ultimately resulted in the First World War. The failure of the monarchy to manage the speculation and publicity surrounding the deaths lent credibility to the metaphor of love in death as the resolution of unmanageable life, the Wagnerian *Tristan und Isolde*.

Whilst the potential for political instability might have resulted in radicalisation (as it did in France, for example, where the bourgeoisie destroyed, or fused with, the aristocracy<sup>19</sup>), Austrian society distinguished between *Kultur*, the sphere of *Geist*, the spiritual, inner and subjective (Innerlichkeit) world of artists, poets, philosophers and the religious, and *Zivilisation*, the social, political and technical organisation of the state, with its *Macht*, that lower order of life to be avoided by the artist. This dichotomy left the *Macht* or political culture to ossify, but led many, particularly artists, to look to Utopian solutions rather than political action in response to the generalized culture of despair that predominated.<sup>20</sup> Austrian bourgeois society had meanwhile assimilated much of the aristocratic culture of Vienna, whilst being denied its political ramifications; bourgeois taste in the theatre, opera, architecture and the arts in general mimicked the Baroque and Rococo, ignoring the realities of socio-economic change and pressures. As Schorske puts it, the Austrian bourgeoisie,

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<sup>17</sup>Schorske, *op.cit*, p.4.

<sup>18</sup>Beller, *op.cit*, p.160.

<sup>19</sup>Peter Watson, *The History of Ideas from Fire to Freud II*, London, 2005, p.329.

<sup>20</sup>Schorske, *op.cit*, p.7.

rooted in the liberal culture of reason and law, now confronted an older aristocratic culture of sensuous feeling and grace, an unstable compound which ultimately revealed itself as an escape from despondency.<sup>21</sup>

## Origins of Viennese Discourse on Synaesthesia

The discourse on synaesthesia originates with the cultural developments associated with the Romantics and Symbolists.<sup>22</sup> The term “synaesthesia”, the relationship between different types of sensory and cognitive responses to the same stimuli, has its roots in the literature of the later Romantic period, in passages of poetry like Charles Baudelaire’s (1821-67) *Correspondences* (1857), and in novels like Joris-Karl Huysman’s (1848-1907) *À rebours* (Against Nature) (1884). This meaning of synaesthesia was employed widely in Britain, France and Germany earlier in the nineteenth century, but the term itself seems not to have general application until the end of the century: Jules Millet, French psychologist, identifies one primary feature of aesthetic synaesthesia, the association of the sound of words and colour, in *Audition colorée*, Paris, 1892.<sup>23</sup> The term is today more widely applicable to the understanding of the cognitive psychological and neurobiological basis of perception, memory, emotion, empathy, and creativity” and informs some responses to art. In the absence of sufficient understanding of human physiology at the time, however, this thesis does deal not with attempts to apply concepts of neural synaesthesia.<sup>24</sup> Rather, the focus in *fin-de-siècle* Vienna may be seen to begin in the questions about musical composition in its relation to other art forms, not least because

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, p. 8.

<sup>22</sup> Henri Dorra, *Symbolist Art Theories A Critical Anthology*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, p.1.

<sup>23</sup> Apart from this one publication, which is commonly cited, Jules Millet, a French *fin-de-siècle* psychologist, is biographically elusive, and hence, no dates are given.

<sup>24</sup> Hence, this thesis does not engage with the enquiries of authorities like Eric Kandel into the neural understanding of art. See, Eric R. Kandel, *The Age of Insight The Quest to Understand The Unconscious In Art, Mind and Brain From Vienna 1900 To The Present*, New York, 2012.

musical history was central to continuing identity of the city.<sup>25</sup> As this thesis will make clear, it cannot be accidental that Schoenberg's treatise, *Harmonielehre*, considers the relationship between music and other sensory responses as its starting point.

One side of the argument about synaesthesia is dominated by Richard Wagner (1813-1883); his concept of *Gesamtkunstwerk* requires the surrender of autonomy on the part of each individual art-form in the interest of a unified (transformative) artwork much greater than the sum of its parts. Wagner's influence extends beyond musicology across all European artistic culture, and in Chapter 2 of this thesis the metaphysics of Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk*, and reactions to it are discussed. However, the link

In apparent opposition to Wagner stands Eduard Hanslick (1825-1904), one of the foremost music critics of German-speaking Europe in the second half of the nineteenth century, chiefly through his newspaper reviews and articles which were still influential in Schoenberg's time. In his sole extended theoretical work, *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen (On the Musically Beautiful)*, 1854, Hanslick dismisses the synaesthetic relationship between music and other expressive modes, such as poetry and the visual arts.<sup>26</sup> According to Hanslick, those extra features are aesthetically extraneous to the music: *Gesamtkunstwerk*, the artistic synthesis of different modes of expression in Hanslick's terms, is unnecessary and cannot achieve its objectives.<sup>27</sup> The difficulties of achieving synthesis, particularly with respect to the choice of words and writers, certainly tested Schoenberg.

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<sup>25</sup> David Wyn Jones, *Music in Vienna 1700, 1800, 1900*, Woodridge, Suffolk and Rochester, NY, 2016, p.1.

<sup>113</sup> Eduard Hanslick, *On the Musically Beautiful*, trans. Geoffrey Payzant, Indianapolis, 1986, p.11.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, p. 25.

In *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen* to escape the constraints of sentimental investigations of the feelings aroused by music (which had characterised previous music criticism), Hanslick seeks to apply the “scientific methods” he associates with other expressive modes, such as poetry and the visual arts to musical aesthetics. Diltthey might identify a common ontological association between the creative arts, which is distinctive from science, but Hanslick asserts that there is an inherent beauty in music *per se*, independent of other ideas and events, and, therefore, deserving of its own aesthetic. Hanslick dismisses suggestions that even Beethoven composed with definite events or emotional moods in mind.<sup>115</sup> According to Hanslick, Beethoven was simply using such apparently objective events to ensure the musical unity of the work. Berlioz, Liszt and others, composers of *programme music*, were deceiving themselves, asserts Hanslick, when they imagine that a poem, a title, or an event – in other words a synaesthetic connection, though Hanslick does not use the term - could be anything more than something unconnected.

Hanslick’s *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen* identifies an important element to the discourse on synaesthesia – only to dismiss its critical significance for him. His deprecating comments about the French composer Hector Berlioz (1803-1869) and the Hungarian Franz Liszt (1811-1886) seem to arise from his aversion to those composer’s use of literary or dramatic sources as stimuli for their compositions; in Berlioz’s case, large-scale orchestral works were produced in an ekphratic response, most notably, to Shakespearean plays (for example, *Roméo and Juliette*, 1839) or religious celebrations (for example, *Grande Messe des Morts*, 1837). Liszt’s introduced the concept of the symphonic poem, in which a theme, or themes, representative of some person or idea, metamorphoses according to the changing

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<sup>115</sup> *ibid*, p. 37.



circumstances within an underlying literary or dramatic narrative. Liszt's piano cycle, *Années de pèlerinage*, (*Years of Pilgrimage*), 1855-1883, for example, relates to the narrative of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's (1749-1832) *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* (1795-6) and *Wilhelm Meister's Journeyman Years* (1821), novels of travel and self-realization, which became models for all subsequent German *Bildungsroman* ("novels of formation"). Liszt's specification for the printed accompaniment to such *programme music*, as it came to be known, requires that the listener be directed in intelligible language to the composer's poetical idea of the work, or relevant part of it, thereby avoiding any misunderstanding. Notwithstanding the overall valedictory sentiment in his essay on Liszt, *Franz Liszt's Work and Being*, of 1911, Schoenberg echoes Hanslick's reservations about Liszt's role in the development of German music programme music.<sup>116</sup> Schoenberg objected to the very nature of compositional formats, and the limitations this placed on other composers.

For Hanslick, there are inherent and inexhaustible melodic, harmonic and rhythmic potentialities in music that are sufficient in themselves to create an aesthetic unity. Whilst music might be related to other human activities - literature, visual arts, scientific ideas - these are for consideration by others – the art historian, for example – for music sits in the realm of its own aesthetics. In Hanslick's view, music and speech have essentially different centres of gravity: the attempt to understand music as a kind of language has given rise to the "most mischievous and confusing theories". Hanslick's *bête noir* is Wagner and Wagnerite composers, in whose compositions the main rhythm of the music is repeatedly interrupted by what he calls

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<sup>116</sup> *Style and Idea*, p. 442.

“inexplicable bumps and heaped-up contrasts”.<sup>117</sup> For Hanslick, there is an important distinction to be made between the librettist’s text, the singer’s appearance and acting ability, and the stage designer’s costumes and sets on the one hand, and the most beautiful element of all, the composer’s music, on the other. According to Hanslick, those extra features of a Wagnerian performance are aesthetically extraneous to the music: *Gesamtkunstwerk*, the artistic synthesis of different modes of expression, is unnecessary and cannot achieve its objectives. On the other hand, perhaps in recognition of the inherent power of Wagner’s “Christian” opera *Parsifal* 1882 (an opera based upon the story of the Grail) Hanslick does concede that music can accompany acts of exultation in opera or song, which celebrate the deepest and most precious emotions of the human spirit. Here is *das Gleitende* exemplified for Schoenberg: his proposals for a religious composition which might satisfy Hanslick’s critical standards.

Hanslick further asserts that, as compared with other art forms, the distinction between content and form does not exist, the musical theme itself being the self-sufficient unity of thought, one that it is impossible to further subdivide aesthetically. That the theme is music’s content is Hanslick’s axiomatic contention. Presented to the listener the musical theme is spontaneous and immediate, but the listener must use his intelligence to follow the theme, the musical argument, with all its propositions and counter-propositions. Hanslick insists that the substance of music can only be rescued by denying every other form of content: beauty in music connects with all other great and beautiful ideas, for music possesses its own autonomy. The elements of music - sound, notes, rhythm, strength, frailty – are sufficient in themselves and are to be found in the whole universe; man can find the

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<sup>117</sup> Hanslick, *op.cit*, p.43.

entire universe in music. There is no need for a synaesthetic dimension to be invoked. Whilst Hanslick may be said to sit in opposition to Wagnerites in rejecting synaesthesia as a component of music aesthetics, his opposition may be more apparent than real. In an abbreviated supplement to his study of Beethoven, Wagner quotes Schopenhauer on the self-sufficiency and autonomy of music – “the composer reveals the inner-most essential being of the world and expresses the profoundest wisdom in a language his reason does not understand”.<sup>117</sup> It will become clearer in Chapter 2 that there is an underlying element of all-pervasive Schopenhauerian influence here.

Hanslick is conscious, however, of the shifting nature of the interface between music and technology. In *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen* he draws an analogy between the shifting shapes and colours of a child’s kaleidoscope, and music.<sup>118</sup> Music presents, in his description, a ceaselessly unfolding procession of beautiful shapes and colours, with delicate transitions and sharp contrasts, always self-consistent yet always new, wholly independent and self-renewing. Nevertheless, he dismisses attempts to apply the means of one art to the effects of another that were attempted in some early technical innovations like “colour-keyboards” or “eye-organs”.<sup>119</sup> In the context of this thesis, and notwithstanding Hanslick’s apparent trivialisation, this analogy – Hanslick’s recognition of a technological potential not realised during his own lifetime - is not without its significance. The tension between Hanslick’s critical

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<sup>117</sup> Richard Wagner, *Beethoven With a supplement from the Philosophical works of Arthur Schopenhauer*, trans. Edward Dannreuther, London, 1903, p.167. Reprinted, no location, 2012.

<sup>118</sup> Hanslick, *op.cit.*, p.29.

<sup>119</sup> For example, The Rimington Colour Organ was demonstrated around Europe in 1895 and was created by A. Wallace Rimington (1854-1918), a British fine arts professor. Coloured lights were projected on to a screen from an organ keyboard, but only in accompaniment to music produced by a piano or an orchestra. There was scope for the player to “translate” the music into colours, rather than attempt precise analogies with musical vibrations. See, Peter Vergo, *The Music of Painting Music, Modernism and the Visual Arts from the Romantics to John Cage*, London, 2010, p.146.

insistence of music's intrinsic aesthetic status and music's potential synaesthetic relationship with other artistic forms, as expressed very forcibly through his reviews of music in the Austrian press, continued throughout *fin-de-siècle* period.

## **A Widening Discourse**

The cultural and political stasis felt by the bourgeoisie in *fin-de-siècle* Vienna was also felt by visual artists, though there were parallels elsewhere in Europe. In France, it was reflected in the sense of exclusion from the opportunities for exhibition success in the traditional academic salons experienced by a younger generation of artists, which led to the creation of new commercial venues, such as the Exposition des Refusés of 1874. This may also reflect the radical dissatisfaction with the socio-economic and political circumstances France experienced after the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-01. The ambitions of the Viennese Secession of artists, sculptors and architects of 1897, led by the painter and *Jung Wien* member, Gustav Klimt (1862-1918), who had abandoned a career working on Ringstrasse projects, were to develop not just a new market for their artwork beyond the traditional academies, like their French counterparts, but also to explore the new intellectual ideas about Western social development and the impact rapid industrialisation was having. As Schorske puts it, Klimt sought to re-orientate himself in midlife: he had been one of those artists most closely involved in the various *Ringstrasse* projects, an architectural decorator with a family background in the decorative arts.<sup>120</sup> He painted ceilings, theatre walls, stairways and many portraits of the Viennese aristocratic and bourgeois elite with an historic, photographic precision, preserving individuals and fashionable crowds for posterity.<sup>121</sup> Like other artists, however, Klimt was not

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<sup>120</sup> Schorske, *op.cit.* p.208.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid*, p.212

immune, despite financial success, from the corrosive effect of despair and despondency among the bourgeoisie. What had begun as an opposition from literary figures – *Jung Wien* – became *Die Jungen*, with “rebels” across all artistic fields from the mid-nineteen nineties onwards.<sup>122</sup> Like *Jung Wien* members, all these artists sought was to express themselves in new ways, free from the constraints (like the *Blaue Reiter* group of the Introduction to this thesis) of traditional academic training in classical realism.

Under the leadership of one of the best-known members of the old guard, the Viennese *Secessionists* were founded in 1897 and set about freeing themselves from the constraints of historicism, found that they could reassess the past from new perspectives, and espoused a new sense of aspiration for the future. Their periodical magazine, *Ver Sacrum*, adopts an anti-historical stance to the regeneration of all forms of artistic expression (painting, literature, movement, sculpture, architecture and music) from wherever they found inspiration. Whilst claiming at the same time to be founded on Classical origins, their pledge “To the Age Its Art to Art Its Freedom” echoes the Roman offering of youth to save their culture from their elders and is intended as clarion call of a new secular artistic elite.<sup>123</sup> Klimt appropriated the image of the Classical Athena, the female image of the wise virgin which had been chosen by the Austrian Parliament located on the *Ringstrasse* (part of the *potemkinische* decoration), but reduced it to a two-dimensional graphic, rather than an imitation Greek statue.<sup>124</sup> An accompanying version of the Athena, *Nuda Veritas*, which

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<sup>122</sup> *Ibid*, p. 213.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid*, p. 213.

<sup>124</sup> Schorske, *op.cit*, p. 217.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid*. p. 217.

<sup>126</sup> Eds. Michael O’Neil and Charles Mahoney, *Romantic Poetry: An Annotated Anthology*. Oxford, 2007.

Schorske describes as “nubile waif”, was designed by Klimt to represent the hope of regeneration.<sup>125</sup> The figure holds a mirror up to man, whilst her feet are placed in the vegetation and flowers of a garden. The concept of renewal was completed by the creation of a new exhibition space, *The House of the Secession*, by the architect Josef Olbrich (1867-1908): this art gallery abandoned the traditional style of recreating a Renaissance or Baroque palace, in favour of some sort of pagan temple with gleaming white walls. Drawing on the essence of the past, art is to be characterised by the relationships between different modes of expression, their synaesthesia. That concept alone became its own institutional *Gesamtkunstwerk*, a permanent arrangement for collaboration between artists working in different modes. But, it also raises questions about what sort of vision of the future did the *Secessionists* offer, and were there not inherent contradictions from the outset in what they wanted to offer?

The appropriation of ancient culture had already been part of the English Romantic tradition which had grown in European popularity by the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>126</sup> The Romantics – John Keats (1795-1821), Lord Byron (1788-1824) and Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822) – sought to accentuate extreme emotion through an emphasis upon the contemplation of natural imagery, classical architecture and objects, which stimulated their imaginations. Inherently this is an elitist version of those experiences that only the aristocracy had been able to access. Peter Hanák develops Schorske origin concept that the *Secessionists* were addressing the despondency and despair of the Viennese bourgeoisie by offering an alternative

means of contemplation.<sup>127</sup> The *garden*, whether real or metaphorical, offered them a private sphere in which to retreat from the pressures of life. Drawn from its *Jung Wien* literary origins, Hofmannsthal's poem of 1890, *Idyll on an Ancient Vase Painting*, subverts the subject of Keats' original *Ode on a Grecian Urn* of 1819, by introducing a stream-of-conscious form of contemplation: the emerging sexuality of a young girl examining the images on the vase. Awakening sexuality and rebirth are rendered in an early Freudian context, but the presence of an external voyeur – a man looking at a young girl who is looking into her own future – opens this metaphor up to the ambiguities of meaning and reception inherent in *Secessionist* art productions.

Whereas the submersion into an internal mental reality might represent a *somnambulist surrender*, as Hanák puts it, to aesthetic nostalgia and the opportunity to snatch a moment out of the cycle of life and death, there remains another dimension which relates to the sexualisation and eroticism of such an escape. The *psyche* of the dream world presented in a work of art can also be true reality because there is a continuity between it and the real world of love and life, *Eros*.<sup>128</sup> In the Freudian terms Hanák uses, dreams of surrender, transfiguration and timelessness have an undercurrent of sexual ecstasy. At the same time dreams of eroticism, and its reality, occupied the writing life of another *Jung Wien* member, Arthur Schnitzler; his stories in *Reigen (La Ronde)* of 1897 document reality of the social round of men and young girls as they pursue sexual love, or are pursued for it.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Peter Hanák, "The Garden and the Workshop: Reflections on the *fin-de-siècle* Culture in Vienna and Budapest" in ed. Zsuzsa Gáspár, *The Austro-Hungarian Monarchy (1867-1918)*, London, Cape Town, Sydney and Auckland, 2008, p. 103.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid*, p.107

<sup>129</sup> Arthur Schnitzler, *La Ronde*, trans. B. K. De Fabris, publisher and location not provided, 2014.

Schoenberg's interpretations of this concept are relevant, even if there is a time-lapse between its first enunciation and his production of artistic responses. In *Das Buch der hangenden Gärten* (*The Book of the Hanging Gardens*), 1908-09, a song cycle setting of poems by Stefan George (1868-1933) for solo voice and piano, an inversion of this concept is exemplified. The failed love affair between two adolescents in a garden ends with the woman's departure and the disintegration of the garden. Again, in his one-act monodrama of 1909, to a libretto by one of Freud's early students, Marie Pappenheim (1882-1966), *Erwartung* explores, in a way which seems to freeze time, the monologue of a despairing woman who finds her lover dead in the garden. Both works use the lack of consonance and resolution to a known key to emphasise the distress of the individuals concerned.

Such problems of interpretation were, indeed, present in Hofmannsthal's own thinking: his *Ein Brief* (*Chandos Letter*) of 1902, a mock-historic letter from seventeenth England, examines the social divide prevents the dissemination of concepts of art and beauty.<sup>130</sup> Hofmannsthal concludes that human communication is inherently impossible, particularly when it is a matter of seeking to communicate to people across a social divide, whether they like it or not. Whilst the *Ver Sacrum* of 1898 asserted that the *Secession* "knows of no difference between "high art" and "mass art" or art for the rich and art for the poor", as Hanák says, the disparity between intention and execution could not be ignored.<sup>131</sup> The ornamentation of many art products was charming and attractive, but the philosophy of *somnambulist surrender*, and subconscious symbolism remained alien to the very people the *Secessionists* were seeking to involve. Bahr's declaration of war against

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<sup>130</sup> Hofmannsthal, *op.cit.*.

<sup>131</sup> Hanák, *op.cit.*, p.113.



“Byzantinism and all bad taste” in a *Ver Sacrum* of 1898 seems not to have matched the emerging reality.<sup>132</sup>

At the time of the *Fourteenth Secessionist Exhibition* in Vienna in 1902 under the overall direction of the architect and designer, Joseph Hoffmann (1870-1956), twenty-six artists came together to celebrate in a range of artistic modes Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827), the epitome of individual creative achievement: a *Gesamtkunstwerk*.<sup>133</sup> The self-identification of artists with prophets martyred for their art and Christ-like figures who promised redemption for humanity became part of the *Secessionists*’ wider agenda, in line with Wagner’s revolutionary idealism about artists coming together.<sup>134</sup> Beethoven is perceived by the *Secessionists* not merely as a standard-carrier in musical revolution, but as an artist in his own right, one who had suffered the torments of cultural misunderstanding, social exclusion and deafness. Beethoven’s setting of the poem by Friedrich Schiller (1759-1805) *Ode to Joy* (or before Beethoven’s amendments, *Ode to Freedom*) from the play *Thalia* of 1785, in his *Ninth Symphony*, Op.125, 1824 linked Beethoven with Schiller’s *Aesthetic Education*, a series of philosophical speculations written in 1791-96.<sup>135</sup> Like other Austro-German intellectuals, Schiller perceived the French Revolution as a failure to achieve political change without violence and warfare. Schiller and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) created the foundations of German literature, *Weimar Classicism*, combining a critical view of German hypocrisy about class, religion and economics (Schiller) with the idealised calm grandeur of Classical

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<sup>132</sup> Hanák, *op.cit*, p.110.

<sup>133</sup> Kevin C. Karnes, *A Kingdom Not Of This World, Wagner, the Arts and Utopian Visions in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*, Oxford, 2013, p.87. See also, Schorske, *op.cit*, p.254.

<sup>134</sup> Karnes, *op.cit*, p.67

<sup>135</sup> Matthew Wilson Smith, *The Total work of Art From Bayreuth to Cyberspace*, New York and Abingdon, p.11.

Greece (Goethe). Hence, Beethoven's choice of Schiller's words for his *Ninth Symphony* reflected a deep vein in German culture, but Beethoven was only now, in 1902, understood for his abilities to express his own spirit through music that had once been deemed unplayable. Indeed, as Wyn Jones notes, Mahler's attempts to have Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* performed by the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra to coincide with the opening of the *Secessionist Exhibition* were thwarted by indifference.<sup>136</sup>

A life-sized, seated polychromatic sculpture by Max Klinger (1857-1920) was set against a large wall frieze painted by Klimt. A fanfare arranged and conducted by Mahler from Beethoven's *Ninth* reminded celebrants of that culmination of Beethoven's achievement, with its combination of soloists, chorus and large orchestral forces in the *Ode to Joy* of the fourth movement. Beethoven is a model for all future composers, and not simply the composer at the historical last post of a classical music tradition. The Beethoven *Gesamtkunstwerk* is a hymn to aesthetic autonomy, which exemplifies the Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) aphorism: all history is a metaphysical struggle between those who express the "will to power" and create the values on which civilisation is based, and those who do not, who become "the masses produced by democracy".<sup>137</sup>

As Kevin Karnes suggests, the imagery of the celebration of Beethoven, particularly the Klinger statue, is a Utopian one, influentially elaborated by the Danish playwright Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906), in anticipation of a *drittes Reich* (*Third Kingdom*), a psychic world of pre-Christian notions of the sensual and aesthetic in synthesis with

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<sup>136</sup> Wyn Jones, *op.cit.*, p.211

<sup>137</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. Michael A. Scarpitti and R. Kevin Hill, London, 2017.

modern understandings of Christian morality.<sup>138</sup> Klinger had created a similar *Gesamtkunstwerk* based on the music of contemporary composer, Johannes Brahms (1833-1897): the *Brahms Fantasy* comprises prints and vocal works to be seen and heard at the same time, but Karnes sees this as much as a portend of the failure of the Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk* model to deliver any heavenly message of salvation to mankind. Klinger – the exhibition was perhaps as much about his work as Beethoven's - soon came to conclude, however, that the Utopian spiritual unities of artist and audience promised in a Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk* were unobtainable.

If Karnes is correct in crediting Klinger with sufficient awareness that the *Gesamtkunstwerk* ambitions of the *Secession* were indeed illusory, then the year 1902 is the highwater mark of the Viennese *Secessionists*. After the 1902 exhibition the movement splintered very rapidly.<sup>139</sup> Internal dissension revealed that some members were disenchanted with the overt sensuousness and aestheticism (by now pejorative terms among some *Secessionists*) adopted by the original leadership. Notwithstanding Klimt's success with the enormous *Beethoven Frieze* of 1902, the political problems surrounding his ceiling paintings for the University of Vienna, *Jurisprudence, Philosophy and Medicine*, 1898-1903, which had referred as much to the primal origins of these aspects of human behaviour and the uncertainties of their outcomes as their academic antecedents, forced Klimt to reassess his whole relationship with public sponsorship and overt *Gesamtkunstwerk* projects. The project was abandoned in 1903. In the transformation of original sketches to realisation, explains Schorske, Klimt "pressed his own frustrating experience of

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<sup>138</sup> Karnes, *op.cit*, p.39.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid*, p.91.

social authority – academic, political, and bureaucratic – into the service of socio-psychological insight through personal self-revelation”.<sup>140</sup>

Klimt embarked upon a series of smaller scale painting projects and a *Wiener Werkstätte* commission for a luxurious villa in Brussels, the *Stocklet* house. In a society pervaded by social class, the distinctions between artists and non-artists inevitably meant that a hierarchy asserted itself; artists began to differentiate themselves from their public and from each other in both behaviour and dress. Members of the *Wiener Werkstätte*, originally a small design and production co-operative in 1902-03, reorganised itself along traditional master and apprentice industrial lines by 1905. In 1908, Klimt exhibited for the first time in five years at the *Kunstschau Pavilion*, a small-scale neo-Baroque building designed by Joseph Hoffman (1870-1956), who had been involved in the *Wiener Werkstätte*. In Klimt's work the spatial illusions of the University paintings and the *Beethoven Frieze* of Klimt's work were abandoned in favour of the two-dimensional decorations of walls and portraits.<sup>141</sup> According to Schorske, Klimt came to see this artistic community around the *Kunstschau* as a preferable route for performing public artistic tasks, using exhibitions “as the only road open to us”. Schorske quotes Hofmannsthal: “It is hard to grapple with an existing social order, but harder still to have to posit one that does not exist”.<sup>142</sup> In the view of this writer, the last remnants of Hofmannsthal's *garden* can now only be found in the decorative haze of flowers and bushes in gold in which Klimt's subjects are seated and which cover their dresses, and the faces that still wistfully display a hint of unconscious or half-conscious eroticism. However,

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<sup>140</sup> Schorske, *op.cit*, p.246.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid*, p.266.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid*, p.179.

as will become clear in Chapter 5, the concept of a space for personal reflection of a religious type is one which stayed with Schoenberg.

Although in the above assessment *Secessionism* may be seen to have failed in its *Gesamtkunstwerk* and synaesthetic ambitions to confront the Austrian public with its own realities and the function of art, it did create a new public, one not just made up of bourgeois consumers seduced by the new ostentatious presentations, but one which was increasingly critically-conscious. Parts of that public, even the majority perhaps, remained wedded to the old *Ringstrasse* culture of the Emperor, with its traditions, its social structure, its inherent conservatism and above all its certainties. The emphasis within the *Jugendstil* (the Viennese Art Nouveau which replaced *Secessionism*) on over-elaborated surface decoration, which had found its way from the canvases of paintings by artists like Klimt on to the walls of buildings and the everyday objects of domestic life, became anathema to the Secessionists' own internal critics: the architect Adolf Loos and the social commentator Karl Kraus. Schoenberg, a friend of both Loos and Kraus, was similarly antipathetic to the musical equivalent of *Jugendstil*, the Viennese operettas with their fantastical plots and unnecessary use of musical decoration and repetition. Schoenberg's antipathy towards, and polemical response to, the concert-going public surrounding him is discussed at Chapter 3 of this thesis.

Before seeking to review what Schoenberg gained from his experience of the *Secession* and the discourse on synaesthesia, remembering that two works relate directly to concepts within them - *Buch der hängenden Gärten* and *Erwartung* – it is appropriate to identify off-shoots to these cultural developments, which are pertinent to the discussion. In *Harmonielehre* Schoenberg notes that Utopianism exists in its negative form, Dystopia, in the visions of cultural collapse in *Entartung*

(*Degeneration*) by Max Nordau (1849-1923) and *Geschlecht und Charakter* (*Sex and Character*) by Otto Weininger (1880-1903), both of whom espoused psycho-physiognomic explanations for what they perceived as cultural decline.<sup>143</sup> Weininger associates the Jews and women of Vienna with social degeneration and artistic decline. Max Nordau linked all aspects of racial, sexual and cultural commentary into a general theory of degeneracy and decadence. In the face of cultural degeneration, Austrian Roman Catholicism was challenged by the loss of its traditional congregations through the disruptions of industrialisation and secularisation, and by the re-conception of religion as a cultural and institutional entity, another aspect of the Diltheyan reconfiguration of academic study. The introduction of historiography into the epistemological investigation of the literary origins of the Bible and Koran by Julius Wellhausen (1844-1918) means that philological knowledge of the words of the text can be distinguished from the personal belief. Belief was no longer reliant on established religion and written texts, but could take on a more personal, even Utopian, form of spiritual reawakening. As will become clearer at Chapter 2, this position had been anticipated for Schoenberg by Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772).

### **Schoenberg's *Harmonielehre***

*Harmonielehre* is primarily a treatise on harmony, except that it also conveys what might be called a Diltheyan *nexus* of ideas, that is, without necessarily providing causal relationships. Concepts are on occasion explicitly stated, or merely alluded to. Early in his text Schoenberg excuses himself:

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<sup>143</sup> Max S. Nordau, *Degeneration*, trans. not given, no location, 2016.  
Otto Weininger, *Sex and Character: An Investigation of Fundamental Principles*, trans. Ladislaus Lob, Indiana, 2005.

But I cannot on that account forego the opportunity to make known my own views, through an occasional hypothesis, on more complex relationships (*Zusammenhänge*) – on the similarities and relationships between artistic creation and other human activities, on the connections between the natural world outside ourselves and the participating or observing subject.<sup>144</sup>

Beneath the surface of this treatise, in this writer's view, and without being made explicit, lie Schoenberg's key purposes: to propose an answer to the question posed by Hofmannsthal in the *Secession* of how to engage the bourgeois listeners of Vienna in *new music* (Schoenberg's own term). For expressive purposes composers like Schoenberg are increasingly using dissonant chords, chords which audiences find difficult to locate back to the harmonic references of traditional keys: consonance. Consonance gave audiences the security of resolution, something they were used to even after periods of uncertainty: dissonance. Audiences would have to be taught how to appreciate *new music*, for it took education, good listening and memory to understand the journey across the harmonies. To assist them Schoenberg proposes that there is continuity across consonance and dissonance, not an either/or separation, so that the challenge is not a substantial one. The security of the traditional harmonic structures on which the great German musical tradition is based is not being undermined but being sustained. The musical theorists who pontificate on these issues of taste and convention know nothing about music because they have never composed it. The prize for the listener of the *new music* is the possibility of experiencing new sensory experiences and new insights into their own beliefs and cultures conventions – the possibility of personal and cultural regeneration of the type envisaged by the *Secessionists*. Finally, Schoenberg

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<sup>144</sup> *Harmonielehre*, p.17.

believes that the synthesis of music with coloured lights and visual effects, synaesthesia, would make these changes possible for all humanity, if only a way could be found to achieve this.

*Harmonielehre* presents an evolutionary hierarchy of composers, particularly of German composers, within which, readers are no doubt invited to conclude, Schoenberg is worthy of his own place. Thus, the hierarchy is built: Bach, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Wagner, Brahms, Bruckner, Wolf, Mahler, and so on. Schoenberg adds his own pupils, Alban Berg (1885-1935), and Anton von Webern (1883-1945), as well as the Hungarian composer, Bela Bartok (1881-1945), to the list of harmonic innovators, but soon concludes that it would be premature and wholly inappropriate to consolidate innovations around new harmonic theorising. The dangers of theorising about music are made clear in an extended passage at the beginning of *Harmonielehre*:

Whoever seeks theoretic knowledge, but *bases it on received aesthetic judgments without examining this aesthetic and these judgments to see if they are correct*, exposes his theories as nothing but attempts to drag up proofs for these judgments, hence, as worthless. [sic.] <sup>145</sup>

Indeed, Schoenberg's approach in *Harmonielehre* is one that undermines the power of all previous aesthetic authorities to pass judgement on works of art: is it possible for a theorist to write a text without also being a master musician or master artist, even a woodworker? This last comparison is probably something acquired from his friend Loos's espousal of high standards for the design and production of even the most commonplace of articles (as discussed at Chapter 3):

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<sup>145</sup> *Harmonielehre*, p. 7ff.



...the true music theorist is embarrassed by the handicraft because it is not *his*, but that *of others*. Merely to hide his embarrassment without making a virtue of it does not satisfy him. The title, master, is beneath him [...] And the result: the evolution of no other art is so greatly encumbered as is that of music. For no one guards his property more jealousy than the one who knows that, strictly speaking, it does not belong to him.

There are regular rejoinders from Schoenberg that the purpose of *Harmonielehre* is *not* the teaching of “eternal law, laws handed down by nature as the only laws, the immutable laws of art”. The qualifications of an author to pronounce on theoretical matters must be challenged, as does the status such pronouncements acquire:

If art theory could be content with [...] the rewards afforded by honest searching, then one could not object to it. But it is more ambitious. It is not content to be merely the attempt to find laws; it professes to have found *the eternal laws* [...] But now begins the error. For it is falsely concluded that these laws, since apparently correct with regard to the phenomena previously observed, must then surely hold for all future phenomena as well. And, what is most disastrous of all, it is then the belief that a *yardstick* has been found by which to measure artistic worth, even that of future works.

Schoenberg concludes:

To hell with all these theories, if they always serve only to block the evolution of art and if their positive achievement consists in nothing more than helping those who will compose badly anyway to learn it more quickly.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> *Ibid*, p.9.

*Harmonielehre* was first published in Vienna in 1911, though the English translation used here is based upon the third German edition of 1922. The only significant difference between the editions of 1911 and 1922 is the commemoration in the 1922 edition to the death of Gustav Mahler (1860-1911) “a saint (who) passed away before he had established his work well enough even to be able to entrust its future to his friends”.<sup>146</sup> *Harmonielehre* carries a sense of a musical culture at the point of transition: in harmonic theory, a break with the traditions of the previous centuries; and in Mahler’s death, the failure of assimilated Jews, like Mahler, Schoenberg, and many others in Viennese cultural society, to overcome the corrosive anti-Semitism in Austria and Germany. Mahler had resigned from his post at the Viennese opera because of media and public antipathy towards figures with a Jewish heritage. Retrospectively, the dedication to Mahler in the 1922 edition might be considered the epitaph for musical German Romanticism and failed Jewish assimilation, with Schoenberg now introducing a new era of modern music, in both his theoretical writing and his compositions. All of this is in hindsight, of course, and there is a danger that this sense of loss and the imminence of death a reader might get from the first pages of *Harmonielehre* might pervade the whole book: it does not. Notwithstanding the negative social and cultural characteristics of the Austria and Germany in which Schoenberg had been brought up, *Harmonielehre* is wholly positive and optimistic about the future of music, or rather, “German music” as Schoenberg calls it. *Harmonielehre* is not a book of despondency and despair about the future. The 1922 edition does not acknowledge the cataclysm of World War,

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<sup>147</sup> *Ibid*, p.4.

even though it originates from the time when the tensions in the Balkans perhaps presaged such a thing.<sup>148</sup>

The writing of *Harmonielehre* in Vienna between the years 1910 and 1911 came at the time at which Schoenberg was reviewing his own compositional technique; the polemical narrative of harmonic evolution provides a justification for his own compositions and begins the discourse with pupils which leads to what became known as the Second Viennese School. *Harmonielehre* is based on his teaching notes written from 1907 onwards for gifted students like Berg and Webern:

From the errors made by my pupils as a result of inadequate or wrong Instructions I learned how to give the right instructions. Successful completion of assignments by the pupils established the soundness of my efforts without luring me into the fallacy that I had solved the problem definitively. And I think neither the pupils nor I have fared badly that way. Had I told them merely what I know, then they would have known just that and nothing more. As it is, they know perhaps even less. But they do know what matters: *the search itself!*

[sic]<sup>149</sup>

Schoenberg illuminates his “shaking up” of pupils with elliptical references indicative of his own exploration of musical development, the structure of musical harmony and the potential of harmonic development for future musical compositions, not least his own. It is the act of *searching* across all areas of life (what might be called Diltheyan universality), which Schoenberg casts in opposition to the conventions of Viennese *Weltanschauung* or comfortable superficiality. That is Schoenberg’s aspiration for his

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<sup>148</sup> The First Balkan War, the prelude to the First World War, commenced in 1912, following several years of growing unrest on Austria’s south-eastern borders.

<sup>149</sup> *Harmonielehre*, p.1.

pupils, the discovery that life poses problems, and that they may remain unsolved. Schoenberg wanted his pupils to emulate those whom he venerated himself: August Strindberg (1849-1912), Maurice Maeterlinck (1862-1949), Otto Weininger (1880-1903) and “all others who have thought earnestly”.<sup>150</sup>

Only action, movement, produces what could truly be called education or culture... The teacher who does not exert himself, because he tells only “what he knows”, does not exert his pupils either. Action must start with the teacher himself; his unrest must infect his pupils... It should be clear, then, that the teacher’s first task is to shake up the pupil thoroughly. When the resultant tumult subsides, everything will have presumably found its proper place.

Or it will never happen! <sup>151</sup>

This act of *honest searching* – Schoenberg’s personal philosophy - is incumbent upon all who wish to perceive the phenomena associated with the arts, but those phenomena are ephemeral and imperfect imitations of the Platonic ideals, if indeed such ideals even exist:

[...] nowadays, as everybody knows, aesthetics does not prescribe laws of Beauty but merely attempts to infer their existence from the effects of art (*Kunstwirkungen*). <sup>152</sup>

Schoenberg is reflecting here Hanslick’s call for an aesthetic based upon music itself, and not upon its sentimental effects. Schoenberg’s interest in the relationship between art and nature is, of course, an aspect of the wider *Secessionist* discourse

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<sup>150</sup> *Harmonielehre*, p.2. Schoenberg makes no references to actual works by these individuals, though he had, for example, already completed a setting of Maeterlinck’s play *Pelléas and Mélisande* in his tone poem of that name in 1903, Op.5.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid*, p.2.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid*, p.9.

on synaesthesia. Schoenberg begins with the idea that “art in its most primitive state is a simple imitation of nature”, but soon embarks upon a reprise of ideas from Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860), discussed further at Chapter 2:

Art [...] quickly becomes imitation of nature in the wider sense of [...] not merely imitation of outer but also of inner nature. In other words, art does not then represent merely the objects or the occasions that make impressions, but above all those impressions themselves, ultimately without reference to their What, When and How. <sup>153</sup>

By extension, Schoenberg concludes that

[...] the material [the medium] in which the imitation is presented differs from the material or materials of the stimulus, so that, for example, visual or tactile sensations might be represented in the material of auditory sensations.

This leads Schoenberg to one of the major tenets of *Harmonielehre*: notwithstanding the assertions of the so-called musical theorists,

[...] some old prejudices of musical aesthetics [...] have remained with us right up to the present [...] tonality is no natural law of music [...].

Schoenberg asserts that musical composition has reached the limits of its potential within existing harmonic conventions, explaining the cultural impasse the music around him and his own compositional frustration. For Schoenberg this represents part of the *Secessionist* intellectual crisis among both composers and their audiences. How will music develop next, given the Viennese general audience's

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<sup>153</sup> *Harmonielehre*, p.18ff.

inherent conservatism on the one hand and seemingly insatiable appetite for innovation among composers and some listeners on the other?

According to Schoenberg, whilst ideas about harmony rest upon the traditional structure of musical keys it has relied upon since the time of the first Church music, music can only repeat itself *ad nauseam* if it continues such reliance. As well as reflecting his own conversion to Lutheranism, Schoenberg here alludes to an under-current of the Viennese *Secession* thought running throughout *Harmonielehre*, the role of the Austrian Roman Catholic Church in determining the conservative nature not just of musical education but of all artistic education.<sup>154</sup> There is a long section in *Harmonielehre* (as per Diltthey) describing the socio-politically contingent nature of cultural development and musical evolution from the Romans through to Christianity. These changes are not driven by natural laws, nor by the laws of religion. Conventional harmony has the advantage of familiarity, but such harmonies are culturally transmitted, and music becomes stultified.

Schoenberg traces the pattern of development of Western European music, commencing with the simplest of chords (that is, the grouping of tones around the fundamental, such as the chord of C) and moving over the centuries towards those chords which contain dissonant sounds and are remotest from everyday music.

Schoenberg locates his ideas about harmony, consonance and dissonance firmly within this historical narrative, but uses a physical metaphor to describe the forces between sounds within a chord.<sup>155</sup> Dissonance, a harmonic interval or chord, which can be resolved only by a movement to and from a consonance, invokes a

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<sup>154</sup> Robert W. Wason, *Viennese Harmonic Theory from Albrechtsberger to Schenker and Schoenberg*, Rochester, 1995.

<sup>155</sup> *Harmonielehre*, p. 23.

recognisable increase in musical tension, as Charles Rosen describes it (anachronistically). Consonance then provides release from that tension.<sup>156</sup> Traditional unity of sentiment requires that composers acknowledge the significance of this consonance/dissonance balance in order not to exploit the sensibilities of the listener too alarmingly. Exceptions to this general rule of returning the listener to a familiar key, consonance, might occasionally be acceptable, as in, for example, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's tendency to indulge in orchestral surprises. For the listener, consonances require little resolution because those sounds lie closest to recognisable keys; dissonances are more difficult to resolve because they lie close to several possible keys. Dissonances give rise to a sense of uncertainty. Returning to the cognitive and affective safety of a common harmony might meet with some *fin-de-siècle* listeners' expectations, even if they had to wait until the end of a composition. Yet, even the most conservative of audiences crave some novelty, and composers like Wagner and Mahler deliberately exploit an audiences' aural insecurity by obscuring which key a piece of music is set in, and where it might eventually resolve itself, so to express the widest range of human emotions. An educated and actively listening audience hears the distance travelled in the transition between resolution and non-resolution, between harmonic consonance and dissonance.

Schoenberg's challenge to both composer and listeners is to come to terms with the removal of the distinction between consonance and dissonance based on traditional harmonic keys. The evolution of harmonic theory to include the more remote sounds of dissonance is analogous to the movement of art from the expression of what is

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<sup>156</sup> Charles Rosen, *Music and Sentiment*, London, 2011, p.9.

known from the outer mimetic nature of things, towards the inner nature of things, what is unknown in sensory terms, the abstract:

What today is remote can tomorrow be close at hand; it is all a matter of whether one can get closer. And the evolution of music has followed this course: it has drawn into the stock of artistic resources more and more of the harmonic possibilities inherent in the tone. <sup>157</sup>

It follows that as far as Schoenberg is concerned, the term “the emancipation of dissonance” ascribed to him by certain authorities is a meaningless one, for “dissonance” has come to the end of its useful life. <sup>158</sup> Soon there will be no need for the language of “consonance and dissonance”:

Now if I continue to use the expressions “consonance” and “dissonance”, even though they are unwarranted, I do so because there are signs that the evolution of harmony will, in a short time, prove the inadequacy of this classification. The introduction of another terminology at this stage would have no purpose [...] Since I still have to operate with these notions, I will define consonances as the closer, simpler relations to the fundamental tone, dissonances as those that are more remote, more complicated. <sup>159</sup>

The use of both consonance and dissonance in composition means that Schoenberg can escape from some traditional aesthetic metaphors. Holly Watkins suggests that the music of Beethoven derives its heroic power to describe the struggles of humanity from its capacity to combine subjectivity with an architectonic musical

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<sup>157</sup> *Harmonielehre*, p. 21.

<sup>158</sup> See for example, Thomas Harrison, *1910: The Emancipation of Dissonance*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1996.

<sup>159</sup> *Harmonielehre*, p. 21.



structure of fugues or canons.<sup>160</sup> Watkins suggests that Schoenberg's music pre-serialism is freed from such harmonic structures, but still carries an internal structure akin to "an unimaginable psychic state" resembling that of the city dweller who carelessly abandons his or her reserve.<sup>161</sup> Watkins's description here presages one of the metaphors of the later part of thesis, the alienated city-dweller freed spiritually from the physical and intellectual confines of the city streets. Schoenberg's is a musical environment without physical boundaries of a restrictive architectural structure.

To re-quote the passage Schoenberg uses from Schopenhauer, Schoenberg's objectives are for an expression of things that lie outside and beyond everyday human experience by liberating not just sounds but every other form of experience from the concrete here-and-now, so that other worlds and other forms of experience become accessible:

In other words, art does not then represent merely the objects or the occasions that make impressions, but above all those impressions themselves, ultimately without reference to their What, When and How.<sup>162</sup>

This definition of abstraction describes Schoenberg's own path to abstraction as proposed in this thesis, and determines the characteristics of his planned *Gesamtkunstwerk*, *Seraphita*. Music can escape from the traditional programmatic or narrative style it once utilised, and move towards a new form of expression, an abstract world of which humans can have no direct experience.

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<sup>160</sup> Holly Watkins, *Metaphors of Depth in German Musical Thought From E.T.A. Hoffmann to Arnold Schoenberg*, Cambridge, 2011, p.3.

<sup>161</sup> Watkins, *op.cit*, p.214.

<sup>162</sup> *Harmonielehre*, p.18.

