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Correlating Symbolisms of Womanhood and Marriage in the Libretti of Schoenberg's *Von heute auf morgen* and Berg's *Lulu*

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Abstract

Von heute auf morgen and *Lulu*, the twelve-tone operas of Arnold Schoenberg and Alban Berg, respectively, can be interpreted as works that sought to uphold a traditional formalism of Germanic opera construction amidst the post-Expressionistic aesthetics that the newer *Zeitoper* style strove to abolish. This new style aimed to popularize opera by embracing a new simplicity of contemporary values that discouraged the perpetuation of prior operatic dispositions. This dichotomy of old vs. new is presented in an analysis of the *Von heute* and *Lulu* libretti that traces their symbolic representation of womanhood and marriage from the male gaze, whereby an overlapping depiction emerges in both operas in their similar but varying treatment of these themes as parodies of their composers' time and the ongoing cultural conflict between moralities rooted in the past and non-conforming values that embrace modernized change.

Keywords: womanhood, Arnold Schoenberg, Alban Berg, Von heute auf morgen, Lulu

1. Introduction

In addition to their long-standing camaraderie as first teacher and student and then as friends, Arnold Schoenberg and Alban Berg, respectively, also shared a distinct perception of their place

in the history of music as a linear culmination that had progressed in German musical culture from the Baroque era to their own time. As such, both composers viewed themselves as aesthetic curators who perpetuate a recognizable German tradition in their works, which made them fundamentally opposed to the specific interwar trends of the Weimar Republic era that yielded to the kind of popular cultural tropes that sought to discontinue this lineage of maintaining ties to the traditional past.[1] In his "Lecture on *Wozzeck*," his first opera, Berg expressed his view on belonging to a German tradition:

> Only in music that is based on the great tradition of German music – with its moving harmony, its diverse rhythm, especially with its polyphony and immeasurable richness of forms and shapes – is there a straight path leading from Bach to our own time. The music of *Wozzeck* does not stray from this path of German music – and when I think of music pure and simple it is the only one, the only one that I find to be music at all – and this is what I have intended to show when I have underscored a traditional accordance with rules in my theoretical discussion.[2]

Schoenberg, likewise, presented similar views in his own published texts. The following statement was published in 1921, in an article titled "On German Music," as part of an edited collection on the subject of "the meaning of music for German culture":

> When I think of music, the only type that comes to my mind – whether I want it to or not – is German music. He who is its enemy will often be guilty of starving others into submission before this insight has become second nature to him. German music, however, thrives even in times of hunger: scrimping and saving, its wordless power will create and fill stately mansions of the spirit into all eternity. And it will always reach for the heavens, while worldly superiority only boasts with artifice.[3]

Several years later, in 1931, in his second article titled "National Music," Schoenberg wrote:

> Remarkably, nobody has yet appreciated that my music, produced on German soil, without foreign influences, is a living example of an art able most effectively to oppose Latin and Slav hopes of hegemony and derived through and through from the traditions of German music.[4]

The essential purpose of these three texts is to exemplify the responsibility that Schoenberg and Berg attached to their place within a historic structure that informed their motivations as composers, further illustrating how to them, musical innovation can simultaneously be new while maintaining semblances of its heritage. Ergo, music derived from the German tradition that unequivocally seeks to abolish this form of authentic unity would not be endorsed by Schoenberg or Berg.

The timeframe of the ideological upheaval that strove to embrace popular trends at the expense of tradition transpired from the mid-1920s until the rise of National Socialism in 1933. At the time, Schoenberg and Berg were both working on operas that they felt would be seen as successful

[1]For a source that delves into the socio-cultural and political makeup of Vienna during this transitional period in which Berg and Schoenberg worked, see HOLMES and SILVERMAN, *Interwar Vienna*.

[2]BERG, *Pro Mundo*, 258. The lecture was written in 1929 and updated multiple times before its publication in 1930.

[3]SCHOENBERG, *A Schoenberg Reader*, 160.

[4]SCHOENBERG, *Style and Idea*, 173.

examples of a stylized system of composing operas that can popularize a sophisticated method that does not compromise the integrity of elevated craftsmanship in order to garner widespread appeal. Schoenberg composed *Von heute auf morgen* (From One Day to the Next), while Berg devoted considerably more time to his *Lulu*. Musically speaking, both operas were composed in the twelve-tone system that was itself still relatively new and untested in the realm of opera, making it plausible to assume that there was even more incentive to combat the aesthetic and formal operatic modalities that were antithetical to *Von heute* and *Lulu*.

In the genre of opera, the *Zeitoper* was the post-Expressionistic style that aimed to symbolize contemporary sentiments through simple and widely-accessible forms of expression that are not only new, but look to disavow past traditions in an attempt to completely reinvent the genre for the modern technological age. The composers Kurt Weill, Paul Hindemith, and Ernst Krenek were the driving proponents of *Zeitoper*, while Schoenberg and Berg were openly against the principles that these other composers and the *Zeitoper* stood for.

With these initial concepts in mind, the central focus of this article is to analyze and juxtapose the libretti of *Von heute* and *Lulu*, and in particular, the way they present similar portrayals of womanhood (albeit in different contexts and for different purposes), and the institution of marriage, which reflects each opera's depiction of women as wives. From one perspective, the two operas portray a social construct of womanhood in the late 1920s/early 1930s. This view is characterized from the standpoint of behavioral cues that reflect strict representations and expectations of respectable conduct and morality. But it also delves into more nefariously-idealized depictions of femininity that project another side of women, from the skewed perception of the male gaze, which views women as immoral seductresses who seek to manipulate and sexually subjugate men in order to control them. The inclusion and meaning of marriage as an establishment also comes into consideration as a major pillar of tradition and formality amidst the chaos of rebellious non-conformity that takes the form of self-empowerment, sexual indiscretion, and the uninhibited freedom to be one's self, removed from the identity-forming projections of others. Many of these themes were circulating in Vienna at the time at the behest of the famous (or infamous) socio-political satirist, Karl Kraus, whom Schoenberg and Berg both venerated. In light of this, it becomes clear just how profoundly *Von heute* and *Lulu* reflect the impulses of their time beyond the explicit symbolisms that they both partially (and satirically in the case of *Von heute*) embrace to reflect the popular orientations of *Zeitoper* in order to achieve commercial success as compelling, mainstream operas, that nevertheless possess qualities of depth and sophistication that will ensure an assumed longevity of interest even after the tastes that they seek to emulate and parody cease to be meaningful or socially representational. However, it must be made clear that neither *Von heute* nor *Lulu* are purely *Zeitopern* – the style that both of their composers disparaged – because the complexity of their music's harmonic language and the overall musical idiom of twelve-tone extended tonality retains their quintessential individual styles, which does not reflect the push towards simpler orchestrations found in *Zeitoper*'s operatic archetypes. The overt borrowings from the style that Schoenberg and Berg made are more of a symbolic concession rather than an integral conformity to a new aesthetic implementation.

The libretti of the operas are analyzed without an inclusion of the music, because only the texts can distinguish the narrative depictions of womanhood and marriage, and also the symbolic duality of old traditionalism versus new progressiveness, which characterizes the stylistic clash between the operatic forms that Schoenberg and Berg wished to uphold, and the desire to

reject these paradigms that *Zeitopern* promoted. Nevertheless, one distinguishing feature of the music that both operas share will briefly be made to convey an even greater depth of integration between the two works. This detail pertains to the fact that both operas are distinctly built upon a formal structure of vocal idioms (as opposed to the instrumental forms, for example, that *Wozzeck* was constructed around). Douglas Jarman writes that

> *Lulu* is a "number" opera, using the vocal forms traditionally associated with opera – Recitative, Aria, Duet, Arioso, Quartet and so on. Although the division into different numbers is less aurally distinct in *Lulu* than it is in other works, the beginnings and ends of these separate formal units are clearly articulated, and the different numbers are clearly indicated in the score.[5]

Complementing this, Schoenberg writes of *Von heute* that "my opera is vocally conceived from A to Z – in fact, to such an extent that there are hardly any longer instrument interludes … ."[6] Additionally, George Perle writes that

> as in *Lulu*, and possibly influenced by the example of the one-act opera, *Von heute auf morgen*, that Schoenberg had just completed, Berg employs piano and saxophone as integral components of the orchestra and for episodes in the standardized timbre of commercial popular music.[7]

This short inclusion on formal and musical attributes serves to further demonstrate how at their core, *Von heute* and *Lulu* aim to encompass a more long-standing and conventionally-historic approach to opera composition than those of the *Zeitopern* variety, while still yielding to a level of flexibility to not completely disavow the trends of the music that was all around them. It is also important to note that Schoenberg and Berg had an intimate knowledge of each other's simultaneous opera projects. Berg worked on *Lulu* for many years, so his letters with Schoenberg are replete with mentions of his opera. Conversely, Schoenberg spent much less time composing *Von heute*, which he finished at a time when *Lulu* was still at a relatively early stage. Therefore, a brief focus on Berg's awareness of Schoenberg's opera, and particularly its libretto, is crucial in order to understand the plausible influence that *Von heute* could have exercized upon Berg to compel him to infuse *Lulu* with overlapping characteristics, and especially the symbols pertaining to womanhood and marriage. The first of two representational letters was written by Berg to Schoenberg on April 4, 1929, and emphasizes Berg's knowledge of and enthusiasm for the *Von heute* libretto. He writes:

> I have probably never picked up a libretto with such suspense, indeed excitement, as *Von heute auf morgen* … It is just what an opera composer could wish for, or should wish for if he isn't a theatrical symphonist: a libretto! … Indeed, there are even sentences whose cadence is so much your own that they could only be by you or someone so close to you, that they are really by you, even if entirely by another … Beyond this attempt of mine at a fairly objective judgment, there is naturally a subjective interest in my capacity as my own librettist, if I may call myself that one the basis of the fact that I am transforming an enormous drama like *Lulu* into a libretto.[8]

[5]JARMAN, *Alban Berg: Lulu*, 58.

[6]Quoted in DAVISON, "*Von heute auf morgen*," 103.

[7]PERLE, *Lulu*, 29.

[8]BRAND, HAILEY, and HARRIS (eds.), *The Berg-Schoenberg Correspondence*, 384–385.

Berg's other letter of interest regarding *Von heute* was written to Schoenberg on March 1, 1930. In it, Berg expresses his regret at missing the opera's stage premiere the previous month, but acknowledges that he attentively listened to the radio broadcast of the performance on February 27, citing musical observations that he found particularly interesting, also adding that he had ordered a copy of the full score and libretto to the opera.[9] Owing to Berg's devotion to Schoenberg, and his professed study of the libretto and music of *Von heute* – while also adding how the libretto impacted his own attempts at crafting *Lulu*'s libretto – all contributes to the justification that these operas can be meaningfully juxtaposed from a purely textual standpoint.

In terms of previous research that has compared *Von heute* with *Lulu*, only Craig Ayrey wrote about an association, but his sole reference to a likeness between the two libretti is to say that they both similarly alluded to notions of "modern life."[10] In addition, Ayrey posits a connection of influence that cites Berg's *Lyric Suite* string quartet as a work that exerted an impact on *Von heute*.[11] Lastly, Ayrey isolates how Berg quoted the title *Von heute auf morgen* in the text of his 1930 canon.[12] Although these are fascinating insights that link the two operas, Ayrey primarily focuses on theoretical considerations of harmonic structure and the twelve-tone row derivations between the two composers. But he does draw attention to Berg's preoccupation with *Von heute*, which acts as a compelling foundation for the current article to build a deeper textual juxtaposition between the libretti, owing to their history of shared perception between their composers.

The only scholar to devote significant studies just to *Von heute* is Stephen Davison, who wrote at length about the opera's socio-cultural symbolic qualities, further adding that while Schoenberg's music does not conform to the *Zeitoper* template, the *Von heute* libretto that Schoenberg's wife, Gertrud Schoenberg, wrote under the pseudonym Max Blonda, is decidedly reminiscent of *Zeitoper*.[13] Davison also touches upon the emphasis that the narrative places on women's place in society, and marital considerations, which the libretto parodies.[14] However, his most pertinent observation to the current article is the belief that "*Von heute auf morgen* is best viewed as both critical of and participating in *Zeitoper*."[15] Lastly, Juliane Brand wrote a detailed

[9]Ibid., 394–395.

[10]AYREY, "Introduction," 17.

[11]Ibid., 20–21.

[12]Ibid., 26–28.

[13]DAVISON, "*Von heute auf morgen*," 92. Furthermore, while Gertrud Schoenberg is credited as the sole librettist, Berg's letter above testifies to clear intonations in the *Von heute* libretto that are reminiscent of Arnold Schoenberg's own expressive mannerisms, which can suggest that both composers either acted as their own librettists, or, in the case of Schoenberg, presenting him as being significantly involved in the creation of his opera's libretto. This distinction further associates the two composers in their working methods that keenly connects them to the formation of their respective texts.

[14]Ibid.

[15]Ibid., 105. See also DAVISON, "Of its Time," 271–298.

history of Schoenberg's opera, and chronicled the development of the libretto as a partnership of insight between the Schoenbergs, yet, with Gertrud Schoenberg taking the initiative in crafting the essence of the text through the extensive evolution of plot points and a side-by-side presentation of the original libretto next to its final version, as well as the English translation of both texts.[16]