In the penultimate chapter of *Harmonielehre*, Schoenberg abandons the historical justification for harmonic innovation he has spent several chapters developing, and resorts to his belief in another *Secessionist* trope, the artistic genius – an action that is defensive of his own position. Rather than resulting from dispassionate technical experiment (with, for example, chords constructed in intervals of fourths and sixths), the *new harmony* (Schoenberg's term) arises from a composer's "sudden inspiration evoked by and powerful expressive urge ...expression to something that moves him, something new, something previously unheard-of." <sup>163</sup> Such innovations may then be used by other composers but remain essentially symbols of the individuality of a man. It is that sense of individuality that distinguishes the true artist, someone who does not submit wholly to the common *Kultur* of other men:

*The artist who has courage submits wholly to his own inclinations. And he alone who submits to his own inclinations has courage, and he alone who has courage is an artist. [sic]*

This is not, however, the figure of an artist as a revolutionary: the true artist has the deepest respect for his predecessors, and a sense of community with them.

Mendelssohn unearths Bach after years of neglect, Schumann discovers Schubert, and Wagner, as conductor and composer, awakens the first real understanding of Beethoven. The next generation of composers helps others to understand the work of predecessors. As Schoenberg says:

The appearance of the new can far better be compared with the flowering of a tree; it is the natural growth (*Werden*) of the tree of life [...] Short memory and meagre insight suffice to confuse growth with overthrow; they suffice for

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<sup>163</sup> *Harmonielehre*, p.400ff.

believing that when the new shoots emerge from what was once new the destruction of the old is at hand.

Schoenberg's plea is for musical inspiration (*Einfall*) and intuition (*Gefühl*), rather than the, mediocre, unrelated work of the musical craftsman and theorist.<sup>164</sup> Hence, the instruction to the pupil at the beginning of the final chapter of *Harmonielehre* is one which seeks to exclude the mediocrities:

I do not recommend that the pupil use the harmonies [using chords with six or more tones] presented here in his attempts to compose [...] The work of the truly gifted [...] manifests very little external relationship with the literature that was once his model [...] Because ultimately he will not write what is *artistically acceptable* (*Kunstgemäss*), but rather what is *acceptable to him, the artist* (*Künstlergemäss*).

In the final pages of *Harmonielehre*, Schoenberg rejects the opportunity to summarise his own position regarding the need for musical theory to give coherence to even more innovative harmonies, the development of five-, six-, or even eight-part chords. Theory as opposed to praxis will not help, though he is sure that someone will develop such laws soon or later. This section starts as if grounded firmly on earth, but then rises towards a metaphorical heaven as Schoenberg begins to speculate yet further about the spiritual potential of sound's effect on the listener:

In a musical sound (*Klang*) three characteristics are recognized: its pitch, colour [timbre], and volume. [...] Now, if it is possible to create patterns out of tone colours that are differentiated according to pitch, patterns we call "melodies", progressions, whose coherence (*Zusammenhang*) [sic] evokes an

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<sup>164</sup> *Harmonielehre*, p.410ff.

effect analogous to thought processes, then it must also be possible to make such progressions out of the colours of the other dimension, out of that which we call simply “tone colour”, progressions whose relations with one another work with a kind of logic entirely equivalent to that logic which satisfies us in the melody of pitches.<sup>165</sup>

*Harmonielehre* ends suddenly and abruptly in the euphoria of anticipation, as if the artist genius is offering the reader some dramatic revelation:

Tone-colour melodies! How acute the senses that would be able to perceive them! How high the development of spirit that could find pleasure in such subtle things!

In such and domain, who dares ask for theory! <sup>166</sup>

The euphoria with which Schoenberg approaches the potential of *new music* anticipates Schoenberg’s ultimate project of *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Schoenberg’s language here is the same language Honoré de Balzac uses to describe the crescendo of sensations at the end of the novella *Seraphita*, the ecstatic transformation of a body ascending to heaven and the point at which humanity escapes the concrete of the Earth and rises heaven-wise to an abstract but religious Utopia.

### **Honoré de Balzac’s *Seraphita***

The association of *Harmonielehre* and the novella *Seraphita* exemplifies Schoenberg’s synaesthetic use of a text for not just for programmatic musical

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<sup>165</sup> *Harmonielehre*, p.421.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid*, p.422.

purposes, but also for writing *Harmonielehre*.<sup>167</sup> Schoenberg is attracted to the whole set of Balzac's *Études philosophiques* of which *Seraphita* is one small part: the ASC holds a one volume compendium in German translation, which includes *Seraphita*. There is also a French edition annotated by Schoenberg himself.<sup>168</sup> Schoenberg's original library apparently once held a more complete set of Balzac. *Seraphita* was written for publication in instalments between the years 1833 and 1835, and is dedicated to Balzac's future wife, Madame Hanska, in the apparent belief that the androgynous character, *Seraphita/Seraphitus*, could represent the two of them.

*Seraphita* is the exposition of the religious ideas of Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772), a Swedish Lutheran theologian and mystic. *Seraphita* is an extraordinarily beautiful entity; whether the body is an androgen or hermaphrodite is never made clear, as the real focus of attention is the relationship between a man, *Wilfrid*, and a woman, *Minna*, who fall in love in turn with someone whom they believe to be a member of the opposite sex, and who appears as either *Seraphita* (female) or *Seraphitus* (male). This description of androgyny has no part in Swedenborg, for he describes both male and female angelic bodies. Swedenborg's theory of *correspondences*, as presented by Balzac, means that male and female continue to exist in the celestial realm beyond death, can be married and give birth to successive generations at levels of spiritual and celestial existence above the everyday human. Male and female are described as having the traditional stereotypical attributes of

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<sup>167</sup> Honoré de Balzac, *Seraphita*, 2004. The current Amazon edition does not indicate the name of a translator or the year of publication. (BookSurge Classics Title No.214.)

<sup>168</sup> The undated (1900?) French edition in the ASC has hand-written translations in the margins by Schoenberg himself: Schoenberg particularly notes the contrasting responses of the male and female characters to *Seraphita*.

action and thought (male), as opposed to care and support (female). The man, *Wilfrid*, has returned from a life full of the usual masculine stereotypes, presumably at sea, since he is a Norwegian; none of the details are provided. He finds himself over-wintering in the year 1800 in a North Norwegian village at the head of a fjord, though, apart from an extraordinary description of *Seraphitus* skiing down the side of the alp with *Minna* in his arms, the topography of the novella's setting is ultimately of little consequence.

The narrative then becomes a series of intense and claustrophobic interviews between the three characters, Wilfrid, Minna and Seraphita/Seraphita, supported by the old pastor, Becker. The pastor provides the story of Seraphita's birth after a celestial marriage of Baron Seraphitz and his fiancée conducted by Emanuel Swedenborg himself. The novella finally reveals itself as Balzac's interpretation of Swedenborgian religious philosophy, terminating in the ascent of Seraphita to the heavens as witnessed by Wilfrid and Minna. The novella *Seraphita* and text *Harmonielehre* converge at this point in Schoenberg's music stripped of its harmonic constraints and a Utopian vision of ascendancy through lights, colours and voices. Chapter 5 show how Schoenberg's ideas for future sounds and future music come together with his images, the *Fantasies*, in ways which exploit the new technologies of the cinema.

## **Summary**

What Schoenberg learns from his experience of the *Secession* and the discourse on synaesthesia begins his progress towards the realisation of a *Gesamtkunstwerk* based upon *Seraphita*: the dispute between Wagner and Hanslick raised fundamental problems about the relationship between words and music which would

occupy much of his creative time; Wagnerian ideas of a socio-political Utopia to be achieved through the *Gesamtkunstwerk* connectivity of artists and public were clearly out of touch with the political realities of a modernising Austria, but the alternative of a primal sensibility based upon art, a new form of religion, was equally undeliverable. How might *Gesamtkunstwerk* contribute to the perceived problems of cultural degeneration? The *Secession* had approached the difficult issue of man's inner consciousness and his relationship with the Schopenhauerian essence of things but had failed to proceed much further. Would Schoenberg be able to carry this forward? This chapter has shown how a synaesthetic association of *Harmonielehre* and Balzac's *Seraphita* acts as a framework for a planned *Gesamtkunstwerk*. In this union Schoenberg conceives of a new music freed from the historical constraints of traditional harmonic theory, one that is saturated with words, lights and colours. Schoenberg begins to form an outline *Gesamtkunstwerk* in which the human spirit is freed from the confines of worldly matters and ascends to a Utopian heaven. The removal of the traditional harmonic structures, and the artificial distinction imposed by Viennese musicologists between consonance and dissonance, mean that music can escape from the need to resolve back to the certainties of the known world and explore new, abstract sound and visual worlds. The next chapter discusses in greater detail the *fin-de-siècle* ideas about *Gesamtkunstwerk* as they affected Schoenberg's concept.

## Chapter 2: First Triad – Wagner, Schopenhauer and Schoenberg

At the heart of this thesis is Schoenberg's central creative concern with the synthesis of language, music and visual imagery in his compositions. In this chapter Schoenberg's ideas about harmony, which were strongly influenced by the operatic works of Richard Wagner (1813-83) as shown in *Harmonielehre*, are discussed alongside the philosophical ideas of Arthur Schopenhauer's (1788-1860). However, the discussion here is couched once again in the terms of Dilthey's hermeneutic methodology, the links in this triad of relationships between Wagner, Schopenhauer and Schoenberg reflecting a cultural discourse and not a causal narrative. The chapter will begin to show how the Wagnerian concept of *Gesamtkunstwerk* influenced Schoenberg, and how the philosophy underlying the concept helped him to develop his own compositions. The chapter ends by showing how Schoenberg rejected Wagner's Utopian ideas and introduced his own concept of redemption.

### ***Gesamtkunstwerk***

Whilst the concept of *Gesamtkunstwerk* did not originate with him, as Hilda Meldrum Brown points out, Wagner's ideas of the 1850s established its theoretical framework.<sup>1</sup> Wagner builds upon ideas anticipated in the German Romantic period by Friedrich Schelling (1775-1854), and the aspirations of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) and Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) to collaborate in a production of *Faust*, part one of which was published in 1808. Brown explains that the failure to produce a fully-realised *Gesamtkunstwerk* before Wagner arises from the lack of sufficient development of music and German opera to take on the task.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Hilda Meldrum Brown, *The Quest For The Gesamtkunstwerk And Richard Wagner*, Oxford, 2016, p.40.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p.84.



With Wagner came Schopenhauer, whose ideas pervaded late nineteenth century Austro-German culture, not least due through Wagner's own writing. Indeed, both Wagner and Schopenhauer dominated pan-European culture for much of the late nineteenth century. It is appropriate to recognise Schoenberg's identification in *Harmonielehre* of Wagner and Schopenhauer as major influences in his contemplation of *Gesamtkunstwerk* structures, whilst recalling that Schoenberg refrains from using the term. At the end of this chapter, in the overtones to the triad, the influence of Gustav Mahler on Schoenberg is discussed: Mahler's compositions, which he described originally as *programme music* before insisting that the term be dropped after 1896, are *Gesamtkunstwerk* once they are considered in the context of the discourse on synaesthesia.<sup>3</sup>

As discussed in Chapter 1, Schiller's *Aesthetic Education* was an influential building block in *Secessionist* cultural discourse and the appreciation of Beethoven. Wagner recommends that *Aesthetic Education* be read as a prelude to his own work for the vision of Ancient Greece that it describes.<sup>4</sup> According to Wagner, Germania should regard itself in the same terms as those who created the Athens of Ancient Greece, a cultural and political democracy, with a strong sense of its own identity and of its authority over other Greek city states.<sup>5</sup> The Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk* is the equivalent of the artistic synthesis of the Greek theatre, and the sharing of communal concerns and feelings among the whole population. The chorus of ordinary citizens reflects on the moral impact of human events, whilst the all-too-human leading players, the actors, represent the conflicts of political leadership. The collapse of

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<sup>3</sup> Jens Malte Fischer, *Gustav Mahler*, trans. Stewart Spencer, New Haven and London, 2011, p.152.

<sup>4</sup> Matthew Wilson Smith, *The Total Work Of Art From Bayreuth to Cyberspace*, Oxford and New York, 2007, p.12.

<sup>5</sup> Richard Wagner on *Music and Drama*, selected and arranged by Albert Goldman and Evert Sprinchorn, trans. By H. Ashton Ellis, New York, 1964, "*The Artwork of the Future*" (1849) and "*Opera and Drama*" (1851).

Classical Athens resulted in the segregation of the arts from one another; *Gesamtkunstwerk* would reunite them. Wagner believed that opposition to the political unification of Germany (of the type he experienced in Dresden in 1849) would collapse following a period of cultural rejuvenation and artistic synthesis. Although these sentiments of the need for cultural regeneration flow through the Viennese *Secession* and its Utopianism, an essential part of human progress being the destruction of the “man-destroying march of culture” of commerce, industry, mass production and mechanics, the Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk* was not sustainable in an era of mass-mediated marketing and propagandizing.<sup>6</sup> Wagner’s Athenian *Volk* was becoming a *mass*.

Whereas Schopenhauer and Wagner are near contemporaries and were aware of each other’s activities, they never actually met, never actually even tried to meet. Schoenberg was still very young when Wagner died, but he knew his operas (if only in piano reductions) and his writings well, for he provides an analysis in *Harmonielehre* of important elements of *Tristan und Isolde*, Wagner’s opera of 1865. Wagner identifies the time, the circumstances and his frame of mind when reading Schopenhauer for the first time in a letter to Franz Liszt from Zurich in December 1854:

Apart from slowly progressing with my music, I have of late occupied myself exclusively with a man who has come like a gift from heaven, although only a literary one, into my solitude. This is Arthur Schopenhauer, the greatest philosopher since Kant, whose thoughts, as he himself expresses it, he has thought out to the end...His chief idea, the final negation of the desire of life, is terribly serious, but it shows the only salvation possible. To me of course

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<sup>6</sup> Smith, *op.cit*, p.10 and 21.

that thought was not new, and it can indeed be conceived by no one in whom it did not pre-exist, but this philosopher was the first to place it clearly before me... This is the genuine, ardent longing for death, for absolute unconsciousness, total non-existence.<sup>7</sup>

The very fact of Schopenhauer's existence is apparently sufficient to reassure Wagner that there is intellectual substance in his own negative feelings about the contemporary state of music and his relationship to it. The brief correspondence between them, and the despatch of an autographed score by Wagner to Schopenhauer, apparently convinces them that the effort of engaging in further dialogue is not worthwhile. Juliet Koss argues that Wagner's reassurance stems not just from Schopenhauer, but contemporary culture, Wagner and Schopenhauer having reached similar conclusions about the state of modern society at the same time.<sup>8</sup>

Schopenhauer is not a creative artist, though as an amateur musician he provides a detailed commentary on the relationship between his philosophy and musical composition. For Wagner, it is perhaps enough to know that Schopenhauer exists: in the letter to Liszt he acknowledges that Schopenhauer has raised music to a philosophical status above other art forms, and thereby enhanced Wagner's own self-esteem. For Wagner, it is Schopenhauer

who first defined the position of music among the fine arts with philosophic clearness, ascribing to it a totally different nature from that of either plastic

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<sup>7</sup> Wagner, *op.cit*, *Part V Wagner's Development*, p.271. Wagner's references to Schopenhauer are not made in any formal academic style but are far more general. Franz Liszt (1811-86), the Hungarian pianist and composer, had provided Wagner with the funds to escape from Dresden in 1849 – Wagner had been involved politically in the failed revolution in that city – and to establish himself in the exiled safety of Zurich.

<sup>8</sup> Juliet Koss, *Modernism After Wagner*, Minneapolis and London, 2000, p.9.

(mimetic) or poetic art...(music) needs no whit of intermediation through abstract concepts... (one can find) *in music itself an idea of the world*.<sup>9</sup>

Wagner's *idea of the world* carries an allusion to his political aspirations, the recreation of Greek drama, as described in the *Artwork of the Future*, as a precursor to the regeneration of the German *polis* and communal engagement.<sup>10</sup> For Schopenhauer, the *idea of the world* is always full of pessimism about the impossibility of anything other than negative outcomes being achieved, no matter what the human aspirations might be. Like Emmanuel Kant (1724-1804), whom he quotes very frequently, and Plato before him, Schopenhauer argues that there is an unbridgeable gulf between reality as it is in itself, and reality as it represents itself to us, governed as we humans are by the limits of our senses, our own biological characteristics and our relationship with other physical things. The dichotomous *world* can, therefore, be distinguished from a noumenal (thing-in-itself) realm on the one hand: a single, undifferentiated, space-less, timeless, and inaccessible entity, beyond the reach of causal relationships between things. That is the world of the Will. On the other hand, the entity which we know in an everyday sense as being governed by space and time is one in which events and characters pass by us in what seem to be causal relationship to one another: it is a world of Representation, of images rather than ideas themselves (in a Platonic sense), of style over substance. Indeed, the very principle of self-serving individual existence, what Schopenhauer calls "individuation", is nothing but a source of evil, the sole basis of morality being compassion for one another, not some externally deity-imposed code of conduct. Characters like *Tristan und Isolde*, in their eponymous opera, can do little

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<sup>9</sup> Wagner, *op.cit*, Part IV *The Artwork of the Future*, p. 179.

<sup>10</sup> Wagner, *op.cit*, Part I *Cultural decadence of the Nineteenth Century*, p.37ff. This section contains an extended statement of Wagner's aspirations originally to be found in *Art and Revolution*, 1849.

more than demonstrate in their world of Representation an expression of compassion, and hence, a form of morality, in the ways in which they deal with one another and with those around them. For the most part individuals are driven by the unconsciousness of the Will to be self-seeking, immoral and ultimately, evil in their disregard for others.<sup>11</sup>

The entity in which we exist, and which we cannot know in any normal sensory way, is one which exists unconsciously for us, but to which we may have occasional access through the arts, particularly through music and perhaps, through conjugal, sexual love. Music sits above the other arts because it is not dependent upon, but has escaped from, any reliance upon representation and apparent cognitive meaning. It might be said to be capable of “objectifying” the world that is usually unknown to us, the world of the Will. To put it another way, music is about getting to the essence of things.<sup>12</sup> Wagner identifies himself with Schopenhauer’s proposal that the inner essence of things which provides the *true* idea of the world

cannot be gathered from the ideas, nor understood through any mere *objective* knowledge...only in as much as every observer [literally, knower, or perceiver] is an individual withal, and thereby part of nature, stands there open to him in his own self-consciousness the adit to nature’s innermost; and there forthwith, and most immediately, it makes itself known to him as *will*...our consciousness has two sides; in part it is a consciousness of *one’s own self*, which is the will; in part a consciousness of *other things*, and chiefly

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<sup>9</sup> Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, trans. E. F. J. Payne, 2 vols. Indian Hills, Colorado, 1958. Referred to henceforth as *WWR 1* and *WWR 2*.

<sup>12</sup> Schopenhauer, *WWR I*, p.257. There are several assumptions here, of course, about the way in which “programme” music, music with a literary or visual association, should be understood. Accepting Schopenhauer’s understanding of the role of the composer in “getting to the essence of things”, and the respective role of the “informed listener” in receiving things in that same way, it is axiomatic that the superficiality of “programme” music is attractive to ordinary listeners who can know no better.

then a *visual* knowledge of the outer world, the apprehension of objects. The more the one side of the aggregate consciousness comes to the front, the more does the other retreat. <sup>13</sup>

In Wagner's interpretation of Schopenhauer, there exists

a *sound world* beside the *light world*, a world of which we may say that it bears the same relation to the visible world as dreaming to waking...As the dream organ cannot be roused into action by outer impressions, against which the brain is now fast locked, this must take place through happenings in the inner organism that our waking consciousness merely feels as vague sensations. But, it is this inner life through which we are directly allied to the whole of nature, and thus are brought into a relation with the essence of things that eludes the forms of outer knowledge, time and space...<sup>14</sup>

In Schopenhauer's belief that music contains an idea of the world of the Will, Wagner saw a template for *Gesamtkunstwerk*, the synthesis of artistic activities, of music with the plastic and poetic arts.<sup>15</sup> The composer's purpose should be to propagate "the oneness of our inner essence with that of the outer world..."<sup>16</sup> The plastic arts (of sculpture and painting), as Schopenhauer states, are only capable of providing representations of the world as perceived individually. Music alone provides a means of revealing that inner life not merely to individuals but also to humanity in general: through the exploitation of the superior hierarchical position of music above the plastic arts as an objectification of the Will, the composer can demonstrate the

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<sup>13</sup> Wagner, *op.cit*, Part IV *The Artwork of the Future*, p.180.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, p.181.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, p.179.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, p.183.

universality of the inner essence of things, and humanity's inherent interrelatedness, "the oneness of all human beings."

Music is the primary force within Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk*, but Schopenhauer's influence on Wagner is even wider than that. To earn sufficient income to sustain a continuously lavish life-style, Wagner was engaged from 1850 onwards in a successful European career as a conductor of his own works and very importantly, of Beethoven's. In 1870 Wagner published his own eulogy in celebration of the centenary of Beethoven's birth, anticipating the *Secessionist* celebration of 1902.<sup>17</sup> In this work, Wagner reaffirms the significance of Schopenhauer's recognition of music as the art-form most directly associated with the Will, using Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*, Opus 125, 1826 to exemplify the successful integration of words and music in the choral, *Hymn to joy* of the final movement. Through this music, Wagner insists, Beethoven asserts his own artistic and intellectual existence, and communicates with the German people not just through language *per se* but through a metaphysical process, via the Will. As a composer of genius Beethoven can access the Will not in any cognitive sense, but through, as Schopenhauer has it, his "dream organ", his personal ability to use his unconscious self. His music then activates the Will in his listeners, again in an unconscious, non-cognitive way. Here begins the celebration of Beethoven as the leading German composer, the archetypal artist genius. The echoes of this critical approach are very strong in Schoenberg's *Harmonielehre*: the philosophical status of music, the succession of German composers following on from the greatest, Beethoven, and the elite status of "serious" music, as compared to the vulgarity of the dance-hall or the man whistling a tune in the street.

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<sup>17</sup> Richard Wagner, *Beethoven, With a Supplement from the Philosophical Works of Arthur Schopenhauer*, trans. and location not provided, 2012.

The affirmation that Wagner received from Schopenhauer means that the philosopher's influence in *Tristan und Isolde* can be seen from the outset.<sup>18</sup> In his letter to Liszt of 1854, Wagner anticipated the completed opera wholly in Schopenhauerian terms as the negation of the desire of life, the longing for death: "with the black flag which floats at the end of it I shall cover myself to die".<sup>19</sup> However, Wagner finds consolation for what might have been the overwhelming nihilistic pessimism of life in Schopenhauer's assertion that the expression of sexual love through the arts, and especially through music, is the most valuable of all human activities.<sup>20</sup> This is sexual love as a form of redemption, not as compensation for the failure of the social and political dimensions of human existence, but as something far more fulfilling than might be found in any of the everyday occurrences of an insignificant, phenomenal world. Schoenberg's *Erwartung*, Op.17, 1909, a monodrama in one act to a libretto by Marie Pappenheim (1882-1966) explores that same territory, but Schoenberg also recognises the continuing tensions arising from social convention, stigma and sexual love that Wagner's proposition implies, but does not resolve.

Wagner even finds that Schopenhauer, though only an amateur musician, provides him with encouragement in the actual process of composition. Schopenhauer's idea

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<sup>18</sup> Michael Tanner, *Wagner*, London, 2008, p.174. Tanner argues that the last work of the *Ring* cycle, *Götterdämmerung*, completed 1874 concludes not with a resolution about the power of love to redeem, but with its self-centred destructive power and the destruction of the gods themselves, Schopenhauerian themes. The *Ring* cycle was already in too far an advanced compositional state to enable significant changes to be made either retrospectively or looking forward after Wagner read Schopenhauer in 1854. It took twenty-six years to complete, 1848-74.

<sup>19</sup> Wagner, *op.cit.*, p.272.

<sup>20</sup> Thomas Mann, "Schopenhauer", in *Essays of Three Decades*, trans. H.T. Lowe-Porter, London, 1947, p.394. Cited in Bryan Magee, *Wagner and Philosophy*, London, 2000, p.129. Magee identifies within his wider set of works Schopenhauer's own discovery of the power of love not only in a traditional, romantic and even, metaphysical sense, but also in a deeper, much more physically intimate, orgasmic sense, as part of the Will to live. See Magee, *op.cit.* p.169 and Schopenhauer, *WWR II*, p.531, *The Metaphysics of Sexual Love*.

There were, of course, very personal reasons, perhaps, for Wagner's discovery of the power of sexual love, and the problems of marital and extra-marital relations, which are not dealt with here.



that music is the Will presenting itself directly to us is accompanied by some indicative technical analysis of what might be heard in that *sound world*:

Now the nature of man consists in the fact that his Will strives, is satisfied, strives anew, and so on and on; in fact his happiness and well-being consist only in the transition from desire to satisfaction, and from this to and fresh desire...the nature of melody is a constant digression and deviation from the keynote in a thousand ways, not only to the harmonious intervals, the third and dominant, but to every tone, to the dissonant seventh, and to the extreme intervals; yet there always follows and final return to the keynote. In all these ways, melody expresses the many different forms of the Will's efforts, but also its satisfaction by ultimately finding again a harmonious interval, and still more the keynote. <sup>21</sup>

The suspension or delay in returning to the security of harmonic consonance is exploited by Wagner to achieve insights into the world of the Will other composers would find impossible to achieve. The composition of music can be subjected to conscious analysis and reveal the men of talent can do little more than "compose" (in the everyday sense of the word, they have the mechanical skills, as Schoenberg says in *Harmonielehre*). Only the man of genius, the *monstrum*, the freak, has the superfluity of intellectual energy to satisfy the needs of the Will and to exercise "objective perception" of the true nature of things, or, in Platonic terms, Ideas.<sup>22</sup> The capacity of genius is lent to a few individuals, but there may well be a price to pay.<sup>23</sup> The relationship between total commitment to creative, philosophical ideals and solitude and mental health is one which Schoenberg understood; he reflected upon it

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<sup>21</sup> Schopenhauer, *WWR I*, p. 260.

<sup>22</sup> Schopenhauer, *WWR II*, p.376, *On Genius*.

<sup>23</sup> Schopenhauer, *WWR I*, p.195.

throughout his life.<sup>24</sup> However, as has been noted in the Introduction, the caricature of the driven composer described in Thomas Mann's *Doctor Faustus*, the monomaniac driven by human inadequacy and tertiary syphilis, is just that – a caricature.<sup>25</sup>

Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* is, of course, an opera. How can words be relevant in a work which purportedly is solely concerned with the Will, and not with the world of Representation, for, as Schopenhauer acknowledges (after Plato), language is the representation of reality, not reality itself? For Schopenhauer, music remains the superior art, "more powerful, more infallible, and more rapid" than the words. Paradoxically, Schopenhauer argues that music can add secret information on the feelings expressed in the words, that is, there is another component to the words which is revealed via their association with the music:

It expresses their real and true nature, and makes us acquainted with the innermost soul of the events and occurrences, the mere cloak and body of which are presented on the stage.<sup>26</sup>

Words and music can supplant stage action. In Wagner's innovative use of the *leitmotif* can be seen the advantages of a musical summation, or anticipation, of the emotions, thoughts and actions/reactions of a character as he or she moves between the different phases of the opera. Stage action is seemingly unnecessary. In *Tristan und Isolde* there are times when the words themselves are often so extended in their phrasing, or are even so overwhelmed by the musical accompaniment, that they are totally lost. The opening chord of *Tristan und Isolde*,

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<sup>24</sup> "How One Becomes Lonely" (1937), in *Style and Idea*, p.30.

<sup>25</sup> Mann, *op.cit.*

<sup>26</sup> Schopenhauer, *WWR II*, p.448.

the so-called “*Tristan* chord”, serves as *Tristan*’s *leitmotif* throughout the three acts, and was considered innovative, disorientating and daring at the time of the opera’s first production. As Schoenberg asserts in *Harmonielehre* that diminished seventh *Tristan* chord marks the beginning of the breakdown of tonality (or, as Schoenberg put it, it “lies on the frontiers of tonality” or comes “like some foreigner from another land”), for it introduces a work, which in its exploration of sexual love between the eponymous characters, exploits the “transition from desire to satisfaction” without resolution until the final few bars are played.<sup>27</sup> Like the striving of the Will in the body of *Tristan*, the music swoops and dives across a timeless landscape as the action creeps slowly to its unavoidable denouement. Wagner recreates Schopenhauer’s single, undifferentiated, space-less, timeless, and inaccessible entity, beyond the reach of causal relationships between things. There is little dramatic action beyond setting the scene –Wagner was scrupulous in demanding the correct stage sets and acting directions - and few characters, apart from the lovers, between whom to trace causal relationships. Physical action is peripheral to the work’s purpose. Action would in any case be superfluous. From the outset, the music avoids association with a definitive harmonic key, which might give the audience any idea as to how the opera is to be resolved musically – as Schopenhauer puts it, “by ultimately finding again a harmonious interval, and still more the keynote” – to match the apparently inextricable moral dilemma in which the lovers find themselves. If there is no musical resolution, there can be no physical action which leads to a resolution. In the

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<sup>27</sup> See, *Harmonielehre*, p.238 and Schopenhauer, *WWR I*, p.260. It should be noted here that Schopenhauer, Wagner and Schoenberg are using the classical, Pythagorean model of harmony: the universe comprises bodies which vibrate, and, therefore, make a sound. The sounds of “the music of the spheres”; however remote such bodies might be from one another, are related to one another. They are “in harmony”. See, Cox, *op.cit*, p. 144.

This does not mean that all “noises” exist in harmonic relationship with one another, as John Cage (1912-92), a pupil of Schoenberg might argue, but that the harmonic relationship between sounds might be described by reference to an infinite number of intervals and micro-tones. Such sounds are related to one another and are not randomly assembled. See Simon Shaw-Miller, *Visible Deeds of Music Art and Music from Wagner to Cage*, Yale, 2002, p. 217.

absence of any musical or other form of resolution in “the world of representation”, Wagner the sort of happy-ending which an audience might have expected in any Viennese operetta from that same era.<sup>28</sup> In Wagner’s opera the lovers determine to join one another “in absolute unconsciousness, total non-existence”.<sup>29</sup>

Schoenberg’s recognition, like Wagner, that words and music can supplant stage action had an important impact upon how he perceived synaesthesia. In Berlin in 1902 Schoenberg wrote for a newspaper in advance of a performance of *Verklärte Nacht*, Op.4, 1899 about the capacity of orchestral music to produce “epic-dramatic” structures and of chamber music to represent the “lyric or lyric-epic” language.:

This is an *ancient* principle and derives its origin from those *old* masters, who, in text repetitions that today seem endless, continued to *fantasize* musically about a poetic idea until they had gained all possible moods and meanings from it – I would almost say: until they had analysed it.<sup>30</sup>

That a synaesthetic link exists between music and its capacity to transport the listener to a new world of infinite meanings is something that Schoenberg found not just in Schopenhauer (and hence, repeated in *Harmonielehre*) but also in the German novelist and music critic E.T.A. Hoffmann (1786-1822).<sup>31</sup> Before Hanslick, Hoffmann was central to the development of German musical criticism and would certainly have been known by Schoenberg. The same concept is to be found in Fritz Mauthner’s (1849-1923) *Critique of Language*, published in 1901-02 and widely circulated in Vienna and Berlin, and strongly influenced the Viennese linguistic

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<sup>28</sup> See, for example, Johann Strauss II, *Die Fledermaus*, 1874, or *Wiener Blut*, 1899, operettas which leave the problematic issues of adultery, interpersonal relationships and marriage for resolution by dancing the waltz.

<sup>29</sup> Wagner, *op.cit*, p.271. The term “join” is, of course, used in a metaphysical sense, there being no physical environment – no Valhalla for heroes – or separable bodies to relate to one another.

<sup>29</sup> Jenkins, *op.cit*, p.113.

<sup>31</sup> Charlton, *op.cit*, p.13.

philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein's (1889-1951) *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1922).<sup>32</sup> Mauthner's concept of language is that it is in constant change, capable, in Schoenberg's terms, of sustaining "all possible moods and meanings". In the sketches for *Pelleas und Melisande*, Op.5, 1903 Schoenberg included an entire narrative for this single movement purely instrumental tone poem; theme groups, akin to Wagnerian *leitmotifs*, associated with scenes from the action or with individual actors, allow Schoenberg to manipulate the traditional dramatic unities (continuity of time, place and action) ) and to revisit key emotional moments several times The subject was suggested to Schoenberg by Richard Strauss (1864-1949), who was interested in supporting the new composer, and is based upon the Symbolist play by the Belgian Maurice Maeterlinck (1862-1949). Schoenberg writes:

- I. Melisande, Fate
  - II. Golaud, timid Melisande Fate – big
  - III. Golaud Melisande Fate – big Warning
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- I. Melisande dreamy. Pelleas youthful: (King Arkel, Premonition, Discouragement) Love and Fate Motive (I.)
  - II. Ring lost, Golaud meets with an accident, search for the ring. Love and Fate Motive II. Even bigger
  - III. Golaud suspicious, jealousy menace and distrust: G[olaud] and Yniold, grotto, ominous atmosphere, brutal outburst directed at Melisande

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<sup>32</sup> Gershon Weiler, *Mauthner's Critique of Language*, Cambridge, 1970, p.177.

IV. Love scene (big and broad.) Fate motive, jealousy – Golaud kills  
Pelleas and wounds Melisande

- I. Ominous atmosphere
- II. Golaud and Melisande, entrance of the servant women
- III. Melisande expires <sup>33</sup>

It is worth reiterating the point here: Schoenberg indicates in this note for his orchestral performers the impressions of action and emotion that he intends to impart to the audience. These are not program notes for the audience. The traditional theatrical unities of time, place and action are subverted in a way that permits the audience to “analyse”, as he puts it, and “re-analyse”, the emotional experiences of the characters portrayed in sound. According to Jenkins, Schoenberg’s pupil Berg suggests that this same work might be viewed as a four-movement symphony in a one-movement form, based on its thematic content – introduction, scherzo (the search for Melisande’s ring), adagio (the love scene) and finale (the recapitulation of the forest music).

For a performance of his *First String Quartet*, Op.7, 1904-05 (completion of which was delayed by Schoenberg’s financial difficulties), Schoenberg produced program notes in his 1904-05 sketchbook, which were discovered only much later.

Schoenberg describes the programmatic underpinnings of that composition across its three movements. This work presents itself as a traditional string quartet, a purely three- movement instrumental piece, and not even a tone poem with an associated narrative like the play *Pelleas und Melisande*:

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<sup>33</sup> Jenkins, *op.cit.*, p.130.

- I.
  1. a) Rebellion; defiance; b) longing c) rapture
  2. a) Depression; despair; fear of engulfment, unaccustomed feelings of love, a need to be completely *absorbed*
    - b) Solace, assuagement (she and he)
    - c) A new eruption: depression, despair and
    - d) Transition to
  3. Struggle among all the motives with the resolve to begin a new life (Development I)
    - e) mild dispute
- II.
  1. "Feeling New Life"
    - a) Aggressively joyful energy, unfolding fantasy, momentum
    - b) New love: intimacy, devotion, rapture, understanding, supreme sensual intoxication, (repetition or a part of II. 1. a)
  2. a) Disappointment, (hangover), brief.
  3. a) Return of depression, despair, transition to
    - b) the return of the first mood I.1.a.
    - c) transition to a gentler mood
- III.
  1. a) Increasing longing for deserted loved ones, transition to despair over the pain it has caused them
    - b) Falling to sleep. A *dream image* shows the deserted ones, each grieving in his own way for the distant one, thinking of him, hoping for his return

- c) Transition to the decision to return home; increasing longing for peace and rest
- d) Homecoming; joyful reception, quiet joy and the contemplation of rest and harmony [sic] <sup>34</sup>

The emotions evoked are not handled in a linear manner, but in a Diltheyan manner, following the way in which the music moves and repeats, and which permits examination and re-examination – as Schoenberg suggests, “until they [the players and the audience] had analysed it”. <sup>35</sup> These works are, of course, orchestral ones, without voices. Schoenberg notes demonstrate what he believes is the power of music to stimulate not just affective, emotional responses but also cognitive ones at the higher philosophical level of Schopenhauer’s world of the Will. Schoenberg draws heavily on Schopenhauer for his definition of the “language” of music as a key element of his composition. Schopenhauer’s metaphysics provides access to the world of the Will, as opposed to that of (mere) Representation. Schoenberg believes that in poetic language, language intrinsic to the act of composing and listening to music, he has solved Schopenhauer’s failure to recognise the inability of language to cope with what are in Schoenberg’s language essential characteristics. For Schoenberg, language is concerned with the translation into the terms of human terms that:

“which is abstraction, reduction to the recognizable, the essential, the language of the world, which ought perhaps to remain incomprehensible and only perceptible...” <sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Jenkins, *op.cit*, p.152.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, p.152.

<sup>36</sup> “*The Relationship to the Text*”, 1912, in *Style and Idea*, p.142.



Schoenberg identifies here the contradiction inherent in Schopenhauer's philosophy: the paradox of seeking to describe that which is essentially indescribable. The challenges associated with such an undertaking within the *Gesamtkunstwerk* model are, therefore, very clear to Schoenberg, as he concedes in the next sentence of that same passage of *The Relationship of the Text*. The philosopher (Schopenhauer or even Schoenberg himself) might aim to represent the essence of the world, but "its unsurveyable wealth" [sic] will be beyond the linguistic concepts utilised because their "poverty is all too easily seen through".<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, it is through the poetic language of a *Gesamtkunstwerk* that Schoenberg seeks to see through this poverty. And, this means, of course, that every element of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* – the synthesis of the different media - will be expected to contribute to this process of communication.

Wagner's commitment to achieving a successful *Gesamtkunstwerk* using all modes of expression requires that considerable attention be paid to the problems of staging the operas. Theatres must be sufficiently large enough to accommodate an orchestra, a complex stage set and an audience. That produced major difficulties in existing theatres until Bayreuth was built by Ludwig II of Bavaria especially for Wagner. The Bayreuth Theatre incorporates a series of innovations: a vast stage, and hidden orchestra pit, brighter stage lights and a darkened auditorium (Illus. 8). In this respect Bayreuth is a model for all future theatres, though Wagner himself was as much concerned with Bayreuth as the venue for exclusive productions of *his* works, as he was with building Bayreuth theatres in cities like Berlin.<sup>38</sup> The audience is there not to see one another in some conventional social gathering, but to experience a unique opera, so there are no boxes on the side of the auditorium. Both

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<sup>37</sup> "The Relationship to the Text", 1912, in *Style and Idea*, p.142.

<sup>38</sup> Patrick Carnegy, *Wagner And The Art of Theatre*, New Haven and London, 2006, p.119.

stage and auditorium use a proscenium to direct the audience's attention. The focus is on the drama as presented by the orchestra and the singers. The background scenery is capable of movement; actors can trapeze across the stage as if they are flying, swim in the Rhine river. Singers are not permitted curtain calls at the end of each act, let alone at the end of each aria (not that there are such things in Wagner's operas), as has been traditional in operas before then. Nothing is permitted to break the illusion established by the work itself. The comparison with modern cinema is inescapable, an audience seated in dimmed lighting looking at a screen and surrounded by sound without the distraction of an orchestra pit.

Except for the conductor, there are no distractions. The partially-hidden conductor stands as the link between the all-embracing stage, with its hidden orchestra, and the auditorium, as if in total control of all that the audience is to experience. In his lifetime Wagner revolutionised the act of conducting, particularly of Beethoven's work, adopting a style as far removed as possible from the time-beating, band master style of his predecessors. The "new conductor" communicates the emotions that the music inspired in him through the movements of his arms and whole body. The conductor acts as an intermediary between the composer and the audience, helping it to understand something of the composer's own thinking, and not just leaving it to the music.

And here there is a paradox: notwithstanding his adherence to Schopenhauer's philosophy exposing the limitations of mimetic representation, Wagner's original stage sets, and the production standards he established, are perversely realistic in seeking to create a pseudo-mediaeval or pre-historic fantasy for an audience now

consuming cheap newspapers as well as his operas.<sup>39</sup> Wagner argues that the Nordic-Germanic contexts offers the audience Germanic universality from a time of socio-economic simplicity before recorded history, as opposed to the fantasies of French opera or the contemporary frivolities of Viennese operettas. The commercial growth of the “Wagner industry” cannot have escaped Schoenberg’s attention. He claims that his knowledge of Wagner was derived from first-hand experience of the operas in performance: he had been present at every one in his youth and involved in the orchestration of several of them.<sup>40</sup> Without doubt Schoenberg witnessed the attention that a succession of theatre producers paid to maintaining those Wagnerian stage settings, set designs, stage directions, and an array of mechanical devices with which to present the operas, particularly of the *Ring* cycle (Illus. 9). But, by the turn of the century, such styles of operatic presentation must surely have seemed deeply old-fashioned to someone like Schoenberg, who had witnessed the mass-mediated modernity of the cabarets of Berlin. As Smith concludes, Bayreuth epitomises the impact of modern production technology on an audience which would have to reconceive its relationship to performance.<sup>41</sup>

Schoenberg’s attention to Wagner in *Harmonielehre* sometimes borders on the dismissive; he provides a solution to the harmonic resolution of the *Tristan* chord.<sup>42</sup> What is more, he demonstrates how he has “captured” that chord and “other vagrants” by proposing that consonance and dissonance are part of the same sensory continuum. However, when Schoenberg compares the impact its use by Wagner has upon audiences with the banality it induces when used inappropriately

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<sup>39</sup> Wagner uses the example of *Die Gartenlaube*, the first mass circulation family journal founded in 1853. See, Smith, *op.cit*, p.21.

<sup>40</sup> Stuckenschmidt, *op.cit*, p.18. It is a moot point as to whether Schoenberg had truly seen all of Wagner’s operas. Wagner’s work was available, however, in piano transcriptions.

<sup>41</sup> Smith, *op.cit*, p.21.

<sup>42</sup> *Harmonielehre*, p.238. The same anecdote about the Viennese professor is repeated in the footnote at p.394, but Schoenberg was never formally educated in music, so this can only be fictitious.

by other, less talented composers, he soon reasserts its significance in radicalising his own harmonic ideas:

Whenever one wanted to express pain, excitement, anger, or some strong feeling – there we find, almost exclusively, the diminished seventh chord. So it is in the music of Bach, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Weber, etc. Even in Wagner's early works it plays the same role. But the role was played out. This uncommon, restless, undependable guest, here today, gone tomorrow, settled down, became a citizen, was retired and philistine. The chord had lost the appeal of novelty, hence, it had lost its sharpness, but also its lustre. It had nothing more to say to a new era. Thus, it fell from the higher sphere of art music to the lower level of music for entertainment...It became banal and effeminate. *Became* banal !...Other chords took its place, chords that were to replace its expressiveness and chords that were to replace its pivotal facility...Yet these too were soon worn out, soon lost their charm; and that explained why so quickly after Wagner, whose harmonies seemed unbelievably bold to his contemporaries, new paths were sought...The diminished seventh chord provoked this movement, which cannot stop before it has fulfilled the will of nature, and not before we have reached the greatest possible maturity in the imitation of nature: so that we can then turn away from the external model and more and more toward the internal, toward the one within us...I value originality, but I do not overrate it...I do believe in the new; I believe it is that *Good* and that *Beauty* towards which we strive with our innermost being, just as involuntarily and persistently we strive toward the *future*. There must be, somewhere in our future, a *magnificent fulfilment* as yet hidden from us, since our striving forever pins its hopes on it. Perhaps that

future is an advanced stage in the development of our species, at which the yearning will be fulfilled which today gives us no peace. Perhaps it is just death; but perhaps it is the certainty of higher life after death. <sup>43</sup>

Here is the fundamental distinction between Wagner and Schopenhauer's concept of death as "the genuine, ardent longing for death, for absolute unconsciousness, total non-existence" and the Utopianism of Schoenberg. <sup>44</sup> For Schoenberg, *the world of the Will* does not necessarily imply an exploration of as pessimistic an entity as Schopenhauer suggests. Schoenberg remains positive for it is a metaphor of human striving that Schoenberg obtains from Schopenhauer:

Now the nature of man consists in the fact that his will strives, is satisfied, strives anew, and so on and on; in fact his happiness and well-being consist only in the transition from desire to satisfaction, and from this to a fresh desire. <sup>45</sup>

This is the imperative that is handed down to students when they read *Harmonielehre*. "Striving" towards some target is more important than achieving a conclusive outcome. Resolution will always be contingent upon future changes in the human condition. In *Harmonielehre* "striving" propels the trajectory of harmonic development across history, locating German composers in the primary position, the pursuit of new routes and new modes of travel is part of his commitment to the path prepared by Schopenhauer:

That which is new and unusual about and new harmony occurs to the true composer...(because) he must give expression to something that moves him,

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<sup>43</sup> *Harmonielehre*, p.239.

<sup>44</sup> Wagner, *op.cit*, *Part V Wagner's Development*, p.271.

<sup>45</sup> Schopenhauer, *WWR I*, p.260.

something new, something previously unheard-of...and new sound is a symbol, discovered involuntarily, and symbol proclaiming the new man who asserts his individuality...Those youthful sounds are an omen of possibilities...<sup>46</sup>

This set Schoenberg on a road of what might have become “rolling radicalism”:

The future brings the new, and that is perhaps why we so often and so justifiably identify the new with the beautiful and the good...<sup>47</sup>

In such words Schoenberg seals his commitment, alongside Wagner, to the potential rewards of artistic commitment and sheer hard work:

This prodigious breaking down the floodgates of appearance must necessarily call forth in the inspired musician a state of ecstasy wherewith no other can compare: in it the will perceives itself the almighty will of all things: it has not mutely to yield place to contemplation, but proclaims itself aloud as a conscious world idea.<sup>48</sup>

This state of ecstasy can then be seen in the final pages of *Harmonielehre*, when Schoenberg anticipates “the tone-colour melodies” of future music, and in those of *Seraphita* as a spirit ascends into heaven in the finale of that novella.

### **Overtones to the First Triad**

These overtones concern the tensions around the concept of *Gesamtkunstwerk* which influenced Schoenberg’s own concept. Whereas Wagner’s influence on Schoenberg, both in terms of *Gesamtkunstwerk* foundations and harmonic

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<sup>46</sup> *Harmonielehre*, p.401.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, p.238.

<sup>48</sup> Wagner, *op.cit*, Part IV *The Artwork of the Future*, p. 180.

development, can be identified in the text of *Harmonielehre*, Mahler's influence is more difficult to discern from any overt textual evidence. Both Gustav and Alma Mahler (1879-1964) had been friends of Schoenberg from the late 1890s. Mahler had provided Schoenberg with intellectual and financial support and is the subject of a dedication (to "a saint") in the third edition of *Harmonielehre*. Karnes contends that the similarities between Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* (*Song of the Earth*) (1908-9) and Schoenberg's *Gurrelieder* comprise a kindred musical language.<sup>49</sup> *Das Lied* was composed by Mahler after the death of his daughter and the diagnosis of the heart condition that would kill him in a few years; he was also being subjected to a vicious anti-Semitic campaign during his tenure as conductor at the Vienna Opera. Mahler set six songs from a newly translated volume of Tang Chinese poems by Hans Bethge (1876-1946) in what he originally called a symphony for two voices and an orchestra. *Gurrelieder* took Schoenberg a longer period to complete, 1900-11, and is a large-scale cantata for five voices and orchestra, a setting of a poem by the Dane Jens Peter Jacobsen (1847-85). *Gurrelieder* has recently been presented in a stage version, but was not premiered until 1913, after Mahler's death.<sup>50</sup>

Schoenberg's pupils Berg and Webern attended the premiere of *Das lied* in Munich in November 1911. Both had been involved in preparing piano reductions of *Gurrelieder* so knew that work well. Berg's letter to Schoenberg notes the similarity of sonority between the two works.<sup>51</sup>

Mahler's involvement with the discourse on synaesthesia goes back to the beginning of his career as a composer. According to Fischer, Mahler follows the precedents of composers like Liszt and Berlioz: he "devoured" literature from an early age, despite

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<sup>49</sup> Karnes, *op.cit*, p.174.

<sup>50</sup> Arnold Schoenberg, *Gurrelieder*, dir. Pierre Audi, cond. Marc Albrecht, Dutch National Opera and soloists, 2017, dvd.

<sup>51</sup> Brand, *op.cit*, p.44. Letter from Berg to Schoenberg of 20 November 1911.

the restrictions of his birth (in a tradesman's household in a Bohemian village) and prejudice against his religion. As a converted Jew he experienced the limitations of assimilation throughout his life. He read Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), and his German Romantic literary associates Friedrich Hölderlin (1770-1843), Johann Peter Eckermann (1792-1854), Jean Paul (Richter) (1763-1825), and E.T.A. Hoffmann, alongside other European authors such as Miguel de Cervantes (1547-1616), Charles Dickens (1812-70), Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky (1821-81), and Laurence Sterne (1713-68).<sup>52</sup> Mahler drew upon German poets and his own poetry both as stimuli and libretti. He wrote poetry of his own, especially when expressing the extreme emotional tensions arising from his love affairs with several women, including Alma. The poems and songs collected by Achim von Arnim (1781-1831) and Clemens Brentano (1781-1842) at the beginning of the nineteenth century, *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, (published 1806 & 1808) provided the material for Mahler to compose a series of songs commencing with *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* (1884-85), and *Das klagende Lied* (all twelve songs being fully published as his *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* in 1905). In the same way that Schoenberg set verses to music in a song, voice accompanied by a piano, in the first instance before transposing those musical ideas into much larger composition (for example, the song *Seraphita* in Op. 22, 1913, becomes material for *Seraphita/Jakobsleiter*), so too does Mahler develop his own versions of *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* into themes that find their way into three of his early symphonies.<sup>53</sup> Thus, *Urlicht - Primaeval Light* (1893) is incorporated into the fourth movement of the *Second Symphony* (1888-94), and *Es sangen drei Engel – Three Angels sang a sweet air* (1895) into the *Third Symphony* (1893-96), whilst another song, not published as part of the set of twelve, *Das*

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<sup>52</sup> Fischer, *op.cit*, p.126.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*, p.126.



*himmlische Leben* – *The Heavenly Life*, becomes the finale of the *Fourth Symphony* (1899-1900). According to Fischer, it is the “emotional polyphony” of *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* that so attracted Mahler: in evidence he quotes from the diary kept between 1890 and 1901 of one of Mahler’s closest confidantes, Natalie Bauer-Lechner (1858-1921), the Austrian violinist, of a visit to a fair of 1900, in which Mahler was taken by “concordant and harmonious” sounds of the shooting galleries, Punch and Judy show, the military band and the singing of a male voice choir” – a description of a Mahler symphony in its own right.<sup>54</sup> The professional difficulties for orchestras of Mahler’s time inherent in producing complex sounds he envisages mean that Mahler has to produce very detailed instructions to his players; this is not just to assert his control (as both a composer and conductor) but to ensure that there is clarity of performance.<sup>55</sup>

Mahler’s *Symphony No.1 in D Major*, 1887-1888, with elements composed as early as 1884, had an unusually long gestation period because Mahler seemed unable to decide what sort of music it should be, a symphonic tone poem (in the style of Liszt, Berlioz or Richard Strauss) or a five-movement symphony.<sup>56</sup> In the event it was performed as a four-movement symphony in 1889, the third movement *Blumine* (*Flower Piece*) having been set aside (and only rarely played in Mahler’s time). The symphony was planned in connection with a cycle of four-songs *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* (*Songs of a Wayfarer*) 1884-5, set to poems by Mahler about an unsuccessful love affair, which are quoted in the symphony. The symphony is also linked to the novel *Titan* (1800-03) by the German Romantic writer Jean Paul (Friedrich Richter) (1763-1825), the story of the transformation of a youth to a man,

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<sup>54</sup> Fischer, *op.cit*, p.128.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid*, p.453.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid*, p.148.

with archetypal supporting characters doomed to failure and a strong sense of imminent *hubris*. And yet further, it is linked to Jean Paul's novel *Siebenkäs* (1796-7) with the first *Doppelgänger*, a device invented by Jean Paul. Jean Paul was associated with *Weimar Classicism*, though he disliked Goethe and Schiller, and wrote in a humorous and genial style. Within *Secessionist* circles then, Mahler represented both synaesthesia and the link back to German Romanticism. Because of the reaction of critics at the time, however, Mahler refused to discuss the genesis of the *Symphony No. 1* after 1896 and this dimension of descriptions of Mahler's work has been lost to many modern listeners. Paradoxically perhaps, Mahler seemed to fall back on Hanslick's view of musical criticism: music should be discussed in terms of its own aesthetic. Poetic and biographical interpretations arising from the music's synaesthetic origins should be dispensed with.<sup>57</sup> When Schoenberg was exiled in America, he also refused to discuss the synaesthetic characteristics of his work, reflecting the passing aesthetics of synaesthesia from musical discourse.<sup>58</sup>

There is, however, an important difference between Mahler's philosophical stance in *Gesamtkunstwerk* and Wagner's: Mahler work is not driven by the same Schopenhauerian nihilism as Wagner, that unconscious world of the Will, but rather by a deep sense of religious redemption. As demonstrated in his reverence for the text *Seraphita*, this is the same conclusion that Schoenberg reaches, notwithstanding his apparent reliance upon Schopenhauer's philosophy to justify his harmonic theories in *Harmonielehre*. Schoenberg and Mahler may express themselves in different ways, whilst sharing a common belief in a personal sense of religious redemption.

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<sup>57</sup> Fischer, *op.cit.*, p.152.

<sup>58</sup> Jenkins, *op.cit.*, p.152. An anachronistic (1940) comment regarding performance directions discussed earlier for the *First String Quartet* given in 1904.

Mahler's involvement in the Secessionist Exhibition of 1902 warrants further discussion, not least because it demonstrates the way in which the concept of synaesthesia spread across the artistic modes of expression. According to Alma Mahler, Gustav Mahler had little understanding of the visual arts before 1902: it was her introduction of Gustav Klimt, whom she had nearly married before Mahler, of her father-in-law artist, Carl Moll (1861-1945), and of the designers Alfred Roller (1864-1935) and Karl Moser (1860-1936) to Mahler that led to his interest in and commitment to synaesthesia beyond the literature and music.<sup>59</sup> Out of these introductions emerged, for example, the collaboration between Mahler and Roller for the new, epoch-making production of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* in Vienna in 1903. Both were apparently aware of the important stage lighting specialist, Adolphe Appia's (1862-1928) work on the production of Wagnerian dramas, *La Mise en scène du théâtre Wagnerien* (1895), in which he promoted the concept of a "theatre of suggestion", and not one of "illusion".<sup>60</sup> Appia recognised the contradiction within Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk* between dramatic action, with its concentration on the centre of gravity of the characters, and the over-elaborate, decorated visual realizations; Appia took the "living actor" as his point of departure. As Evan Baker describes it, the Mahler/Roller production was characterised by this same move away from naturalistic scenic and costume designs to one which used abstraction, rather than detailed reproduction, and lighting effects to emphasise specific colours suggestive of emotional sensations.<sup>61</sup> The lighting effects facilitated the passage of

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<sup>59</sup> Fischer, *op.cit*, p. 357.

<sup>60</sup> Carnegie, *op.cit*, p.175.

<sup>61</sup> Evan Baker, *From The Score To The Stage An Illustrated History of Continental Opera Production and Staging*, Chicago and London, 2013, p.271. Alfred Roller, 1864-1936, was known to Schoenberg as the set designer for the Vienna Opera which Schoenberg must certainly have frequented through his association with Mahler, who was director from 1897-1907. Schoenberg certainly saw the anti-naturalistic, stylized Mahler/Roller production of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* in 1903. See Hahl-Koch, *op.cit*, p.101. Roller was later involved in the lavish film production in 1925 of Richard Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier*, a film intended to be accompanied by an orchestra conducted by the composer

time through the narrative of the programme, sunrise followed by evening and the emergence of starlight.

The formalisation of the Mahler/Roller partnership through the latter's appointment as director of production at the Vienna Court Opera initiated new production standards characterised by rapid scene changes, three-dimensional effects and dramatic mood lighting. The performers are now set within a dramatic space, in which they can be seen to interact with each other, rather than singing out at the audience against a flat, lifeless background. In the two years to 1905, the year of the notable performance of the Mahler/Roller production of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, these standards became established. According to the music critic Julius Korngold (1860-1945), a fervent Mahler supporter and father of the child prodigy and Hollywood film music composer, Erich Wolfgang Korngold (1897-1957), when writing in the (pro-Mahlerian) *Neue Frei Presse* in 1905, "*Das is rollerisch*" has become the production standard. Music, words and movement are inseparable, and intense colours emphasise emotional incidents and moods. Roller's success might be seen, as Baker suggests, as the beginning of the concept of the director's theatre, *Regietheater*, the production designer becoming as important as the composer and conductor. It is highly likely that Schoenberg would have seen, or have received reports of, these Mahlerian productions. For himself, Schoenberg, when faced with the problems of securing collaborators, of course, fell back on his own resources.

As Mahler's compositional techniques developed over time and through three more symphonies, it becomes clear by the *Eight Symphony* (1906, first performed 1910)

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himself in an extensive tour of America. The advent of films with integral sound tracks in 1927 very rapidly curtailed such ambitious ideas.

that he uses the human voice as an orchestral instrument, and not just as a way of conveying cognitive ideas.<sup>62</sup> In the *Eight Symphony* the anachronous use of texts from the second part of Goethe's *Faust* and from a ninth century abbot, Hrabanus Maurus (c.780-856) in a work involving the human voice from the outset, continues to divide opinion; is it an attempt to create a *Gesamtkunstwerk* celebration of the human spirit in a symphonic cantata around two disparate texts, signalling (as Adorno suggests) an empty gesture for an age devoid of values, or is it one seeking, like Schoenberg's "breathing air from another planet", a new way of exploring some higher religious principles?<sup>63</sup> Charles Youmans suggests that Mahler is attempting, for one last time as the "last mountain of a large mountain range", to connect with his audience by embracing the past in a modern revival, rather than by manipulating the past for modernist purposes.<sup>64</sup> As his *de facto* mentor, whether in providing financial support or in exemplifying compositional technique and production, Mahler's death was a matter of deep regret to Schoenberg. The potential of the synaesthetic combination of song with orchestra and choir, and texts from mediaeval Christianity and Goethe's *Faust* in Mahler's *Eighth Symphony* was missed by Schoenberg and his students until after 1912, adding to this sense of loss. In his epitaph to Mahler in the 1912 edition of *Theory*, Schoenberg describes Mahler as a saint, whose true worth had only been understood after he had died.

Like Strauss and Schoenberg, Mahler distanced himself from Wagner's aesthetic aims and his concept of the dramatic stage, at the same time as recognising his harmonic achievements. In conducting Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* in a new production in Vienna in 1903, Mahler demonstrated his understanding of Wagner's

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<sup>62</sup> Fischer, *op.cit*, p.522.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid*, p.524.

<sup>64</sup> Charles Youmans, *Mahler & Strauss In Dialogue*, Bloomington Indianapolis, 2016, p.17.

intentions and raised the standards of performance, whilst rejecting other aspects of Wagner's aspirations. As Youmans expresses it, Mahler's own compositional approach is one of "critical appropriation", the deployment of Wagner's own art to express something self-consciously new.<sup>65</sup> This is precisely Schoenberg's attitude, the appropriation of *Gesamtkunstwerk* production characteristics in pursuit of his own musical objectives.

Whilst noting Timms's inclusion in his well-known diagram of creative interaction in *fin-de-siècle* Vienna of Alma Mahler in her own right and not just as a marital appendage, her role in introducing Gustav to Secessionist artists reflects her involvement with a string of Viennese figures and the discourse about artistic synaesthesia: she was taught music by Alexander von Zemlinsky (1879-1942), who subsequently became Schoenberg's brother-in-law, and was introduced to both Schoenberg and his pupil, Alban Berg. Despite Gustav Mahler's prenuptial insistence that she discontinue her composing, giving preference to supporting his own, Alma composed a set of five songs to poems by German authors, including Richard Dehmel (1863-1920), the same poet engaged earlier by Schoenberg in *Erwartung*, part of *Dehmellieder*, Op.2, 1899, and *Verklärte Nacht*, Op.4, 1899. Alma Mahler's *Die stille Stadt*, the first of the five songs published in 1910, describes the composer's feelings of unbridled fulfilment juxtaposed against controlled emotions, words and colours contrasted with musical chords in a pale moonlit scene, with a green sea, a red villa, and a black oak tree.

The *Secessionist* juxtaposition of music and colour to suggest emotional and psychological anxiety can be seen in Schoenberg's *Erwartung*, Op.17, 1909, the one-act monodrama for female soprano, in which the inner-consciousness of an

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<sup>65</sup> Youmans, *op.cit*, p.65.

apparently deserted woman alone in a forest clearing lit by moonlight is explored in a way in which time itself seems suspended. *Erwartung* is a prime example of how the discourse on synaesthesia influenced both the nature and content of Schoenberg's compositions, and how Schoenberg had begun to think about the possibilities of a *Rollerisch* production. Schoenberg prepared set designs, though *Erwartung* was not performed until 1924. Schoenberg's librettist, Maria Pappenheim (1882-1966) was a member of Freud's earliest group in Vienna; the choice of literary material on which to base his compositions demonstrates the extent to which Schoenberg was prepared to extend beyond the traditional sources.

### ***Gurrelieder*, a new redemption**

Schoenberg's composition of *Gurrelieder*, a large-scale work for soli, chorus and orchestra, set to words by the Danish poet Peter Lens Jacobsen, had commenced in 1900, but was not completed until 1911.<sup>66</sup> It is important because it signals Schoenberg's break with Wagnerian Utopianism. It is a composition that is still essentially tonal, is based on a more traditional type of text, and does not exploit dissonance in the way that Schoenberg's works of the same date do; but, it is a daunting work in scale, musical development and the complexity of its libretto, and is a challenge to the listener's understanding of the difficult combination of words and musical sounds. "*Gurre*" - lieder, the onomatopoeic sound that a wood dove makes, is based upon a mediaeval Danish legend, retold by the poet Jens Peter Jacobsen (1847-85): the wood dove, a symbol of purity, fidelity and happiness, is the transfigured body of the King's murdered mistress. He renounces God for his loss but rediscovers his faith again in the spiritual correspondences to be found in the lakes and woods of his dominion, Naturalism. In contrast to previous concerts

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<sup>66</sup> Rufer, *op.cit*, p.78.

involving Schoenberg's work, the premier of *Gurrelieder* in the Great Hall of the Musikverein in Vienna on 23 February 1913 was extremely well received. It was composed in what is now called a Late Romantic style, that is, it is programmatic, overtly descriptive, lyrical and traditionally tonal, and apparently met the expectations of contemporary Viennese taste. It was warmly applauded. In Richard Taruskin's description, Schoenberg had been encouraged to compose the work by Richard Strauss, who had secured a stipend and employment in a Berlin conservatoire for Schoenberg so that he could complete it.<sup>67</sup> Taruskin suggests that the work failed to satisfy Schoenberg when finally performed, because it did not reflect his apparent intention to produce something more reminiscent of Beethoven's Romanticism (a *Secessionist* trope), with a strong sense of *Innigkeit* (inwardness). This dissatisfaction on Schoenberg's part regarding the need to express the "inborn, instinctive", rather than those characteristics known as individual taste, upbringing, intelligence, knowledge or skill, are derived from Schoenberg's sense of the artistic genius of a Beethoven.<sup>68</sup> In his deliberately ironic program note for a private performance of *Gurrelieder* of January 1910, Schoenberg anticipates public response to *Gurrelieder*: he wants the work performed despite its long gestation to demonstrate to audiences that he is perfectly capable of producing something that would have satisfied previous aesthetic taste, but also that he is fulfilling an inner compulsion to continue the formative progression disclosed in *Harmonielehre*.<sup>69</sup>

However, Schoenberg's apologetic description of *Gurrelieder*, according to Karnes, undervalues its underlying meditation on questions of redemption, renewal and humanity's relationship to the natural world. It suggests redemption from earthly

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<sup>67</sup> Richard Taruskin, *Music in the Early Twentieth Century*, Oxford and New York, 2010, p.305.

<sup>68</sup> Schoenberg writes precisely in this same language to Kandinsky in a letter of 18 January 1911, reflecting what he has already written in *Harmonielehre*, Hahl-Koch, *op.cit*, p. 21. *Harmonielehre*, p.18

<sup>69</sup> Jenkins, *op.cit*, p.185. Program note for the *Verein für Kunst und Kultur*, January 1910.



sufferings elaborated through a psychological utopia, deeply at odds with Wagner's vision of surrender to the unconsciousness of the Will.<sup>70</sup>

This resurgence of redemption - religious in Mahler's case, naturalism (at that stage) in Schoenberg's - reflects an important change in the discourse on synaesthesia, the increasing dissatisfaction with Wagnerian bombast and hero-worship. In *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) places the creation of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* at the heart of European culture: Germania has followed the ideals of Ancient Greek and is producing in Wagner's hands a new form of tragedy, revealing the inherent suffering in life and the consolation available to all via the arts, particularly through music.<sup>71</sup> Building on the philosophy of Schopenhauer – using Greek metaphors Apollo and Dionysius to identify the twin characteristics of art, beauty and order on the one hand, and ecstatic emotional reactions on the other – Nietzsche credits Wagner with the creative leadership of this whole movement. In the *Preface to Richard Wagner* of 1871, Nietzsche proclaims:

Let these serious people know that I am convinced that art is the supreme task and the truly metaphysical activity of this life in the sense of that man, my noble champion on that path, to whom I dedicate this book.<sup>72</sup>

However, by the end of the next decade, in a new introduction to *The Birth of Tragedy* of 1886, Nietzsche condemns Wagner as the symptom of a “broader disease affecting Europe” of decadence and nihilism.<sup>73</sup> Having once been a part of the erection of the myth of Wagnerian artistic and aesthetic pre-eminence across

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<sup>70</sup> Karnes, *op.cit*, p.129.

<sup>71</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy, Out of the Spirit of Music*, trans. Shaun Whiteside, London, 1993.

<sup>72</sup> Nietzsche, *op.cit*, p.13.

<sup>73</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Case of Wagner, A Musician's Problem*, trans. Anthony M Ludovici, Third Edition, Edinburgh and London, 1911.

Europe and America, Nietzsche sees in the creation of the Bayreuth theatre only the perpetuation of Christianised pagan and Grail myths, the creeping negative powers of commercialism and the incessant clamour of satisfying bourgeois, reactionary tastes. Some of the Wagnerian stage settings suggest that fetishism has become more important than any desire to stimulate a sensory response on the part of the audience. Wagner has lost the objectives of providing insights into the struggles facing humanity by dropping the emphases on self-illumination and maturation as solutions, in favour of what Nietzsche takes to be an over-reliance upon the “unconditional morality” of Christian religion.<sup>74</sup> Nietzsche’s alternative to Wagnerian and Schopenhauerian yearning for non-existence is an affirmative instinct for life, which he calls *Dionysiac*, satisfaction in life.

## Summary

In Chapter 1, the synaesthetic relationship between words and music is described as a disputed area of discourse between Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk* on the one side and Hanslick’s anti-synaesthetic musical aesthetic on the other. In Chapter 2, Wagner’s concept of *Gesamtkunstwerk* is described as an adjunct of Schopenhauerian philosophy, the relationship between sensory experiences and language not requiring overt cognitive articulation through spoken or sung words. The dichotomy at the heart of Schopenhauer’s worlds of the Will and of Representation is apparently capable of resolution: if not through normal sensory perception and communication the unconscious world can be communicated through the enhanced relationship between words and music, the foundation of *Gesamtkunstwerk*. As Schopenhauer says, music can add “secret information” to the feelings expressed in the words. The interplay of music and words acquaints

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<sup>74</sup> Nietzsche, *op.cit*, p.9.

humanity with the innermost soul of the events and occurrences, the mere cloak and body of which are presented on the performance stage.<sup>75</sup> Music can be made to generate cognitive meaning for, and not just affective responses in, the mind of the listener. In the next chapter the development of language as a polemic for the confrontation of public attitudes towards music and to purity and morality is described, alongside the support Schoenberg derived through his relationships with Adolf Loos and Karl Kraus.

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<sup>75</sup> Schopenhauer, *WWR II*, p.448.

### Chapter 3: Second Triad and the Idea of Language.

In this chapter the metaphor of the triad brings together Schoenberg and his immediate contemporaries, Adolf Loos (1870-1933) and Karl Kraus (1874-1936), to explore Schoenberg's idea of language, that combination of Schopenhauer's concept of the metaphysical nature of the universe, ideas about musical theatre, and Schoenberg's own innovations. Language is a further important part of the *fin-de-siècle* discourse on synaesthesia: the link between language and other human sensory experiences suggested by the Romantics and Symbolists who preceded the *Secessionists*, led to deliberation about the very nature of language in relation to human physiology, psychology and the acts of thinking and creating. That language carried a moral and ethical dimension is clear from the work of both Loos and Kraus. Whilst Schoenberg was influenced by this, particularly with respect to the polemics of writing and performing. Kraus's concern for the origins of language and the success or failure of communication with a deity is then carried forward by Schoenberg in his plans for a *Gesamtkunstwerk* based upon Swedenborgian religious concepts. Consistent with synaesthetic theory and the primacy given to words and music, Schoenberg believes that music can sustain an underlying "narrative" of words, cognitive, linguistic responses to harmonic sounds. In *Harmonielehre*, he proposes that "the material [the medium] in which the imitation is presented differs from the material or materials of the stimulus, so that, for example, visual or tactile sensations might be represented in the material of auditory sensations".<sup>1</sup> Language for Schoenberg acquires a metaphysical function, through which he can explore philosophical matters. In turn, music becomes part of a synaesthetic discourse, within the composer's mind in the first instance (interiority), and thereafter, in the

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<sup>1</sup> *Harmonielehre*, p.18.

minds of the composer and the listener. However, Schoenberg is also concerned with the limitations of language to express the nature of musical creativity and to communicate matters at a higher level than the mundane. This latter issue will be discussed as an overtone to those sections on Loos and Kraus.

Schoenberg's use of language for public polemic is considered firstly from the perspective of the support given by the architect and cultural critic Adolf Loos for performances of the new music anticipated in *Harmonielehre*. Secondly, Karl Kraus supported other word opposition to conservative public attitudes towards culture in general by establishing a critique of public opinion. Kraus's concerns for the moral purity of language, however, were more significant for the impact they had on Schoenberg's understanding of the links between language, the inner nature of things and spirituality.

The chapter does not deal with the status of the German language, or the political aspirations of German-speaking territories for autonomy and/or political unification, though this is clearly an important part of the contextual background. Schoenberg's aspirations for the continuing domination of European music by German composers in *Harmonielehre* and hence, the German language, must be recognised. Language also has a polemic dimension, the German language itself fulfilling the function of creating a sense of Germanic cultural cohesion in the absence of political or constitutional unification. Schoenberg's concern for the continuing predominance of German music is part of this same desire for German cultural cohesion. The considerable social, cultural and dialectical differences between Berlin, Munich and Vienna were overridden by the unifying force of that common language, which

permitted the free migration of writers, artists, composers and performers from city to city.<sup>2</sup>

This chapter will conclude that, whilst the polemic use of language had an important impact on the way in which ideas were presented in *Harmonielehre* and Schoenberg's opposition to critics, the links between language, the inner nature of things and spirituality were most influential with respect to the language to be used in his planned *Gesamtkunstwerk*, *Seraphita*.

### **Loos and Kraus: responses to the Secession**

By the time of the *Secessionist* 1902 *Beethoven Exhibition* artistic and critical opinion about *Jugendstil* visual art and *Jung Wien* literary style had begun to fracture. Loos and Kraus voiced dissent against what they perceived as the increasingly luxurious and decadent characteristic of all modes of artistic presentation. Even almost ten years later, there is an echo of Loos's opposition to the *Secessionists* in *Harmonielehre*:

...our taste in almost all fields is corrupted by the "decorators"  
(*Ornamentierer*) (as Adolf Loos calls them) disguised as simplifiers.<sup>3</sup>

As MacDonald suggests, Schoenberg might have been more closely associated with *Jung Wien* at that early stage; he had only been a professional musician since 1895, when he was twenty-one years of age, and did not have the supposed advantages of a formal, academic education in artistic or musical matters.<sup>4</sup> However, the growing disillusion that many artists and musicians felt about their lack of success in Vienna, despite the apparent 'glitter' of the *fin-de-siècle* style, was the same disillusion that

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<sup>2</sup> Peter Gay, *Freud, Jews and Other Germans*, Oxford, 1978, p.12.

<sup>3</sup> *Harmonielehre*, p.270.

<sup>4</sup> MacDonald, *op.cit*, p.25.

made Schoenberg move to Berlin in December 1901 and subsequently associate himself with the oppositional stance of Loos and Kraus on his return.

At the time he was beginning to write *Harmonielehre*, around 1909-10, Schoenberg uses the term “language” to suggest processes of “action, movement”, which form a dynamic language of “active knowledge that yields understanding and wisdom”, and which can embrace the “applied languages” of music and visual communication.<sup>5</sup>

The activity of musical composition subsumes that same broader meaning in *Harmonielehre*: the commitment of the philosopher to show, as Schoenberg says, that in life “there are problems and that they are unsolved”.<sup>6</sup> Thinking through music is his own cognitive preference. The “problems” Schoenberg refers to arise from his recognition that in rejecting the concept of divine laws (of music, for example), man finds “only laws which always see and only recognize ourselves...”<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, in *Harmonielehre* Schoenberg is only able to identify the sensory/cognitive circularity of this argument. He was unable to separate subject from object in an organically interrelated universe (as per Schopenhauer). Schoenberg maintains the nineteenth-century contention linking artistic production to natural generation, the work of a creature.<sup>8</sup> Only after 1923 (beyond the scope of this thesis) did Schoenberg return to the “musical idea” in his *Gedanke* essays, when he was seeking to demonstrate that there is something unique about German compositional techniques and to justify his own adoption of twelve-tone composition as part of an evolutionary process.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> *Harmonielehre*, p.2.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, p.2.

<sup>7</sup> *Style and Idea*, p.452. Nb. this is a revised version of Schoenberg's “*Gustav Mahler: In Memoriam*” of 1912, written in 1948.

<sup>8</sup> Arnold Schoenberg, *The Musical Idea and the Logic, Technique and Art of Its Presentation*, trans. Walter Frisch, Bloomington, Indiana, 2006, p.7.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, p.12.

When Loos's and Kraus's linguistic ideals are applied to music, music is required to "speak" very directly to the listener, strictly without ornamentation and repetition. Stripped of the cultural accretions described by Schoenberg in *Harmonielehre*, it will not necessarily be music, as he himself jokingly put it, that "you would hear people whistling in the street in two hundred years' time". Rather, it will be music awaiting the arrival of a new artistic sensibility, again as Schoenberg suggests, one that conveys a new "Idea" [the Will] and is not about a new "Style" [the Representation], but which will ultimately lead to the evolution of "a new man". (sic) <sup>10</sup> The key to Schoenberg's understanding of the way in which music and language intersect is not just the criticism of contemporary culture provided by Loos and Kraus: it is the anticipation of something completely new.

### Reading *Harmonielehre* through Loos's Eyes

Adolf Loos provides an important link between the *Secessionist* critique of Viennese *fin-de-siècle* society and Schoenberg's aspirations for the renewal of German music in *Harmonielehre*. Loos's primary vehicle for artistic and cultural criticism was his own publication of 1903, *Das Andere – Ein Blatt zur Einführung abendländischer Kultur in Österreich* (The Other – A Magazine to Promote the Introduction of Western Culture in Austria), though only two numbers actually appeared, both as supplements of *Kunst*, an art magazine, of which Peter Altenberg was the editor.<sup>11</sup> *Das Andere* can be taken as a prospectus for Loos's critical objective, to introduce Western influence, particularly American, into the stultifying and self-centred culture of Austro-Hungarian Vienna. Loos places himself quite firmly at the centre of

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<sup>10</sup> *Harmonielehre*, p.400.

<sup>12</sup> Peter Altenberg (1859-1918), the satirical columnist was an influential part of the literary and artistic movement *Jung Wien* (Young Vienna) and a friend of Loos's. He had a reputation as a flâneur. and writer of short, topical newspaper pieces. See Christopher Long, *The Looshaus*, New Haven and London, 2011 p.24.



modernity.<sup>12</sup> He sees the homogeneity of countries like America and Britain, which he judged to have overcome their dysfunctional social and economic divisions, to be models for Austrian modernity.<sup>13</sup> Loos's antipathy towards symptomatic aspects of Viennese cultural decline, particularly middle-class preferences for Baroque over-elaborate decoration and designs, inevitably meant that he was drawn into confrontations, chiefly through his patronage of cultural events, lectures and pamphleteering. His opposition to the endless repetition of the works of Beethoven in Viennese concert halls, the composer Loos's former *Secessionist* so ardently promoted, associates led him to support concerts of new music, including that of Schoenberg.<sup>14</sup> Like Schoenberg Loos believed in the evolutionary potential of culture, provided it was pointed in the correct direction.

By profession Loos saw himself as an architect and set out on his return to Vienna in 1896, after 3 years in America, to prove that architectural and design aesthetics could also be used polemically. Loos's shared the dissatisfaction of the *fin de siècle* Secessionist artists (*Jung Wien* or *Jugendstil*) with the outmoded historicism and over-elaborate buildings of Vienna. Loos called it *Potemkinisation*, the apocryphal disguising of buildings during the reign of Catherine the Great (1729-96) in Russia to fabricate fictionalised past imperial glories. It represented cultural stasis. Loos saw the realities of Austrian decline and did not welcome the hypocrisy of its pretentious past. Loos's article *The Potemkin City* was reprinted in the July 1898 edition of *Ver*

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<sup>13</sup> Janet Stewart, *Fashioning Vienna Adolf Loos's Cultural Criticism*, London, 2000 Stewart, p.1. In an article celebrating his sixtieth birthday published in December 1930, among those representatives of European modernism, present were Karl Kraus, Arnold Schoenberg, Heinrich Mann, Valery Larbaud and James Joyce. The article was signed "Karl Kraus et al.

<sup>14</sup> Stewart, *op.cit*, p.20.

*Sacrum*, the journal of the *Secession*.<sup>15</sup> Soon, however, Loos distanced himself from that group of artists, mainly because of a dispute about the design of the new *Secessionist* exhibition hall designed by Joseph Olbrich (1867-1908) in the Karlsplatz in Vienna, the *Wiener Secessionsgebäude*, 1897. Loos's offer to design one of the rooms had been rejected, for which Loos blamed a fellow architect and designer, Josef Hoffmann (1870-1956), but not the *Secessionist* leader, Klimt. Loos never publicly criticised Klimt, whom he associated with the creative power of individuality.<sup>16</sup> More importantly perhaps, the whole design for the *Beethoven* Exhibition of 1902, described in Chapter 1, failed to meet his Westernising aspirations.<sup>17</sup> That *Gesamtkunstwerk* was characterised by everything Loos objected to, ornate, expensive materials, including gold, and exuberant colours applied to any, and all, surfaces, regardless of their function. For Loos this represented not the real modernity of ideas, but the false modernity of ahistorical references to colour, pattern and symbolism without meaning inside the actual culture of Austria.

Loos's most famous publication, *Ornament and Crime* (*Ornament und Verbrechen*), started as an article written in 1908 for the *Frankfurter Zeitung* about the conference on "New Building".<sup>17</sup> His first lecture in 1910, *A Critique of Applied Art*, was a more pugnacious version of his article *Ornament and Crime*, though it produced little by way of public reaction: both style and content were revised by Loos over subsequent years to bring that lecture up to public performance standards.<sup>18</sup> Public lectures and

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<sup>15</sup> Long, *op.cit*, p.80.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, p.80

<sup>17</sup> Loos, "Ornament and Crime" in *op.cit*, p.167. The eponymous article, "Ornament and Crime", originated in 1908, was first published in 1913, but revised in 1929.

<sup>18</sup> Beatriz Colomina, "Sex, Lies and Decoration Adolf Loos and Gustav Klimt" in eds. Tobias G. Natter and Christoph Grunenberg, *Gustav Klimt Painting, Design and Modern Life*, London, 2008, p.43.

<sup>19</sup> Loos, "Printers", in *op.cit*, p.129. "A true printer, however, does not want to produce representations of printed works, but to create new works of his own."

their associated pamphlets were very popular in Vienna and Loos was very successful. The written style and layout of *Harmonielehre* mirror Loos's views on orthographical printing techniques, as demonstrated in the original German versions of his essays, with their unusual capitals (in the traditional German Gothic print-face he insisted on using) and grammatical emphases.<sup>19</sup> *Harmonielehre* echoes the oratorical style of a public lecture, and not the usual quiet internal voice of the author.

In *Ornament and Crime*, Loos outlines his self-appointed position as a critic of Viennese culture and language:

I (Loos) made the following discovery, which I passed on to the world: *the evolution of culture is synonymous with the removal of ornamentation from objects of everyday use*. I thought that by doing so I would bring joy to the world: it has not thanked me for it. People were sad and downcast. What depressed them was the realization we could no longer create new ornament.

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In Loos's view, Viennese society was wedded to its ornamentation, the ornamentation of everything, which "means wasted labour and therefore wasted wealth." [Such] "ornamented objects are bearable only when they are shoddily produced." Loos's diatribe in favour of the removal of unnecessary ornamentation from the everyday objects of domestic life can be compared to the assertion of the same principle of evolutionary development espoused by Schoenberg in *Harmonielehre*: the removal of the harmonic accretion which is stifling German music and has the same spiritual association. In *Harmonielehre* Schoenberg uses Loos's

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<sup>20</sup> Loos, *op.cit.*, p. 167.

<sup>21</sup> *Harmonielehre*, p. 270.

word *Ornamentierer* to describe the corrupters disguised as simplifiers.<sup>21</sup> Beneath the mock disappointment at the sad effect of removing ornamentation from public view Loos which expresses in *Ornament and Crime*, there exists a deeper dissatisfaction with *fin de siècle* Viennese society: no ornament can any longer be made today by anyone who lives on our cultural level...freedom from ornament is a sign of intellectual strength.

The abhorrence of unnecessary decoration, a call for aesthetic of simplicity, is the most obvious common characteristic that Loos and Schoenberg share, but underneath it is their shared belief in the distinction between the public persona of the concert hall or lecture theatre, and the private domain of the home and the inner world of the individual. Loos drew Schoenberg into a public polemic about the stripping away of convention. It should be noted at this juncture that Schoenberg was a very different social being to Loos. Timms suggests that Loos was very much the socialite around the coffee houses of Vienna, had access to all sorts of people and was the key to many social introductions within contemporary Vienna.<sup>22</sup>

Schoenberg, as described by authorities from Stuckenschmidt onwards, was most definitely not that sort of character. Loos's relationship with Schoenberg and his circle, particularly with Alban Berg, probably provided many of the cultural, social and political ideas that might not be available otherwise. In some ways, however, the relationship between Loos and Schoenberg defied expectations: Schoenberg had neither the time nor the affluence to follow Loos's socialising; and Loos had become increasingly deaf from an early age, an irony not lost on those who were perplexed by Loos's criticism of musical matters and support for Schoenberg's concerts. The tasks Schoenberg had set himself in these years before 1914 were not just

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<sup>22</sup> Timms, *op.cit*, p.7.

concerned with new compositional forms, but also with teaching, lecturing and the publication of *Harmonielehre*. As Stuckenschmidt put it,

The task he [Schoenberg] had set himself was more important than life; the architect Adolf Loos, who was linked in a long and close friendship with Schoenberg, experienced this once in a drastic manner when Schoenberg interrupted a social occasion with the remark that he had to get back to his desk.<sup>23</sup>

After the disruption by a squad of off-duty soldiers and subsequent public savaging of Kokoschka's play *Murderer, the Hope of Women* in 1909, in which the symbolic figures 'Man' brands 'Woman' and then murders her, Loos had supported the young artist publicly and helped him to secure painting commissions. Loos advised him how to maximise public attention: though not bald naturally, Kokoschka shaved his head and adopted an English gentleman's business outfit, looking like a criminal wandering the streets of Vienna.<sup>24</sup> Loos introduced Kokoschka to Schoenberg, and the two maintained a life-long friendship.

Although Loos involved himself in several public controversies, his attacks are like most *Secessionist* criticisms of Viennese *Kultur*, words of irony, not a call to arms. Loos does not regard his seemingly momentous discovery of the relationship between decoration and human happiness as the prelude of an impending apocalypse of the type envisaged by Nordau. Loos exemplifies his irony in his own version of Nordau's *Cultural Degeneration*:

It is above all the combination of art with objects of practical use that modern people feel is the greatest degradation one can impose on art. Goethe was a

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<sup>23</sup> Stuckenschmidt, *op.cit*, p. 50.

<sup>24</sup> Long, *op.cit*, p.58.

modern man. There is one of his sayings that, because of its direct relevance ought to have been included in the *Kunstschau*, where he and Bacon and Ruskin and King Solomon are quoted on the wall, but is not: “Art, which made the floor under the ancient’s foot and the vault of the church ceiling over the Christian’s head, is now cramped onto boxes and bracelets. The times are worse than one thinks.”<sup>25</sup>

This statement about the nature of Viennese design culture is a mock-heroic, satirical barb aimed at nothing grander than “everyday objects”, which carries the full power of a polemical, ideological feather.<sup>26</sup> The decorations which once supported the purposes of religion, the state and “High Art”, are now to be found on the cheap, everyday items found in Viennese shops, their original meanings and iconographic significance all but lost. Loos concludes that standards have declined beyond general recognition. The breakdown in the relationship between architecture (and interior design) and public culture, and the coherence between function and the materials used, lead Loos to agitate for the “liberation of mankind from superfluous ornamentation”.<sup>27</sup>

Stewart notes the combination of modernity and traditionalism in Loos.<sup>28</sup> Loos success in competing for the contract to design the building of a new Goldman and Salatsch department store was won out of his respect for the quality of their products – particularly, their English clothing – and his conviction that “the route to a modern aesthetic lay through the crafts, through the effort to fill any practical need, without

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<sup>25</sup> Loos, “*Cultural Degeneration*”, in *op.cit.*, p.165.

<sup>26</sup> Adolf Opel, “*Introduction*” in Loos, *op.cit.*, p.1.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p.11.

<sup>28</sup> Stewart, *op.cit.*, p.5.

artistic pretention”.<sup>29</sup> (Schoenberg’s own comments in *Harmonielehre* about the value of such handicraft, even carpentry, as compared with bad aesthetics is worthy of note here. <sup>30</sup>) The design of the building matched the practical purposes of the store with the purity of its undecorated stone and un-rendered surfaces. It was designed to display clothing, not persuade people of some imperial pretension. Loos may not have been a radical innovator, but the building on the Michaelerplatz (1909-11) for the Goldman and Salatsch departmental store, was deliberately confrontational. It sits directly opposite the *Hofburg*, the supposedly historic centre of Imperial power, though the buildings only date back to the *Ringstrasse* redevelopments of the 1850s (illus. 10). In Viennese urban memory – still quoted in today’s tourist literature - the Emperor is said to have been affronted by the Loos’s design, that building “without eyebrows” the Emperor allegedly called it, which contrasted so sharply with the Baroque- and Neoclassical-style buildings surrounding it. The building became a Viennese *cause célèbre*, Loos’s ideological battle for recognition of the modern. By modern standards the building is by no means “confrontational”, the real issue being the simplicity of design and absence of surface decoration. <sup>31</sup>Completion was suspended for a time by the city authorities, but the opportunity to offend those who wished to be offended yet further was not lost on Loos and in December 1910 he gave a public lecture with lantern slides and posters, *Mein Haus Am Michaelerplatz* (illus.11). The building on the Michaelerplatz became known euphemistically as the *Looshaus*, Loos’s own term. Simultaneously the *Looshaus* became a vehicle for Loos’s combination of self-promotion and

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<sup>29</sup> Long, *op.cit*, p.23.

<sup>30</sup> *Harmonielehre*, p. 7.

<sup>31</sup> The public confrontation was settled through compromise: decorations beneath the window frames were suggested, which resulted in flower boxes being used.

confrontational polemics, exemplifying a strategy which Loos utilised throughout his career.<sup>32</sup>

The simplicity and lack of pretension of the *Looshaus* exemplifies Loos's desire to minimise unnecessary public displays of social status and pretentious history. His building designs are seemingly anonymous on the outside, with no differentiation between the people living at the different floor levels, leaving the individuals who live or work inside them to create their own, private environments. For Loos this sense of public space versus private permits everyone to develop their taste, and with that the culture and economy of Austria. Loos's responsibility is to support this through cultural criticism and education, or, as quoted by Schoenberg, "There are relatively enough people who know how to produce, but relatively few who know how to be consumers".<sup>33</sup>

The affinity between Loos and Arnold Schoenberg becomes clearer in Loos's support for what became known as the *Skandalkonzert*. The confrontational stance of Loos's public support for the performance of Schoenberg's music is matched by the didactic stance of *Harmonielehre*: the two are conceptually inter-dependent. Before 1911, Schoenberg had already experienced the sharper side of Viennese public reactions to his compositions: the performance of his *First Chamber Symphony*, Op.9, 1906, in Vienna in 1907 had provoked audience disruption, which almost involved Mahler, one of Schoenberg's advocates in what became a fistfight. A December 1908 performance included Schoenberg's *Second String Quartet*, Op.10,

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<sup>32</sup> Loos's career post-1919 included a period as Chief Architect for the Municipal Housing Department of the City of Vienna, at the start of the new Austrian State. This ended in disappointment in 1922; after that few of his commissions reached completion and he was largely left to revise previous writing and to agitate for the reform of Austrian architectural and design education. Attempts to found an architectural school, though supported by his associates including Schoenberg, came to nothing. Stewart, *op.cit*, p.4.

<sup>33</sup> *Harmonielehre*, p.417.



1907-08, alongside a Beethoven quartet, became another opportunity for similar public disruption, widely reported in the press. For some authorities, it is as if the battle lines of contemporary musical taste were being set out, though, as David Wyn Jones notes, there has been a tendency on their part to exaggerate the extremes of public responses to new works.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, it is unclear in some commentaries as to which concert of Schoenberg's work is worthy of the title, *Skandalkonzert*, that of 1907, 1909 or 1913: all have their own claims and mythologies.

The premier of *Gurrelieder* in the Great Hall of the Musikverein in Vienna on 23 February 1913 was extremely well received and subsequent performances of the same works were often well-received by Viennese audiences. After years of public indifference and even contempt, Schoenberg's refusal to accept the applause or the traditional calls for the composer's appearance on the public stage in February 1913 might have seemed like a confrontational act. Schoenberg stalked away to avoid public adulation: as far as he was concerned it had all come too late.<sup>35</sup> Perhaps, he had something retaliatory in mind by way of the next performance of his work, and, if that were to be the case, Loos, whose antipathy towards Viennese middle-class taste for Beethoven has already been noted, helped him to achieve just that.

If any image can suggest Schoenberg's attitude to the Viennese public and music critics at this time, it is perhaps his *Walking Self-Portrait* (1911) (fig.3). Schoenberg, the balding small man with rounded shoulders and hands holding cane and hat clasped behind his back, walks away from the viewer down a road which is characterised by its narrowness and the straightness of its guttering: a man in a dark-brown suit walking away from his audience and his critics on his own dark-grey

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<sup>34</sup> David Wyn Jones, *Music In Vienna 1700, 1800, 1900*, Woodbridge, Suffolk and New York, 2016, p.213.