To reiterate, the present article investigates the libretti of *Von heute* and *Lulu* to trace their symbolic symmetries regarding womanhood and femininity from the male perspective, and the institution of marriage as a catalyst for these projections. Allegorical similarities emerge that not only identify the close kinship of meaning between the two operas, but also emphasize how the narratives exemplify the opposing duality of tradition versus modernized change, as it informs most of the behaviors and perceptions expressed by the scrutinized characters. The musicological value of such an undertaking presents a unique comparison of works by important composers, situated in the context of their contemporary time when aesthetic turmoil punctuated the cultural landscape, and opera was a central platform for expressing and arguing the pervasive ideologies of Weimar Republic society. To facilitate this discussion, the first section addresses the primary philosophical disputes that stood for and against the tenets of *Zeitoper*, and how Schoenberg and Berg fit into this scheme. Next, one section each is devoted to the analysis of the libretti of *Von heute* and *Lulu* to isolate their figurative meaning. And lastly, an examination of womanhood and femininity will put the two operas into a historical context aimed at broadening the analogous representations of the libretti into a wider framework.

2. Opposing operatic aesthetics

At the time that Schoenberg and Berg were composing *Von heute* and *Lulu*, respectively, in the late 1920s, the cultural landscape had shifted from the Expressionist ethos, which informed the symbolic character of Berg's first opera, *Wozzeck*, which premiered in 1925. Expressionism focused on inner psychological states that essentially distorted reality to epitomize disturbing realizations.[17] Following the end of the First World War in the cultural atmosphere of the Weimar Republic, a new path towards a simplified and positive outlook was sought to be conveyed in the arts, resulting in the cultural advent of *Neue Sachlichkeit* or New Objectivity, which found its operatic embodiment in the style of the *Zeitoper*.[18]

As Susan Cook writes, New Objectivity came to "define a new kind of realism which marked a dramatic 'renunciation of Expressionism.'"[19] Regarding *Zeitoper*, Cook describes it as

> topical opera that was firstly a comic genre and typically relied on parody, social satire, and burlesque as dramatic tools. They were expressions and celebrations of modern life, where

[16]See BRAND, "Of Authorship," 153–239; BRAND, "A Short History," 241–270. Brand's English translation of the final version of the libretto is the one that the present article will utilize in its analysis of the text. For other analytical texts on *Von heute*, see STREET, "Expression and Construction," 85–104; STREET, "*Von heute auf morgen*," 242–270; TREGEAR, "Schoenberg, Satire," 147–156.

[17]For relevant studies, see BEHR, FANNING, and JARMAN, *Expressionism*; CRAWFORD and CRAWFORD, *Expressionism*.

[18]For a study on music and *Neue Sachlichkeit*, see GROSCH, *Die Musik*.

[19]COOK, *Opera for a New Republic*, 28.

composers tried to incorporate as many attributes of contemporary life as possible into all facets of the operatic production. The libretti were set in the present; characters were typically everyday people or were presented as recognizable modern stereotypes. The action takes place in locales considered either modern or everyday: office buildings, elevators, train stations, cabarets, and private family dining rooms. Along with the modern setting, composers also relied on theatrical properties of the age: characters talk on the phone, play gramophones, take pictures, and shoot movies.[20]

The *Zeitoper* style embodied New Objectivity, and looked to emphatically reject past tenets of complex anxiety by also incorporating an idiom of music that appropriated popular music styles and embraced the structure of number operas.[21] One of the most essential motivating factors for this ideological revision was the conviction that operas that represented tropes of realistic commonality would also be more intriguing to audiences than the heavy subject matters that epitomized Expressionist opera.[22]

Schoenberg spoke at length about his views regarding this new cultural milieu. He particularly objected to the tenets of New Objectivity, designating it as a "fashion," which found explicit representation in the libretto of *Von heute*. At precisely the same time that he composed his opera, Schoenberg wrote an article titled "Fashion" (c. 1928–1929). He writes:

There is no objective justification for fashion, but only nonobjective, subjective reasons. And it is this senseless nature of fashion that one would now like to transfer to art. And it succeeds. Except for one thing: it changes like fashion, but ceases to be art. In this America dominates. Film and jazz, rejecting long-lasting riches through worldly living, and dedicated – to understate and exaggerate at the same time – to sudden and unfounded change, on the one hand, and to the standardized mass production of successful models on the other. It was easy to foresee that such overexploitation must quickly lead to failure. It would have happened the same way with music, if the true art did not possess the strength to withdraw to a lonely island and, in the shadow of true spirituality, to remain untroubled by the hustle and bustle of the day. One day or many: what role does that play in the eternity of the Idea?[23]

This passage captures the essential components of Schoenberg's argument against the trends of the day. He describes his disdain for the popularity of fashion as superficially ephemeral. Its mass distribution and exploitation is also a fallacy, which undermines the integrity of "true art," which will nevertheless endure due to its enhanced value and morality, and will rebound after the fleetingness of fashion invalidates this style's ability to remain relevant to posterity.