<sup>35</sup> MacDonald, *op.cit*, p.23.

and generally featureless road. The perspective of the image is cropped like the scene from a film, though there is no attempt to suggest movement. Nevertheless, the man walks alone, as he must do.

On 31 March 1913, Schoenberg conducted a concert in the very same hall, the Musikverein in Vienna, but this occasion was characterised by the audience's open hostility and had to be abandoned at the interval. The concert came to be known as the *Skandalkonzert* or *Watschenkonzert* (from the *Die Zeit* cartoon of 6 April 1913, literally "the boxed ears") (illus.12) after the brawl between one of the organisers, Erhard Buschbeck, and the composer of several operettas, Oscar Straus (not related to the Johann Strauss family) ended in a minor court case.<sup>36</sup> Everything about this *Skandalkonzert*, seemed designed from the outset to affront traditional Viennese public taste. Loos had joined Schoenberg in promoting the event. Loos provided 4000 Austrian crowns as a deposit for the hiring of the hall, and sold tickets on the streets of Vienna, thereby generating wider public interest.<sup>37</sup> The first piece was Webern's *6 Pieces for Orchestra*, Op.6, 1909, a series of short and slow contemplative pieces, which combine unusual mixtures of instruments in a way which is very suggestive of a funeral in places. For Schoenberg, this was because it is "it was the bitterest pill", best performed when the audience is still fresh and patient.<sup>38</sup> Zemlinsky's *Four Orchestral Songs on Poems by Maeterlinck*, Op. 13, 1912, illustrates the interest among Schoenberg and his associates had in the wider group of European Symbolist writers (a piece representing Western influence), Schoenberg himself having written *Pelleas et Melisande*, a tone poem based on

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<sup>36</sup> Stewart, *op.cit*, p.4. Stewart sees this as the most uproarious of all *Skandalkonzert*.

<sup>37</sup> MacDonald, *op.cit*, p.343. MacDonald notes that Loos sponsored several Schoenberg's concerts and educational activities throughout their friendship. For his part, Schoenberg sought architectural commissions for Loos.

<sup>38</sup> Auner, *op.cit*, p.121

Maeterlinck's play in 1903. Schoenberg's own *Chamber Symphony No. 1 for 15 instruments*, Op. 9, 1906, suggests the potential of overturning tonality for expressive effect, as well as subverting audience expectations of a traditional classical form – an orchestra of very much reduced size and a symphony in a single movement, rather than four. Just before the interval, there followed two of Alban Berg's *Five Orchestral Songs on Picture-Postcard Texts by Peter Altenberg*, Op.4, 1911-12; one about a rain-soaked forest by Altenberg (Loos's publisher) simply added to the sense of public confrontation, not least because of his contentious reputation. The programme was apparently sufficient to shatter the audience's patience and the concert finished even before the interval came. The Mahler, programmed for after the interval, *Kindertotenlieder* (On the Death of Children), 1901-04, was not actually performed. The boxed ears of the brawl became the metaphorical aural assault on the audience's hearing. Schoenberg's programme was carefully chosen to display the work of the Schoenberg group and to celebrate the late Gustav Mahler: it was to be the first performance of works from what is now known as the "Second Viennese School". Loos and Schoenberg's confrontational plans were successful: the Viennese music audience now knew what to expect from the new music.

The relationship between the architect Loos and the composer Schoenberg was essentially complementary: Loos provided Schoenberg with a critical parallel for stripping contemporary music of unwanted, historically outdated harmonic conventions in the same way that Loos approached standards of Austrian architecture and design. Both shared a desire to "Westernise" and revitalise Austrian culture by linking it with the cultures of Western Europe and America. Both value practicality and functionality to suit their purposes. For the sake of cultural development this lead them into confrontational and polemical public action, whether

in the design of buildings by Loos or in the composition of music in new harmonic forms by Schoenberg.

### **Reading *Harmonielehre* through Kraus's Eyes**

In the next part of this chapter, Kraus's role as another cultural agitator like Loos is considered. Opinions about Kraus are dominated by Timms's study and by the post-hoc impact of views about the First World War in Kraus's *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit* (*The Last Days of Mankind*) (1915-19).<sup>39</sup> In his dedication to the second edition of *Harmonielehre* 1912, Schoenberg acknowledges his own debt to Kraus:

I have perhaps learned more from you than one is permitted to learn if one wishes to remain independent.<sup>40</sup>

This dedication is indicative not only of Schoenberg's sense of indebtedness, but also his willingness to have it recognised by others. Just as typically, however, it reflects a sentiment he shared with Kraus, a sense of independence, self-reliance and personal autonomy. Schoenberg credits Kraus with as much influence over his personal development as any composer or visual artist ever had, yet Kraus only exercised this through very occasional meetings. Kraus's influence was largely exercised through his paper, *Die Fackel*, published between April 1899 and February 1936; both Schoenberg and Loos are listed among its contributors in January 1910, but by December 1911 Kraus is the sole contributor, as well as its editor and publisher. Kraus was conscious of his role as a public critic and orator, with an audience to both satisfy and challenge. Ever anxious to maintain sole control and responsibility for *Die Fackel* and the views expressed in it, Kraus was unwilling to

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<sup>39</sup> Timms, *op.cit.* and Karl Kraus, *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit* (*The Last Days of Mankind*) 1915-19, trans. Fred Bridgham and Edward Timms, New Haven and London, 2015.

<sup>40</sup> Cited by Julian Johnson in, eds. Gilbert J. Carr and Edward Timms *Karl Kraus und Die Fackel, Reading Karl Kraus, Essays on the reception of Die Fackel*, Munich, 2001.

accept the possibility of others encroaching on his territorial interests. Kraus's justification for eliminating other contributors epitomises his combative style and reservations about those around him:

I no longer have any contributors. I used to be envious of them. They repel those readers whom I want to lose myself.<sup>41</sup>

What Kraus shared with Loos was the antipathy towards unnecessary ornamentation in buildings and design, or in public language. Loos's campaign to see his designs for the *Looshaus* through to completion was taken up by Karl Kraus in December 1910. Kraus was equally antipathetic towards the direction in which the *Secessionists* had apparently moved since 1902 to satisfy the desires of the new Viennese bourgeoisie: interior decoration had replaced art. "They have the dirt off the streets in their homes, and even that is by Hoffmann" was his comment.<sup>42</sup> He was also critical (along with Loos) of the orientalism influencing *Secessionist* artists and consumers, many of whom, like himself, were Jewish, which he perceived was creating a new ghetto for Jewish culture.<sup>43</sup> Loos, Kraus and Schoenberg were all pro-assimilation Jews.

Kraus was not directly involved in the *Skandalkonzert* but probably approved of the challenge to Viennese public culture. Kraus is critical of stylistically elaborate journalism which he believes merely obscures the events it purports to describe.<sup>44</sup> As a country, Austria had fallen behind the Western nations he looked to and was characterised by the inequalities of its social and political development. It lacked the

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<sup>41</sup> Harry Zohn, *Karl Kraus*, New York, 1971. p.27.

<sup>42</sup> Karl Kraus, *Die Fackel*, 13 October 1913. Kraus apparently shared the hostility towards Hoffmann with Loos. Joseph Hoffmann was one of the leading *Wiener Werkstätte* designers.

<sup>43</sup> Colomina in Natter and Grunenberg, *op.cit*, p.44.

<sup>44</sup> Timms, *op.cit*, p.119.

coherence of modern states like Germany and Britain, though both were not without their social problems. Kraus was influenced by British political criticism and drew on the writings of John Ruskin's (1819-1900): extracts from Ruskin's *Sesame and Lilies* (1864) denouncing the vulnerability of British public opinion to journalistic propaganda (as opposed to literature) were published in *Die Fackel* of February 1910. Kraus criticised Austrian society for the same shortcomings; it was a country, which relied on "thought by infection, catching an opinion like a cold".<sup>45</sup>

Kraus was particularly exercised by the decline in moral standards which he recognised in Austria. Austrian society had no capacity to form intelligent views of its own, because it subjugated itself to the opinion-makers among the politicians and the popular press owners. Kraus seeks to exercise the highest ethical standards and strictest congruence between life and work in pursuit of his moral cultural purpose. He began a campaign, *Sittlichkeit und Kriminalität*, (*Sexual Morality and Criminal Law*) in 1902 to have the laws changed so that the boundary between private behaviour and public and social protection could be made clear.<sup>46</sup> In a way this principle emulates Loos's architectural aesthetic of anonymity of external design and privacy on the inside. Kraus's editorial target is the symbiotic grouping of corrupt politicians, businessmen and journalists, particularly when they figure in his articles covering morality and criminal justice cases..." condemned by day what it enjoys by night."<sup>47</sup> There are two types of men, says Kraus: "those who say that a den of vice has been raided somewhere and those who regret having learned the address too late."<sup>48</sup> Whereas for Loos and Schoenberg the removal of unnecessary ornamentation might be an aesthetic and cultural matter, the purification of language

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<sup>45</sup> *Die Fackel*, 31, 7-8, Feb.1900.

<sup>46</sup> *Die Fackel*, 115, 1-24, 1902.

<sup>47</sup> Zohn, *op.cit*, p.42.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*, p.48

becomes Kraus's essential political and moral task. The language of even the most trivial of advertisements and newspaper articles contrives to add levels of verbal and ideological mystification, obscuring the real nature of political power (the collusion of politicians and newspaper owners) and revealing an underlying social immorality. As Kraus sees it, "writing [for newspapers is] is nothing more than the skill of verbally imparting an opinion to the public".<sup>56</sup> It has no moral purpose.

Kraus's influence on Schoenberg, his circle of students and associates was largely exercised through *Die Fackel*, which became the group's in-house magazine.<sup>57</sup>

There are copies of *Die Fackel* and references to Kraus's lectures from students like Berg in the ASC.<sup>58</sup> MacDonald argues that, under Kraus's influence, Schoenberg's prose in *Harmonielehre* becomes "almost bare of adjectives, terse, apothegmatic, full of word-play and double-meanings, eminently suited to quotation and aphorism."<sup>59</sup>

For Joan Allen Smith, echoing Diltheyan hermeneutics, Schoenberg's *Harmonielehre* rhetoric is designed to express more than its literal meaning: it avoids stating anything explicitly, "so as not to ruin everything with explanations that seek to provide a causal or systematic connection."<sup>60</sup> Generally, though, authorities have underplayed the stylistic relationship between Kraus's and Schoenberg's rhetoric, with the stripping away of unnecessary language and the acerbic tone. Schoenberg's barbed comments about the contemporary composer and musicologist Heinrich Schenker (1868-1935) - "His conception is in fact rather similar to mine. Yet I find it inexpedient and incorrect to present it this way" - are perhaps indicative of Kraus's

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<sup>56</sup> Karl Kraus, "Aphorism 577", in *Dicta and Contradicta*, trans. Jonathan McVity, Urbana and Chicago, 2001, p. 79, First published 1909.

<sup>57</sup> In a letter to Berg from Berlin in September 1911, for example, Schoenberg requested that the latest copy of *Die Fackel* be sent to him; in another letter of December 1911, Berg quotes from Kraus's *Pro Domo* aphorisms, which had appeared in that month's edition. Brand, *op.cit*, p.16 and 60.

<sup>58</sup> Stein, *op.cit*.

<sup>59</sup> MacDonald, *op.cit*, p.96.

<sup>60</sup> Smith, *op.cit*. p.9.

influence on Schoenberg's demeanour.<sup>61</sup> Kraus is, of course, capable of more robust confrontation: in *Ist die Folter in Österreich abgeschafft? (Torture in Austria)*, 1903, Kraus conducts a long diatribe on the iniquities of the treatment given by Viennese audiences to composers like Wagner, Brahms, Bruckner and Hugo Wolf, only to conclude that, in terms of popularity, "Charles Weinberger must be regarded as the most important composer around the 1900".<sup>62</sup> (Weinberger (1861-1939) was a prolific but minor composer of operettas.) Not that Kraus is immune from making comments about Wagner and *Gesamtkunstwerk*, which may have upset Schoenberg:

In opera music mocks theatre, and the natural parody which arises from juxtaposing two forms makes a mockery of even the most effectual resolve to create a "total work of art." Action and song can meld into such a work only in operetta, which presupposes folly.<sup>63</sup>

Like Kraus, Schoenberg has the strength of his own convictions to express his views forcefully, for, as he says:

The artist who has courage submits wholly to his own inclinations. And he alone who submits to his own inclinations has courage, and he alone who has courage is an artist.<sup>64</sup>

An echo of this theme from *Harmonielehre*, the distinction between the true artist, and the merely talented composer of operettas who finds public favour, can be found in Kraus:

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<sup>61</sup> *Harmonielehre*, p.429. This is, of course, the same Schenker of Cook's *op.cit.*

<sup>62</sup> Karl Kraus *In These Great Times A Reader*, Manchester, ed. Harry Zohn, 1984, p.31.

<sup>63</sup> Kraus, *op.cit.*, "Aphorism 514", p. 67.

<sup>64</sup> *Harmonielehre*, p.400.



Having talent – being a talent. These are always confused.<sup>65</sup>

In an echo of Kraus's diatribe against the lazy Viennese public reliance upon press and political opinions, Schoenberg requires that readers of *Harmonielehre* and listeners to his music commit to an educational process of listening, learning and understanding. In a well-targeted aphorism worthy of Kraus, Schoenberg states that he refuses to repeat musical ideas, lest the intelligent listener be bored by the same old diet of easy tunes:

Here is the greatest difficulty for any listener, even if he is musically educated...I say something only once, i.e. repeat little or nothing. With me variation almost completely takes the place of repetition...the fewer sections are repeated, and the less often, the harder the piece of music is to understand. If one wishes to be understood, one must keep harping on the subject in question," Why make it so hard for the listener..." To this I have to say:" I can do it no other way, and it does not work any other way...I did not choose to write like that" ...That is how music must proceed, if it sets out from complicated figures, to arrive at still more complicated ones. <sup>66</sup>

However, it must also be understood that Kraus, although very supportive of Schoenberg and sympathetic with respect to the critical antipathy to his work, was cautious about the potential of a frontal, public response from Schoenberg. In the January and February of 1909 Schoenberg started an exchange with the Viennese music critic, Ludwig Karpath, whose review of a performance of Schoenberg's *Second String Quartet*, Op.10, 1907-08, was a not unusually negative critical

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<sup>65</sup> Kraus, *op.cit* "Aphorism 466", p.61.

<sup>66</sup> Schoenberg, "New Music: My Music" c.1930, in *Style and Idea*, p.102.

response.<sup>67</sup> Schoenberg's open letter to the *Neues Wiener Journal* suggested that the Viennese critics were so antipathetic that the public were not given the opportunity to enjoy works, an echo here of Kraus's point about the public being led by the opinions of the newspapers. Faced with even more public antipathy, Schoenberg appealed to Kraus for his support in *Die Fackel*. However, Schoenberg had first to apologise to Kraus for the grammatical errors in his original letter to the press, failing Kraus's notoriously high standards. Kraus printed Schoenberg's letter in *Die Fackel* in February 1909, together with the original review, but finally noted that Karpath had not responded to the suggestion from Schoenberg that he undertake an appropriate examination in musicology before next reviewing music. Kraus reluctance to engage in this sort of confrontation was probably an important lesson for Schoenberg: this type of confrontation would be ineffectual.

Kraus's influence on Schoenberg can be identified in other places: Julian Johnson hears Krausian aphorisms in Schoenberg's *Six Pieces for Piano*, op.19, 1911-14, with its brevity, transparency, formal elegance, paradox, and its simple musical statements followed by an apparent reversal.<sup>68</sup> But, this is music awaiting the arrival of a new artistic sensibility, one that is not "Style", as Schoenberg puts it, but one, which conveys a new "Idea". The key here is not just the criticism of contemporary culture: it is the anticipation of something completely new, pursued for the sake of art alone.<sup>69</sup> The anticipation of a "new" idea – a challenge to the comfortable cultural existence of the average Viennese bourgeois – is something to be found in Kraus, notwithstanding the criticisms that belong to the here-and now with which Kraus is

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<sup>67</sup> Smith, *op.cit.*, p. 60.

<sup>68</sup> Julian Johnson, "Responses of Contemporaries", in Carr and Timms, *op.cit.*

<sup>69</sup> *Style and Idea*, p.124. Whilst this comes from an anachronistic article, "New Music, Outmoded Music, *Style And Idea*", it usefully summarises Schoenberg's continuing commitment to the evolution of "Ideas".

more usually associated. Kraus anticipates the advent of a new musical language, a *Sanskrit*.

Music cleanses the shores of thought. Only people with no mainland dwell in the world of music. The easiest melody awakens thoughts, like the easiest woman. The man with no thoughts seeks them in music and womankind. The new music is a woman who compensates for her natural flaws by fully mastering Sanskrit.<sup>70</sup>

Kraus's opinions – so often stripped down to form the pithiest of aphorisms - exemplify something of the attitude to be found in Schoenberg, on the one hand self-regarding and authoritative, but at the same time self-deprecating. Kraus's can maintain this same uncompromising sentiment:

I have often been fair and view a matter from all sides. I did so, hoping something might improve if I viewed all sides of it. But the result was the same. So I went back to viewing things only from one side, which saves me and lot of work and disappointment. For it is comforting to view something as bad and be able to use one's prejudice as an excuse.<sup>71</sup>

And, he is capable of debunking popular prejudice even to the extent of vilifying the Viennese idol, Beethoven:

What is the Ninth Symphony compared with a popular tune played by a barrel organ and a memory! <sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Kraus, "Aphorism 504", in *op.cit*, p.65.

<sup>71</sup> Karl Kraus, *Half-Truths and One-and-a-Half Truths Selected Aphorisms*, trans. Harry Zohn, Chicago, 1990, p.33.

<sup>72</sup> Kraus, "Aphorism 506", in *op.cit*, p.65. See Loos, *Beethoven's Ears*, cited above.

Timms concludes that Kraus's rhetoric is the voice of a conscience, even a voice of spirituality, which seeks to arouse responses to the inadequacies of a whole civilisation; he is an actor, who selects a mask to represent alternately the vices and the virtues of life. The link between the purity of language and spirituality is shared by Schoenberg.

In this culture, men are already corrupt, or ready to be corrupted. How language is used indicates what the health of the culture is. Beneath the rhetorical salvo against social corruption lies Kraus's deeper intention, which is to restore the connection between *Wort und Wesen* (word and essence). "Life and language come to blows with each other until they burst, and the end is an unarticulated jumble – the true style of our time." <sup>73</sup> Since Kraus believes in a correspondence between language and experience, the unworthiness of his age being defined for him by its treatment of language.

## Overtones

Kraus's theoretical assertion is that in its essence, language had once comprised a direct affinity between objects and sounds, *Wahlverwandtschaft*. Repeating that *Secessionist* theme, cultural degeneracy has led to a widening gap between "language and reality", such that language, and hence, human relationships, are no longer sustainable. The very foundations of human society have been eroded away. Citing his associate Walter Benjamin (retrospectively), Kraus's objective is to restore the purity of language by rediscovering its prelapsarian origins, *Ursprung ist das Ziel*. Benjamin argues that in Kraus's view:

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<sup>73</sup> Kraus *op.cit*, p.59.

Language shows itself to be the mater (sic) of righteousness in the redemptive and punitive citation. The citation summons the word by its name, destructively wrests it from its context, but it thereby recalls the word to its origin.<sup>74</sup>

Kraus's use of the concept *Ursprung*, a confrontational return to the origins of language, or the "language of the angels" (again to quote from the phrase used by Benjamin for clarification) remains problematic, since language inherently carries with it national, religious, linguistic and textual characteristics, which can only be stripped away by exercising authoritarian political power to demonstrate its single foundation. Kraus may, or may not, associate the objective with his own religious background, and the authority of a monotheistic religion. Kraus expresses conflicting attitudes towards Christianity – "Christianity enriched the erotic mealtime with the hors d'oeuvres of curiosity and ruined it with the desert of remorse" - but apparently is much harder on Judaism – "Many a beauty marries a Jewish businessman out of sheer romanticism. She always hopes that the erotic robber baron will not be far behind the financial".<sup>75</sup> As a Jewish convert to Christianity perhaps he can be characterised as holding both pro- and anti-Semitic attitudes. So far as language is concerned, Kraus seems most like Weininger in his anti-Semitic disparagement of the popular Jewish poet Heinrich Heine (1797-1856), whom he associates with decay: "I know a species of sentimental scribbler that is dull and stinks. Mosquitoes from Heine's mattress-grave".<sup>76</sup> Timms concedes that he originally undervalues the

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<sup>74</sup> Quoted from Walter Benjamin in the year 1931, in John Pizer, *Towards A Theory of Radical Origin Essays on Modern German Thought*, Nebraska, 1995, p.42.

<sup>75</sup> Kraus, "Aphorisms 280 and 121", in *Dicta and Contradicta*, *op.cit*, p. 32 and 14 respectively.

<sup>76</sup> Kraus, "Aphorism 623", *op.cit*, p.88. Kraus pursued Heine still further in a stand-alone publication about the size of a *Die Fackel* edition: *Heine and the Consequences*, 1910.

significance of this antisemitism.<sup>77</sup> Benjamin, writing after 1918 asserts an essentially non-religious Marxist framework of Kraus's thinking, but this is surely post-hoc revisionism. State-endorsed religious structures pervade language, in Benjamin's view, but these would evaporate during the emergence of socialism. In the orthodox Marxist schemata, following the transition of society through proletarian revolution and communism, socialism would emerge.<sup>78</sup> With the advent of socialism, language would lose its capitalist associations, and those associations reliant upon capitalism, such as the family and religion, would similarly lose their relevance. For Benjamin, Kraus is limited in his vision by the remnants of his religion, his Judaism:

That to him the fit state of man appears not as the destiny and fulfilment of nature liberated through revolutionary change, but as an element of nature per se, of an archaic nature without history, in its pristine, primeval state, throws uncertain, disquieting reflections even on his idea of freedom and of humanity.<sup>79</sup>

For Benjamin, Kraus's apparent reliance upon a vision of the future of humanity stripped so bare of social structures that it is wholly reliant upon an all-seeing, all-knowing deity is wholly unreasonable, but this does indicate the parameters of Kraus's thought. Kraus himself is less discursive: his conversion to Roman Catholicism, and subsequent conversion back to Judaism because of Catholicism's

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<sup>77</sup> Edward Timms, "True Believers The Religious Vision of a Jewish Renegade", in Carr and Timms, *op.cit.* By comparison his earlier work underplays this issue, Edward Timms, *Karl Kraus, Apocalyptic Satirist, Culture and Catastrophe in Habsburg Vienna*, Yale, 1986.

<sup>78</sup> Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, 1848, London, 2015.

<sup>79</sup> Walter Benjamin, "Karl Kraus", in *Reflections, Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, ed. Peter Demetz, trans. Edmund Jephcott, New York, 1978, p.259. Benjamin also alludes to Kraus's sexual abuse of a young girl, taken as a mistress, only to be discarded to a friend, Wittels, an early psychologist, who subsequently fell out publicly with Kraus over his opposition to Freud. Kraus was of course, keen to assert the rights of individuals to have privacy concerning their personal sexual proclivities. Apparently, Kraus favoured the Dionysian female with lots of sexual freedom but without education; in contrast men were the rational Apollonian ones, both references to Nietzsche.

failure to oppose the war remained purely private matters, not for public scrutiny.

Kraus left the Roman Catholic Church in 1923, when he concluded that it too has become seduced by political power; before that, few even knew of his conversion.<sup>80</sup>

It might be assumed that Schoenberg's concerns with the purity of language and the relationship between language and thought can be said to arise from their common Judaic background. If so, that background might include the Biblical notion that linguistic complexity, the multiplicity of languages and the breakdown of relationships between communities, can be associated with the Biblical Tower of Babel, a metaphor for the disconnection between man and God. Communication with God, however, is not simply a matter of social and linguistic purity, but also of being able to access the word of God through a language – or rather, a stream of thought in a pre-linguistic form - currently withheld from man. For Kraus, a convert to Roman Catholicism from Judaism, the conflation of Jewish and German cultures in the pursuit of economic and political power means that the all-pervasive poison of money has made everyone unworthy of the trust God had placed in them. The problem of language is a moral one. Kraus is particularly critical of the Jews, notwithstanding his own origins. There is very much the Old Testament Prophet about Kraus here, or, as Zohn has it, perhaps Kraus felt that “anti-Semitism was too important a matter to be entrusted to anti-Semites”.<sup>81</sup> Kraus's solution is essentially a pragmatic one: further religious assimilation, state agnosticism, and very personal and individual morality, supported by the advent, albeit eventually, of socialism.

As an avid reader of the Austrian and German press, Kraus may well be aware of Fritz Mauthner (1849-1923), an Austro-Hungarian converted Jew and author of a

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<sup>80</sup> Zohn, *op.cit*, p.26.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid*, p.41.

critique of language (1901-02). It may well have been that it was through Kraus that Schoenberg became acquainted with Mauthner's work. In advance of Ludwig Wittgenstein's reservations about languages capacity to communicate anything but the most mundane, Mauthner sees language as being essentially isolationist: the risks of what he calls "word-superstition", words over-burdened with cultural and historical accretions, which Loos, Kraus and Schoenberg, are trying to strip away, best avoided by the simple expedient of remaining silent. Mauthner suggests:

People are always churning about the old cliché that language creates links between people...language tosses about between individuals (like the ocean) ...Language only conveys the lowliest things from one person to another. And in between, amidst the surge and tempest, in the empty foam that dashes against heaven, far from all inhabited lands, poetry and seasickness exist side by side.<sup>82</sup>

Kraus stresses the connection between thought and language in his belief that in its subliminal existence "the word" triggers the linguistically preformed "idea" that brings the word into being. Hence, "Language is the mother of thought, not its handmaiden".<sup>83</sup> Schoenberg adopts this deeper level of language in *Harmonielehre* and his other writing around 1911 and 1912. In *Problems in Teaching Art*, 1911, Schoenberg discusses Kraus's views regarding the relationship between an idea and a final product: which comes first?

"Language, mother of the idea", says Karl Kraus – as wrongly as if he had said the hen is there before the egg. And as rightly. For that is how it is in the

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<sup>82</sup> Quoted in Jacques Le Rider, *Modernity and the Crises of Identity, Culture and Society in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*, trans. by Rosemary Morris, Cambridge, 1993, p.36.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid*, p.61.



real work of art: everything gives the impression of having come first, because everything was born at the same moment. Feeling is already form, the idea is already the word.<sup>84</sup>

Schoenberg adds a further dimension to Kraus's response to the question of what we might now call 'the chicken and egg', in *The Relationship to the Text*:

When Karl Kraus calls language the mother of thought, and Wassily Kandinsky and Oskar Kokoschka paint pictures the objective theme of which is hardly more than an excuse to improvise in colours and forms and to express themselves as only the musician expressed himself until now, these are symptoms of a gradually expanding knowledge of the true nature of art.<sup>85</sup>

Schoenberg begins to speculate in *Harmonielehre* about the nature creativity and its relationship to language which is inevitably influenced by upbringing, education and culture. For Schoenberg, the idea, *Einfall*, corresponds to something that is necessary and autonomous. Anything that interferes with the expression of *Einfall* out of external formal considerations (such as traditional harmonic structures) have generally spoiled the idea.<sup>86</sup> In his *Memoriam* to Mahler of 1912, Schoenberg states that the composer does not feel the "bliss of generation" because he is merely "the slave of a higher ordinance, under whose compulsion he ceaselessly does his work...What the whole world would some day believe in, he no longer believed in. He had become resigned".<sup>87</sup>

The intellectual content of music, the idea, is superior to the manner, in which it is expressed, since expression is culturally-determined. What is important in art is not

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<sup>84</sup> Schoenberg, "Problems in Teaching Art" 1911, in *Style and Idea*, p. 369.

<sup>85</sup> "The Relationship to the Text" 1912, in *Style and Idea*, p.144.

<sup>86</sup> *Harmonielehre*, p.417.

<sup>87</sup> "Gustav Mahler: In Memoriam 1912, in *Style and Idea*, p.447.

the creation of new styles of expression, but the search for the new, something that has not been said before. This is what Schoenberg means by the “gradually expanding knowledge of the true nature of art” (as quoted above), and it requires that the artist searches for something that has never been said before. At its highest level art is about not about outer nature (mimesis) but about the inner nature of things. That is what is truly new, truly modern. It is the unique characteristic of music to carry an idea that presages the future of man, a higher form of life towards which mankind is evolving.

In this chapter the influence of Loos and Kraus on Schoenberg's role as a cultural polemicist has signified the importance of linguistic and musical purity. Through Kraus, Schoenberg was reminded of the prelapsarian origins of language and the artistic and cultural degeneration associated with that. But, the relationship between language and thought is also significant for Schoenberg. Schoenberg expresses a belief in the autonomy of thought and the subordinate place of expression, but the relationships of *Einfall* (*Inspiration*), *Gefühl* (*Feeling*) and *Gedanke* (*Thought*) and the language of expression remain ambiguous, exemplifying *das Gleitende* of *fin-de-siècle* Viennese culture and Schoenberg's own sense of unfulfilled philosophical searching. Requiring that the artist searches for something that has never been said before is Schoenberg's self-imposed challenge and poses the question as to whether redemption and spiritual renewal are feasible in the absence of having something new to say. In the next chapter Schoenberg turns to the new technologies of electric light, colours and moving images in his search for a *Gesamtkunstwerk* solution to the problems of expression, before finally commencing on the task of saying something that has never been said before in a *Gesamtkunstwerk* film.

## Chapter 4: Third Triad, *Kino-Debatte* and Moving Colour

In this chapter, technologies new to *fin-de-siècle* world of Vienna and the *Secessionists* are introduced: electric lighting, colour and movement – the cinema. Schoenberg was one of the first to recognise the potential of these new technologies, for the first associations of the embryonic cinema were with the street fairs of major cities and the entertainment of the masses, not the venues of the cultural élites. Schoenberg saw in the cinema not just a more economical version of the performance hall or the opera house, but a new medium which brought its own opportunities for artistic expression. This chapter explores the nature of those opportunities for *Gesamtkunstwerk*, once again using a Diltheyan style of discussion.

At the age of twenty-two in 1896 Schoenberg had lost his post as a trainee in the Werner & Co private bank in Vienna and had devoted himself exclusively to music, playing 'cello in an amateur orchestra conducted by Alexander von Zemilinsky (1872-1942), his future brother-in-law, and conducting several workers' choral societies.<sup>1</sup> Had Schoenberg accompanied some of his worker-choristers to the *Prater*, the public entertainment park in Vienna, he might have spent some time at one of the fifteen newly installed Edison machines, perhaps viewing a short film of an exotic dancer; or if he had walked down the *Karntnerstrasse*, Vienna's main shopping boulevard, he might have visited one of the first expositions of the Lumière Brothers' films outside Paris.<sup>2</sup> From 1896 until the outbreak of the First World War,

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<sup>1</sup> MacDonald, *op.cit.*, p.306

<sup>2</sup> Robert von Dassanowsky, *Austrian Cinema: A History*, Jefferson, North Carolina, 2008, p.7. According to von Dassanowsky, the Edison kinetoscope machines were located in the Prater, the public entertainment park in central Vienna, at around the same time, 1896, as the ethnographic exhibition of African Ashanti tribesmen described by Peter Altenberg in his *Ashantee* documentary prose record published in 1897. Altenberg makes no reference to the Edison machines, but he must surely have seen them. See Peter Altenberg, *Ashantee*, reprint edition, no translator named, London, 2007. The first major exhibition of Lumière Brothers' film took place in the Grand Café in Paris on 28<sup>th</sup> December 1895: ten films were presented, lasting twenty-five minutes in total.

whether working in Vienna or Berlin, Schoenberg could not help but be immersed in a new cultural phenomenon, the cinema.

### **Schoenberg and cinema**

The fourth triad, Schoenberg, the cinema and moving colour, is concerned with Schoenberg's relationship with the cinema, both as a medium of narrative communication and as a technology involving moving light and colour. It will be argued that the advent of the cinema had an important impact upon Schoenberg's visualisation of *Gesamtkunstwerk* compositions, and that this can be equated with his use of extended harmonies, consonance and dissonance, in his musical compositions. Schoenberg was conscious of the potential of the cinema to support his concept of *Gesamtkunstwerk* from 1900 onwards and has not been sufficiently credited for this by authorities to date. This chapter attempts to remedy that omission, and poses the key question: what would cinema, with its new technologies of light and moving colour have contributed to Schoenberg's *Gesamtkunstwerk*?

The connection between musical composition and technological innovation is one which has attracted a good deal of theoretical speculation: in the case of Mozart, for example, the introduction of new musical performing instruments (such as the bassoon or the clarinet) is believed to have led him to compositional innovations.<sup>3</sup> In the same way the introduction of the Broadwood fortepiano (itself a forerunner of the contemporary pianoforte) assisted Beethoven in extending the range of dynamics available for his compositions, the fortepiano being more capable of sustaining music at louder volumes, and displaying wider, contrasting ranges, than previous types of keyboard instruments. Musical composition and technological innovation are

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<sup>3</sup> Albert R. Rice, *The Clarinet In The Classical Period*, London and New York, 2003, p.9.

inextricably linked: new instruments have consistently provided musicians with inspiration, and ideas about combining sound with lights and moving colour would prove no differently.

That Schoenberg recognised the potential of the cinema to enable him to visualise a *Gesamtkunstwerk* in a way which transcended the traditional boundaries of the concert hall or the stage is demonstrated in his contemporaneous correspondence.

In a letter of 1913 to Emil Hertzka, Managing Director of Universal Edition, Schoenberg's music publishers in Vienna, Schoenberg sets out his directions for the *cinematographical* production of one of his compositions, *Die glückliche Hand*.<sup>4</sup>

Discussed below in greater detail, the letter shows how Schoenberg clearly recognises the developmental nature of the cinema at that time, in which rapid technical innovation on an international basis plays an important dynamic part. As early as 1900 Schoenberg had begun work on a *Gesamtkunstwerk* called *Aberglaube (Superstition)*, based on his own libretto and featuring three characters (two students and an artist). The theme was to be an exploration of religion, love and superstition (about the number thirteen). Whilst ultimately Schoenberg abandoned the idea, he did prepare stage designs (pencil sketches on paper) of panoramic street scenes beneath a brightly moonlit night, and apparently envisaged the movement of characters across this panorama. (There is an echo here of E.T.A. Hoffmann's nocturnal urban settings in *Tales of Hoffmann*, of which Schoenberg would probably have been aware.<sup>5</sup>) For a similar idea, though one also abandoned, *Die Schildbürger (The Gothamites)*, a comic opera in three acts about the arbitrary

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<sup>4</sup> This letter is contained in several sources, including the collection edited by Erwin Stein, *op.cit*, p.43-45. All versions try to maintain Schoenberg's original stylistic and grammatical idiosyncrasies. The term "cinematographical" is the one used by Schoenberg at that time.

<sup>5</sup> E.T.A. Hoffmann, *Tales of Hoffmann*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale, London, 1982.

acts of local government housing authorities (possibly a topic of personal contention for Schoenberg and Loos) was begun in 1901, Schoenberg produced stage designs. These sketches are again panoramic street scenes; stylistically both sets are very similar, pen and ink on paper. For the purposes of this thesis, only one illustrative example is included, *Aberglaube (Superstition)*, c.1900/1901, (illus.13), which shows three aspects of the same scene, with indications of both the movement of the line of sight across the image and the increasing concentration on an element of the garden outside the house. Whether Schoenberg was familiar with the terms “panning” and “close-up” in 1900 is not known to this writer but the sketches suggest an understanding of such technical devices, even at so early a date in cinematographical development. Schoenberg seems to have revisited these images in a series of *Nachstücke (Nocturnes)* of 1911. Though the media used are different, watercolour and gouache on paper, or oil on canvas or board, the similarities are striking: street panoramas suggesting movement. The resemblance between the *Aberglaube (Superstition)* sketch already referred to above and *Nachstück (Nocturne) III* of April 1911 (illus.14) is very strong: the curve of the street around the houses, here lit by street lights, which stretch on into the distance. Were Schoenberg a professional artist, he might have revisited sketches made years before, from which to produce versions in a different medium. Perhaps he was reconsidering his original plans for *Aberglaube (Superstition)*; the *Nachstücke* do not seem like images worked up more fully for public sale. This possible link between the *Nocturnes* and *Gesamtkunstwerk*, however, appears to have been lost among art historians, along with any credit for presentational innovation that Schoenberg may be owed.

This view of Schoenberg’s relationship with cinema is dependent upon an assessment of cinema’s achievements during the period up to 1913, as it runs

counter to the prevailing views among certain authorities on Schoenberg's development. For example, Esther da Costa Meyer, in the 2003 catalogue to an exhibition of Schoenberg's paintings in New York, states that:

Schoenberg's use of close-ups has often been associated with his interest in film, but in 1910 they were not clearly established as part of cinematic narrative. Nonetheless, Schoenberg's *Hands* (one of Schoenberg's *Fantasies*) [not discussed in this thesis], wrested from their narrative matrix and from the flow of musical time in *Die glückliche Hand*...seem to anticipate film music.<sup>6</sup>

The New York 2003 exhibition was supported by the director of the ASC, Christian Meyer, and by his associate, Therese Muxeneder. The exhibition was also assisted by members of Schoenberg's own family, his son, Lawrence, and grandson, E. Randol, both of whom had inherited musical and cultural interests from Arnold. The exhibition catalogue can be taken, therefore, as an authorised version of Schoenberg's music and his legacy. This writer suggests that, as well as resorting once again to the art-historical illusion that individual artistic artefacts, for critical purposes, can remain autonomous and discrete entities defined by the medium in which they are produced, and that their *Gesamtkunstwerk* and intermedial associations can be ignored, this view of the actuality of cinematographical (Schoenberg's term) standards in the period before 1914 is not only outdated but also under-estimates Schoenberg's own understanding of the potential of the new medium. Meyer seems to ignore the evidence of Schoenberg's epistolary directions, which demonstrate that critical discourse about the cinema had reached far greater

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<sup>6</sup> Esther da Costa Meyer, "Schoenberg's Echo The Composer as Painter", in eds. Esther da Costa Meyer and Fred Wasserman, *Schoenberg, Kandinsky and the Blue Rider*, The Jewish Museum, New York, 2003, p.52. The catalogue contains a preface and endorsement by Christian Meyer, Director of the ASC. See, Meyer and Muxeneder.

levels of sophistication than he recognises by the time Schoenberg wrote his to Emil Hertzka. The narrative language of cinema had already acquired many of its unique characteristics by 1914.

This fourth triad is also concerned with cinema's organisational form. Cinema is the province not so much of named individuals, though certain names of actors and directors may emerge, as that of groups of individuals and organisations. This befits the new medium itself, cinema being the responsibility of groups of artists, writers or musicians, rather than individuals. To some extent, of course, this is little more than the collective responsibility of the same types of artists and technicians, whom Wagner had assembled to realise *Gesamtkunstwerk* productions in Bayreuth. Cinema depended on large technical production teams to satisfy the demands of ever larger audiences. Beyond that, as one of a new family of mass communications, cinema engaged large groups across multinational society, both as customers, producers and commentators. Indeed, it might be said that cinema stimulated the very formation of such communities.

Consistent with this essential characteristic of a medium of mass communication, discussion focuses not so much on individual film productions, though examples will be used, as on the overall impact the public discourse about cinema had on Schoenberg and on the Germanophone culture before 1914. From the evidence of the diaries for the relevant years, retained in the ASC, Schoenberg was an avid cinema goer during this whole time.<sup>7</sup> Schoenberg's interest in the cinema in those years apparently contrasted sharply with the attitudes of those in his immediate circle

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<sup>7</sup> The diaries specify dates when Schoenberg went to the cinema, though unfortunately without specifying the films he saw. Whilst it might be possible to correlate dates and times with Schoenberg's activities in Vienna, Berlin or other cities from the databases of cinema presentations showing what might have been available, this is a task beyond the scope of this thesis.



of Viennese coffee house associates, notably Kraus and Loos.<sup>8</sup> Whether cinema was the subject of discussion between Schoenberg, Kraus and Loos or not, the triad begins with discussion of the cultural values espoused within the new medium – the *Kino-Debatte*.

This triad has also to address the psychological and emotional effects on audiences of film projection *per se*, and the impact of moving colour. As will become clear, cinema was concerned with colour from the outset, whether in the films colour tinted frame-by-frame by hand, or through newer colour-sensitised film emulsions. As Joshua Yumibe explains, the commonly-held anachronistic view of early cinema as a monochromatic artefact, not a coloured one, arises from the archival difficulties of preserving early film stock: most pre-1914 films no longer exist.<sup>9</sup> Many of the original colours in those films that still exist cannot be seen, as cellulose nitrate, the predominant material of film projection, fades, decays and even self-combusts at unpredictable rates. Colours were always unstable, and certain dyes began fading immediately after their first projection, the lights burning them away because of the high temperatures. Colours were not fixed but were the ephemeral characteristics of an essentially unstable product. Finally, the triad deals with failure – the fact that none of Schoenberg's *Gesamtkunstwerk* films were produced – and speculates what

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<sup>8</sup> This is not to say that Kraus's early antipathy towards cinema was long-lasting: there are references to the cinema and its technology in his *The Last Days of Mankind* – for example, in the last section, *The Last Night*, the cinema projectionists comment on the ironical failure of the lights in the cinema and the light in the Universe as everything collapses into and cataclysm. As Dassanowsky notes, towards the end of his life Kraus gave a short performance in front of the camera. Dassanowsky, *op.cit*, p.43. With respect to Loos, given his strong views about America and modernity, the absence of comment about cinema is even more puzzling.

<sup>9</sup> Joshua Yumibe, *Moving Colour Early Film, Mass Culture, Modernism*, New Jersey, 2012, p.11

sort of films might they have been, both in terms of narrative content and moving colour.

### **Schoenberg and the artistic stimulus of the cinema**

Evidence of Schoenberg's interest in utilising the new medium of cinema to produce *Gesamtkunstwerk* before 1914 comprises the stage designs and the *Nocturne* (illus. 13 & 14) noted above, but the most important are two letters, firstly to his new associate, Wassily Kandinsky, and secondly, to his music publisher, Emile Hertzka. In the letter of 19 August 1912 to Wassily Kandinsky, Schoenberg gives the first indication of his plans to produce a *Gesamtkunstwerk* based on Balzac's *Seraphita* "scenically", rather than as a traditional stage or concert hall production.<sup>10</sup>

Schoenberg uses Kandinsky's own proposals for *Der gelbe Klang*, which Kandinsky had included in a draft contribution to the *Blaue Reiter Almanac*, as the opportunity to rehearse some of his own intentions for *Gesamtkunstwerk* productions and strongly recommends *Seraphita* to Kandinsky, as the most suitable subject, "perhaps the most glorious work in existence". However, as Juliet Koss notes, the potential of the cinema seems not to have occurred to Kandinsky before 1914, though he would become involved in his Bauhaus years post 1919.<sup>11</sup>

More important as evidence of Schoenberg's commitment to technological innovation is a second, very detailed letter from Schoenberg to Emile Hertzka, the

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<sup>10</sup> Hahl-Koch, *op.cit.* p.53-55. "I want to do it scenically. Not so much as theatre, at least not in the old sense. In any case, not "dramatic". But rather: oratorio that becomes visible and audible." (Arnold Schoenberg) The grammatical construction is Schoenberg's. Schoenberg's coyness here, not using "cinematically" is perhaps a matter of professional competitiveness with Kandinsky, for, as will become clearer below, Schoenberg formulated very detailed "cinematographical" plans to produce *Die glückliche Hand* by 1913.

<sup>11</sup> Juliet Koss, *Modernism After Wagner*, Minneapolis and London, 2010, xvi.

managing director of Schoenberg's music publishers in Vienna, Universal Edition.<sup>12</sup>

In the edition of Schoenberg's letters, Stein suggest that this second letter was written from Berlin in the autumn of 1913, though neither date nor address are attached to the letter itself. The letter apparently arises from an enquiry from Hertzka about the production of *Die glückliche Hand* as a film. Written between 1909 and 1913 but not premiered until 1924 (at the *Volksoper* in Vienna), *Die glückliche Hand* (*The Hand of Fate*) Op.18, a four-act drama with music for male and female soloists, a mixed chorus and small orchestra, is described by MacDonald as "an anguished symbolic music-drama":

A man lies face down in the earth with and hyena-like monster on his back, its teeth in his neck. A half-hidden chorus comments on his predicament, including the words: "Earthly happiness! You poor fool!"<sup>13</sup>

In the period before October 1910, Schoenberg prepared fourteen illustrations for a stage production of scenes (stage sets, chorus and male and female protagonists) for the drama, in a range of media, typically pen, pencil and watercolour or gouache on paper or card (illus. 15 & 16). Schoenberg's letter to Hertzka then discusses in detail how the transposition from theatrical stage to cinematic film would enable Schoenberg to achieve the desired effect: the creation of "the utmost unreality":

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<sup>12</sup> Stein, *op.cit.*, p.43. Hahl-Koch, *op.cit.*, accepts Stein's assumption about the date of this letter. Subsequent anachronistic references to film by Schoenberg, such as "*Art and the Moving Pictures*" 1940, in *Style and Idea*, p. 153, come beyond the scope of this thesis. See also, Nuria Schoenberg Nono, *Arnold Schoenberg Self-Portrait, A Collection Of Articles Program Notes And Letters By The Composer About His Own Works*, Pacific Palisades, USA, 1988. Edited by Schoenberg's daughter, who was married to the composer, Luigi Nono, this publication accompanied a series of concerts of music by Schoenberg at the South Bank Centre, London between October 1988 and January 1989.