In 1937, Schoenberg wrote an article titled "How One Becomes Lonely," where he elaborates on the themes expressed in "Fashion," to also include his sense of responsibility in combating what he sees as a flaw in the overarching perception of art at the time. He writes:

Among some of my pupils an uncertainty appeared and some of them turned to the new fashions of composing which were promoted by the different composers of the so-called New Music. … This took place between 1922 and 1930, and during this time almost every year a new kind of music was created and that of the preceding year collapsed. It started with the European musicians imitating

[20]Ibid., 4.

[21]Ibid., 30.

[22]Ibid., 36.

[23]SCHOENBERG, *A Schoenberg Reader*, 210–211.

> American jazz. Then followed "Machine Music" and "New Objectivity" *(Neue Sachlichkeit)* and "Music for Every Day Use" *(Gebrauchsmusik)* and "Play Music" or "Game Music" *(Spielmusik)* and finally "Neo-classicism." While all this happened and so many styles developed and passed away … I saw with great regret that many a great talent would perish through a corrupt attitude towards the arts, which aimed only for a sensational but futile success, instead of fulfilling the real task of every artist; although I knew I was right and that they were wrong … One of the accusations directed at me maintained that I composed only for my private satisfaction. And this was to become true, but in a different manner from that which was meant. While composing for me had been a pleasure, now it became a duty. I knew I had to fulfill a task: I had to express what was necessary to be expressed and I knew I had the duty of developing my ideas for the sake of progress in music, whether I liked it or not; but I also had to realize that the great majority of the public did not like it.[24]

Even after the musical stylings of New Objectivity and *Zeitoper* all but disappeared after the Second World War, Schoenberg still maintained his vitriolic and rather self-righteous position, which can be seen in his 1946 article "Heart and Brain in Music," where he writes that

> I believe that a real composer writes music for no other reason than that it pleases him. Those who compose because they want to please others, and have audiences in mind, are not real artists. … They are merely more or less skillful entertainers who would renounce composing if they could not find listeners.[25]

After the success of *Wozzeck*, Berg felt pressure to deliver another hit opera. This is partially reflected in his extended correspondences with his friends, where he exhaustively deliberated between the merits and weaknesses of various potential texts as the subject of his second opera. In the end, it came down to Gerhard Hauptmann's play *Und Pippa tanzt!* and Frank Wedekind's *Lulu* plays.[26] Once the choice fell upon *Lulu*, Berg was keen to imbue his opera with enough references to *Zeitoper* to ensure its place among the most popular operas of its day. Conversely, as Stephen Davison notes, Schoenberg was one of the few major composers at the time who did not integrate any of the popular musical idioms into his compositions.[27] Douglas Jarman addresses Berg's practice of moderate conformity to the current stylistic trends when he writes how "*Lulu* has much more in common with the music of Weill and Brecht's 'epic opera.' As a man of the theatre Berg could not afford to ignore, and could not fail to be interested in, what was happening in the 'new opera.'"[28]

Berg's primary position was as a man of the theater, and this must be referenced in order to fully comprehend how his aesthetic approaches to composing opera both agreed and disagreed with Schoenberg's perspectives. A crucial insight into Berg's general frame of mind is this famous passage from his essay "The 'Problem of Opera'":

> It never occurred to me to attempt to reform the art form of opera when composing *Wozzeck*. However little I intended this when I began to compose, I intended just as little that it should become a model for further operatic creations. … I had nothing in mind about a technique of composition,

[24]SCHOENBERG, *Style and Idea*, 52–53.

[25]Ibid., 54.

[26]For a text that chronicles Berg's dilemma of operatic choice, see ERTELT, *Alban Bergs Lulu*.

[27]DAVISON, "*Von heute auf morgen*," 89.

[28]JARMAN, *Alban Berg: Lulu*, 95.

> nothing in mind at all except to give the theater what belongs to the theater, that is, to create music that at every moment fulfills its duty to serve the drama. Furthermore, to create music that provides everything that is needed to bring this drama to reality on stage. And all of this without risking the absolute (purely musical) justification for the existence of the music – without risking its own viability by extramusical obstacles.[29]

Schoenberg also made a similar point a few years later in his article from c.1930, "New Music: My Music," where in reference to *Von heute*, he wrote that

> its most important feature as regards the text – and on this point I found the librettist extraordinarily accommodating – is that everything is subordinated to one aim: genuine musical theater.[30]

Berg's public tone of expression regarding his views on New Objectivity was more guarded and subtle than Schoenberg's, although he essentially agreed with his former teacher's negative views on the new cultural movement. In an open letter to Schoenberg from 1925 where he examines some of the secret programs in his *Chamber Concerto*, Berg made the following observation:

> I have smuggled into these three movements the adherents of program music – if there are any left – would be delighted, and the [representatives and defenders of the "New Classicism," and "New Objectivity,"] the "linearists," "physiologists," the "contrapuntists," and the "formalists" would fall upon me in indignation at such "romantic" tendencies – if I did not make them aware that they too, if they wanted to look, would have their hearts' desire.[31]

Berg articulates his disdain for New Objectivity clearly here by stating how divergent his music is from the new styles that he listed. Schoenberg again echoes Berg in his article "New Music: My Music," where he also makes a similar list that aims to bridge the sentiment that Berg referred to as "romantic tendencies" as being integral to the development of the new styles, illustrating their indebtedness to past paradigms. He writes:

> Whereas Wagner's poetry never acquired any influence worth mentioning, the evolution of music went straight along the path he pointed out, and not a single note written by any of the "new classicists," "folklorists," "new objectivists," and "community-art" musicians would be possible without Wagner the musician.[32]

A few years later, in his published "Lecture on *Wozzeck*," where he is discussing a formal consideration in a scene from the opera, Berg writes:

> A similar example of this sort of musical exploitation of material, this "objectivity" – earlier applied to a specific note as object, here to a rhythm – arises also in the next scene. You see, this term "objectivity" is older than the current buzzword![33]

[29]BERG, *Pro Mundo*, 216.

[30]SCHOENBERG, *Style and Idea*, 105.

[31]BERG, *Pro Mundo*, 198. According to Simms, the bracketed text was probably added or approved by Berg after the article's publication.

[32]SCHOENBERG, *Style and Idea*, 105.

[33]BERG, *Pro Mundo*, 255.

Berg's attitude here echoes Schoenberg's disapproval of ephemeral fashions by his pejorative characterization of "objectivity" as a buzzword. Elsewhere in his article, "The 'Problem of Opera,'" Berg conveys his knowledge of contemporary trends by simultaneously disparaging their effectiveness at continuing the kind of lineage of German music that he communicated earlier in his lecture on *Wozzeck*, when he writes:

> The use of means "suited to the times" – like cinema, revue, loudspeakers, and jazz – proves only that such a work is up-to-date. But this cannot be called real progress because we are already there and cannot go further with such things alone. To say that the art form of opera has developed further – as happened, for example, with Monteverdi, Lully, Gluck, Wagner, and finally in Schoenberg's stage works – requires other means beyond the simple application of the latest acquisitions and things that are in fashion. But must it always "further develop?" Isn't it enough to take the opportunity to make beautiful music for good theater, or, better said, to make music so beautiful that – in spite of it – good theater will result?[34]

However, Berg's most direct statement professing his displeasure with the tenets of New Objectivity came in 1929 when he answered a newspaper inquiry that asked the question, "Should Wagner stagings be modernized?" Berg replied by first saying that he agreed with the need to update stage works, which Wagner and Mahler both supported, then added:

> But if you mean by "modernization" to put on *Tristan und Isolde* as New Objectivity, and do *Siegfried* in white tie and tails, and *Die Meistersinger* – where the connections of verse and industry (it need not be just the shoe business) is easily maintained – as *Zeitoper*, then the answer to your question is *no*.[35]

For a contextualization of the opposing aesthetic, Kurt Weill, one of the main proponents of *Zeitopern*, expressed his advocacy for the new style in a series of articles that offer an ideological juxtaposition to Schoenberg and Berg. In his aptly titled article "Zeitoper" from 1928, Weill writes:

> The new operatic theater that is being generated today has epic character. It does not propose to describe but to report. It no longer proposes to form its plot according to moments of suspenseful tension but to tell about man, his actions, and what compels him to commit them. Music in the new operatic theater renounces pumping up the action from within, glazing over the transitions, supplying the background for events, and stirring up passions.[36]

Later on, Weill writes that these ploys which he aims to incorporate have the ability to "fundamentally recreate the genre of opera. But then it must fall in line with that development evident in all artistic areas which today proclaims the end of the socially exclusive, 'aristocratic' art."[37] Then, in his 1929 article, "Correspondence about *The Threepenny Opera*," Weill writes that

[34]Ibid., 216.

[35]Ibid., 392.

[36]KAES, JAY and DIMENDBERG (eds.), *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, 573.

[37]Ibid., 574.