<sup>13</sup> MacDonald, *op.cit.*, p.7. MacDonald associates the hyena-like monster with Richard Gerstl sitting on Schoenberg's own back, an anachronistic biographic assumption that is difficult for him to substantiate.

You ask what are the artistic terms by which my *Die glückliche Hand* might be reproduced cinematographically. There is little I can say at the moment about details, which will arise only during the work of adaptation. But in general I can say as follows:

I. No change is to be made in the music!

II. If I find it necessary to make improvements in the text, I shall make them myself and nobody else, whoever it may be, shall have the right to require them of me.

III. As many rehearsals as I think necessary! This cannot be estimated in advance. Rehearsals must go on until it goes as well as *Pierrot Lunaire*.

IV. Performances may be given only with performers approved by me, and if possible with the original ensemble. But I am prepared to consider rehearsing with several sets of performers, alternatively, to let friends of mine rehearse them under my supervision.

V. Performances may be given only with a (full) orchestra rehearsed and directed by me or by my trusted deputies, or (if these mechanical organs turn out to be as good as I hope) with an Organ (e.g. Aeolian organ). Further, in large cities it must always be an orchestra. When and under what conditions an organ may be used cannot be said at this stage. For that, after all, depends to a great extent on what these organs are like. If they satisfy me, I shall make no difficulties. On the

contrary, I expect great things of these instruments with their magnificent bass stops and the innumerable defined timbres.

VI. What I think about the sets is this: the basic unreality of the events, which is inherent in the words, is something that could be brought out even better in the filming. For me this is one of the main reasons for considering it. For instance, in the film, if the goblet suddenly vanishes as if it had never been there, just as if it had simply been forgotten, that is quite different from the way it is on the stage, where it has to be removed by some device. And there are a thousand such things that can easily be done in this medium, whereas the stage's resources are very limited.

My foremost wish is therefore for something the opposite of what the cinema generally aspires to. I want:

### THE UTMOST UNREALITY!

The whole thing should have the effect (not of a dream) but of chords. Of music. It must never have the effect of symbols, or meaning, or thoughts, but simply the play of colours and forms. Just as music never drags a meaning around with it, at least not in the form in which it manifests itself, even though meaning is inherent in its nature, so too should this simply be for the eye, and so far as I am concerned, everyone is free to think or feel something similar to what he thinks or feels while hearing music.

What I have in mind is therefore the following:

A painter (say: I. Kokoschka, or II. Kandinsky, or III. Roller) will design all the main scenes. Then the sets will be made according to these designs, and the play rehearsed. Then, when the scenes are all rehearsed to the exact tempo of the music, the whole thing will be filmed, after which the film shall be coloured by the painter (or possibly only under his supervision) according to my stage directions. I think however that mere colouring will not suffice for the “Colour-Light Scene” and other passages where strong colour effects are required. In such passages there would also have to be coloured reflectors casting light on the scene.

Another problem, it seems to me, is that of the opening and concluding scenes, which are to be *almost entirely in darkness*. I do not know whether cinematography can do this, since there is no such thing as *dark light*. But I dare say there are solutions even for such problems.

Regarding the music:

The 6 men and the 6 women would of course have to be there, as well as the *Man*. I mean: they would have really to sing and speak. Of course behind the stage or the orchestra, by the organ, or in some such place. That can be worked out.

Of course they would have to be outstandingly good singers. Still, that is and comparatively small expense. What I mean is: e.g. one of the 6 men (the first) has to be and good soloist, the others good choral singers. The same applies to the women!

For the film the part of the Man can be played by somebody who does not need to sing. An outstanding actor should therefore be chosen.

For the time being I can't think of any other details. Everything else will be cleared up during the rehearsals.

One very important thing: try to interest a Berlin company. If for no other reason than I can then take rehearsal myself.

The letter ends at this point; the idiosyncratic grammar and layout are typically Schoenbergian.

As compared with Schoenberg's somewhat vague references about *Seraphita* and *Die glückliche Hand* in the letter to Kandinsky of 1912, this letter to Hertzka of 1913 clearly sets out a series of design ideas and stylistic parameters for further discussion with others: an artist of Schoenberg's choice (including Mahler's collaborator Alfred Roller) and a technical director responsible for lighting and filming. It should be noted that Schoenberg envisages that by controlling the light from the film projector and from the theatre lights each viewer and the audience as a whole will be saturated in light and colour, as well as by the music, very clearly emulating both the last pages of *Harmonielehre* and anticipating the closing passages of *Seraphita*. The music and words are to be exclusively Schoenberg's own responsibility. The letter also displays a recognition on Schoenberg's part that cinema is a developing medium, with problems, such as "dark light", the production of images at low light levels, and the production of sounds and music behind the cinema screen but synchronised with the filmic action, which are to be resolved by the technicians. Whilst Schoenberg asserts that he has overall charge of this *Gesamtkunstwerk* production, he is reliant upon levels of technical expertise that are

wholly innovative: Schoenberg knows what visual effects are desirable for the achievement of his purposes from his own experience as a consumer of cinema and, before that, of opera, but he has also apparently learned to be continuously surprised by, and open to, the innovatory techniques that the new medium is capable of offering.

In short, it can be assumed that by the time of his letter to Hertzka, Schoenberg is aware of the sheer potential of cinema as a medium for producing his *Gesamtkunstwerk*. No doubt he also anticipated the prospect for audiences the size of which he had never experienced before. However, to assess the nature of this perceived potential it is necessary to begin with more specific questions about the type of cinema Schoenberg had experienced by 1912/13 and what his expectations might have been with respect to the use of light and colour, as well as sound.

### ***Kino-Debatte* –what should cinema be?**

As has been noted, the fragility and combustibility of early film stock, the changes in public and commercial taste affecting the sheer possibility of preserving some titles, and the exigencies of wars and revolutions post-1914, all mean that discussion of cinematic subjects is unavoidably problematic. Many, if not nearly all, films of the period have been lost or damaged, and transfers of original film from nitrate material to digital formats has often led to distortions and losses of quality. Too often it has been assumed that early film was short in duration, in black-and-white, and silent, except perhaps for the tinkling piano accompaniment provided in some sort of re-enactment of cinema performances.<sup>14</sup> This post-hoc view of early cinema is a

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<sup>14</sup> See, for example, Stanley Donen and Gene Kelly, directors, *Singin' in the Rain*, USA, 1952, dvd, which purports to show the transition from silent film to sound film and includes sequences of silent film production to the sound of a solo piano accompaniment.



travesty. The technical foundations for a modern *Gesamtkunstwerk* production were already evident across Europe and America before 1914.

In the period leading up to 1910 there were two basic cinematic styles: the documentary, realist style, pioneered most notably by the French Lumière Brothers (Auguste, 1862-1954, and Louis 1864-1949); and the imaginary, more filmic style of George Méliès (1861-1938), another Frenchman.<sup>15</sup> Innovation was everything, and among the many other technical innovators, the German Oskar Messter (1866-1943) introduced a flicker-free projection system (in contrast with the flickering Lumière's system), accompanied by synchronised gramophone sound recordings (*Ton-Bilder*, sound images), and featuring close-ups, speeded-up motion, and so on. Vision and synchronised sound were, therefore, already possible, though there was yet no universally accepted technical standard. This interplay of rolling technical development across national boundaries (reminiscent of Wagner's initial reliance upon French models of opera production for his Bayreuth productions) reflects the essentially international orientation of film production and distribution at this time: only between ten and twenty percent of the films screened in Germany, for example, were produced in Germany. Robert von Dassanowsky records that Austrian film production was only inaugurated in 1906 by the Wiener Kunstfilm Industrie, a company founded by Louise Kolm (née Veltée, 1873-1950), one of the first female film directors, and Jakob Fleck (1881-1953).<sup>16</sup> Both Germany and Austria relied on the many imported films from England, Italy, America, France and Denmark, these

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<sup>15</sup> For examples of these works, see *Early Cinema Primitives and Pioneers, 1895-1910*, dvd, British Film Institute, undated production. The Lumière examples are of black-and-white documentaries (trains, people playing cards, and fire engine, and bull fight, etc.) but the Méliès, an extract from *Voyage a travers l'impossible*, 1904, is an imaginary journey to another planet, with hand-tinted coloured frames to suggest the fantastic nature of the narrative.

<sup>16</sup> Dassanowsky, *op.cit*, p.13. Dassanowsky concedes that there were discovered in the 1990s erotic/pornographic Austrian films of an earlier production date.

latter two countries being particularly important in the German market. The film captions, which were necessary before the introduction of sound-tracks physically attached to the film, could, of course, be produced in the various languages of the countries in which films were exhibited, an advantage particularly relevant in multi-lingual Austro-Hungary.

What sort of films should be produced, however, was a contentious question from the very birth of cinema: were the purposes of the cinema concerned with entertainment or education, or some combination of the two? How was a public, mass medium to relate to issues of morality and personal behaviour? How was cinema to relate to other, pre-existing art forms, if it was to be regarded as an art form at all? Did cinema have anything beyond its peripheral, transient existence as a fashionable entertainment, with a short lifespan? In the period before 1914, of course, such questions were hardly formulated in such a composed way. Cinema was a novelty with an unknowable future. However, the early cinema did prompt very serious questions, which are here subsumed under the term, *Kino-Debatte*, questions which informed the discourse about cinema, with which Schoenberg was himself clearly engaged.

The *Kino-Debatte* raised a whole set of questions from a German and Austrian perspective about the educational and artistic potential of cinema, irrespective of where films were produced. Longer, narrative films, with recognisable theatrical influences of a type associated with writers and actors for the stage, and with believable character development and psychological motivation, were valued above the sensationalist, action-centred films to be obtained, for example, from America. Notwithstanding the technical advances and proven popularity of films from America, there was an antipathy to the processes of American cultural hegemony, the cinema

being perceived by some as merely just the latest example.<sup>17</sup> The physical movement of film cameras (particularly camera panning), editing and care in creating a consistent *mis-en-scène* meant that European companies already practised a specific film language, with which German and Austrian audiences could more readily associate than with the language of some of American productions, which favoured the earliest Westerns and armed robbery scenarios.

At the heart of *Kino-Debatte* lies the Austro-German middle- and upper-class concern about the potentially negative effect of the new medium of cinema might have upon the working-classes.<sup>18</sup> What messages was it proper for the new medium to carry? The rapid urbanisation of Germany and Austria into centres such as Berlin (with a population of two million people by 1910) and Vienna (with a similar population by 1914), associated with industrialisation and migration from the countryside, had led many commentators, such as Georg Simmel (1858-1918), to raise the spectre of psychological urban stress and breakdown, to which were then added fears about potential social degeneracy and even revolution.<sup>19</sup> In the context of the recently unified Germany of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the dominant Prussian cultural expectations of sustained social and political control were apparently being undermined by the new medium. The *kinntopps*, the spaces in bars, storefronts and coffee houses dedicated to continuously-rolling exhibitions of films of music-hall variety acts, animals and folk-dancers, were attracting a mass

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<sup>17</sup> As previously noted with respect to Adolf Loos, being attracted by American fashions and innovations was often taken as a form of opposition to traditional European values, particularly the values espoused by conservative Germans and Austrians.

<sup>18</sup> Jennifer N. Kapczynski and Michael D. Richardson, *A New History of German Cinema*, Rochester, NY, 2012, p.13-19.

<sup>19</sup> Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life", in eds. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood, *Art in Theory, 1900-2000, An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, Oxford, 2003, p.132-136. It should be noted that both Berlin and Vienna were characterised by severe over-crowding by 1910, public housing investment having failed to keep pace with population growth. Going out to the cinema permitted a temporary escape from a claustrophobic homelife.

commercial market of workers, middle-class women shoppers and teenagers. For self-important members of society this raised the spectre not just of uncontrollable merriment, always something to be frowned on, but of public anarchy and revolution. And, cinema refused to stand still. In these urban environments, cinema rapidly moved from being housed in temporary fairground tents and street bars to being organised in permanent theatres. By 1910 there were over 1000 such establishments in Germany and about 100 in Vienna alone. The German government's political response in 1907 was to extend Prussian-style censorship to all the other parts of Germany, and to tax film in the same way as all other forms of entertainment, including alcohol and tobacco.

Between around 1907 and 1914 the *Kino-Debatte* about the cultural values within the cinema itself became an organised socio-political response: *Kinematographische Reformvereinigung*, for example, founded in Berlin in 1907, had a fundamentally (but not untypically) ambivalent attitude towards the cinema. While it professed to protect women and children, whose exposure to film narrative was regarded as a danger to public morality, the reformers were keen to enlist film as an educational tool in all manner of causes, notably those related to the preservation of natural places, of certain national cultural activities, and so on. This ambivalence led to an oscillation of political demands for prohibition on the one hand (largely to prevent the uncontrollable imitation by audiences of behaviour seen on the screen), and restraint on the other (favouring soothing and uplifting nature films and documentaries).<sup>20</sup>

Perhaps inevitably, this political response had a nationalistic aspect, the reformers above all fearing that German cultural values would be threatened by “international

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<sup>20</sup> Thomas Elsaesser, with Michael Wedel, *The BFI Companion to German Cinema*, London, 1999, p.147 and p.163. Interest in literary adaptations also led to productions in countries like France, Italy and America for the same reasons of preserving public morality.

capital” (by which they probably meant “American”). An obvious counter-reaction was, therefore, to favour the adaptation of those literary works for the screen deemed most desirable for “others” to see, and the engagement of recognised stage actors, in what became known as *Autorenfilme*, *Literaturverfilmung* or *film d’art* (in its French variation).

Because they were capable of attracting European-wide admiration, excerpts from a number of William Shakespeare’s plays, or abridged versions of whole plays, were produced during the period in question, and not just by British companies, but also by American and Italian companies, as exemplified in the collection prepared by the BFI.<sup>21</sup> The British production of *King John* of 1899 features the famous stage actor, Herbert Beerbohm Tree (1852-1917), and comprises a traditional stage version of that play, whereas the 1908 British production of *The Tempest* is characterised by its Méliès-style use of stop-frames and mechanical devices to suggest the storm at sea, with which the play opens, and the magical events that follow. Whilst the American 1909 production of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* combines a naturalistic, outdoor setting with stop-frame magical appearances and disappearances of the fairy characters, it also includes a Méliès-influenced sequence when the fairy Puck “puts a girdle around the Earth”. However, in the extant Italian-produced versions of *King Lear* and *The Merchant of Venice*, both of 1910, there is not only the use of outdoor settings (in the case of *The Merchant* an actual Venetian canal scene) but the hand-coloured costumes in classical reds, blues and purples have been preserved (and digitised). Whilst this evidence may seem partial and anecdotal because of the

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<sup>21</sup> British Film Institute, *Silent Shakespeare*, dvd, undated production. It should be noted that, as in the case of the previously cited *Early Cinema Primitives and Pioneers*, the extracts have been restored and digitised in collaboration with other European archival sources, because of the poor and incomplete condition in which many films exist.

problematic nature of early film preservation, these examples are suggestive of the successful commercial availability of such narrative material and the technical qualities that could be achieved around 1910, as well as of the popularity of Shakespearean material. It is probable that Schoenberg was aware of many such examples; he certainly had a copy of Shakespeare's works in his library and may have been interested in how the plays transferred to film.<sup>22</sup>

Further, as David Shepherd notes, "in the beginning was the Word" might easily be applied to the genesis of the cinema, for the first Biblical film productions began in France as early as 1897.<sup>23</sup> With the support of religious organisations, such as the Catholic Church, production of films with a Biblical theme were made in Britain, France and America in the years before 1914 to the same contemporary standards and are likely to have circulated in Germany and Austria. Allowing for the possibility that films of this period may have been lost (even from the written records), productions in Germany seem to have been limited. However, credibility of the cinema as a purveyor of even the most serious subjects, particularly in cultures where religion remained a significant social and political force, can be easily appreciated.

Where German society led in seeking a stronger cultural foundation for cinema, Austria followed. Austrian inclinations to favour socio-critical subjects led to the production of what may have been the first film (as opposed to "shorts" of exotic dancing or pornography), *Der Muller und sein Kind* (*The Miller and his Child*), 1910 by the Austrian company, Wiener Kunstfilm Industrie. This film is based on a five-act

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<sup>22</sup> Copies held in the ASC.

<sup>23</sup> David J. Shepherd, *The Bible on Silent Film Spectacle, Story and Scripture in the Early Cinema*, Cambridge and New York, p.11.

melodrama by Ernst Raupach (1784-1852) and is the horrific story of doomed love across the social divides, which culminates in a death scene in a Gothic cemetery.

*Der Muller und sein Kind* is a film intended to entertain, as well as to raise intellectual questions.<sup>24</sup> It was directed by Walter Friedman, head of the Vienna *Volksoper*, who was more usually produced popular light operettas. Like many others of its time, this film and its score are also now lost, and are known only from contemporary reports. However, it perhaps exemplifies the increasing involvement of professionals from the wider theatrical and musical environment at the time that Schoenberg was formulating his own projects.

Austria's *Kino-Debatte* around the cinema's competition with the stage for middle-class audiences resulted in several noted Austrian authors being invited in 1913 by one of the first Austrian film entrepreneurs, Count Alexander Kolowrat-Krakowsky (1886-1927), to write original screenplays: Arthur Schnitzler (1862-1931), Egon Friedell (1878-1938), Hugo von Hofmannsthal (1874-1929), and Felix Dormann (1870-1928). The very first example of what became an Austrian speciality during the interwar years, the operetta film as musical biography, was produced in 1913: *Johann Strauss an der schönen blauen Donau* (*Johann Strauss and the Blue Danube*).<sup>25</sup> For Schoenberg, then, the cinema was developing a professional legitimacy, which would legitimise his own professional involvement.

From within this *Kino-Debatte* discourse also emerges the first sense of what is now known as the *auteur*, the putative film-maker who is akin to a literary author,

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<sup>24</sup> Dassanowsky, *op.cit*, p.12. The film itself is apparently lost, descriptions being dependent on contemporary newspaper reports.

<sup>25</sup> Elsaesser and Wedel, *op.cit*, p.29. Elsaesser and Wedel note that the Danes pre-empted Austria in 1912 by inviting a similar group of authors, including Arthur Schnitzler, to develop screenplays for them.

responsible for all aspects of the film's production in a way that almost perfectly mirrors the aspirations of Wagner for one of his *Gesamtkunstwerk*, or for Schoenberg in *Seraphita* or *Die glückliche Hand*.<sup>26</sup> Asta Nielsen (1881-1972), a Danish actress and film producer, was the first one to achieve in 1911 full artistic control over all aspects of production and distribution in films in which she featured. In *Die Filmprimadonna* of 1913, Nielsen produced a film-about-making film, in which she is both lead actor and producer and director; the film covers all aspects of film production, including screen-writing, filming on set and outdoors, and editing exposed film.<sup>27</sup> Unfortunately, that film is now incomplete. Nielsen was involved in the production of approximately thirty films before 1914. She was hugely successful and became, for many contemporary critics, an aesthetic and social force in her own right.<sup>28</sup> Her performance in *Afgrunden* (*The Abyss*) 1910, for example, is centred on the interaction of the actor with the camera, the camera being the embodiment of the individual viewer.<sup>29</sup> This innovation contrasts sharply with the interaction of a stage actor and a largely unseen audience (because of the lights which are often in the actor's eyes) or that of a stage production filmed by a camera, in which there is no acknowledgement of the part played by an audience behind the camera. The camera's emphasis upon Nielsen's eyes reveals a new level of psychological and

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<sup>26</sup> The term "auteur" is an anachronism here but does convey the sense in which the director is the author of a film, the person who gives it any distinctive quality in a production process that necessarily involves, actors, writers, cameramen, lighting men and many others. As set out in Chapter 2 above, Wagner certainly sought to control all such elements. Many authorities credit the polemical French magazine *Cahiers du Cinema* of the 1950s with the original formulation of the concept, and, in particular, the French actor, critic and director Francois Truffaut (1932-84). See, for example, Andrew Sarris, "Notes on the Auteur Theory in 1962", in eds. Gerald Mast, Marshall Cohen and Leo Braudy, *Film Theory and Criticism, Introductory Readings, Fourth Edition*, Oxford, 1992, p.585-588.

<sup>27</sup> Asta Nielsen, *Die Filmprimadonna*, dvd, Deutsches Filminstitut, Edition filmmuseum 37, 2011.

<sup>28</sup> Heide Schlipmann, "27 May 1911: Asta Nielsen Secures Unprecedented Artistic Control", in Kapczynski and Richardson, *op.cit*, p.44.

<sup>29</sup> Asta Nielsen, *Afgrunden* (*The Abyss*) 1910 is a melodrama about a *femme fatale* who leaves her safe middle-class upbringing for a life in the circus with a cowboy lover, whom she kills because of his infidelity. A full version is available via YouTube under the name of the actress, Asta Nielsen.



motivational intensity in her response to the death of her lover that is unparalleled and exceeds the usual parameters of an old-fashioned melodrama. The shedding of real tears by Nielsen, in close-ups which are also closely-framed by the camera (thereby compounding the impact of the eyes), is revolutionary when compared with the simulated tears of the traditional stage actor or the glycerine-induced ones of the film or stage make-up box. It certainly stirred a lot of critical debate: stage acting was just that, “acting”. Real tears confounded public expectations. This must surely have influenced Schoenberg and certainly emphasises this writer’s proposition that there is a link between Schoenberg’s attention to the eyes in his paintings and the cinematic language developed by actors and producers like Nielsen. Again, this runs counter to the prevailing trope of the equation of the soul with the eye as part of the stock-in trade of the *fin-de-siècle* artistic conventions, as suggested, for example, by Meyer, and later Blackshaw, when discussing Schoenberg portrait paintings. Schoenberg’s use of close-focussing on the eyes, and the cropping of other material from the frame surely owes more to the language of cinema than the mere replication of some traditional convention.<sup>30</sup> The eyes of an actress like Nielsen are indicative of a deliberate attempt to communicate a psycho-emotional state to and mass audience, not a remnant of Romanticism presented before a private collector or gallery visitor.

Nielsen’s artistic and commercial influence was such that even a chain of cinemas was named “Astras” after her. It was for another Nielsen film in 1911 that the Viennese composer, Erich Hiller (who seems now to have disappeared from most records) composed one of the earliest scores explicitly for a named film, *Der schwarze Traum (Black Dream)* 1911; previously he had composed music not for

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<sup>30</sup> Meyer and Muxeneder, p.53, and Blackshaw, *op.cit.*

specific films but for individual cinemas or film distributors, in the same way that many other composers had done at that time.<sup>31</sup> Scores had been used irrespective of a narrative film's requirements. The French composer Camille Saint-Saens (1835-1921) had composed music in 1908 specifically for a filmed production of the *L'assassination du duc de Guise (The Assassination of the Duke of Guise)*, with actors from the *Comédie Française*, but this was essentially to accompany a series of historic stage tableaux with the minimum of filmic action. Hiller's music for *Der schwarze Traum*, another circus-based tragedy/melodrama with daring horse-riding scenes performed by Nielsen, was apparently very well received by critics and audiences. Regrettably, in common with many other examples, that score is now lost.

That the status of the cinema was rising above the street level of the *kinntopps* can be seen in the extent to which cinema became a subject for academic as well as critical attention. In a letter of September 1907, Sigmund Freud notes the hypnotic effect the endless repetition of "landscapes, Negroes of the Congo, glacier ascents, and so on" has upon the crowd (the audience), and upon himself, at a cinema in Rome. Whilst sitting for several hours in the same spot in a crowded cinema watching the same films repeated several times through, Freud nevertheless feels isolation and loneliness. Later, in a work of 1919, *Das Unheimliche (The Uncanny)* Freud reflects further on the cinema's propensity to resurrect repressed childhood memories: their re-emergence and repetition in dreams is just like a sitting through a repetitive cinema screening, in which the *doppelgänger* haunts the dreamer like the main character in Paul Wegener's (1874-1948) hugely popular *Der Student von Prag*

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<sup>31</sup> Dassanowsky, *op.cit*, p.13. According to Dassanowsky, Hiller was also involved in arranging Jacques Offenbach's music for a screen version of *Hoffmanns Erzählungen (The Tales of Hoffmann)*, produced in 1911 by the Wiener Kunstfilm Industrie.

(*The Student of Prague*) of 1913. Henceforth, the link between psychoanalysis and film is firmly entrenched.<sup>32</sup> Schoenberg's own understanding of psychoanalysis is first demonstrated in his *Erwartung (Expectation)*, Op.17, 1909.

Similarly, the cinema features in philosophical discourse at a relatively early stage, Henri Bergson (1858-1941) writing in 1907 in his *Creative Evolution* about the relationship between the mechanics of cinematographical presentation (the rapid movement of one projected image after another) on the one hand, and human thought and illusion on the other. At one level, this confirms the assertion that cinema, in its mechanical processes as much as its "content" (subject matter, *mis en scène*, etc.) has already become an issue worthy of philosophic discourse during the earliest years of its inception:

The application of the cinematographical method therefore leads to a perpetual recommencement, during which the mind, never able to satisfy itself and never finding where to rest, persuades itself, no doubt, that it imitates by its instability the very movement of the real.<sup>33</sup>

For Bergson the cinema is about movement, that movement inherent in the human physiological process of reception, and not just the movement of the narrative which cinema seeks to communicate. At another level, however, Bergson touches on an important issue for Schoenberg in any planned *Gesamtkunstwerk*: how could the transfigurations within the narrative of a work such as *Seraphita* – the passage of the

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<sup>32</sup> Tan Waelchli, "22 September 1907: Sigmund Freud Is Attracted to the Movies but Feels Lonely in the Crowd", in Kapczynski and Richardson, *op.cit.*, p.31-36. The student is haunted by a murderous alter-ego, a *doppelgänger*, whom he acquires in a pact with Mephistopheles. The Student/*doppelgänger* effect is cleverly shown by using cinematic effects and a trick mirror to show the same actor simultaneously in both roles.

<sup>33</sup> Henri Bergson, "*The Cinematographical Mechanism of Thought and the Mechanistic Illusion In Creative Evolution*", in ed. Andrew E. Hershberger, *Photographic Theory An Historical Anthology*, Oxford, 2014, p.110.

earth-bound human form of *Seraphita/Seraphitus* into an angelic, heavenly form - be handled visually as well as musically? As Bergson says,

Matter or mind, reality has appeared to us as a perpetual becoming. It makes itself or it unmakes itself, but it is never something made...But, preoccupied before everything with the necessities of action, the intellect, like the senses, is limited to taking, at intervals, views that are instantaneous and by that fact immobile of the becoming of matter...Of becoming we perceive only states, of duration only instants, and even when we speak of duration and becoming, it is of another thing we are thinking. Such is the most striking illusion...supposing that we can think the unstable by means of the stable, the moving by means of the immobile.<sup>34</sup>

Bergson's allusion to what might now be described as the subliminal aspects of a film projection as well as the narrative content it is designed to communicate – the fact that the human eye ignores the flickering passage of one film frame image to another, but receives subconsciously the information contained in every movement of one frame to another as well as the content of each frame – is one that is taken for granted now. The mechanical process itself is commonly understood now as part of the cinematic cultural experience, even though the process has now been overtaken by digitisation, in which mechanical processes are redundant. It is accepted in the same way that the sharp disjunctions of location and time are also taken for granted in cinematic language. This concept of visual presentation working with words and music, which comprises states of matter which can only be perceived at particular moments in time, without any sense other than that of continuing change, and of

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<sup>34</sup> Bergson, *op.cit*, p.109.

unknown durations, lies at the heart of Schoenberg's *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Cinema could give Schoenberg control over movement within and between locations, between different states of matter, around which the passage of time and the succession of musical sounds could be manipulated.

Out of the *Kino-Debatte*, then, there emerged not only notions of what cinema should be concerned with – in Schoenberg's terms what ought legitimately to be the subject matter and literary narrative content of a *Gesamtkunstwerk* produced as film - but also expectations about what effects the cinema should have on its audiences at a socio-psychological level. As a potential *Gesamtkunstwerk* film *Seraphita* has the appropriate characteristics: it has literary status (as one part of Balzac's *La Comédie humaine*) and a philosophical or religious subject-matter. It also has a potentially exciting introduction: characters skiing at high speed down the side of a Norwegian fjord and a cataclysmic denouement, a transfiguration and ascent into heaven. However, running parallel to this content-focussed *Kino-Debatte* was the debate about the use of colour, though it will become clear that these two foci overlapped: the physiology of perception, and the reception of colour in the eye had raised scientific interest towards the end of the nineteenth century in a way that Bergson reflects in his philosophical speculation. The point at which the sensory experience of moving colour impacts emotionally and psychologically on the viewer is the subject of the next section of this chapter.

## **Moving Colour**

In this section, discussion focuses on the debate about colour in the cinema, before turning to the question of Schoenberg's relationship with Wassily Kandinsky, one of the most important colour theorists of the early twentieth century. Schoenberg's

model of integrated colour and music – tone colour – is then discussed, as part of his overall *Gesamtkunstwerk* conceptualisation.

In parallel with the *Kino-Debatte* about the literary narrative content of cinema film there arose the debate about the refinement of the sensual- emotional effect of colour, and the avoidance of sensationalist coloured effects. Just as critics were afraid of certain types of narrative content, they also feared the impact of colour. Colour, it was said, should be used with judgement and discrimination, to avoid its negative psychological and emotional effects. The scope of the various proposals for greater refinement the use of colour projected on to the screen included the architectural and design components of the very buildings within which films were being exhibited. The *kinntopps* – the bars and fairgrounds - of the early years of the cinema were soon replaced by buildings which more adequately reflected what an authority like Goethe would have recognised, had he lived long enough to witness it, as the intrinsic moral purpose of the new mass medium. Films were, henceforth, to be shown in surroundings which matched their educational, social and spiritual aspirations, in the same way that theatres, opera houses and concert halls did. Such venues should themselves be uplifting. Wagner's concert hall in Bayreuth was the ideal model. Hence, Schoenberg's directions for the performance of his *Der glückliche Hand* perhaps acquire additional assumptions, which may now be lost to contemporary commentators, but are no less important: assumptions about the very nature of the buildings within which a *Gesamtkunstwerk* was to be presented. Schoenberg would no doubt have taken such matters for granted, the growth of cinema building in both Berlin and Vienna by the time he wrote his directions, 1913, having been so dramatic

As Yumibe makes clear, the novelty of cinema's introduction was the culmination of a whole series of nineteenth century innovations using light and colours: lantern slides, postcards and mass publishing.<sup>35</sup> Colour had become ubiquitous. The same colouring techniques and visual styles developed in the earlier part of the century were adapted for cinema films from the 1890s onwards: films were coloured from the outset. Along with these intermedial foundations came the same theoretical and cultural associations, particularly the scientific and artistic study of motion perception and the physiological study of colour perception. In fact, such studies began at the point at which the study of light itself ceased being a matter solely of Newtonian physics (light being subject to mathematical rules of transmission from source to a neutral receiver) and became one of enquiry as to the nature of the impression created on the eye by moving colour. Researchers, including Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), were concerned not with the spectral components of light (Newton's prismatic analysis of light, the source of Newton's errors according to Goethe), but with the phenomenon of colour perception, particularly as this related to artistic responses to the effects of light.<sup>36</sup> In other words, as Enlightenment gave way to Romanticism, attention shifted from the physical nature of the phenomenon of light to the subjective experience of light as it is filtered by human senses. Schoenberg was aware of Schopenhauer's contribution to this discourse; "a real theory should start with the subject".<sup>37</sup> In turn, the relationship of subjective experiences to questions of personal, individual education, training and spiritual

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<sup>35</sup> Joshua Yumibe, *op.cit.*

<sup>36</sup> Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Theory of Colours*, originally published in 1810, trans. by Charles Lock Eastlake, Cambridge, 2014.

<sup>37</sup> *Harmonielehre*, p.18.

development became part of the aesthetic response to the new ways of presenting colour.<sup>38</sup>

Yumibe demonstrates that, in the period around 1910, discussion of colour in the cinema involved theories not just of subjective perception but also of how the cinema might be conceived as a physiological machine that could confront, address and uplift the viewer.<sup>39</sup> “Uplifting”, in the same sense that Schoenberg uses when he talks of “spiritual renewal”, became the by-word for a new aesthetic of cinema. More specifically, it was believed that beyond the immediate power of moving images themselves, their afterimages, a combination of physiological impact on the eye itself and the subliminal impact on the brain, have a lasting, uplifting effect. Yumibe quotes a contemporary reference of 1911:

The memory of the eye endures longer and keeps its impression clearer than the memory of either the ear or the imagination.<sup>40</sup>

Whilst Schoenberg would certainly have questioned any notion of ascribing the primacy of the eye over the ear in a statement such as this, given the significance of Schopenhauer’s conviction about the differential relationship between music (the aural sense) and the Will (as compared with other senses) has in helping Schoenberg to form a model of *Gesamtkunstwerk*, the intellectual weight given to colour certainly chimes with Schoenberg’s requirements for a *Gesamtkunstwerk*:

In Schoenberg’s letter to Kandinsky on 14 December 1911, the time of preparation of the first *Blaue Reiter* exhibition of 1912, Schoenberg writes about an exhibition of

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<sup>38</sup> En passant, it is worth noting that E.T.A. Hoffmann had a theory correlating colour and musical sounds, which Schoenberg would possibly have known.

<sup>39</sup> Yumibe, *op.cit.*, p.149.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, p.150. Yumibe’s source is *The Psychic Force and Value of the Moving Picture*, in *Moving Picture World* 8.25 of June 24, 1911.



Kandinsky's work he visited in Berlin. Kandinsky had translated a section of an early draft of *Harmonielehre* for publication in Russian before it was published in Germany. Schoenberg had not yet completed reading a prepublication version of Kandinsky's *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, but has seen several Kandinsky's paintings:

Now I must write to you about your pictures. Well: I liked them very much indeed... *Romantic Landscape* pleased me the most. The other pictures are not hung very advantageously. There is something that I cannot reconcile myself to: the format, the size. I also have a theoretical objection: since it is only and question of proportions, for example

black 24:      white 120

by red:      yellow 84

it cannot possibly depend on the format, because I can certainly say the same thing if I reduce it, for example by 12:

black 2:      white 10

by red 1:      yellow 7

Practically expressed: I feel these colour-weights less, because they disappear too much from my field of vision. (A few escape me entirely.) I had to stand far away, *and then of course the picture is smaller, the equation "reduced"*.

Perhaps I have for this reason less of an impression of the very large pictures because I could not take them in as a whole.<sup>41</sup>

In his somewhat pedantic way Schoenberg is, of course, questioning the colour balances (what he calls “weights”) within these paintings and the overall after-images of what he perceives as the dominant colours, and, therefore, the emotional-spiritual impressions they leave. Whilst Kandinsky’s written response, if there was one, has been lost, no doubt he would have found Schoenberg’s response contentious, at the very least. But, Schoenberg’s comments indicate a more significant difference of opinion between Kandinsky and himself on the question of the interactions between different colours, contrasting and complementary, and their impact on other senses and on emotional or spiritual responses. This question requires further amplification.

Kandinsky apparently views the relationship between sound and colour as a matter of equals, both artistic modes still being susceptible to individual and separate analysis. Kandinsky relies upon the ideas of Baudelaire and the Symbolists in his conceptualisation of the “associations” between various sensory experiences though he lends to it a specifically Russian Symbolist dimension and invokes the Russian composer Alexander Scriabin (1872-1915), whom Schoenberg knew, in support:

[C]olour is a means of exerting a direct influence on the soul. Colour is the keyboard. The eye is the hammer. The soul is the piano with many strings. The artist is the hand that purposefully sets the soul vibrating to means of this or that key.

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<sup>41</sup> Hahl-Koch, *op.cit.*, p.38-9. Letter from Schoenberg in Berlin of 14 December 1911.

*Thus it is clear that the harmony of colours can only be based upon the principle of purposefully touching the human soul.* <sup>42</sup>

Kandinsky here uses music as a metaphor only – the various colours being the equivalent of the keys on a keyboard – without inferring a specific neural synaesthetic relationship between music and colour. Inferences of any relationship between the two modes of expression rely upon assertions of supposedly common human responses, primarily to colour and secondly to music. Kandinsky's sleight of hand is to quote Goethe to assert that colour (in painting) must count on the "deep relationship" with music as its main foundation on the road to making itself (painting) an "abstraction of thought". Hence, Kandinsky occupies both positions simultaneously – "music acts directly on the soul... (because)...music is innate in man", and "everyone knows that yellow, orange, and red suggest ideas of joy and plenty" - without seeking to establish any specific relationship between the two. <sup>43</sup> By comparison, Schoenberg sought a clearer relationship between colour and music.

Both Kandinsky and Schoenberg had been working since around 1909 on similar music dramas which combine visual and aural effects in *Gesamtkunstwerk* projects. Kandinsky had experienced the impact of Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk*, *Lohengrin*, on a Moscow audience in 1896, and rated this, alongside the exhibition of Monet's *Wheatstack in the Sun* of 1891 in that same year, as having had the most profound impact on his artistic development. <sup>44</sup> But, not unexpectedly perhaps, because of their different cultural backgrounds, Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk* did not have the same effect on Kandinsky as it did on Schoenberg. Kandinsky pursued an overtly

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<sup>42</sup> Lindsay and Vergo, p.160. See also their editorial footnote at the preceding page.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, p.162.

<sup>44</sup> Wassily Kandinsky, "Reminiscences", 1913, in Lindsay and Virgo, p.355.

anthropomorphic and theosophical approach based on colour, firstly in *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, and then in the *Blaue Reiter Almanac*.<sup>45</sup> For Kandinsky, it is colours, not music, which have aspects of personality and human behaviour about them: they can be equated directly with human experiences of birth, life and death, and in combination can create an *atmosphere* within which the observer is wholly immersed. Like humans, colours continue to have an existence individual from one another, and certainly an existence separate from the synthesis of modes of expression in *Gesamtkunstwerk*.

The creation of an *atmosphere*, as Kandinsky puts it, may seem reminiscent of Schoenberg's *Second String Quartet*, Op. 10, 1907-08, in which the poet Stefan George's words are heard (*I feel air from another planet*), but Kandinsky's concept here is more a matter of interactions between separate elements, rather than their synaesthetic integration. Charles Riley suggests that Kandinsky's understanding of colour is derived more from the sensory impact of the coloured lights passing through painted glass, than the analytical stance pursued by Schoenberg in wanting to quantify their sensory impact.<sup>46</sup> It is likely that Kandinsky was influenced by the colours of Orthodox Church interiors and icons with their unique perspectival contact with viewers, but these are optical sensations without reference to choral sounds which must surely have accompanied such experiences. Kandinsky is conscious of moving between colours, in a way analogous to harmonic movement, but only at the level of metaphor:

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<sup>45</sup> See, Lindsay and Virgo regarding both documents.

<sup>46</sup> Charles A. Riley, *Colour Codes Modern Theories of Colour in Philosophy, Painting, and Architecture, Literature, Music, and Psychology*, London, 1995 p.142. See also, Jelena Hahl-Koch, *Kandinsky*, London, 1993, p.126.

The strife of colours, the sense of balance we have lost, tottering principles, unexpected assaults, great questions, apparently useless striving... storm and tempest, broken chains, antitheses and contradictions, these make up our harmony. *The composition arising from this harmony is a mingling of colour and form each with its separate existence, but each blended into and common life which is called a picture by the force of the inner need.*<sup>47</sup>

Kandinsky's works are meditations on colours that are virtual characters in stately masques set in slowly moving tableaux, accompanied by music based on colour-sound principles. In *Gelbe Klang*, as described by Riley:

A bright gold flower graces the top of and large green hill. Behind it is a violet backdrop edged in black like a picture. The hill gradually becomes dazzling white and then grey while the backdrop turns brown. A black shadow on the hill surrounds the flower. Actors in bright costumes appear and sing the verse libretto, initially holding white flowers, which turn yellow and then red as they fill with blood before they are cast away. At the scene's conclusion, the yellow flower on the hill disappears...The finished score for the piece has a four-line stave for colour, movement, music and the human voice...Lighting directions are elaborate and tuned precisely to the music. Mixed tones and pure rays of gold, white, or red light engage one another in colour dramas that allowed Kandinsky to approximate his ideal artwork more closely than in any other medium. Not only were the movement, music, and sets able to maintain their integrity, but the individual colours maintained their personalities and relative

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<sup>47</sup> *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, in Lindsay and Virgo.

strengths the course of the drama. Kandinsky had discovered the key to a new chromatic kingdom.<sup>48</sup>

Perhaps this usefully summarises the main reason for Kandinsky's interest in involving Schoenberg with the *Blaue Reiter* group - the opportunity to work with a professional composer who had already committed himself to a new harmonic approach and might be able to complement Kandinsky's new painterly chromaticism through collaborative productions. Though not a trained musician (perhaps he thought the autodidact Schoenberg was), Kandinsky applies to music – “harmonic composition” in his own words – the same metaphors of contrast and conflict, of main themes and development, he applies to colour.

By comparison with *Gelbe Klang*, Schoenberg's *Die glückliche Hand* is less elaborately visually (based on his stage directions, at least), though it is certainly musically richer. Nevertheless, Schoenberg was equally enthusiastic about a relationship with Kandinsky and it is not unsurprising that in a letter of 19 August 1912 Kandinsky he exalts the similarity between *Gelbe Klang* and *Die glückliche Hand*:

But as I said, *Gelbe Klang* pleases me extraordinarily. It is exactly the same as what I have striven for in my *glückliche Hand*, only you go still further than I in the renunciation of any conscious thought, any conventional plot. That is naturally a great advantage. We must become conscious that there are puzzles around us. And we must find the courage to look at these puzzles in the eye without timidly asking about “the solution”. It is important that our creation of such puzzles mirror the puzzles with which we are surrounded, so

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<sup>48</sup> Riley, *op.cit*, p.185.

that our soul may endeavour – not to solve them – but to decipher them. What we gain thereby should not be the solution, but a new method of coding or decoding. The material, worthless, serves in the creation of new puzzles.<sup>49</sup>

As noted in previous chapters, Schoenberg's motivational metaphor is always that of *striving*: to strive is more important than to achieve final success, since ultimate success will never be possible. That is perhaps why Schoenberg's letter ends with a slap to Kandinsky's face: "The material, *worthless*, serves the creation of new puzzles". Whilst the similarities between the language of Kandinsky and Schoenberg explain something of the immediacy of their friendship from 1911 onwards, the differences are significant. What Kandinsky lacks is the precision of Schoenberg's careful and considered approach to "harmonic composition", in which, for example, consonance and dissonance have a much more valorised role than mere opposition, and colour is one component within a multi-layered, multi-media production of time, colour, music and space. Despite the difficulties of achieving it, sound and colour must be integrated together. Even though, in that same letter to Kandinsky of 19 August 1912, Schoenberg tries to minimise their fundamental differences - "I am sure that this is only a quarrel over words and that we agree completely about essentials" - nevertheless, the differences are clear:

An inner vision is a whole which has component parts, but these are linked, already integrated. Something which is constructed consists of parts which try to imitate a whole. But there is no guarantee in this case that the most

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<sup>49</sup> Hahl-Koch, *op.cit*, p. 53.

important parts are not missing and that the binding agent of these missing parts is: the soul.<sup>50</sup>

Integration of the component parts is the necessary precondition for Schoenberg's model of a *Gesamtkunstwerk*. *Harmonielehre* clearly shows that Schoenberg is very much concerned with notions of extending the measurement of musical pitch to musical colour. Just as the dismantling of the traditional system of organising sounds into consonant harmonies permits musical sounds to be related in ways in which the terms consonance and dissonance are no longer appropriate, so too can a new harmonic system include colour. If Schoenberg is correct, the spectral rigidity of the Newtonian theory of light and colour can be replaced in the same way as the old harmonic systems, with their cultural accretions of Church and State, have been. The key is measurement:

In a musical sound (*Klang*) three characteristics are recognized: its pitch, colour [timbre], and volume. Up to now it has been measured in only one of the three dimensions...the one we call "pitch". Attempts at measurement in the other dimensions have scarcely been undertaken to date...The evaluation of tone colour (*Klangfarbe*)...is thus in a still much less cultivated, much less organised state...Nevertheless, we go right on boldly connecting the sounds with one another, contrasting them with one another, simply by feeling; and it has never yet occurred to anyone to require here of and theory that it should determine laws by which one may do that sort of thing.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Hahl-Koch, *op.cit.*, p. 53.

<sup>51</sup> *Harmonielehre*, p.421.



Schoenberg takes the same view of colour as he does of tones (sounds), relying on scientific investigation and, hence, measurement, before theorising. Hence, Schoenberg continues:

I think the tone becomes perceptible by virtue of tone colour, of which one dimension is pitch. Tone colour is, thus, the main topic, pitch a subdivision...Now, if it is possible to create pattern out of tone colours that are differentiated according to pitch, patterns we call “melodies”, progressions, whose coherence (*Zusammenhang*) evokes an effect analogous to thought processes, then it must also be possible to make such progressions out of the tone colours of the other dimension, out of that we call simply “tone colour”, progressions whose relations with one another work with a kind of logic entirely equivalent to that logic which satisfies us in the melody of pitches.<sup>52</sup>

Out of the measurement of tone colour comes the building of logical, systematic relationships between tone colours, analogous to the organisation of musical tones via their pitch into chords. In this way colour can be integrated with sound, in what Schoenberg calls tone-colours. Like Goethe, Schoenberg identifies with a moral imperative, in which colours have powerful affective powers that can – should - be calibrated and controlled. The purpose for Schoenberg is the achievement of sensory, intellectual and spiritual revolution:

I firmly believe that it will bring us closer to the illusory stuff of our dreams; that it will expand our relationships to that which seems to us today inanimate as

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<sup>52</sup> *Harmonielehre*, p.421.

we give life from our life to that which is temporarily dead for us, but dead only by virtue of the slight connection we have with it.<sup>53</sup>

This brings Schoenberg firmly into line with the Kantian view that the human capacity for aesthetic experience involves the full range of human faculties if the imagination can be persuaded to give free range to the mind's cognitive and perceptual faculties. Kant has difficulty in accommodating feelings, the affective dimension of being human, within his model. Schoenberg has no such difficulties in conceptualising such things, though the act of "striving towards" may be an unrealisable achievement. Moving towards a theory is more desirable than the theory itself, or in Schoenberg's own words:

How high the development of spirit that could find pleasure in such subtle things! In such a domain, who dares ask for theory!<sup>54</sup>

In this final section, it is intended to speculate on what role harmonic tone-colours would have played, had Schoenberg's ideas for the realisation of *Gesamtkunstwerk* using the new technologies of light and moving colour been achieved.

## Overtones

This triad has been concerned with postulating how Schoenberg might have realised his ideas for *Gesamtkunstwerk* using new technologies. At the end of *Harmonielehre* Schoenberg suggests that tone-colour compositions would be possible, if musical harmony continues to evolve in the way that he describes, to support these technologies. However, this is problematic: Schoenberg does not claim to have completed compositions using tone-colours by the time he was considering how to

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<sup>53</sup> *Harmonielehre*, p.422.

<sup>54</sup> *Op.cit*, p.421.

realise his *Gesamtkunstwerk*, *Seraphita*. Further, what Schoenberg means by “tone-colour” at the end of *Harmonielehre* is a matter of *timbre*, from which Schoenberg is only able to contemplate progression into higher sensory, intellectual and spiritual pleasures. Schoenberg anticipates some process of Swedenborgian or Schopenhauerian *correspondence* as sound takes the listener into other dimensions of experience.

Schoenberg did say more at a later stage about tone-colour and musical colouration, which is perhaps a little more informative about what he intended. In a later essay of 1931, *Instrumentation*, Schoenberg explains how the instruments of the orchestra can be handled in such a way that each individual group could differentiated itself from others without resorting to the expedient of loudness, achievable, for example, by “doubling up” the orchestral forces or increasing the number of instruments. Schoenberg’s answer is to use more tone-colours, though his contextualisation of this solution is (in the apparent absence of praxis) more helpful:

If colouration had no deeper significance than that of a crude, naïve pleasure in sheer colour, it would be something on a very low level – perhaps that of a child who enjoys striking matches, or the rather more primitive pleasure uncultivated peoples, or sections of the populace, derive from explosions and shooting – and it could scarcely have and claim to consideration.

But if one’s approach is that colour serves to underline the clarity of the parts, by making them easier for them to stand out from one another, then one must reflect for a while, and moderate one’s views.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Schoenberg, “*Instrumentation*” 1931, in *Style and Idea*, p.333.

Tone-colours and colouration are there to direct the listener's attention towards certain aural passages, without overwhelming or confusing. Colour in musical terms is about differentiation and discretion within works whose complexity requires the listener's unfaltering attention, and which do not carry unnecessary repetitions or decorations. If the same injunctions of differentiation and discretion for the use of tone-colours are applied to the use of colour in the visual/filmed component of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, then, as Yumibe makes clear, colour becomes:

less of a feature in itself and of itself and more a formal device mobilized for stylistic purposes...[something] directed to the minute workings of the viewer's physiological response – to the effects that could be produced by certain precise, colourful, controlled visual experiences.<sup>56</sup>

Schoenberg's *Gesamtkunstwerk* films would have been just that: precise, colourful, and moving images within a controlled multimedial, multisensory experience, and matching the underlying conceptual objectives of achieving spiritual uplift.

The problem, of course, is that Schoenberg was yet to compose tone-colour music, though he alludes to it in the third movement of Chamber Symphony, Op.9, composed in 1909, around the time when *Harmonielehre* may have been entering its gestation period, and he was developing ideas for a *Gesamtkunstwerk* *Seraphita*. The third movement of Op.9 is subtitled *Akkordfarbungen*, or *Chord Colourings*.

## Summary

The *Gesamtkunstwerk* films of *Die glückliche Hand* and *Seraphita*, were never produced, either before 1914, when war intervened, or after 1933, when, not without

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<sup>56</sup> Yumibe, *op.cit*, p.150.

its irony, he went into exile in California, the “home” of cinema and found that Hollywood had no appetite for ambitious filmed *Gesamtkunstwerk*. With hindsight, of course, it is tempting to agree with Theodor Adorno, who alluded to the passing of an age before “mechanical reproduction”, an age when music, and, by extension all that went with music, still had a special cultural status:

The sad state of the late-modern transformation of Enlightenment ideals is allegorised as paltry electric illumination: “Background music is an acoustic light source”. It shines, however dimly, on what might have been.<sup>57</sup>

When it is used to accompany film, music has become no more than a part of the background. Adorno’s allusion is to Walter Benjamin’s famous text is descriptive not only of the passage of time, as Adorno is writing in 1955 originally, but also the demise of the special status that works of art have, after mechanical reproduction has made all art ubiquitous.<sup>58</sup> Art has lost its aura. For Adorno, there is an apparent self-fulfilling prophecy about the artistic failure of music for the cinema, its disappearance as a self-conscious formal art. It is doubly ironical, of course, that Schoenberg’s interest in the cinema meant that he was trying to deal with the very mechanical technology which arguably resulted in the demise of his kind of *Gesamtkunstwerk*.

This triad has explored Schoenberg’s detailed interest in the potential of the cinema, and the steps he took in anticipation of *Gesamtkunstwerk* cinematic productions before 1914, which have been overlooked by many previous authorities.

Schoenberg’s aspirations for *Gesamtkunstwerk* concerned people in general, albeit

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<sup>57</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, “*Music in the Background*” in *Essays on Music*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 2002, p. 506.

<sup>58</sup> Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”, in *One-way Street and Other Writings*, trans. J. A. Underwood, London, 2009, p. 228.

people with some degree of musical education or experience, rather than a smaller elitist audience. Schoenberg had conducted workers' choirs and was self-taught; his concerns were with humanity in general, and not just with elites. Schoenberg sought the spiritual (re)awakening of civilisation, not just select members of it. The sensory impact of the audience's immersion in *Gesamtkunstwerk* would result in longer-lasting, and deeper spiritually-uplifting effects on society. Spiritual necessity, the impulse driving Schoenberg and Kandinsky, now had an obvious vehicle for its achievement. Rather than being the latest fashionable street entertainment in European cities, cinema had the potential to support the spiritual reawakening of humanity.

Schoenberg's *Gesamtkunstwerk* always has a philosophical or religious objective, and Balzac's *Seraphita* might have been eminently suitable for film production: the ideas which emerged from the *Kino-Debatte* suggested that narratives based upon works of literature would be well received by middle class audiences, and were preferable to the lighter form of entertainment, which cinema was becoming. Ideas about the potential of lighting and moving colour seemed to suggest that they would make an invaluable contribution to the realisation of Schoenberg's *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Ultimately, however, cinema pursued its own trajectory, and ideas about *Gesamtkunstwerk* productions fell completely out of favour.

In the next chapter, the literary sources associated with *Seraphita*, Balzac, Swedenborg and Strindberg, will be brought together with the visual images created by Schoenberg, the *Fantasies*, to accompany his planned *Gesamtkunstwerk*. The task of realising this are represented in a subset of images within the *Fantasies*. These chart the emotional and intellectual strain of the religious journey of discovery

experienced by Schoenberg and were influenced by another interpreter of Swedenborgian philosophy, August Strindberg.

## Chapter 5: Fourth Triad: Swedenborg, Balzac, and Schoenberg.

### Introduction

This chapter, with its triad of Swedenborg, Balzac and Schoenberg, draws together the strands of this thesis by locating the *Fantasies* in the preparations for a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, a film version of *Seraphita*. In developing a *Gesamtkunstwerk* of *Seraphita*, Schoenberg mobilises: the compositional ideas about harmony, consonance and dissonance described in *Harmonielehre*; the *Gesamtkunstwerk* philosophies of Wagner, Schopenhauer and Mahler; his own ideas about polemical language; and the cinematic technologies of moving colour. He uses the interplay of the Swedenborg, Balzac and Strindberg texts, an intertextuality, each work inviting (re)interpretation in relation to the others. Out of this interplay a new “subjectivity” merges. The *Fantasies* are part of this new subjectivity, providing not only a set of visual images or cinematic story-boards, but also a sub-set of images suggesting the artists experience as he passes through an emotionally devastating period of religious reflection.

The sub-set of the *Fantasies* is derived from an overtone to the triad, Schoenberg’s personal acknowledgement of August Strindberg (1849-1912), as a “thinker” in *Harmonielehre* is considered.<sup>1</sup> Strindberg’s *Wrestling Jacob*, part of his autobiographical note, *Legends* is a narrative of distressed personal religious exploration.<sup>2</sup> *Wrestling Jacob*. It endorses Swedenborg’s intellectual significance for Schoenberg and introduces a new perspective to his plan. Within the *Fantasies* described in this chapter is a sub-set of images which attempt to portray this new

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<sup>1</sup> *Harmonielehre*, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> August Strindberg, “*Wrestling Jacob (A Fragment)*”, in *Legends: Autobiographical Sketches*, trans. and location not provided, no date. (Amazon edition)



perspective of Strindberg's, the impact an extended period of self-examination and religious thinking had upon Strindberg and Schoenberg himself.

This writer suggests that evidence for Schoenberg's attraction to an apparently obscure novella called *Seraphita* as a vehicle for a *Gesamtkunstwerk* is substantial. The novella, *Seraphita*, Balzac's fictionalisation of Swedenborgian thinking, captured Schoenberg's attention as a libretto at the very time he was writing *Harmonielehre* in 1910-12; the *Fantasies* were produced at that same time, in the same fever of creative activity. The influence of Balzac was first noted in the Introduction; in Chapter 1 the similarity between the literary language of the last chapter of *Harmonielehre* and the final sections of *Seraphita* discussed. In Chapter 4, Schoenberg's expressions of interest in Swedenborgian ideas have been identified in letters to Kandinsky, and his interest in *Gesamtkunstwerk* film productions in detailed instructions to his publisher, Hertzka.

In the Introduction to this thesis, this writer used the term *abstracted* to describe the images Schoenberg prepared as part of his planned *Gesamtkunstwerk*, *Seraphita*. The thesis has described the stages by which Schoenberg progressed towards his version of full *abstraction*. In Chapter 4, Schoenberg defines of the term *abstract* its *Gesamtkunstwerk* context, a synthesis of colour and music. The *Fantasies* are discussed in this Chapter in an interpolation with the narrative of *Seraphita*, in a way which seeks to demonstrate their status as *abstract* components of a *Gesamtkunstwerk*. The *Fantasies* are discussed, therefore, in such a way as to suggest a non-narrative relationship to *Seraphita* the text. Cinema has the power to manipulate time and action in non-linear ways. However, in the absence of their transformation into coloured, moving images projected synchronously with sound

and music, the *Fantasies* will inevitably remain *abstracted* images described in this text.

### **Assessing the importance of Balzac and Swedenborg for Schoenberg**

The Chapter begins with an assessment of Balzac's influence on Schoenberg in the context of Symbolist thought, before moving on to the impact Swedenborg's ideas on about language on Schoenberg's proposed *Gesamtkunstwerk*, *Seraphita*. Whilst Balzac may be best known in some quarters for *La Comédie humaine*, a panoramic, realist view of French social life in the early to middle years of the nineteenth century, it is his *Seraphita*, the novel of 1833-5 which seized Schoenberg's imagination. Balzac's interest in religious matters goes far beyond the roles of Roman Catholic priests in French society described in various *La Comédie humaine* novels.<sup>3</sup> In the same year that *Harmonielehre* was published, 1911, Schoenberg cast Balzac in the same frame as one of his mentors, Franz Liszt:

Fanatical faith, of the kind creates a radical distinction between normal men and those it impels. Normal men possess a conviction; the great man is possessed by a faith. <sup>4</sup>

The literary critic and historian of the time Arthur Symons's introduction to the Symbolist Movement of 1899 not only identifies Balzac for the first time in English in the Symbolist canon, but also refers to Balzac's identification with Swedenborg – “Swedenborgianism is my religion”.<sup>5</sup> Symons nominates two works “into which

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<sup>3</sup> *Seraphita* is one of Balzac's *Études philosophiques*, part of *La Comédie humaine*.

<sup>4</sup> *Style and Idea*, p. 446.

<sup>5</sup> Arthur Symons, *The Symbolist Movement in Literature*, Manchester, 2014, p.126.

Balzac has put his deepest thought”: *Seraphita* and *Louis Lambert*. Regarding the novella *Seraphita*, Symons quotes Balzac’s own views:

My life is in it.

One could write (Père) Goriot any day, *Seraphita* only once in a lifetime.

Schoenberg’s approach to the problems of synthesising words, music and visual images can be seen in terms of the *Secessionist* discourse on synaesthesia already discussed in this thesis. The relationship with Symbolism is noted there, but its influence on the development of Schoenberg’s *Gesamtkunstwerk* requires further amplification. Central to this influence is the concept of *correspondences*, and the interplay of sensory experiences as they are triggered by specific sounds, words, sights or smells. In Symbolism, it is asserted that the metaphysical reconciliation of scientific matter on the one hand, as represented in works of social realism and visual/optical impressionism (or mimesis), and of spirit on the other, as represented by ideas and emotions, results in works of art, which culminate in the expression of something more than the sum of their apparent parts. The prosaic and mundane things of everyday life make esoteric references to that which is hidden and the mysterious, particularly if they are presented in unusual colours and unexpected juxtapositions. Henri Dorra traces this synaesthetic characteristic of Symbolist theory back to the poet Charles Baudelaire (1821-67) and the artist Eugène Delacroix (1779-1863), and to the use of the term *correspondences*.<sup>6</sup> Swedenborg’s use of the concept of *correspondences* to describe analogous physical processes in both the

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<sup>6</sup> Henri Dorra, *Symbolist Art Theories A Critical Anthology*, London, 1994, p. 6.

natural (physical) and the spiritual worlds introduces the possibility of artistic communication between the natural world and the spiritual. The link back to the Schopenhauerian world of Representation and the Will is something that Schoenberg would have recognized: musical harmonies can suggest cognitive meanings, words, without the necessity of their expression in speech or writing. Hence, the use of *correspondences* completes a circle of intertextual relationships.

Of key significance for the development of Symbolism are the literary sources of its origins and its interface with artistic and literary criticism: but any definition of the term Symbolism itself requires clarification of the historical periodization and spatial location of Schoenberg's version of Symbolism. In Schoenberg's own thinking about Symbolism, the literary sources are referred to obliquely, but imply an understanding of certain historical antecedents, notably the eighteenth-century ideas of Swedenborg, together with Western European ideas, particularly those from France and Scandinavia, about the arts. To these ideas Schoenberg adds those of Wagner and Schopenhauer about the function of the arts in providing access to the unconscious realm of the Will. Once again, Schoenberg's approach implies a gradual, evolutionary development of ideas, leading to a qualitative step-change, in what amounts to a significant cultural renewal.

Within the interplay of human sensations, and *correspondences* between the natural world and the spiritual, it is music that increasingly attracted artistic attention from the Symbolists in the latter part of the nineteenth century: music was the foremost metaphor for artistic expression. The prevalent influence of Schopenhauer and Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk* is identifiable across many writers. In the ASC, for example, there is a copy of Paul Verlaine's poem, *Art poétique*, annotated by Schoenberg, in which the primacy of music above all other art forms is celebrated:

Music above all else, and for that choose the Uneven metre, hazier and more soluble in the air, with nothing in it that is heavy or fixed.

Nor should you on any account choose your words without a certain obscurity: nothing is more precious than the grey song where the Indistinct meets the Precise.

It is lovely eyes behind veils, it is the shimmering light of the moon, it is, in a cooling autumn sky, the blue disorder of the shining stars! <sup>7</sup>

This same sentiment is echoed in the critical work of Walter Pater (1839-94), which reflects a wider European synthesis of artistic developments and addresses a pan-European critical audience for Symbolism:

All art constantly aspires towards the condition of music...It is the art of music which most completely realises this artistic ideal, this perfect identification of matter and form...In its consummate moments, the end is not distinct from the means, the form from the matter, the subject from the expression; they inhere in and completely saturate each other...and one of the chief functions of aesthetic criticism, dealing with the products of art, old or new, is to estimate the degree in which each of those products (of different art forms) approaches... to musical law. <sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Paul Verlaine, "Art poetique", trans. by William Rees, in ed. William Rees, *The Penguin Book of French Poetry, 1820-1950*, London 1990. p.241. Paul Verlaine, French poet, 1844-96.

<sup>8</sup> Walter Pater, *Studies in the History of the Renaissance, The School of Giorgione*, ed. by Matthew Beaumont, Oxford, 2010. p.124. Pater cites, for example, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729-81), part of the German hierarchy of art historians, which includes Winckelmann, Herder and so on.

Pater combines the aspirations of *Gesamtkunstwerk*, within which music has the lead, with the concept of *correspondences*, within which different artistic forms interact with each other.

Schoenberg's knowledge of Symbolism, however, was also based upon practical exposure to Symbolist *praxis*, particularly in Berlin: his experiences as a jobbing musical arranger and *per force* a part-time composer in those years must have been very influential. The songs *Brettli-lieder*, no opus numbers, 1901-03, date from this period. Schoenberg's, *Pelleas und Melisande*, Op.5, 1903, are based on the Symbolist play by the Maeterlinck and are strongly influenced by the concept of *correspondences* and Schopenhauerian pessimism. Maeterlinck seems to have been particularly important for Schoenberg. Symons, describes Maeterlinck as a mystic for whom "the secret of things which is just beyond the most subtle words, the secret of the expressive silences, has always been clearer...than to most people".<sup>9</sup> Symons refers to a section from Maeterlinck's own book of meditations, *Le Tresor des Humbles*:

There is not a star in the sky nor a force in the soul which is indifferent to the motion of an falling eyelid or a rising thought - I have come to believe that the motionless old man lived really a more profound, human and universal life than the lover who strangles his mistress, the captain who gains a victory, or the husband who "avenges his honour".

For Maeterlinck, according to Symons, it is mystery that is most significant in life and art: "Science and the positive philosophies are bankrupt". Within the paradox of a

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<sup>9</sup> Symons, *op.cit*, p.80.

“static drama” – *Pélleas and Mélisande* has no action, or at best, the merest memories of it – the artist’s responsibility is to create something that does not express human emotions but rather the external forces that compel people, the Schopenhauerian Will. One of the first translators of Maeterlinck’s work into English from the French, Laurence Alma Tadema, prefaced the work as follows to emphasise its Symbolist and Swedenborgian roots:

The soul has senses as the body has; and it seems to me that the work of a poet – so he walk hand in hand with truth, revealing unto us as best he may the face she shows him – asks to be accepted or rejected in silence. For the nearer he stand to the veil, the keener his ears to catch life’s whispers, and the more vibrating his sensibility to the analogies [that is, the correspondences] that bind together the seen and the unseen, the more impossible it must become to weigh the value of what he gives us, since the only proof of its truth is the comprehension – here or there, partial or entire – of some similar or kindred soul. <sup>10</sup>

After composing the *Brettli-lieder* songs and *Pelleas and Melisande*, Schoenberg was commissioned in 1911 by the actress Albertine Zehme (1857-1946) to produce a work for a concert-hall performance of poetry accompanied by music; she had previously performed recitals of poetry to music by Liszt and Chopin. In *Pierrot lunaire* Op. 21, 1912, Schoenberg set poetry published in 1884 by the Belgian, Albert Giraud (1860-1929) to a suite of music. Though not mentioned in Symons’s book, Giraud is associated with the Symbolist Parnassian poets (and hence, to Baudelaire

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<sup>10</sup> Maurice Maeterlinck, *Pelleas and Melisande*, trans. Laurence Alma Tadema, London, 1915. The variations in spelling reflect the number of translations there are of this work.

and Mallarmé) and a commitment to “art for art’s sake” in which style and form were emphasised to the detriment of content. An alternately “black” and “white” *Pierrot* – not the traditional white-faced clown – swerves between musical settings to mark the waxing and waning of the moon and the character’s own movement back and forth from rationality to lunacy, exemplifying the *correspondences* of lunar cycle and man’s mental state. The subject matter of the poems, presented in three groups – love, sex and religion; violence, crime and blasphemy; and Pierrot’s haunted return home to Bergamo – further compounds the frustration of an audience’s expectations and emphasises the stark break with concert-hall traditions. To the ambiguities of musical consonance and dissonance, tonality and atonality, are added the ambiguities of language, meaning and identity, such that multiple valences are suggested, illusions formed and left to evaporate in a way, which emphasise Symbolist correspondences.<sup>11</sup> In *Pierrot* might be seen the condition of the modern human psyche, at once self-regarding but unsure about its identity and its future, not just an individual, but a marker for everyman. If Schoenberg prepared stage settings for *Pierrot lunaire*, as he might well have done, these settings have been lost.

Like the old man in Maeterlinck’s *Le Tresor des Humbles*, *Pierrot* both contemplates the music and is an active participant in it, though there is, of course, no action as such. In Schopenhaurian terms, the audience is provided with an experience of pure, Will-based knowing, a temporary escape from what remains a basically nasty and pessimistic life – presuming that is, that they are capable of appreciating it, for the elitist divide within humanity remains in the archaic musical forms Schoenberg uses and the *Sprechstimme* with which the poetry is spoken. The work always

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<sup>11</sup> Richard Kurth, “Pierrot lunaire: persona, voice, and the fabric of allusion”, in eds. Jennifer Shaw and Joseph Auner, *The Cambridge Companion to Schoenberg*, Cambridge, 2010, p.120.



emphasises its distance from most of the audience. Life is characterised by endless strife and driven by cyclical desires, wanting-attaining-wanting again: music is consolation. But, at the end, the audience is left to doubt as to whether poor *Pierrot*, that marker for everyman, has truly understood what has happened to him. If there has been a transfiguration, it will have been on the audience's part, as its individual members reflect upon their individual experiences through the body of *Pierrot*.

It would be wrong to assume that Schoenberg's interest in *correspondences* originated entirely from his awareness of Baudelaire and French poetry or exposure to Maeterlinck and European theatre. As Dorra suggests, Baudelaire and Delacroix were chiefly responsible for the propagation of the term in artistic circles in the nineteenth century, and Baudelaire was certainly known to Schoenberg, both as a poet and an art critic.<sup>12</sup> But, as noted in the Introduction (and as Dorra also indicates), interest in hermeneutics and the history of religion, within which Swedenborg and *correspondences* would have been one part, became an academic subject, as opposed to an ecclesiastical one, from the early nineteenth century onwards. Schoenberg was probably exposed to the historical figure of Swedenborg when he converted to the Lutheran Protestant Church; Swedenborg's ideas circulated in the Lutheran Protestant churches in Vienna. Symbolist influence on Schoenberg can be discerned from the annotated copies of key texts in his library in the ASC. Whilst there is no evidence that Schoenberg was aware of the Symbolist manifestos written by Jean Moreas (1856-1910) and Gabriel-Albert Aurier (1865-1892), some key Symbolist concepts particularly, *the unique ideal* of the expression of the idea, and the centrality of the perception of that idea by the artist, are

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<sup>12</sup> Dorra, *op.cit.* Charles Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal [The Flowers of Evil]* 1857, trans. Jonathan Culler, Oxford, 2008. Undated but contemporary copy in the ASC. Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, London, 1964. Undated but contemporary copy in the ASC.

exemplified by terms like *Einfall* and *Gedanke* in *Harmonielehre*, though Schoenberg would not return to a discussion of these terms until well after the period under consideration.<sup>13</sup> In the poem *Correspondences* of 1852-56, Baudelaire acknowledges Emanuel Swedenborg as the inspiration for the Symbolist linking of the mundane with the spiritual:

Nature is a temple in which living pillars sometimes emit confused words...some perfumes are as fresh as the flesh of children.<sup>14</sup>

This quotation from Baudelaire exemplifies the changing emphasis within the usage of *correspondences* from Swedenborg's Enlightenment empiricism to the Symbolist's attention to the artist's own sensory experiences and interactions between them. There is no simple line between Symbolist *correspondences*, Swedenborg and Schoenberg. The interplay of senses exemplified by Baudelaire would not satisfy Swedenborg's testing of empirical evidence for analogous physical processes taking place: pillars do not emit words. It cannot be assumed that the term *correspondences* from Swedenborg's *Arcana Coelestia* in the middle eighteenth century is the same one used by Baudelaire in *Les Fleurs du Mal* (1857), or by Schoenberg in his thinking.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, in *Harmonielehre* Schoenberg apparently shares the Symbolist belief in the significance of the artist's own sensory experience and self-absorbed reflection on that.

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<sup>13</sup> Dorra, *op.cit.*, contains both manifestos: Jean Moreas, A Literary Manifesto – Symbolism, p.150-152, and G-Albert Aurier, Symbolism in Painting: Paul Gauguin, p.192-203

<sup>14</sup> Translated text from Dorra, *op.cit.* p.11. Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal*, *op.cit.* There is a German translation by Stefan George, *Des Blumen des Bösen*, 1908, owned by Schoenberg in the ASC.

<sup>15</sup> Emmanuel Swedenborg, *Arcana Coelestia*, 8 volumes originally published 1746-7.

As compared to his knowledge of Schopenhauer, it is difficult to challenge the simple assumption that Schoenberg is wholly reliant on Balzac's *Seraphita* for his understanding of Swedenborg. As noted in Chapter 2, Schoenberg's knowledge of Schopenhauer can be seen from the annotated editions of Schopenhauer's works in the ASC library, and from direct references to him in *Harmonielehre*. Whilst the absence of documentary evidence in the archive cannot be taken as evidence of gaps in Schoenberg's personal reading, there appear to be no texts of Swedenborg in the ASC. In a letter of 19 August 1912 to Wassily Kandinsky, Schoenberg describes *Seraphita*'s intrinsic value as a work of "Philosophy, religion, that are (sic) perceived with artistic senses" without referring to the novella's purpose as a statement of Swedenborgian theory.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, any discussion of correspondences must start with Swedenborg, rather than relying unquestioningly on Balzac's influence on Schoenberg.

Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) was a Swedish scientist and engineer, who travelled widely in Western Europe, primarily in his capacity as an adviser to the Swedish crown on mining and smelting: during his time Sweden produced the most advanced iron and steels in Europe and had commercial interests to exploit and protect. Born into a Lutheran family, Swedenborg does not write on religious matters until 1734, and his interest in scientific matters continue after that.<sup>17</sup> Swedenborg seeks to apply scientific standards to his "anatomical" description of the human soul, a finite entity, with mechanical and physical links to the body on the one hand, and to the airs and auras of the Universe on the other. The soul beats time with the

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<sup>16</sup> Hahl-Koch, *op.cit*, p.53.

<sup>17</sup> Emanuel Swedenborg, *Philosophy of the Infinite, or Outlines of and Philosophical Argument on the Infinite and the Final Cause of Creation; and on the Intercourse between the Soul and the Body*, London, 1992. Subsequently Swedenborg published between 1749 and 1756 *Arcana Coelestia*, an eight volume, deity-based theory of planetary and biological development.

Universe via a membrane and a fluid in the body. <sup>18</sup> On this basis of this description, to quote Gary Lachman, Swedenborg “was not a Symbolist, not even a Romantic; he was a scientist and a man of the Enlightenment, and clarity and rigour were essential to him, not vague suggestion.” <sup>19</sup> Whilst exercising some necessary caution regarding the more esoteric assertions of the publications of the institution established to promote his writings, the Swedenborg Society, particularly with regard to the veracity of Swedenborg’s claims to have communicated with angels, Swedenborg does attempt to describe religious experience in terms of scientific, physical principles, rather than rely upon the religious and scriptural interpretations of others. In other words, Swedenborg’s approach is purportedly that of the scientific empiricist, rather than the esoteric fantasist – “truths above miracles” Swedenborg states. <sup>20</sup> In accord with the Lutheran Protestant exhortation, each man must examine the evidence primarily of Scripture alongside human experience, but Swedenborg adds that each man must decide for himself on any intrinsic evidence of a deity. Swedenborg’s definition of *correspondences* or *analogies* rests on the assertion that the physical processes taking place in the natural world are the same processes that take place in the spiritual world: *correspondences* are analogous to the physical processes that take place in the natural, everyday world. The process of breathing the atmosphere has an analogous process even when the body is dead, the soul continuing to exist whilst being sustained by processes akin to breathing and blood circulating. Angels

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<sup>18</sup> Anonymous Compiler, *Emanuel Swedenborg, A Compendium of the Theological and Spiritual Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg: Being a Systematic and Orderly Epitome of His Religious Works*. Primary Source Edition, reproduction of original pub. Boston, 1854, p.27.

<sup>19</sup> Gary Lachman, *Swedenborg An Introduction to His Life and Ideas*, London, 2009. Published on behalf of the Swedenborg Society.

<sup>20</sup> Anonymous Compiler, *op.cit*, p.57.

breathe, eat, marry and reproduce like ordinary men and women. It is only the forms that these processes take that are different.<sup>21</sup>

Swedenborg's concept of language comprises levels of meaning beyond the lowest, literal one of common sense: language could progress upwards to the highest level, the level of the angels, through that same process of *correspondences*.<sup>22</sup> The interconnectedness of physical laws continues even at the highest levels of the angels: voices give rise to sounds which have meanings heard through ears, even though the sounds of language cannot be understood at the lower levels. Language exists at the highest levels even though it is uncertain how such processes analogous to speech and hearing work, beyond the proposition that there is some corresponding process based upon the same set of physical principles.<sup>23</sup> The language used in heaven was known to the ancients, but existed in the form of correspondences, rather than, for example, something that might be recognised at the human level as a text. This raises questions for Schoenberg about the relationship between sounds made by the human voice and their semantic meaning. Knowledge of language has been lost even at the lowest, literal level and might only be rediscovered via a new covenant with the deity. Paradoxically perhaps, this revival of language might only be achieved through a combination of faith and truth: that is, a matter of faith about something spiritual understood via the process of *correspondences*, combined with the truth that can be understood from empirical evidence. This must have chimed with Schoenberg's understanding of Kraus's insistence on the recovery of language as a key to social and spiritual renewal,

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, *Compendium of the Theological and Spiritual Writings*, p. 304. The *Compendium* is bound with *The Philosophy*.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, *Compendium* p.54.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, *Compendium* p.69.

discussed at Chapter 3. Like Swedenborg, in *Harmonielehre* Schoenberg emphasises the nature of the listener's experience of musical harmony as an entirely physical phenomenon in the first instance. As such it is something worthy of physical and scientific examination and should be examined with methodological consistency. All evidence should be considered *ab initio*, rather than relying upon the views of previous authorities and cultural conventions. The Swedenborgian scientific approach then encourages Schoenberg to investigate the nature of the unconscious, whether this leads to the world of the Will via the experience of listening to music, as Schopenhauer describes it, or becomes part of the religious celebrations of the Lutheran Church, as Schoenberg might have experienced in his conversion to Christianity. Swedenborg's significance for Schoenberg goes further, however, particularly in encouraging him to develop his own language with which to communicate within a *Gesamtkunstwerk*. The break with cultural historicity envisaged in *Harmonielehre* (and echoed in *Secessionist* discourse) can be accompanied by a similar break with the old language of religion and philosophy. In effect, Swedenborg authorises Schoenberg to go beyond the Lutheran parameters of using texts from national languages in Church (or the obscurity of Latin in Catholic churches), and to use his own language and own texts:

In admitting the divinity of the Word, we rid ourselves of the Bible writers and their idiosyncrasies; and we know that as the fixed Word was produced by them they necessarily occupy the lowest stratum of human history...the justification by faith alone, which at present constitutes the theology of the reformed churches, is built entirely on an entirely fake foundation.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Anonymous Compiler, *op.cit*, p.77

The significance of this change cannot be overstated. Henceforth, Schoenberg has Swedenborg's authorisation to use his own language – music, images and words in a *Gesamtkunstwerk* – without being bound by the constraints of linguistic convention or tradition in religious matters. Swedenborg advocates that the words of the Bible have no special significance in themselves, as “insignificant” as the words of any other writer or poet. Swedenborg proposes exercising that same stripping away of the original Biblical authors' unnecessary ornamentation and spurious historical precedence that Schoenberg applies to his own narrative of musical harmony in *Harmonielehre*. As in Chapter 3, Loos and Kraus practise the same stripping away of artificiality and superficiality from the language of Viennese society, hoping to recover a language stripped of its cultural accretions and tested for its moral certainties as a fundamental spiritual ambition. Nevertheless, Schoenberg is presented with a recurrent problem: for his planned *Gesamtkunstwerk* who will assist him in writing a libretto and words, or will that task fall entirely to himself?

### **Schoenberg and *Correspondences: Seraphita the Gesamtkunstwerk***

This thesis has demonstrated how Swedenborgian concepts were applied to the detailed historical and empirical consideration of the harmonic spectrum in *Harmonielehre*. Consonance and dissonance flow from one to the other, which leads Schoenberg to conclude that by utilising that wider harmonic spectrum (the empirical evidence, the truth) he would be able to heighten “in an unprecedented manner the sensory, intellectual and spiritual pleasures offered by art” (the faith).<sup>25</sup> It has also demonstrated that Schoenberg's understanding of Symbolist thinking is more

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<sup>25</sup> *Harmonielehre*, p.422.

extensive that might at first appear, reiterating the way in which anachronistic perspectives have imposed an unjustifiable identity on Schoenberg: someone imbued in nineteenth-century Symbolism who became a modernist inventor of twelve-tone composition does not fall easily in the same narrative. The processes by which the synthesis of different artistic media is achieved depends upon Schoenberg's rediscovery of *correspondences*, and new levels of exposure to the realm of the Will, and the angels, as Swedenborg and Balzac imagine it.

Schoenberg aspired to complete a *Gesamtkunstwerk* of *Seraphita* throughout his life but was never able to achieve it. Schoenberg confirmed his inability to secure interest in producing a film version when he first arrived in Hollywood in 1940.<sup>26</sup> In this sense, *Seraphita* becomes a story of thwarted ambition, in which many steps were taken without the satisfaction of full realisation. Schoenberg's first attempt to translate *Seraphita* into a musical drama followed his usual pattern of working up from a small-scale setting for solo voice or two voices to a full orchestral and vocal conclusion. The chronology here follows Rufer's catalogue of Schoenberg's compositions and the sequence of Schoenberg's autograph manuscripts and letters. Rufer describes how Schoenberg planned a large-scale symphony for soli, mixed chorus and orchestra between 1912 and 1914, the years when he was preoccupied with *Seraphita*. The drafts of the symphony show that Schoenberg planned to trace the journey of an individual man through his spiritual ascendancy from earthly woes through to spiritual reconciliation with God. In a letter of 1912, well after he had developed his basic ideas and his *Fantasies*, Schoenberg sought Richard Dehmel's collaboration as librettist:

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<sup>26</sup> See, "Art and the Moving Pictures" in *Style and Idea*, p.153.



...for a long time I have been wanting to write an oratorio on the following theme: how the man of today, who has passed through materialism, socialism, and anarchy, who was an atheist, but has still preserved a remnant of ancient beliefs (in the form of superstition) -- how this modern man struggles with God (see also "Jakob ringt" by Strindberg) and finally arrives at the point of finding God and becoming religious...At first I had intended to write this myself. I do trust my own capacity to do so. Then I thought of arranging Strindberg's "Jakob ringt" ("Jacob struggles") for my purpose. Finally, I decided to begin with positive religiosity, and I plan to rework the final chapter ("Journey to Heaven") of Balzac's "Seraphita". But I could not get rid of the idea of "The Prayer of the Man of Today"; and I often thought: If only Dehmel...! <sup>27</sup>

In a first response, Dehmel offered more poems as an alternative, along the lines of his *The Prayer of the Man of Today*, as part of what Dehmel called *Schöpfungsfeier*, *Festival of Creation* – possibly his own suggestion, if not Schoenberg's. In a further response, Dehmel responded positively to Schoenberg's concept of a religious work, but, without the Biblical context, one to be set in a mystical realm. Possible collaboration with Dehmel looked increasingly difficult.

Not unusually in Schoenberg's composing routine, the time-lapses between initial composition and first performance and publication were considerable. Schoenberg began in 1913 by setting an English poem called *Seraphita* to music as one of the

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<sup>27</sup> Rufer, *op.cit.* p.117. Richard Dehmel's poetry had inspired Schoenberg's *String Quartet*, *Verklärte Nacht* Op.4, 1899.

*Four Songs for Voice and Orchestra*, Op.22, 1913-16.<sup>28</sup> The *Four Songs for Voice and Orchestra*, Op.22, are perhaps more concerned with a background narrative to *Seraphita*, the human experiences of life, love and loss, than the transcendence of the human spirit into the unconscious world of the Will. The poem *Seraphita* itself is a short ekphratic response by the English poet Ernest Dowson (1867-1900) to the Balzac novella, translated into German by another of Schoenberg's collaborators, the German poet Stefan George (1868-1933). Dowson's poem of 1896 emphasises the significance of the face of *Seraphita*, and the impact that has on minds of beholders; whilst it does not concern itself with the narrative of Balzac's original Swedenborgian text, the emphasis on the face is a recurrent part of Schoenberg's subsequent images:

Come not before me now, O visionary face,

Me tempest-tost, and borne along life's passionate sea...<sup>29</sup>

The imagery in Dowson's poem is the response of the tormented human to the face of a figure who is both the threat and hope of a future life, intimidation and promise. But, Dowson's is a maritime setting, a poem about the romantic loss of a loved one under a moon-lit stormy sea, rather the transformation of a body into the heavens. Schoenberg set this poem alongside three by the German poet Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926), taken from the *Book of Hours*, *Book of Poverty and Death*, and *Book of Images*, a series of love poems to God who can be remembered but cannot be spoken to (*Book of Hours*), the emotional conflict between human love and communication

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<sup>28</sup> This working routine of Schoenberg's, moving from song to full orchestration, can also be seen in the composition of *Erwartung*, Op.17, 1909, which started out as a setting of a poem on the same subject of emotional and psychological anticipation by Dehmel (1863-1920) in *Four Songs*, Op.2, 1899 for solo voice and piano.

<sup>29</sup> Ernest Christopher Dowson, *The Poems and Prose of Ernest Dowson*, no location, 2011, p. 46.

(*Book of Poverty and Death*) and the human anxieties about ageing and the passage of time (*Book of Images*).

### **“Seeing” *Seraphita***

Schoenberg’s attempt to involve Dehmé in the *Seraphita* concept came to nothing. Time and again, Schoenberg found that his inability to reach agreement with a librettist meant that the work would fall to him. But, the task of visualising the *Seraphita Gesamtkunstwerk* must surely be an easier step, either as a specification for an artistic collaborator – perhaps Kokoschka, Kandinsky or Roller, whom Schoenberg had named as possible collaborators in *Die glückliche Hand* – or something more open ended. There seems to be no evidence that Schoenberg contacted his *Blaue Reiter* associates seeking collaboration, beyond the inclusion of Kokoschka regarding *Die glückliche Hand*. His recommendation of *Seraphita* to Kandinsky as a source of spiritual inspiration received no response. On the evidence of *On the Spiritual in Art*, according to Lindsay and Vergo, Kandinsky was more interested in theosophy at that time than Swedenborg and Western Lutheranism.<sup>30</sup>

As noted in the Introduction, whilst the documentary evidence is incomplete, Schoenberg and Kokoschka had attempted to work together following Loos’s introduction in 1907. In *Erinnerung an Oskar Kokoschka (Memory of Oskar Kokoschka)* (April 1910) (fig.9) Schoenberg is perhaps inviting Kokoschka to join him in the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, recording the memory of a meeting that came to nothing, or speculating how a working relationship between the two of them might have worked. Two heads, represented only by single eyes, are positioned on both sides of the

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<sup>30</sup> Lindsay and Vergo, p.117.

surface, the one on the left higher up than the other, which sits right at the bottom. The heads are separated by a scrub of white colour over a grey-brown featureless background. There is nothing to suggest the relative positioning of the bodies to the heads, except one of possible subordination. Both eyes look out directly at the viewer, the one perhaps slightly behind the other as if looking up from behind the body on the left-hand side. Is this a recognition of Kokoschka's superiority as a visual artist, and a desire on Schoenberg's part to concede that point? Certainly, this is an *abstracted* image, stripped of unnecessary detail. Unfortunately, as in the case of most aspects of Schoenberg's relationship with Kokoschka, there is no longer any supporting documentation to confirm the purpose of this image. Perhaps, it is nothing more than its title suggests, Schoenberg's memory of a life-long friend, though it cannot be a memorial since both Kokoschka and Schoenberg lived on well beyond 1910. The date, however, may be persuasive of a link to Schoenberg's planning for a *Gesamtkunstwerk*.

Interestingly, Balzac provides artistic guidance in another *études philosophiques*. In *Le chef-d' oeuvre inconnu* (*The Unknown Masterpiece*) of 1830/31, Balzac exemplifies the changing nature of pictorial art by contrasting the views taken by three seventeenth century artists, Frenhofer, the old master, Porbus, the well-established current celebrity and the newcomer, Poussin.<sup>31</sup> In the words of the old master, "the human body is not bounded by lines...in nature there are no lines...only the distribution of light gives the body its appearance", to which Porbus responds, "...right here ends our art on earth". But, to the younger artists, the old master's attempts to deal only with light are catastrophic: "the tip of a bare foot emerging from this chaos of colours, shapes and vague shadings, a kind of incoherent mist...the

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<sup>31</sup> Honoré de Balzac, *The Unknown Masterpiece*, trans. Richard Howard, New York, 2001.

impossibility of an artistic lifetime". At the end of the narrative, the old master dies after burning the painting. Balzac's understanding of the potential dilemmas of art theory is clearly influenced by Baudelaire and Delacroix. Delacroix's notion is that art must reproduce the intimate thoughts of the artist: the principal source of interest (of the art) derives from the soul (of the artist) and irresistibly reaches the soul of the onlooker.<sup>32</sup> Should Schoenberg emulate this idea in words, music and visual images? Is the recognition of one part of the human body – the model foot in *Le chef-d' oeuvre inconnu* – amongst a chaos of colour and light sufficient to provide recognition? There is no certain evidence that Schoenberg was influenced in this way, but the existence in the ASC of the remaining copies of a much larger original set of Balzac's works owned by Schoenberg is perhaps persuasive of his knowing this particular novel.<sup>33</sup>

The initial imagery in Balzac's *Seraphita* is certainly very powerful: the novella's setting in Northern Norway is without doubt a product of Balzac's imagination, as he never actually visited the location, but probably relied upon literary evidence. The opening chapter is an exercise in invoking the power of the Romantic Sublime, with which Balzac, as someone with an artistic grounding, would have been aware.<sup>34</sup> As *Seraphitus* – the androgen in male form - and *Minna* ski down the slopes of a high alp above the fjord, Seraphitus expresses his world-weariness and desire to escape to heaven to *Minna*:

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<sup>32</sup> Baudelaire quoting Delacroix in Dorra, *op.cit*, p.9.

<sup>33</sup> *Le chef-d' oeuvre inconnu* (*The Unknown Masterpiece*) is not insignificant as a source of artistic inspiration. See, for example, Pablo Picasso, *Vollard Suite*, in Ashton, *op.cit*.

<sup>34</sup> Balzac numbered the French artist Eugene Delacroix among his circle of friends and consulted him about *Le chef-d' oeuvre inconnu*.

...we are born to stretch upward to the skies. Our native land, like the face of a mother, cannot terrify her children...they who are all spirit do not weep...I see no longer human wretchedness...

The description continues as the reader is carried down the alp, in what is the exact opposite of the novella's finale, the ascent into heaven:

The pair descended to the Falberg: miraculous perception guided their course...or to speak more properly, their flight... *Seraphitus* caught *Minna* in his arms and darted with rapid motion, lightly as a bird, over the crumbling causeways of the abyss.

In his preparation for the *Gesamtkunstwerk Seraphita*, Schoenberg's landscape image, *Vision*, c.1911 (fig.10), of that descent comprises a broad sweep of diagonals down from the top left-hand corner of the board, with a sunlit yellow followed by a broad band of icy translucent blue, over-painted with a thin snowy white, before descending into a dark, black canyon at bottom right. The application of paint is broad-brushed, and the paint thin, though it does suggest the speed of action. In the *catalogue raisonné*, the image is simply entitled *Vision*, and probably dates to 1911, with no suggestion of possible relationship to *Seraphita*. There are no other images of landscapes associated with the Norway of *Seraphita*. Nevertheless, the image is persuasive of the topography described by Balzac in this passage, suggesting, as it does, the depth of the fjord from sunlight at its peaks to the darkness at the bottom of the chasm. In these respects, this is the most realistic of the *Fantasies*, those images associated with *Seraphita*, though very importantly what it lacks is the staffage of a traditional landscape and most notably, the figures of *Seraphita* (in the male form of *Seraphitus*) and *Minna*. This image could be regarded as part of the

visual preparation for a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, one that must be worked up as a stage flat, or more likely, if Schoenberg's for the cinematic production of *Die glückliche Hand* are to be followed, as a series of story-boards in a film.

However, *Vision*, c.1911 (fig.10) also raises uncertainties about the ease with which images can be assigned to specific dates for the development of *Gesamtkunstwerk* and points in the narrative of *Seraphita*. The image was originally called *Vision*, c.1911 in Hahl-Koch's text of 1984: it was believed to be one of two or three *Visions* discussed in letters between Kandinsky and Schoenberg in December 1911.<sup>35</sup>

Correspondence between this writer and the ASC has confirmed that Mayer and Muxeneder identify this same image as having been painted on a much larger piece of board, which was then cut into sections by Schoenberg: whilst the two sections, now both untitled (figs.11 & 12), are related in terms of colour, perspective and topographical references (to a much bigger, steep-sided, fjord scene) they are now merely described as "Fragments".<sup>36</sup> Further, they are undated. Whilst the subject matter of the two images may be suggestive of an association with the narrative of *Seraphita*, caution must obviously be exercised.