> this revision to a primitive operatic form brought with it a far-reaching simplification of musical language. It was a question of writing music that could be sung by actors, that is, by musical amateurs. But what appeared initially to be a limitation proved to be a huge enrichment in the course of the work.[38]

From these passages, Weill's position becomes clear: his work is meant to usher in a new form of progressive musical theater that transcends the static elitism of opera. He believes that opera must now catch up to this established precedent by instigating similar reforms of simplified realism. This sentiment is in stark contrast to Berg's expression of perpetuating an operatic lineage of tradition, where his aim was not to reform the genre, as Weill wanted. The dialectical divergence between Weill's New Objectivity faction and the one of Schoenberg and Berg is palpable, which Schoenberg sought to explicitly parody in *Von heute* to prove that *Zeitoper* did not have to be a simplified operatic endeavor, but could experience meaningful representation in a more sophisticated stylistic framework.

In addition to this discourse on contrasting aesthetic perceptions of opera, there were other points of contention brewing in the social environment of Schoenberg and Berg. The Viennese satirist Karl Kraus regularly printed his reactionary and often vitriolic magazine, whose primary aim was to unveil his society's most pervasive hypocrisies. A central focus of his attacks were concentrated around women and their treatment, particularly in regard to sexuality and sexual practices. Martin Esslin notes that Kraus was especially bothered by the standard of journalistic integrity in Vienna, where he detected significant corruption in what was printed in newspapers, as these periodicals at that time derived their income from printing advertisements. The hypocrisy surrounding sexual awareness essentially originated from these newspapers preaching that society must be ethically upstanding and chaste, while in the back of their issues, they advertised brothels, and profited from those inclusions. In addition, Kraus protested against the corrupt legal system that unfairly prosecuted prostitutes, without holding their male clients to any accountability.[39] From these social perspectives, representations of good and bad sexual conduct was extremely explicit. The hypocrisy here was one of gender normativity, where a woman was held to an extremely rigorous array of prescribed moral rules, while men could freely gratify their sexual appetites with near impunity. Indeed, in 1905 when Kraus put on a private production of *Pandora's Box*, the second of the two *Lulu* plays by Frank Wedekind, Kraus presented a lecture on the play, where a twenty year-old Berg was present for both the lecture and performance.[40] In his lecture, Kraus describes Lulu as

> the woman who became the destroyer of everyone, because she was destroyed by everyone, and they [the words of the play] encompass the world of the author, Frank Wedekind. A world in which woman, if she matures towards aesthetic perfection, is not condemned to take from man the cross of moral responsibility.[41]

[38]Ibid., 578.

[39]ESSLIN, "Berg's Vienna," 4 and 6.

[40]JARMAN, *Alban Berg: Lulu*, 1–2.

[41]KRAUS, "*Pandora's Box*," 102–103.

This imbalance was a driving force of Kraus's satire,[42] and it is plausible to see how these rebuttals could have prompted Schoenberg and Berg to embrace a similar position in their narratives, which clearly accentuate the trajectories of their realities, not least with their reactions to *Zeitopern*, but also regarding the prevalence of hypocritical sexual morality between the genders. This measure of social mirroring exemplifies how *Von heute* and *Lulu* oscillate between reality and an idealized illusion of irrational desire, as they juxtapose opposing perceptions of tradition/novelty with male/female interactions generally, and husband/wife dynamics specifically. Berg was distinctly drawn to Kraus, and Theodor Adorno succinctly conveys this association, especially as it relates to *Lulu*: "Berg's *Lulu* music thanks him [Kraus] in the name of that utopia which at heart motivates Kraus's critique of the bourgeois taboos that degrade love."[43] Moreover, Kraus's influence, Adorno argues, presents *Lulu* as a metaphor of "societal repression over thousands of years, [which] has been concentrated in the ambivalent relationship to female sexuality."[44]

3. The libretto of *Von heute auf morgen*

In the weeks and months following the stage premiere of *Von heute* on February 1, 1930 at the Frankfurt Opera, Schoenberg wrote two different texts in his effort to promote and distribute his opera. The first text was written to accompany the radio broadcast of a studio performance of the opera on February 27, 1930, which Schoenberg wanted to be read prior to the broadcast to inform his audience about the meaning of the work in order to provide a context of insight. He begins by providing an anecdote of a war scene that acts as a metaphor to introduce his point regarding the division between reality and idealized projections.[45] The story serves to illustrate Schoenberg's warning for not heeding the potential consequences of one's actions, even in mundane circumstances. This is his starting point for arguing how perceptions of fashion can largely be innocuous,

> but it becomes serious when the slogans that are in fashion shake the foundations of private life: the relationship between the sexes, and marriage [itself], because the next fashion will again bring something different. And in this regard, there is no use in being insured by others, because if you have destroyed the foundations, then what you build up again is at most superficial.[46]

This was the composer's preface before he delved into describing how the libretto of his opera is meant to exemplify these notions.