There are, however, more fundamental problems. Is it possible to associate the *Seraphita* images with a traditional narrative style of presentation? Do certain images portray specific episodes in the story of *Seraphita* as precisely as the story-board for a film might be thought to outline? Is there a simple narrative in Schoenberg's film, like there is on the printed page of Balzac's original story? This writer would suggest that the images created by Schoenberg are not to be used in this way for two related reasons. Firstly, the images were created as part of the production plan of a

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<sup>35</sup> Hahl-Koch, *op.cit*, p.40.

<sup>36</sup> Meyer and Muxeneder, p.149.

cinematic *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Like his expectations for the production of *Die glückliche Hand*, he would have expected the task of producing final versions of accompanying images to fall to set designers and stage technicians. As already noted, Schoenberg gave considerable thought to set design to achieve the effects that he needed, but only as part of a perception of his own overall responsibility. It is very clear from the precision of his directions for a cinematographical production of *Die glückliche Hand*, that he envisaged a significant role for technicians in the production of that *Gesamtkunstwerk* under his direction and that technical matters would be the subject of discussion and development.

Secondly, and more importantly, Schoenberg's *Gesamtkunstwerk* concept encompasses the synthesis and interplay of media, so that music, images and colours can be manipulated outside the traditional theatrical unities of time, location and continuity of action. Material representing key moments or events can be revisited several times in different media or mixes of media. Images can be repeated without the constraints of time or narrative sequence; equally, they can be the subject of variations and change. Time can be stretched, actions repeated. And, *images* as expressed in terms of Schoenberg's poetic language can reiterate, repeat, vary and change in response to the synthesis of the media involved, colour being enhanced, for example, not just by electric lighting or moving colour, but also by the tone-colours of music. An image *seen* once can be perceived again, allowing, as Schoenberg expresses it, for a process of continuous and repeated analysis. Of all the technologies that permit such manipulation of images, cinema excels at this. Perception moves beyond the confines of mimesis in the world of Representation, into the abstract, unconscious world of the Will.



Hence, whilst the main images believed by this writer to be most closely associated with *Seraphita* are discussed next, there can be no intrinsic significance in the order with which they are dealt with here, the issue being determined more by the constraints of the linear narrative of a thesis than the nature of a *Gesamtkunstwerk* realisation. Others may imagine different narratives from the *Fantasies* because they exist as images not bound by the usual laws of Representation but unbound in the abstract world of the Will. There can be no authoritative narrative.

And further, in this world of the Will, the relationship between the images and *Seraphita* must be questioned: is there a causal, narrative relationship between the two, or do other relationships exist? Does the set of images relate to the physical and intellectual religious journey of discovery upon which Schoenberg embarks on towards the end of this Chapter? Is the viewer supposed to transpose her or his own image into a narrative of personal transcendence through *Seraphita* the *Gesamtkunstwerk*? To remind the reader: *das Gleitende*, meaning is slippery and ever-changing.

The story of *Seraphita*'s birth is related to *Wilfrid* by an old religious minister, *Becker*: the celestial marriage of *Baron Seraphitz*, a cousin of Swedenborg, and his fiancée resulted in the birth of the androgen. In the story, the reader is told that the ceremony was conducted by Swedenborg himself. When the child was nine years old, both parents disappeared, and since that time *Seraphita/Seraphitus* has prepared to join them in heaven, seldom being concerned with food or the everyday activities of human life. The androgen clearly never belonged on earth. The adoration expressed by *Wilfrid* and *Minna* for a being that is alternately female, and male is never reciprocated: *Seraphita/Seraphitus* is world weary and unresponsive. As the narrative moves on, *Seraphita*'s response to *Wilfrid*'s attempts to seduce her are

equally ethereal and dismissive, hinting at a range of experience that exceeds *Wilfrid's* but must surely evade actual description. How can the androgen, at this time living in a remote part of the world, have been offered more than the world can offer? As *Seraphita* responds:

Can the riches of art, the riches of the world, the splendours of a court seduce me? Beings more powerful than you have offered me far more.

The lives of humans, their riches and their conjugal pleasures clearly have nothing to offer. All that is offered by the androgen to *Wilfrid* and *Minna* is the possibility of entry to heaven through their own marital union. The death of *Seraphita/Seraphitus* comes at the point when the man and woman are still pondering their futures, but as a parting gift they are permitted to witness the androgen's ascent into heaven. The significance of this is explained in the following terms, which lie at the heart of Balzac's interpretation of Swedenborg's philosophy:

All human beings go through a previous life in the sphere of Instinct, where they are brought to see the worthlessness of earthly treasures, to amass which they give themselves such untold pains! Who can tell how many times the human being lives in the sphere of Instinct before he is prepared to enter the sphere of Abstractions, where thought expends itself on erring science, where mind wearies at last of human language?

Balzac here uses the concept of correspondences to compare the conditions of ordinary mortal life with those of the angels in body of a central, world-weary character, who is both female and male, dependent upon the sex of whoever seeks her/his attention.

*Denken (Thinking)*, (before October 1910) (fig.13) places the viewer in the centre of the forthcoming action, but there is an immediate uncertainty about the nature of the image and the meaning of its title. Schoenberg's title might suggest that the image is the top of someone's head, cropped (cinematographically, as Schoenberg might have put it) in such a way that it covers the bottom third, and no more, of the surface. If the head is in profile looking upwards to the left, then what might be the hair from a balding head is reminiscent of Schoenberg's own head, his visual signature. The reddened flesh might suggest either the heat of the atmosphere or the brilliance of the light, or possibly both. The object at the bottom of the image is, however, not defined by facial features or an eye, if it is a face in profile. The ambiguity of the nature of the object, head or topographical feature of some unearthly landscape, suggests both bodily presence and simultaneously, absence. Is the image that of an observer looking upwards and outwards on to strange landscape, or is it a landscape without an observer being present, only viewed from a distance? Is the head Schoenberg's, simply thinking as the title suggests of some landscape he has created, or is the image the interiority of his own (or the viewer's) contemplation?

The major proportion of the image comprises a horizon-less expanse of featureless bright yellow desert. There are no shadows, so there can be no sense of time, no position of the source of the light. The image glows with its own colour, emphasising the colour on the top of the head (if it is a head) and the reflection back of colour and heat. Importantly, though, this image, with all its ambiguities, establishes, or repeats, a common palette of colours for featureless landscapes or environments in the sequence of images that follows.

The novella reaches its denouement and the narrative enters its most metaphysical stage. In *Gaze* (c.1910) (fig.14) the same head, if it is a head, of *Denken* (*Thinking*) turns to look back at us frontally, though it is defined by the merest suggestion of eyes, spots of colour without detail. There is no lower face, no nose or mouth, only a wash of dark yellow colour bounded by green shadows on both sides of the head. The skin of the brow and top of the head reflects the colour of the glowing landscape that now stands behind the viewer. Like the effect of some cataclysmic heavenly event, the light of the glowing landscape that the head now looks on extends out into the space beyond the head, out into the darkness beyond.

*Wilfrid* and *Minna* find themselves consumed in a vision of heavenly beings, sounds and lights, and a vision of what their own futures might be if they follow the heavenly instruction to unite together as a single androgen. Through the ordinary woman and man who witness this transfiguration, the reader experiences a mystical threshold beyond which ordinary language, semantic language, disappears into a universe of sounds.<sup>37</sup> In *Blue Gaze* (March 1910) (fig.15) a head in profile on the left of the image utters words which flow out into the same bright, featureless landscape and glowing atmosphere. The flow is traced in the paint from left to right across the surface. As noted in the Introduction to this thesis regarding Schoenberg's materials, the impasto effect of the original oil paint has probably been much reduced as the paint dried to a matte finish. The head possesses an eye with reddened lids, but there is no colour in the eyeball, the eye reflecting the bright orange colour of the environment. The lips are red and open, but the face suggests neither character or

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<sup>37</sup> Schoenberg's retrospective references to *Seraphita* are extensive and include "*Heart and Brain in Music*" 1946, and "*Composition With Twelve Notes*" [1] 1941.

gender. Perhaps, this is a member of the heavenly body assembled to witness and celebrate the transfiguration of *Seraphita*, or it may be *Wilfrid* or *Minna* in that role, or even their androgen. The stripping away of identity is what is significant in Swedenborgian terms.

In *Red Gaze* (26 March 1910) (fig.1), as noted in the Introduction to the thesis, in the upper third of the image, a single eye looks out to the left from a head that is barely recognisable inside an all-consuming fire. The eye provides confirmation that this is a human head. The outline of the head itself is only vaguely discernible in the slightly lighter colour and the contour of the oil paint. Only the accuracy of the painting of the eye provides any sense of position; the head is still upright. But, there is no sense of scale or location, no sense of height above the ground or progress towards the heavens, as the image has no other details. The image of consuming light is overwhelming.

*Seraphita* rejects the corruption of this earth and ascends to heaven in a blaze of light, colour and sound, a unification of God and an androgynous being.

For, when Matter is exhausted, Spirit enters...the communication of THE LIGHT... [in which] Seraphita becomes THE SERAPH.... a single male/female being...Light gave birth to melody, melody gave birth to light...

Transfigured in light, colour and music, Seraphita/Seraphitus ascends to heaven:

Spirits of the pure, ye sacred flock, come forth from the hidden places, come on the surface of the luminous waves! The hour now is; come, assemble. Let us sing at the gates of the Sanctuary; our songs shall drive away the final clouds. With one accord let us hail the Dawn of the Eternal Day. Behold the

rising of the one True Light! Ah, why may I not take with me these friends!

Farewell, poor earth, Farewell. <sup>38</sup>

In *Gaze (Blick)* (May 1910) (fig.?) the transfiguration of the human figure of *Seraphita* seems almost complete. A single eye looks out from the mid-left of the surface, but the head suggests greater detail now: it is distorted as if physically melting in intense light and heat like a waxwork. Apart from the eye, no features are individually identifiable from their normal positions. A green margin to the right of the image, broader at the bottom of the surface, thinner at the top, may suggest the transfiguration is near completion, the “normal” light of the world now emerging as the heavenly glow recedes. Perhaps this is taking the image beyond its interpretive limits: Schoenberg’s habit of cutting his board up to maximise their use may have resulted in work from another image impinging on this one, rendering this interpretation marginally speculative.

The narrative of *Seraphita* ends with the ecstasy of religious sentiment, with the uttering of the last psalm:

*neither by word, look, nor gesture. The departing SPIRIT (of Seraphita) was above them, shedding incense without odour, melody without sound. About them (Minna and Wilfrid), where they stood, were neither surfaces, nor angles, nor atmosphere.* <sup>39</sup>

This ending is then echoed in the closing section of *Harmonielehre*:

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<sup>38</sup> Balzac, *op.cit.* p.178.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, p.180.

I firmly believe that [the new music] is capable of heightening in an unprecedented manner the sensory, intellectual and spiritual pleasures offered by art...it will expand our relationship to that which seems to us today inanimate as we give life from our life to that which is temporarily dead for us, but dead only by virtue of the slight connection we have with it. <sup>40</sup>

This summation of the Swedenborgian conception of the relationship between earthly sensory perception and celestial perception, and the part played by *correspondences* leads Schoenberg far beyond the compositional parameters of the single voice with orchestra of Op.22. To meet the ambitious levels of *Seraphita* and *Theory*, he would have to compose the music for a *Gesamtkunstwerk* of far greater dimensions.

### **Overtone: Strindberg's *Jakob ringt* (*Wrestling Jacob*)**

Schoenberg's original letter of invitation to Dehmel implies not only what Dehmel took to be the composition of an oratorio of a similar scale to one of Johann Sebastian Bach's, but also the direction in which Schoenberg's own religious sense is moving. To meet his ambitions, Schoenberg clearly envisaged a composition of orchestral enormity, moving rapidly from the narrative of Balzac's *Seraphita* to the personal religious experiences described by Strindberg in *Jakob ringt*. Schoenberg planned to use several offstage orchestras and choruses, presumably in addition to a main orchestra, placed at various elevations and distances from the stage,

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<sup>40</sup> *Harmonielehre*, p.422. The brackets are this writer's.

together with organs and harmoniums.<sup>41</sup> The Swedish playwright, August Strindberg, probably known to Schoenberg via plays such as *Miss Julie* and *The Father* with their intense characterisation and confrontational themes, enjoyed immense popularity at the *fin-de-siècle*, and it was to Strindberg that Schoenberg looked for additional inspiration.

Strindberg's understanding of Swedenborg, as noted in by him in *Inferno*, is based upon reading an original version of Swedenborg for the first time in 1896, and on a copy of Balzac's *Seraphita*, which he acquired in Paris around the same time.<sup>42</sup> Strindberg claims that *Seraphita* introduced Swedenborg into his life. Unable to continue his literary success and embroiled in divorce, penury and self-imposed exile, Strindberg engaged in a series of personal religious quests, alcoholism and chemical dependency in various European cities, most notably Paris. During the period from the early 1900s to his death in 1912, he kept a diary and published various journals, including *Legends: Autobiographical Sketches*, within which at Chapter XII is a fragment, *Wrestling Jacob*.<sup>43</sup>

The term "autobiography" is misleading, for Strindberg's writing comprises a montage of ideas, attitudes and emotions which he has himself read, reinterpreted and re-written. His work, suggests Michael Robinson, exemplifies that same intertextuality highlighted throughout this thesis: rather being an accurate and trustworthy exposition of his life, it is a multiple palimpsest of different perspectives:

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<sup>41</sup> Rufer, *op.cit*, p.119.

<sup>42</sup> August Strindberg, *Inferno/From An Occult Diary*, trans. Mary Sandbach, London, 1962

<sup>43</sup> August Strindberg, *Legends: Autobiographical Sketches*, London, 1912.



The narrated life encompasses both a text to be read by the writer (Strindberg) in the profusion of data accumulating in his wake (of abuse, alchemy and personal paranoia), and the production of a more specific reading of other texts, first by the writer who decodes the patterns whereby the past becomes readable according to the available modes of insight and representation, and then by the reader, who brings his own experience of other texts to bear on recreating the relative stability of the writer's self-projection as it is assembled and takes shape in the figures in the text. <sup>44</sup>

The effect of this is to remove the writer, Strindberg, and his reader, Schoenberg, symbolically from direct participation in the events which are recorded. Here is *abstract* thought. The reader is provided with a surface, Strindberg's body, on which to project his or her own experiences (as a form of self-reflection), and a repository of interpretations of other texts to be shared with the writer. Schoenberg's image *Denken (Thinking)* (fig.13) implies the same interrelatedness: thinking about a body thinking, a palindrome of reflection about reflection. Perceived another way, this is another version of the concept of *correspondences*, the writer and reader being united by the same imaginative processes but also being conscious of both the differences and similarities between them. And, it is an echo of something earlier in at Chapter 1 of this thesis, Hofmannsthal's *garden* of contemplation at the start of the *Secession*. Both stand at sufficient distance from the actions described to permit this form of reflection. In Schoenberg's case, Strindberg provides another perspective on Swedenborg and Balzac's *Seraphita*, and an opportunity to share something of Strindberg's frustrations, physical, emotional and material without necessarily

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<sup>44</sup> Michael Robinson, *Strindberg and Autobiography*, London, 1986, p.93.

suffering the reality of Strindberg's experiences, whether fictional or not. The effect on Schoenberg was perhaps to draw him into a cycle of introspection at a time when he was trying to develop his *Gesamtkunstwerk* ideas for *Seraphita*, teach his pupils, complete *Theory* and produce sufficient income to support his family.

Strindberg's *Legends* contains not only an exposition of Swedenborg's ideas, but also an extrapolation of those ideas in the form of a personal experience with an angel, turning the reader/observer into an active participant in a wholly *abstract* process. Reflection becomes a form of action, whether real or imaginary. Strindberg was alone in Paris in late 1897, having separated from his family and most of his friends. He was spending his time reading or carrying out alchemical experiments to manufacture gold; he lived in a cheap hotel among students, ate frugally and drank absinthe (in its most addictive form). He wandered the streets and established routine routes among Parisian parks. He was attracted by the art of various Catholic Churches, most notably St Sulpice, but the mural by Eugene Delacroix, *Jacob Wrestling with the Angel*, did not suit his taste (illus.15). Nevertheless, that image always caught his attention.

One morning Strindberg experienced a remarkable change in his visual perception as he walked towards St Sulpice: the whole building seemed to have removed itself from its usual position by an enormous distance. Thus, begins an episode in which all perceptions are changed in ways which epitomise the application of Symbolist thought to literature, particularly the use of the concept of correspondences. Before Strindberg "walks a figure, whose gait and manner remind (him) of some one whom

(he) knows.”<sup>45</sup> The figure signals that he should follow him, but however fast he walks he can never catch up. If he stops, so too does the figure. Clad in a traveller’s mantle, which resembles Strindberg’s own but is of an opaline whiteness, the figure takes him into a park without him knowing how he gets there. The plants in the park, whatever their season for blooming, are all in flower, even though this is a winter month. The bees are buzzing, and there is a slight breeze which ruffles the stranger’s garments. But, beyond the light that emanates from the Unknown as Strindberg now calls him, and glows from his beardless face, there is still the withered foliage and frost of a winter’s day. As he approaches the Unknown he notices that the air is full of the scent of balsam, which prompts Strindberg to begin questioning the Unknown: why has he been following him for two years (sic) and what does he want? The Unknown’s response is to smile with super-human kindness, forbearance, and urbanity; Strindberg hears the words, but the Unknown does not open his mouth:

“Why dost thou ask me since thou knowest the answer thyself?”

And, as if within me, I hear thy voice sound again, “I wish to raise thee to a higher life, to lift thee out of the mire.”

The effect of Schoenberg’s reading of *Jakob ringt* or *Wrestling Jacob* is to shift the focus of the narrative away from *Seraphita/Seraphitus* and *Minna* and *Wilfrid* and to centre it directly on himself, as a Strindberg in the *Legends*, or as the Biblical characters of Jacob or Job, both of whom Strindberg and Schoenberg identify with in

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<sup>45</sup> Strindberg, *Legends*, p.39.

their confrontation with their God, or as Schoenberg the tormented composer, deprived of public success, but committed to a specific musicological trajectory.

It is then a matter of tracing Schoenberg's self-examination through a series of *Fantasies* during a period of intense work, musical and visual, over a period of a year between 1910 and 1911. Each *Fantasy* (or *Gaze*) may resemble Schoenberg, but they are stripped of the usual characteristic through which the subject of a portrait is identifiable. They are iterations of the same subject, the similarities and changes between them being indicative of the moral and creative turmoil the individual is going through. In this sense, the images exist not so much as singularities but as evidence of an internal narrative - Schoenberg's striving as a common man – which is taking place. The images are characterised by changes in colour as indicators of changing moods, but on the physiognomy of the subject as well, often seemingly part-human, sometimes part-animal. In the context of a *Gesamtkunstwerk* film, they are no longer *abstracted*, but are *abstracts*.

Taking the *Blue Self-Portrait* (1910) (fig.5) as a starting point within the *Self-Portrait* group of Schoenberg's images and not one of the *Fantasies*, as exhibited at the *Facing The Modern* of 2013, the viewer is safely within the traditions of self-portraiture, albeit in the hands of an artist with limited technical facility. In *Brown Self-Portrait* (1910) (fig.2), however, whilst still within that same *Self-Portrait* group, the face is now much thinner and drawn by anxiety. On an overall background of orange-brown oil, the impasto effects of which are reduced to a matte surface, the face is outlined and its features defined only by blue-grey shadowing, which emphasises the lengthening of the jawline. The eyes are yellow within reddened

eyelids, and stare out at the viewer, thereby increasing the overall sense of anxiety. The bald pate of the head extends beyond the top of the canvas. The image carries a later dedication at its foot, probably as a reminder of the changes that have occurred in Schoenberg's life since 1910: "*To Leopold Stokowski [the conductor 1882-1977] / Arnold Schoenberg / September 1949*".

In *Gaze* (March 1910) (fig.16), using the same materials, oil on canvas, and the same colours as in *Brown Self-Portrait* (1910) (fig.2) above, Schoenberg shows his personal transformation into a wolf-like animal, no longer a Schoenberg but an *abstract* expression of what it is like to someone who has experienced a religious trauma. The eyes now stand at the top of the canvas, staring directly out, still yellow but now set even more deeply into their brown sockets. There is a suggestion of a pointed muzzle, emphasised by the absence of any shaping of the nose beyond some dark shadowing, and with a thin white line of teeth protruding beneath it. The head itself has no outline, its shape being suggested only by the slightest of shadowing. The impact of this image is not so much the anxiety being experienced by Schoenberg, as the deep threat that it seems to impart on the viewer, like a tormented animal in a dream. This image has moved beyond the boundaries of the *Self-Portrait* into the *Gesamtkunstwerk* realm of the *Fantasies*.

In *Gaze* (March, 1910), (fig.17), Schoenberg takes the viewer to the climax of *Seraphita* – "Behold the rising of the one True Light!" – and the reflection of light and colour on the face of one who is caught up in *Seraphita*'s transformation and ascent into heaven.<sup>46</sup> The face has no outline against the brown-red background but the

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<sup>46</sup> Balzac, *op.cit*, p.178.

eyes, nose and mouth are now formed of wider range of colours that Schoenberg has used previously. The eyes still stare out, but now they reflect the light and colours of scene that Schoenberg is perceiving, the physical effect of which is suggested by the concentric shock waves passing over the head. This is at once the denouement at the ends of *Seraphita* and *Harmonielehre*.

In *Gaze* (May 1910) (fig.4), Schoenberg's image is that of an exhausted man, the eyes sunken into red sockets in a narrow face. Against a brown, scrubbed background the lower part of the face is outlined by a dark shadow on its left-hand side (the viewer's right), but there is the suggestion of a hand against which the head rests on the left. The top of the head has a scrubbed white covering, as if swathed in a bandage. The eyes stare out at the viewer, again yellow. A crisis appears to have passed, but the anxiety about some future unknown still haunts the face, which sits body-less on the surface of the image. The image is inscribed on the left-hand side, "Arnold Schoenberg Mai 1910", as if recording something momentous that has passed; Schoenberg did not usually sign his images in this way, so this image must have had an unusual significance for him.

Through this series of images, from the *Self-Portraits* to the transformation of the *Fantasies*, it is possible to identify the effect this passage of intense creative activity had upon Schoenberg. Perhaps this is Schoenberg's motivation for moving his *Gesamtkunstwerk* project on in a different direction: something momentous had passed, and this writer speculates that its impact, the combination of religious belief and internal scrutiny, was possibly too much for Schoenberg. The difficulties of mounting a performance of *Die glückliche Hand* before 1914, despite the detailed

instruction to Hertzka described previously, may also have dissuaded Schoenberg from pursuing his *Seraphita* concept further at this time.

### **From *Seraphita* to *Die Jakobsleiter***

However, the idea originally put by Schoenberg to Dehmelt of a celebration of religious regeneration for mankind is supplanted by one which reflects the efforts of the individual to test his relationship with God, a task of much greater uncertainty and potential ambiguity as Schoenberg may have learned from his “*Seraphita* experience”. Schoenberg’s proposal is set out in a letter to Richard Dehmelt of December 1912.<sup>54</sup> Schoenberg would compose an oratorio for soli, mixed chorus and orchestra, which would combine the “The Ascent into Heaven” of *Seraphita* with a “Modern Man’s Prayer”. Schoenberg’s “narrative” of an individual’s ascent into heaven would be followed by an egalitarian prayer to God in the purified language appropriate to modern man – in synopsis, a statement of what he had learned from Schopenhauer, Swedenborg and Kraus. The inverted hour-glass image of the intensity of one individual passage through the tight constrictions at the neck of the glass would then open into a wide expanse into which all might pass: life before death and life after, with a Great Symphonic interlude. Rather than the common cycle of birth-death-rebirth, the new work would be an ascending spiral of increasing human perfection.<sup>55</sup> The Biblical image of saints spiralling up in the never-ending procession to heaven of Jacob’s Ladder may have been in Schoenberg’s mind.

The new work was to be called *Die Jakobsleiter*, *Jacob’s Ladder*, and Schoenberg began it in 1915 and picked it up again, after military service, in 1917. The Jacob’s

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<sup>54</sup> Stein, *op.cit.*, p.35.

<sup>55</sup> Berthold Hoeckner, *Programming the Absolute Nineteenth Century German Music And The Hermeneutics Of The Moment*, Princeton and Oxford, 2002, p. 214.

Ladder is a much older Biblical image of bodies treading ever upwards towards heaven. With Dehmel's refusal to assist, Schoenberg found it necessary to prepare his own libretto himself, but work was, of course, subjected not just to the demands of Schoenberg's military service and but also to the changes that Schoenberg was beginning to consider to the whole task of composing with a new harmonic structure of twelve tones. The aftermath of the First World War imposed further changes on his life on his life, culminating in his American exile. *Die Jakobsleiter* was never fully completed in the years after 1917, and exists only in a first part, left incomplete at his death in 1951.

Schoenberg's attempt to answer the unanswerable question, or more properly perhaps, a cry to heaven, of what communication can be imagined in Schopenhauer's world of the Will results in cycles of music and words, which continue to revolve in a series of unrealised, unrealisable projects. Schoenberg's opera in three acts, *Moses und Aron*, no opus number, 1930-32, contrasts *Aron's* ornamented, impure and facile language of persuasion which he uses on the Israelites, with *Moses's* inability to communicate with them at all. This dilemma of Representation, so despised by Loos and Kraus versus the purity of the language of the Will, has a much deeper resonance than mere words. Michael Cherlin turns to a symbolic conclusion.<sup>56</sup> "Oh Word, thou word that I lack", the words in *Sprechstimme* (spoken) by Moses at the end of Act Two, can be taken as either the recognition that Schoenberg as reached an impasse, a sort of resolution to his dilemma, or a prelude to what might have followed, words stripped of music contrasting with a resolution

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<sup>56</sup> Michael Cherlin, *Schoenberg's Musical Imagination*, New York, 2007, p.234.



yet to be achieved. The third act of *Moses und Aron*, like *Seraphita* and *Die Jakobsleiter*, remained unfinished.

## Summary

In this chapter, the writer has sought to interpret Schoenberg's *Fantasies* in their creative context: the images produced by him as part of a *Gesamtkunstwerk* project are to be taken forward by skilled technicians from the cinema. They have been presented here in such a way as to suggest their contingent status, not as images in a linear narrative but as elements of a more complex artistic production. Their *abstracted* nature has been conceded because they require absorption within a programme of moving colour and music if they are to become truly abstract. Nevertheless, the *Fantasies* are important milestones on Schoenberg's path to abstraction.

## Conclusion: *Un chef-d'oeuvre inconnu?*

I had dreamed of a dramatization of Balzac's *Seraphita*... [this work] by renouncing the law of "unity of space and time", would have found the solution to realization in sound pictures. But the industry continued to satisfy only the needs and demands of the ordinary people who filled their theatres.

Arnold Schoenberg, *Art and the Moving Pictures*, 1940. <sup>1</sup>

This thesis has described the process by which Schoenberg created a new form of *Gesamtkunstwerk* for realisation through cinematography. It has shown how Schoenberg developed a new approach to abstraction, by taking Wagnerian and Schopenhauerian ideas of access to the unconscious world of the Will, filtered through the artistic context of the *fin-de-siècle* Viennese *Secession* to offer a spiritual regeneration for individuals and society. This spiritual regeneration would be characterised by a return to the ethical and moral purity of communication, as proposed by Loos and Kraus, in a language stripped of its historical and cultural accretions. On his arrival in Hollywood, California, as he says in *Art and the Moving Pictures*, Schoenberg found that, despite the problems of his time – religious, philosophical, psychological, social, "Weltanschauungs", economical, national, and racial problems – there was no compulsion to renounce the demands of the intellectually minded, but no inclination to satisfy their needs. Schoenberg sensed the same problem he had experienced in the years before 1914 in Vienna: things "can only be done by new men" if the technical possibilities of the cinema are to be

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<sup>1</sup> *Style and Idea*, p. 154.

realised. Otherwise, the works of Mickey Mouse, Charlie Chaplin, Harold Lloyd, and the Marx Brothers will continue to satisfy the entire world. The sense of disappointment of a refugee arriving in the world centre of film production is palpable.

In contemplating ideas about the film of *Seraphita*, as this thesis has shown in Chapter 4 and preceding chapters, Schoenberg had a model of abstraction, the *Ultimate Unreality*, which relies on the *Gesamtkunstwerk* synthesis of music and moving colour. In its realisation the whole thing should not have the effect of a dream but of listening to musical chords, which are themselves sufficient to carry their own language. Schoenberg follows Schopenhauer's notion of music's capacity to carry "secret messages" from the world of the Will. The music itself must never have the effect of symbols, or meaning, or thoughts, but simply the play of colours and forms. Just as music never drags a meaning around with it, at least not in the form in which it manifests itself, even though meaning is inherent in its nature, so too should this simply be for the eye. In Schoenberg music and moving colour carry a sense of democratic entitlement: everyone is free to think or feel something similar to what he thinks or feels while hearing music.

In preparing the *Fantasies* as part of his *Gesamtkunstwerk* plan, Schoenberg has in mind the sort of collective responsibility he describes regarding *Die glückliche Hand*: responsibility for the music rests with him, libretto and other aspects of the production with others. The writing of a libretto is problematic, *pace* Dehmel, and is left to Schoenberg himself. The production of moving colour images from the *Fantasies* is even more so, regardless of Schoenberg's knowledge of stage and pre-1914 cinema production. The problem of realising Schoenberg's *Fantasies* as offered in their *abstracted* form in a fully *abstract* film production probably requires

the sort of technical processes, such as computer-generated imagery, which is only now available, and was certainly not available in 1940.

Nevertheless. This writer concludes that Schoenberg had embarked on a *Gesamtkunstwerk* path to abstraction, an alternative path to the privileging of painted surfaces as a way of communicating new meaning through symbols, with meaning inherent in the symbols themselves. This path is unique to Schoenberg: it does not rest on the tradition of modernist reaction against the depiction of objects (mimesis) in the world, and warrants proper recognition in the history of art. The celebration of the intermediality within a *Gesamtkunstwerk* represents a positive response against the domination of academic theories of autonomy determined by individual types of media. In turn this has led to the neglect of a fuller understanding of Schoenberg and his contribution to ideas about abstraction. The methodological approach of this thesis has sought to describe the components of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* in a manner consistent with Schoenberg's own approach and which establishes the legitimacy of this pathway.

In Chapter 1, Schoenberg's *Theory* is shown to be the theoretical starting point not just for innovation in music composition, but also, in Chapter 2, for a *Gesamtkunstwerk* based on philosophies of Schopenhauer and Wagner. By liberating musical harmony from the traditional constraints of consonance and dissonance and the conventional requirement to resolve musical ideas back to the security of consonance, Schoenberg created an experience for his audience which escapes the confines of everyday existence. Each audience member can become immersed in the expression of human emotions in environments stripped of their everyday distractions where a poetic language, described in Chapter 3, encompasses all sensory experiences, cognitive and affective. The evidence of

Schoenberg's high regard for Schopenhauer's philosophic proposition that it is essential to distinguish between the everyday world of Representation and the unconscious world of the Will, an abstract state of experience only accessible through the arts, can be seen in all three of the early chapters of the thesis. In Chapter 4, Schoenberg's concept of abstraction is shown to have encompassed the new technologies of electric lighting and moving colour as vehicles for realising *Gesamtkunstwerk*. The cinema presented Schoenberg with a potential opportunity to create immersive environments consistent with his *Gesamtkunstwerk* objectives. It can only be a matter of deep regret the opportunity to use the cinema never came to fruition. In Chapter 5, Schoenberg prepares the visual images for a planned *Gesamtkunstwerk* production of Balzac's *Seraphita*, a work based upon Swedenborgian religious ideas, but strongly reflected in Schopenhauer's philosophy. The intermediality of the various sensations of human existence, to be found in the works of Baudelaire and the Symbolists, that communicates a wide range of emotions and spiritual experiences, matches Schoenberg's *Gesamtkunstwerk* aspirations. In *Seraphita* and Strindberg's *Wrestling Jacob*, Schoenberg finds that the spiritual renewal he is seeking for mankind is not to be found within organised religion so much as within the internal discourse between the individual man and his God. Schoenberg finds this in his Lutheran Protestant quietism, Schopenhauer's and Swedenborg's metaphysical ideas and, *in extremis*, the sort of personal experience described in Strindberg's mania. Schoenberg's language, his poetic language, encompasses all human sensory capabilities, and anticipates an immersive, multimedial experience based upon sounds, words, electric light and moving coloured images.

Why was the *Gesamtkunstwerk* not realised? Irrespective of the emerging potential of the new technology and its limitations as noted above, Schoenberg's *Gesamtkunstwerk* required the mobilisation of significant human and material resources, commitments that would have made Wagner's efforts in Bayreuth in the nineteenth century seem paltry. The economic problems of Austria and Germany after 1919, and the emerging dominance of the American model of cinema as entertainment (rather than a spiritually or intellectually uplifting event) made Schoenberg's *Gesamtkunstwerk* proposals seem increasingly preposterous. When he reached America in exile, Schoenberg found an industry uninterested in his ideas. Indeed, it is only very recently that attention has turned again to the challenges of publicly presenting Schoenberg's larger works to the full potential of their *Gesamtkunstwerk* nature.<sup>2</sup>

The movement towards the segregation of the artistic media from each other and the professionalization of the critical study of individual types was also beginning to have its effect by the time Schoenberg reached America. Ultimately this movement resolves itself into the reductionism of critics like Clement Greenberg, who privileged painting on flat surfaces above all other forms of presentation. The history of art is still characterised by this attitude. Returning to Dickerman, whose work is referred to at the Introduction, the privileging of painting continues, even when *abstract* influences are identified in other artistic production modes.<sup>3</sup> The privileging continues.

Schoenberg's music, notwithstanding its *Gesamtkunstwerk* underpinning, finds itself in the similar cul-de-sac, where technical form, the introduction of composition with

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<sup>2</sup> Arnold Schönberg, *Gurre-Lieder*, [sic], *op.cit* dvd.

<sup>3</sup> Dickerman, *op.cit*.

twelve tones, holds sway over substance and becomes a new form of abstraction *per se*. As this thesis has shown, the link between music and abstraction has always been there – Schopenhauer, Wagner, Hanslick. Schoenberg anticipates the apparent victory of composition with twelve tones as a matter of style over idea, that is, the concentration on the technicalities of composition rather than on the personality of the artist.

The pressure of presentation via a single medium, whether a canvas on the wall of the white-cube art gallery, or the sound of an orchestra on the radio in Schoenberg's day, means that questions of relational aesthetics (performance, interactivity and collaboration between artistic media) inevitably fall foul of the associated academic disciplinary constraints. The various elements of a Schoenbergian *Gesamtkunstwerk*, the scores, the instructions to the director and technicians and the *Fantasies*, the visual story-boards, do not sit in any meaningful sense in the archive, unless there is someone there to (re)assemble them together. The elements have a strange half-life, with priority being given to some of them over others. In Schoenberg's case, of course, the music holds centre stage, but its companions are merely the shadows of what might have been, had all the elements been reassembled. The *Fantasies* sit on the walls of the ASC immobile silence. The challenge for art historians and curators, the potential methodology that this thesis offers, is how to reassemble and present these various elements to the visitor.

Schoenberg's consciousness of the cultural changes affecting the autonomy of individual artistic media apparently led him to suppress his own artistic background. In a "modern world" of war and consumerism, America in the 1940s, it was apparently unacceptable to talk of spiritual matters, except perhaps in the simplest of denominational terms. Schoenberg is a composer, working in a medium that does

not need words and images to sustain itself, except perhaps in opera, when it uses them in its own terms. In this environment, Schoenberg simply avoided discussion of his *Gesamtkunstwerk* ideals and poetic language. In the absence of a sympathetic hearing from a cinema world dominated by simple, sensationalised music and easy entertainment, Schoenberg kept the visual images of 1910-12 close at hand as reminders of what might have been.

Schoenberg's creations were segregated out for posterity by medium; their interrelatedness has been lost to art historians. There is, however, an alternative, which builds on the methodology of reassembling a *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Another contemporary of Schoenberg's, Alfred Whitehead (1861-1947), the English philosopher and mathematician, describes the process of what he calls "speculative philosophy", one of discerning the "relatedness of actualities".<sup>4</sup> Such relatedness is wholly concerned with the appropriation of the dead by the living, or with "objective immortality" whereby what is divested of its own living immediacy becomes a real component in other living immediacies. The creative advance of the world is the becoming, the perishing and the objective immortalities of those things, which jointly constitute stubborn fact. The world is a web of inter-related processes, of which individuals and events are all part irrespective of temporal or geographical boundaries. Or to quote Bergson once again, "Matter or mind, reality has appeared to us as a perpetual becoming".<sup>5</sup> This thesis has sought to demonstrate that Schoenberg's approach to *Gesamtkunstwerk* incorporates such a view, whether through a Diltheyan approach to a *nexus* of cultural influences freed from the

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<sup>4</sup> Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, eds. David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne, New York, 1978, p. xiii-xiv.

<sup>5</sup> Bergson, *op.cit.*



constraints of time and place, or the intermediality of his works, planned and/or realised.

As taken forward by the French philosopher, Gilles Deleuze (1925-95) Schoenberg's "speculative philosophy" (Whitehead) encompasses the *just-was* and the *about-to-be*, and the process of perceiving art and music as one of perceiving an event as it occurs, rather than as in a *freeze-frame* in single experiential events.<sup>6</sup> In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze builds upon both Whitehead and Bergson to suggest that:

An idea...is neither one nor multiple, but a multiplicity of differential elements, differential relations between those elements, and singularities corresponding to those relations.<sup>7</sup>

Defined in this way, ideas possess no actuality, but are pure virtuality: in Whitehead's words, they are phantastical, or existential (rather than essential).<sup>8</sup> The artistic event occurs at the crest of a continuously rolling wave. Time passes, but time itself is a synthesis of the living present, with the past and future as dimensions of this same present.<sup>9</sup> Ideas are not grounded in any physical reality but exist in complexes of time and space. They "impose their own scenery...set up camp where they rest momentarily: they are therefore [sic] the objects of an essential encounter rather than of recognition."<sup>10</sup>

Where there is repetition (or difference), it is the role of imagination to draw out something new. The role of repetition, according to Deleuze, and as exemplified to Schoenberg's series of self-portraits at the end of the previous chapter of this thesis,

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<sup>6</sup> Brian Massumi, *Semblance and Event Activist Philosophy And The Occurrent Arts*, Cambridge, Mass., 2011. Massumi is an associate of the late Deleuze.

<sup>7</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton, London and New York, 1994, p. 364.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, p.365.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, p.101.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, p.372.

is part of the same wave of virtuality. Drawing on both the Enlightenment philosopher, David Hume (1711-76) and Bergson, Deleuze concludes that:

Repetition changes nothing in the object repeated [the portraits of Schoenberg's own internal discourse] but does change something in the mind which contemplates it.<sup>11</sup>

The concept of *about-to-be* in a process of continuing change, or occurrent creativity, as Brian Massumi terms it, underlines the significance of Schoenberg's determination to adopt a *Gesamtkunstwerk* construction for his creations. He abandons the security of harmonic resolution (the certainty of musical resolution in consonance as opposed to the uncertainties and ambiguities of dissonance), and the theatrical unities of time, place and action. The synthesis of words, sounds and images – the idea, the multiplicity of differential elements, differential relations between those elements, and singularities corresponding to those relations – is what Schoenberg seeks to achieve for the widest possible audience, not the synaesthesia for the few who may be neurologically susceptible. Schoenberg's approach to *Gesamtkunstwerk* envisages that other artists – librettists, film and lighting technicians, visual artists, and so on – will be involved in this creative process, his visualisations, like his scores, acting as *notes* for others, provided they are comply with the overall objectives. Artistic creativity itself becomes an iterative process, in which one *form* precedes another without the certainty or necessity of episodic completion, since it can have a continuing existence in the minds of the creators and the audience.

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<sup>11</sup> David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature Being an Attempt to Introduce the Experimental Method of Reasoning into Moral Subjects*, (1739), London, 1985 and Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, (1896), trans. Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer, New York, 1988.

Vitally, then, the iterative process of *Gesamtkunstwerk* always engages the audience. Schoenberg's delivery of artistic experiences through his new *Gesamtkunstwerk* is designed to exceed the Schopenhaurian ideal for music on its own, in that it is intended to release the individual from the ground of everyday existence. Schoenberg's works are dependent upon the audience's active engagement with what has just been heard, seen and felt – with an active mind receiving, reflecting, remembering and relating. *Active* engagement is the definitive prerequisite: the individual is an active participant in an experience which comprises total immersion, rather than a passive body intermittently engaged. A new subjectivity emerges when the solidarity of synchronicity and temporality associated with exposure to individual experiences are broken down and the interplay of the different media begins.

Finally, for this writer's view the genesis of abstraction lies not in the abandonment of recognisable subject matter by visual artists but in the creation of a set of sensory conditions by a *Gesamtkunstwerk* artist, Arnold Schoenberg. Schoenberg created sensory environments, in which occurrent ideas can exist momentarily in a continuous wave of realisation, for each member of the audience. The genesis of abstraction does not rely upon the traditional art-historical trope which privileges painting above all other media. It also has roots in the synthesis of media and the creation of sensory environments, and it is that methodological procedure of active recreation that this writer commends to the reader.

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# Figures

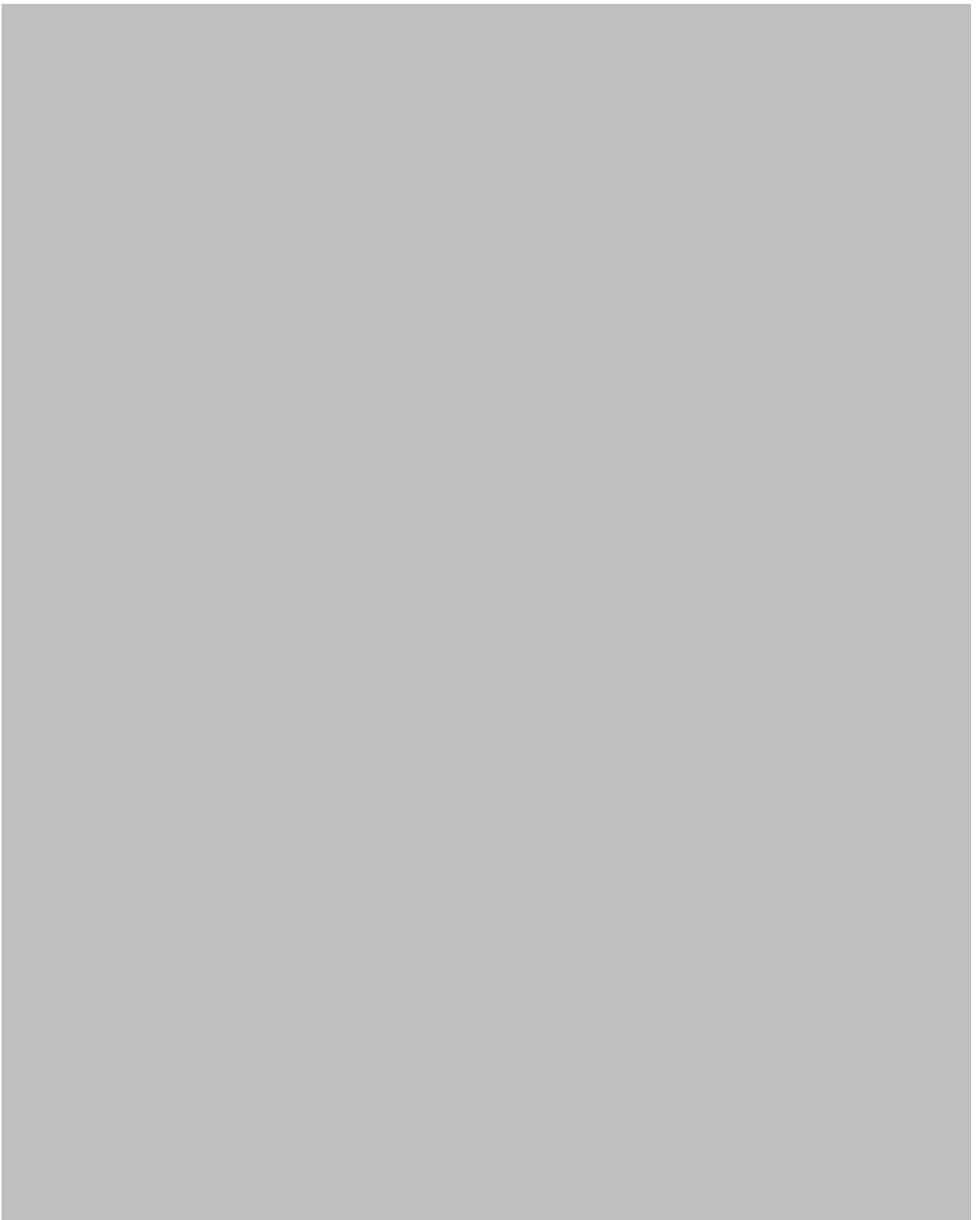


Fig.1. *Red Gaze*, 26 March,1910, oil on cardboard, 28 x 22 cm, signed and dated, 26.03.1910.





Fig.2. *Brown Self-Portrait*, 1910, oil on canvas, 32 x 20 cm, signed and dated 16.03. 1910, Library of Congress, Washington. D.C.

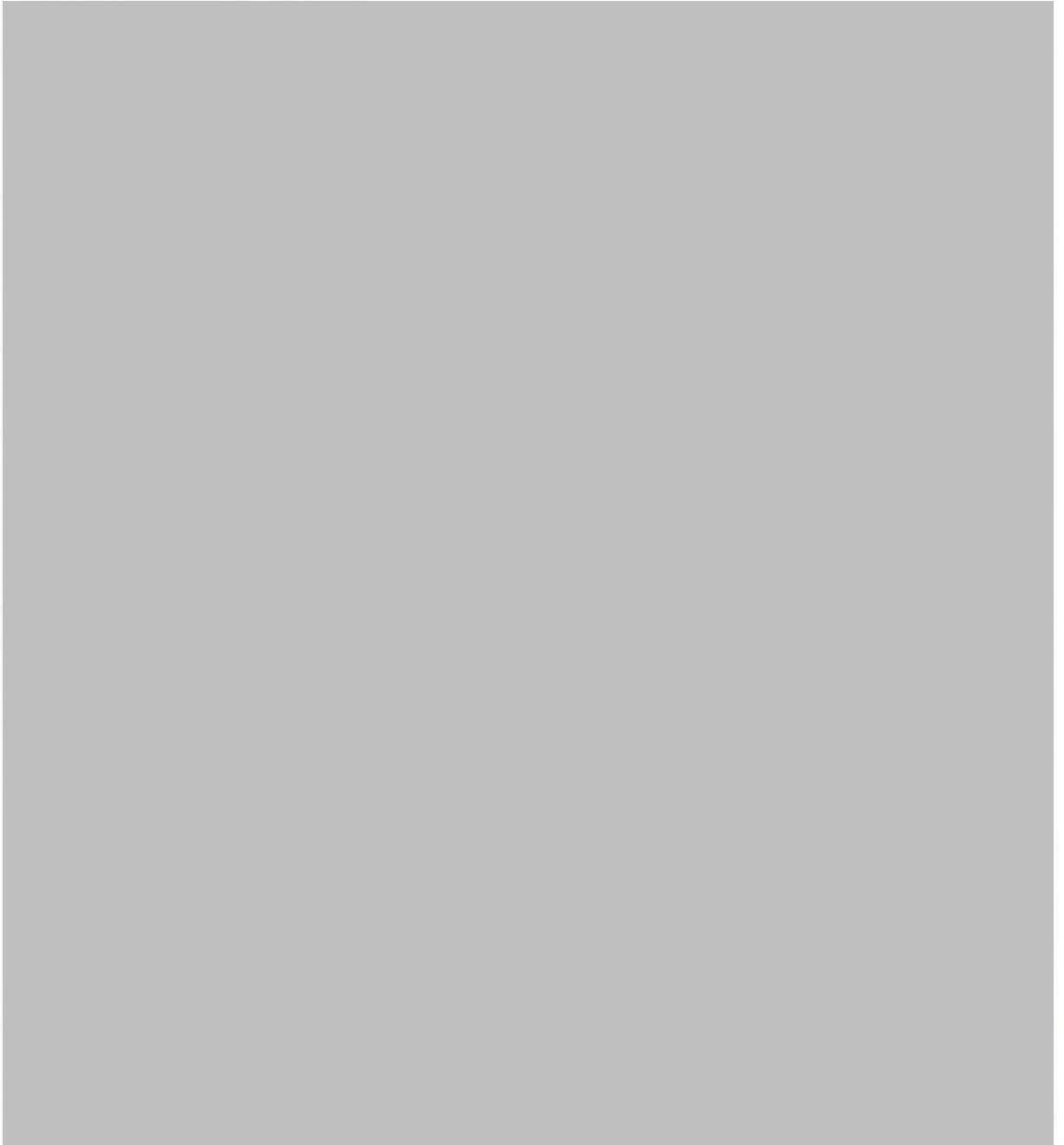


Fig. 3. *Walking Self-Portrait*,  
1911, pencil on paper, 39.3 x  
31.8 cm, unsigned and undated,  
1911.



Fig.4. *Gaze*, May 1910, oil on cardboard, 32.2 x 24.6 cm, signed and dated, May, 1910.



Fig.5. *Blue Self-Portrait*, 1910, oil on three-ply panel, 31.1 x 22.9 cm, signed and dated 13.02.1910.



Fig. 6. *Portrait of Hugo Botsiber*, before October 1910, oil on cardboard, 73 x 50 cm, unsigned, before October 1910.



Fig.7. *Aberglaube (Superstition)*,  
c.1900/1901, pen and ink on paper,  
34.7 x 21.7 cm, unsigned and  
undated, c.1900/01.

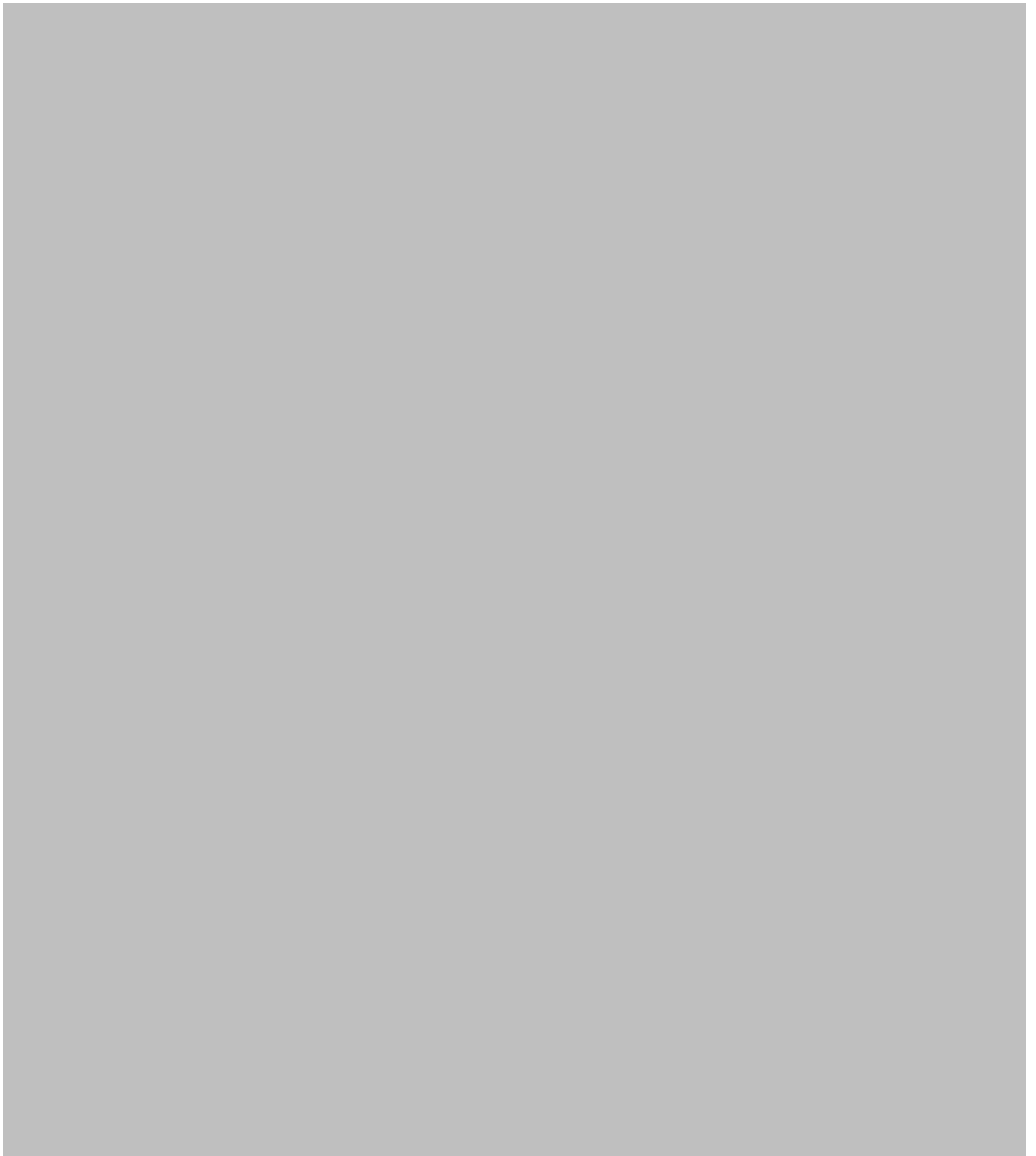


Fig. 8. *Nachstück (Nocturne) III*, April 1911, oil on three-ply panel, 21 x 20 cm, c. April 1911.

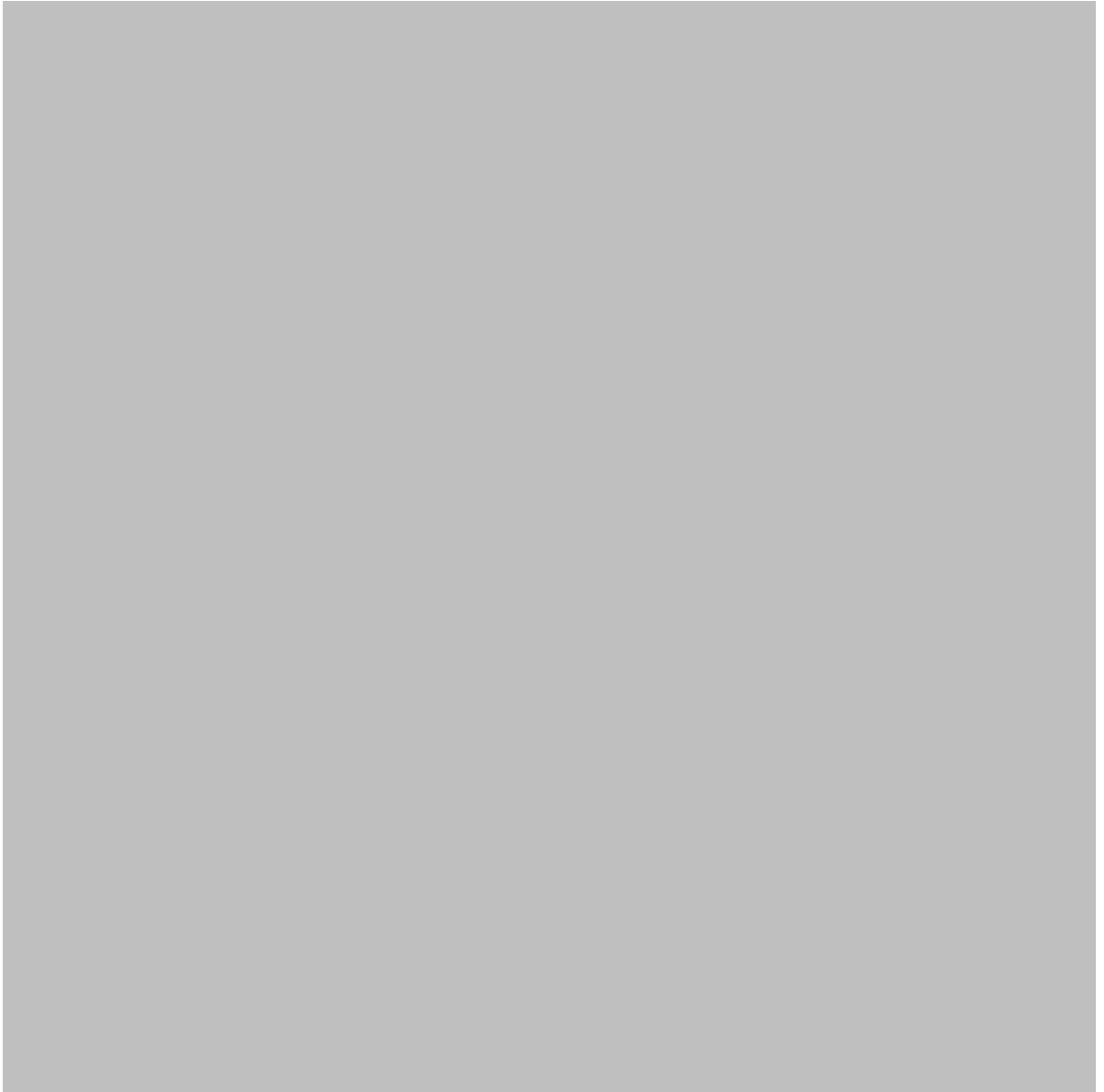


Fig.9. *Erinnerung an Oskar Kokoschka* (*Memory of Oskar Kokoschka*), April 1910, oil on board, signed and dated, April 1910.





Fig.10. *Vision*, c.1910, oil on board, 25.5 x 16 cm, unsigned and undated, May 1910?



Figs.11 & 12. *Untitled Fragment*,  
c.1910, oil on board, 33.9 x 22.2  
cm, unsigned and  
undated, May 1910?



Fig.13. *Denken (Thinking)*, before October 1910, oil on board, 22.3 x 25.1 cm, Unsigned and undated, before October, 1910.

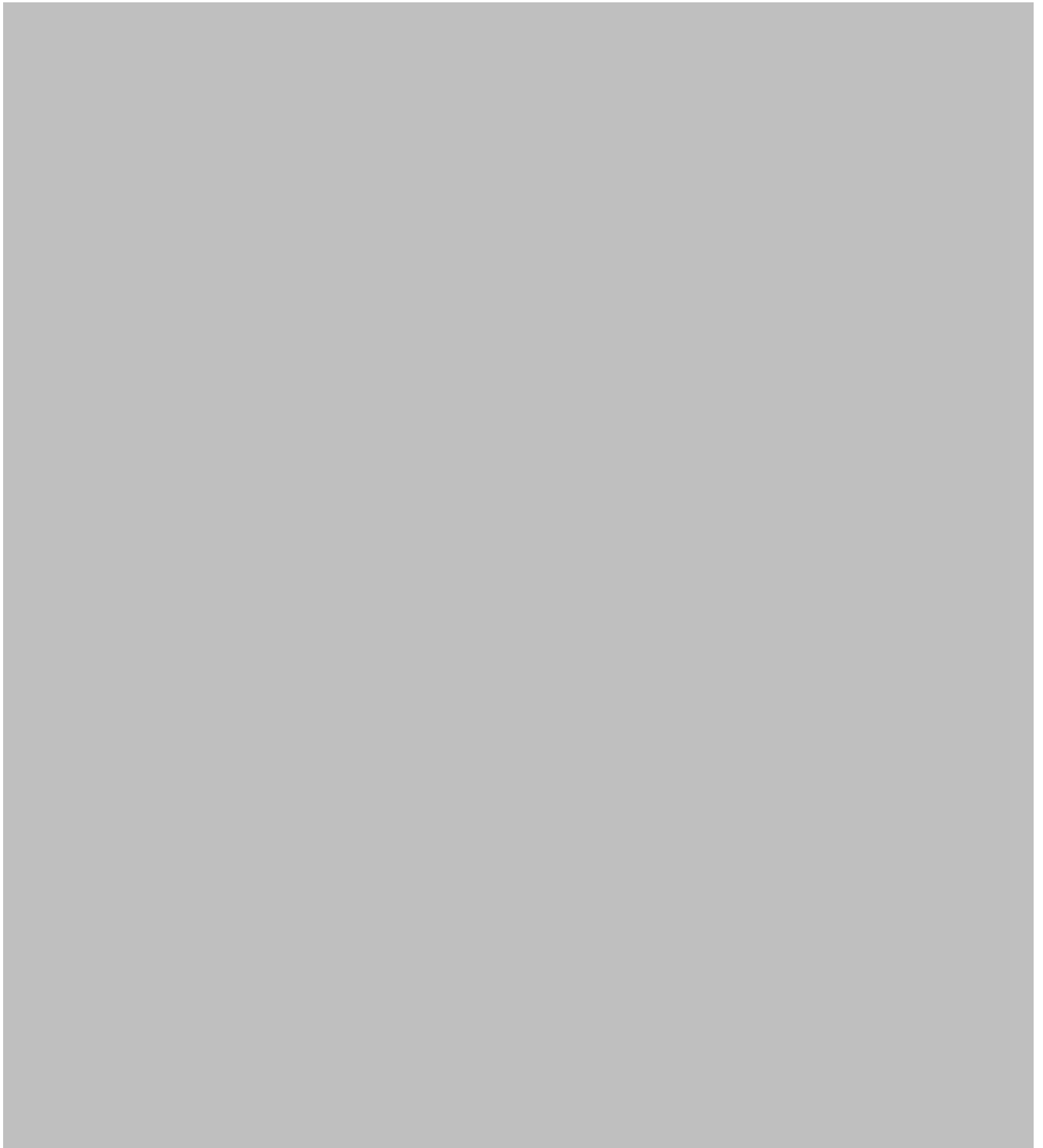


Fig.14. *Gaze*, c.1910, oil on cardboard, 31.5 x 28 cm, unsigned and undated, c.1910.



Fig.15. Blue Gaze, March,  
1910, oil on cardboard, 20 x 23  
cm, signed and dated,  
March, 1910.

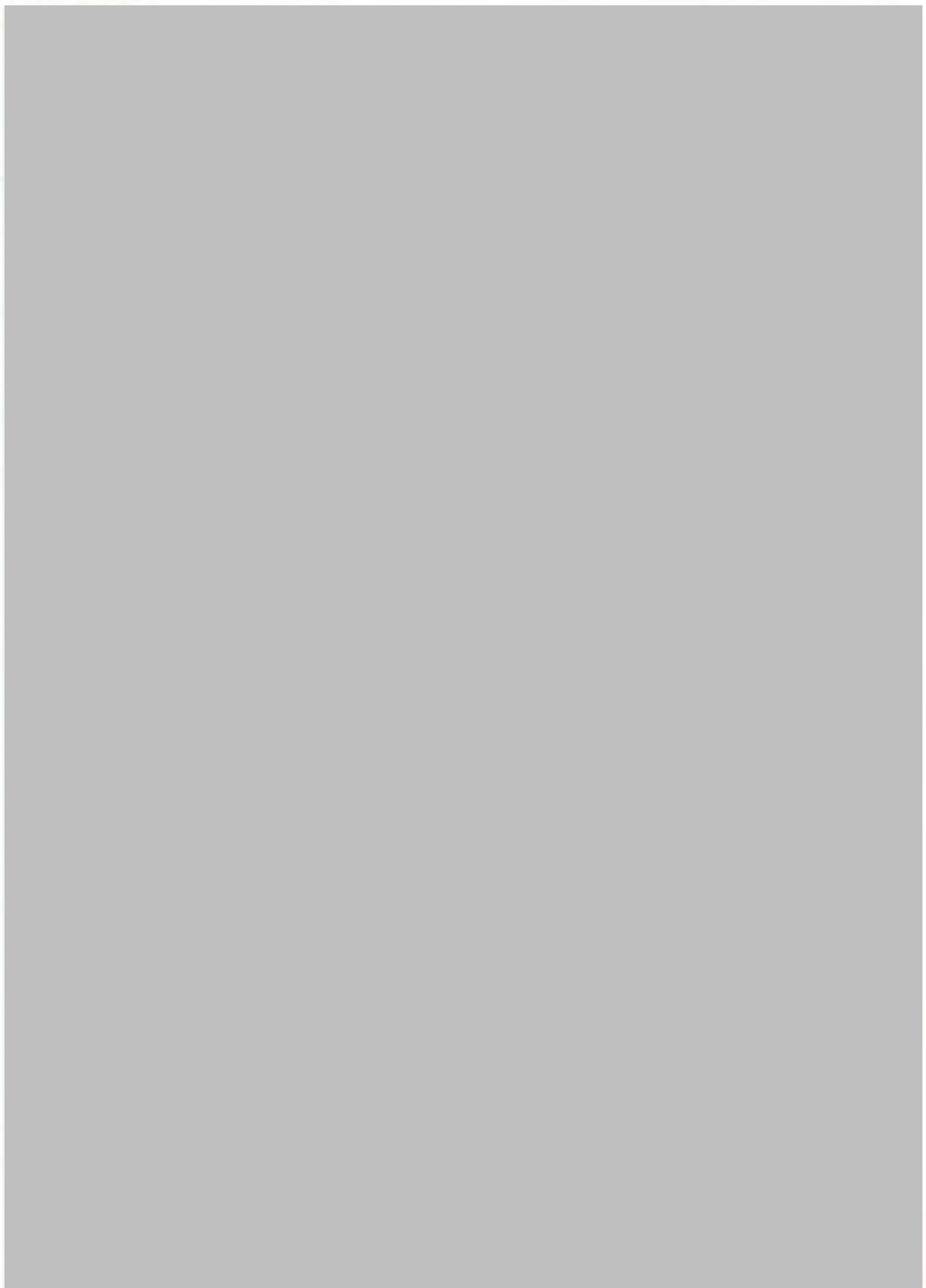


Fig.16. *Gaze*, c.1910, oil on cardboard, 31.5 x 28 cm, unsigned and undated, c.1910.

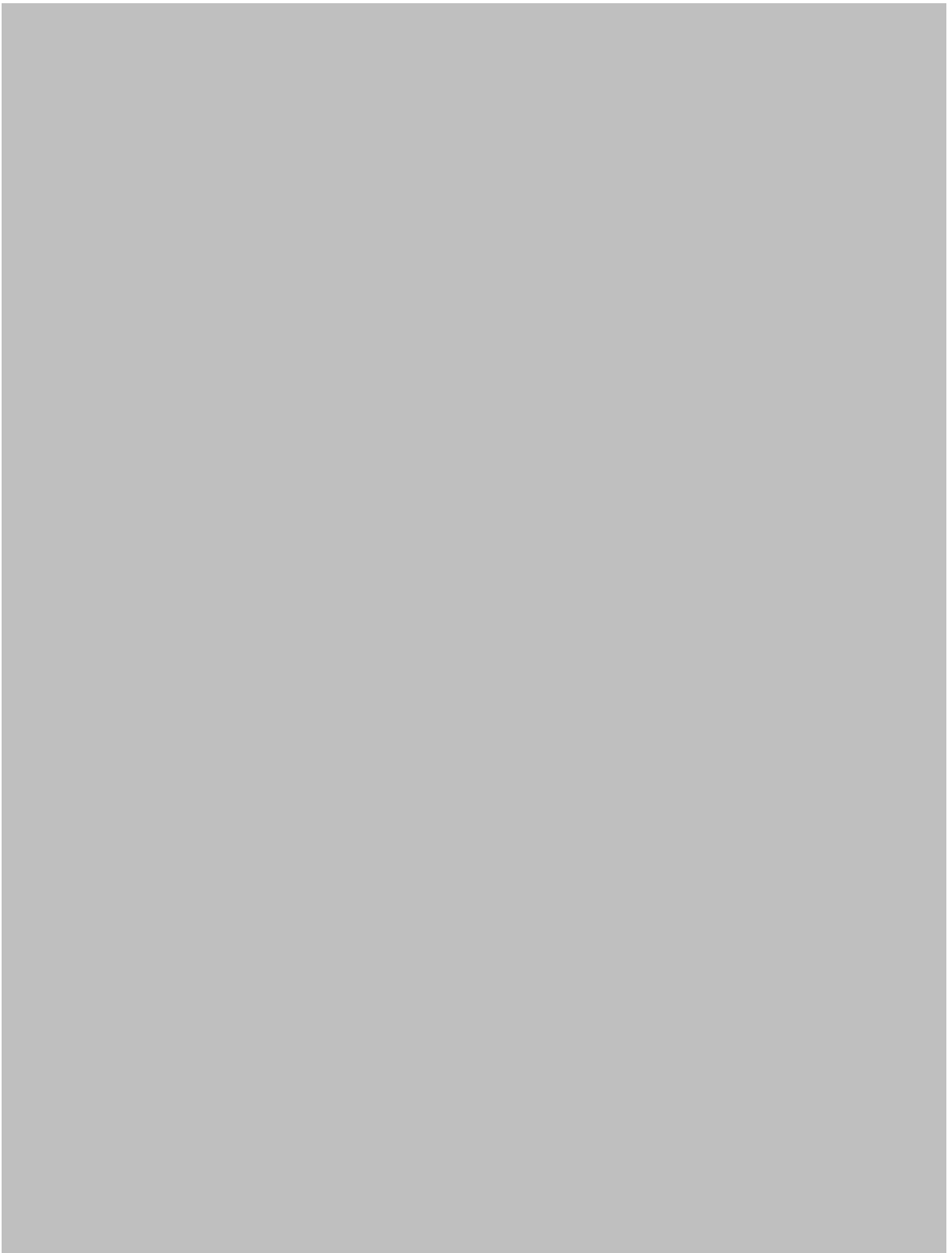


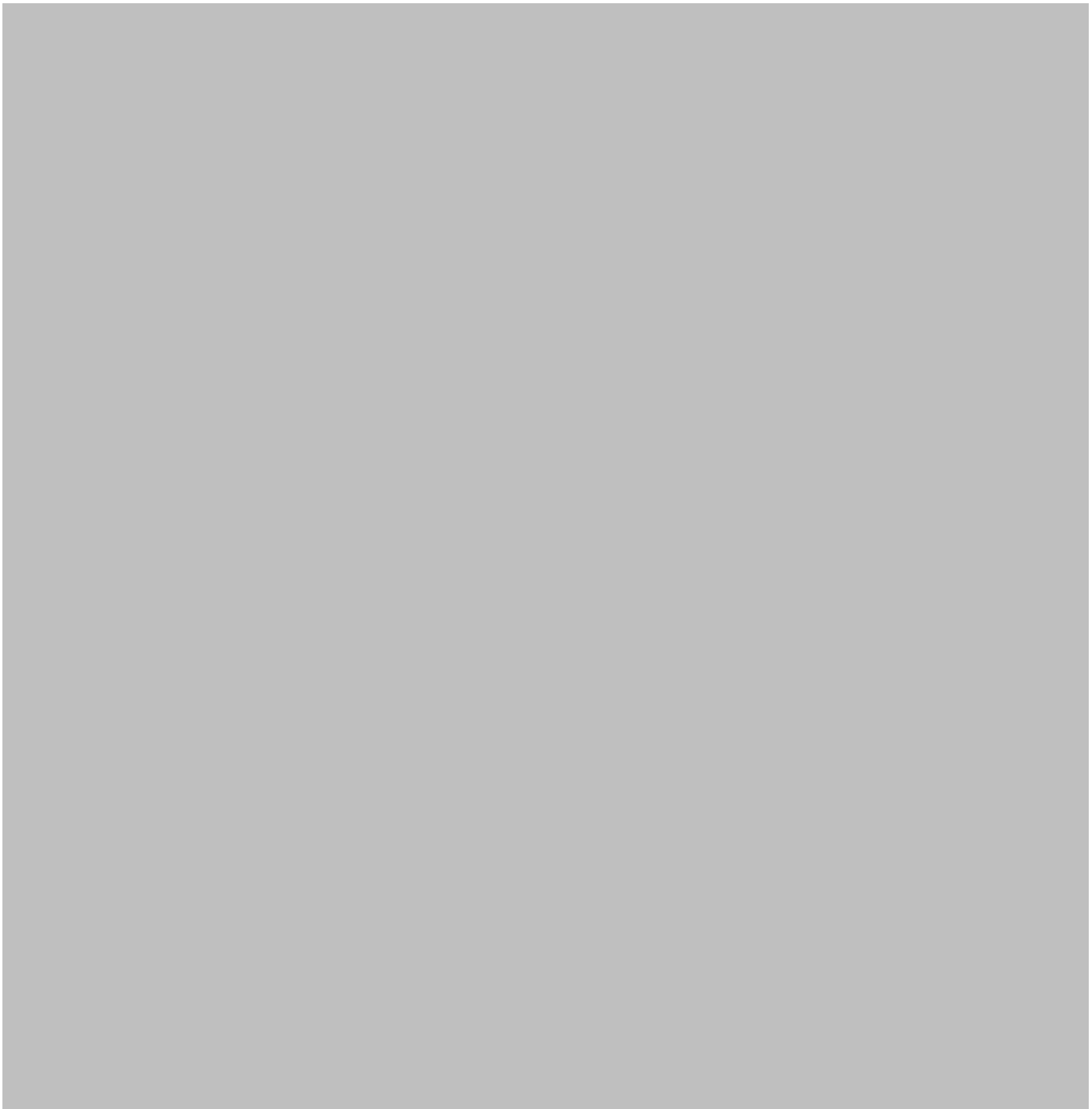
Fig. 17. *Gaze*, March, 1910,  
oil on cardboard, 24 x 18.2  
cm, unsigned and undated,  
March 1910.

# Illustrations






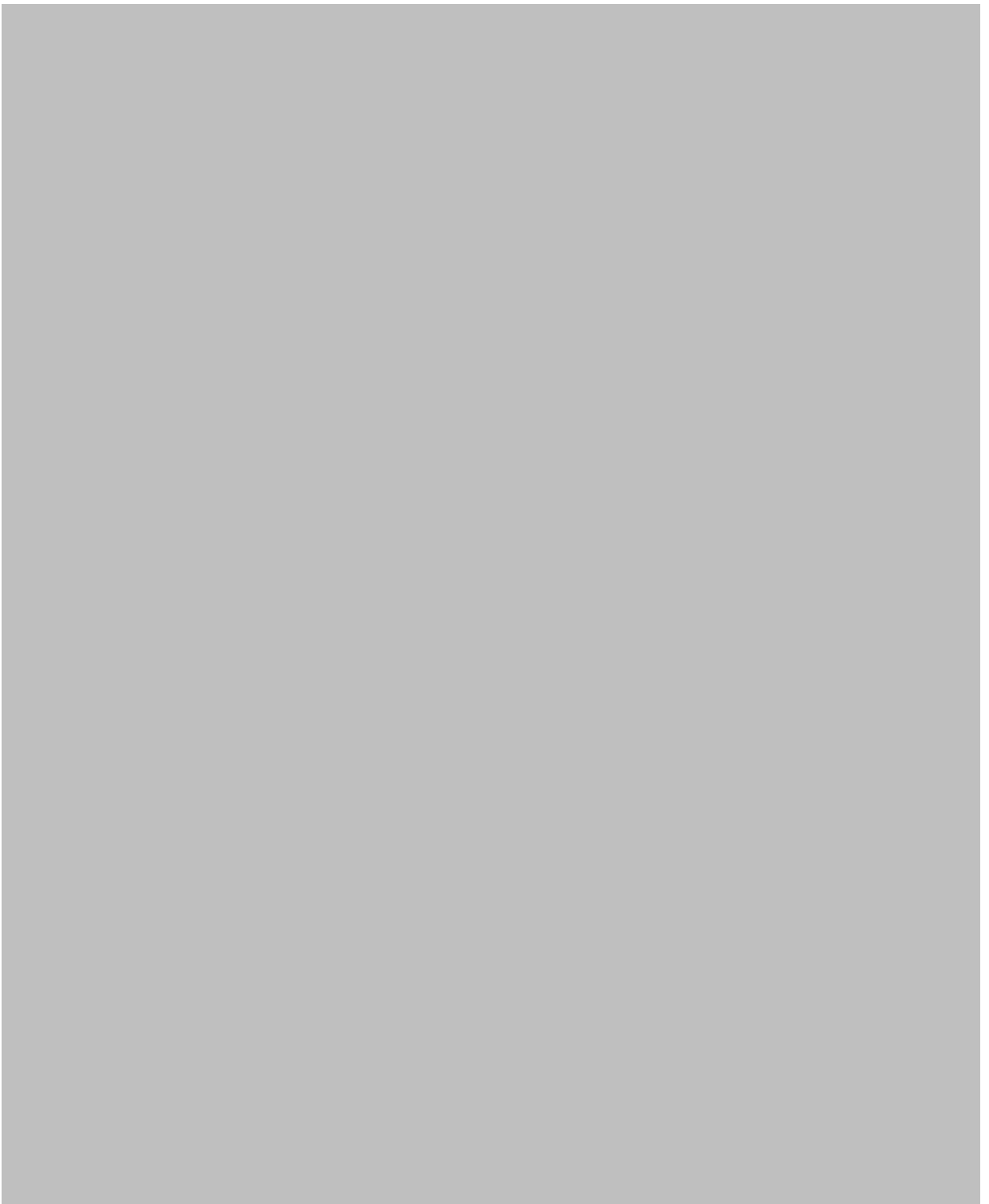
illus.1. Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944) *Impressions III (Concert)*, 1911, oil on canvas, 77.5 x 100.5 cm, Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, Munich.



illus.2. Arnold Schoenberg, *Gustav Mahler*, 1910, oil on board, 45.6 x 44.5 cm, signed and dated, 1910, Arnold Schoenberg Center, Vienna.



illus.3. Edward Timms, *A diagram of creative interaction in Vienna around 1910*,  
in *Karl Kraus, Apocalyptic Satirist Culture and Catastrophe in Habsburg Vienna*, New  
Haven and London, 1986, p.8.



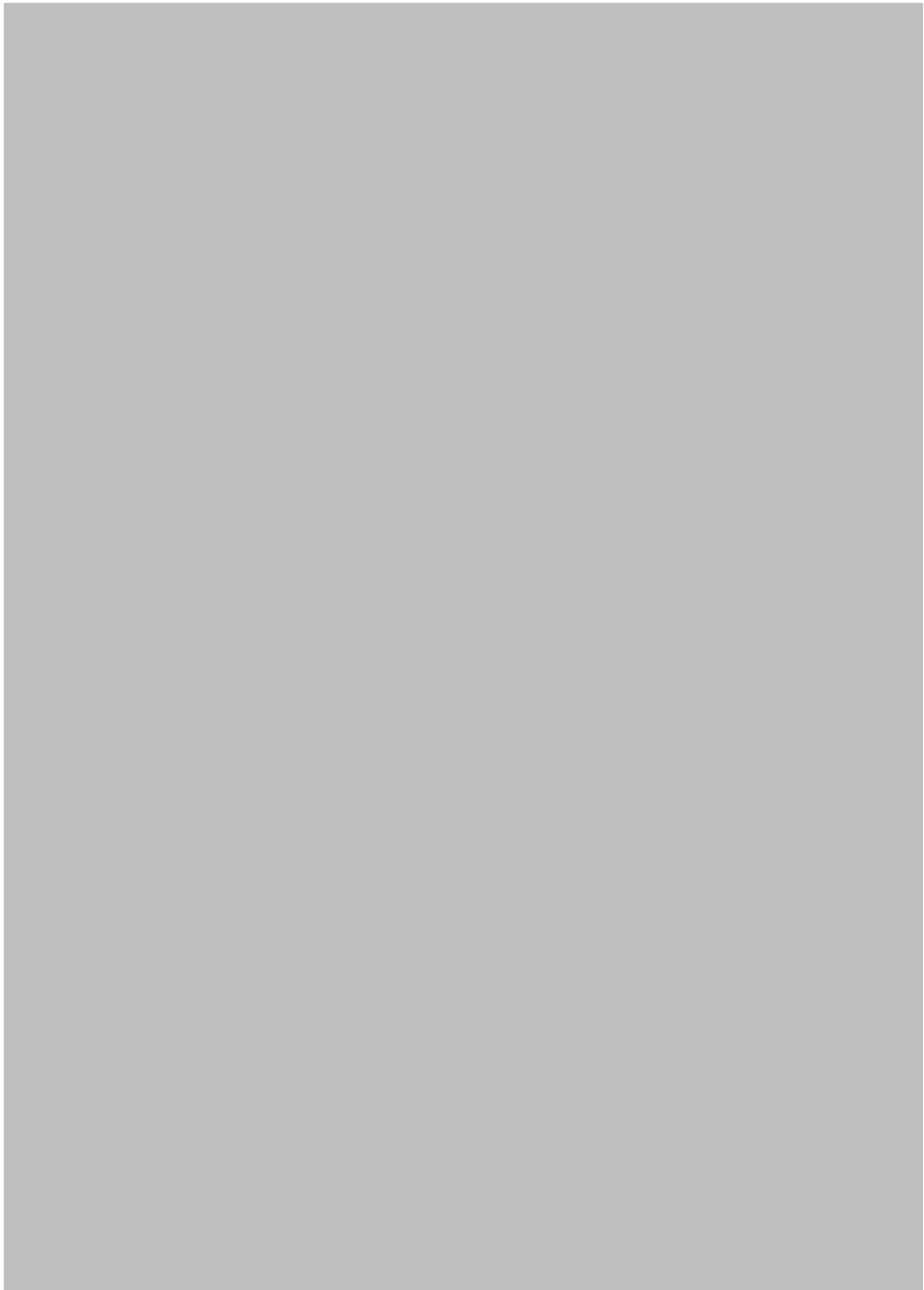
illus.4. Vincent van Gogh (1853-90) Self-portrait with Bandaged Ear, 1889, oil on canvas, 60.5 x 50 cm, Courtauld Gallery, London.



illus.5. Franz Marc (1880-1916) *The Large Blue Horses*, 1911, oil on canvas, 105.7 x 18.1 cm, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis.



illus.6. Arnold Schoenberg, *L. H.*? 1909, oil on canvas, 42 x 57 cm, signed but undated, c.1909, Arnold Schoenberg Center, Vienna.



illus.7. Arnold Schoenberg, *Defeated*, also known as *The Conquered*, 1919, watercolour on paper, 35.7 x 25.6 cm, signed and dated, April 1919, Arnold Schoenberg Center, Vienna.



illus.8. Édouard Schuré (1841-1929) *Engraving of Bayreuth Festival Theatre*, 1876, illustrating the vast stage, hidden orchestra pit, bright stage lights and darkened auditorium.





illus.9. Scene I of *Das Rheingold*, printed image of first Bayreuth Festival performance, 1876.



illus.10. Hofburg, Michaelerplatz, Vienna. The Imperial residence opposite the Looshaus.



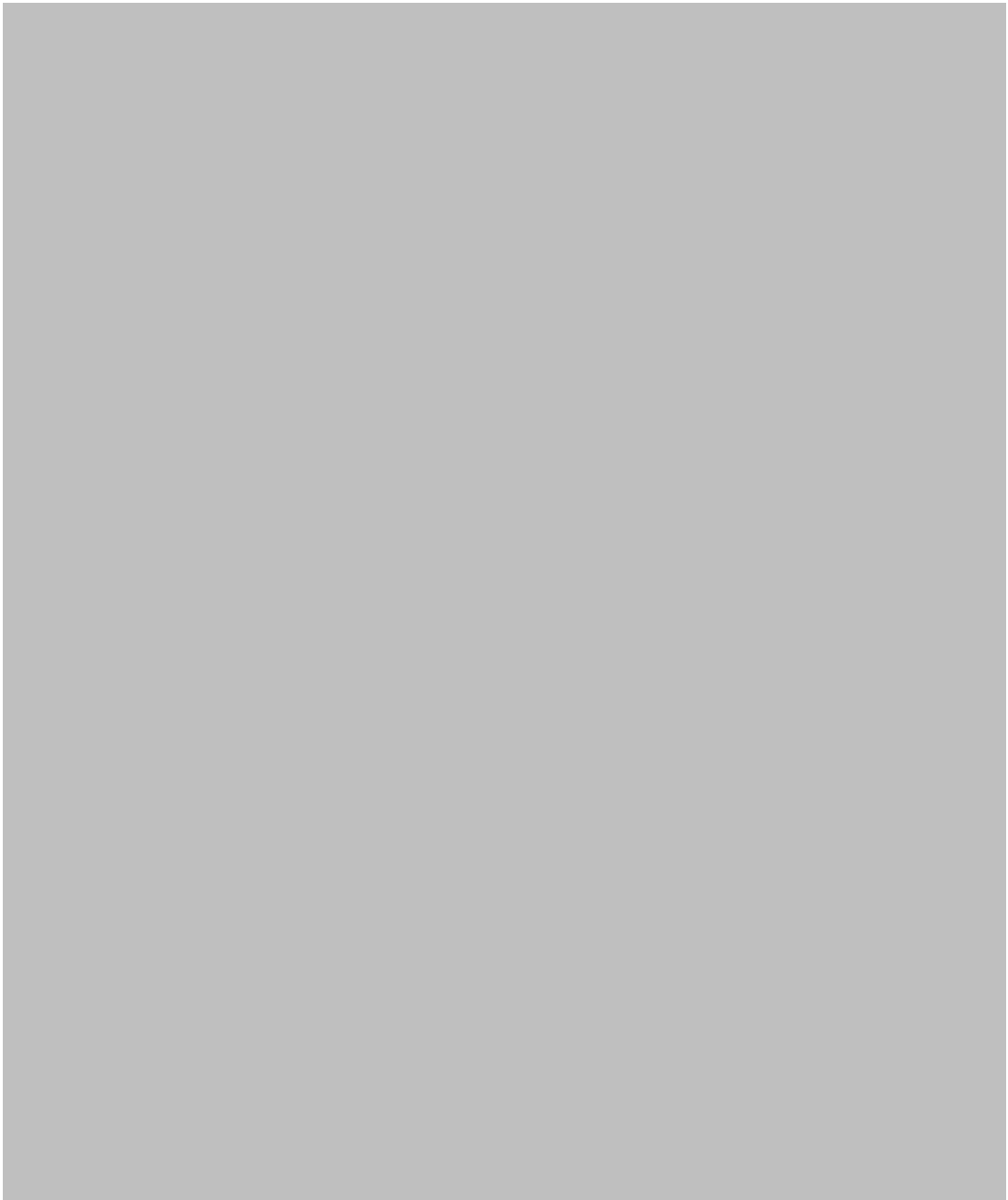
illus.11. Adolf Loos (1870-1933) *The Looshaus - Mein Haus  
Am Michaelerplatz.*



illus.12 *Die Zeit* cartoon of 6 April 1913, the  
*Skandalkonzert, Watschenkonzert,*  
or “ear-boxing” concert.



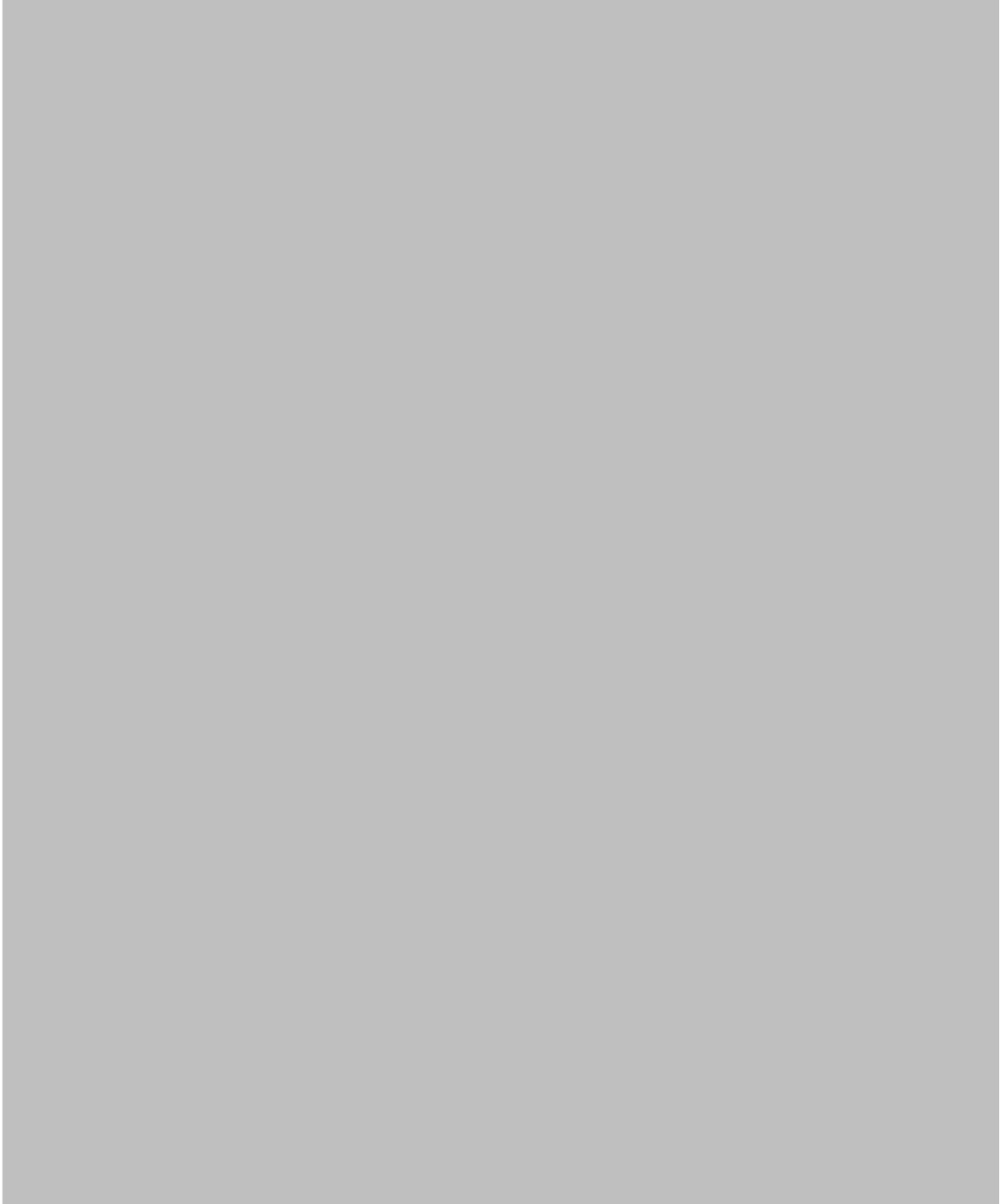
illus.13 *Aberglaube* (superstition), pen and ink on paper,  
34.7 x 21.7 cm, c 1900/1901, ASC, Vienna



illus.14. *Nachstück (Nocturne) III*, oil on three-ply panel 21 x 20 cm, c April 1911, ASC, Vienna



illus.15&16. Arnold Schoenberg, two scenes from *Die glückliche Hand* (*The Hand of Fate*), oil on cardboard, 21.8 x 30.2 cm, and pastel on cardboard, 12.6 x 15.7 cm, both unsigned and undated, before October 1910, Arnold Schoenberg Center, Vienna.



illus.17. Eugene Delacroix (1798-1863) *Jacob Wrestling with the Angel* 1857-61, fresco, 758 x 491 cm, Saint-Sulpice, Paris.