Schoenberg took a more direct approach with his second promotional text, which he drafted on April 1, 1930, but which was never published. In this text, he discusses *Von heute*, and writes how

[42]For additional information on Kraus's socio-critical beliefs, see TIMMS, *Karl Kraus*. For a study that trace's Kraus's influence on Berg, see RODE, *Alban Berg*; SCHROEDER, "Opera, Apocalypse," 91–105. For Kraus's association with Schoenberg, see GOEHR, "Schoenberg and Karl Kraus," 59–71.

[43]ADORNO, *Alban Berg*, 7.

[44]Ibid., 133.

[45]SCHOENBERG, *Schoenberg in Words,* vol. 5, 323.

[46]Ibid., 324.

> on display are those who are foolish enough to act on principles that are merely tossed around by fashion; those who risk their marital happiness, all the while not suspecting that fashion, which today is perfectly fine focusing on superficial appearance, might on its next whim come around again to glorify that very marital happiness.[47]

As befitting his aesthetic diatribe against the tenets of *Zeitoper*, these initial expressions by Schoenberg introduce his ideologies, which are parodied in the libretto of *Von heute*.

The structural disposition of *Von heute* is that of a single act and scene, where the entirety of the action takes place in a single room at the home of the husband and wife, although it is implied that there are other rooms where their child emerges from. Despite the continuous flow of the narrative, its textual construction can be conceived of being in three distinct parts with a short transition between the first and second parts. These are ideological distinctions within the plot that characterize key conceptual divisions within an unbroken linear ordering. Interpreting the opera's single scene in these subdivisions gives it a semblance of a standard three-act arc form, providing a more nuanced understanding of its developmental framework where a problem is presented, embellished, and finally resolved.

The scene direction at the start of the libretto exemplifies *Zeitoper* features, designating the room as modern, and including technical components, such as a light fixture with a dimmer to set the atmospheric stage with explicit references to the time in which the opera takes place. The first part is an exposition of the basic aesthetic and behavioral patterns of the two protagonists: the husband and the wife. The couple return home from an evening out, and the husband is effusively reflecting on the extent of his attraction to a woman, whom he is sexualizing lustfully by describing the allure of her eyes, mouth, figure, and even her teeth. As we will see in the next section, Lulu's mouth is often referenced by her admirers as a characteristic that inflames their desire. The husband imaginatively states that if he was not married, the woman could be hazardous for him. The wife does not react critically to her husband's fawning expressions, suggesting that she knows his whimsical behavior and is secure in her grasp of reality concerning their marital situation.

After she asks him if he is still dreaming, the husband retorts defensively, saying that his dreams are all that he has, citing the daily monotony of home life, work, and raising a child as a boring existence. He adds that periodically experiencing "something different, something new," saves him from feeling "suffocated" by his boredom.[48] This expression elicits a longer response from the wife, who admits to surprise that her husband feels as he does, believing that they are both happy with their lives, reminding him that he has a nice home, a wonderful child, and a wife who loves him. She asks him what more could he possibly want, to which he begins raving about the charms of the other woman again. Since this woman and his wife used to be friends in the past, he asks her what he thinks of her following a long period of no contact. This triggers another diametric conviction: the husband calls the other woman "enchanting," while the wife objectively observes how "that plain little person has become a seductive woman."[49] In response to this, the husband calls the person in question "a woman of today" ("Eine Frau von heute"),

[47]Ibid., 327.

[48]SCHOENBERG, *Von heute* (libretto), 169. "Hätte man da nicht ab und zu 'mal was Andres, was Neues,' man würde vor Alltagssorgen und Langeweile ersticken."

[49]Ibid., 171. "Entzückend" … "Aus der kleinen unansehnlichen Person ist ein verführerisches Weib geworden."

which the wife brushes off as someone who does not have obligations towards a husband, child, home, and kitchen.[50] The ideological meaning of this impasse and its wider socio-cultural implications are important. The husband is enraptured, while the wife perceives seduction. This has the makings of a *femme fatale*, who would logically be described in positive and negative connotations by the husband and wife, respectfully. The designation of "woman of today" further reflects the topicality of New Objectivity. It is the ultimate meaning of this term that will be the crux of Schoenberg's moral illumination at the end of the opera. It is also an encapsulation of the husband's archetypal woman of sexual and sensual desire, even if it is only a fantasy. The wife's interpretation, however, indicates her impression of this woman as being unmarried, and therefore in possession of certain freedoms that allow her to present herself as she does. The husband's lack of restraint characterizes him as a person whose views are ruled by his impulses. This is evident when he states: "I'd gladly trade a marital embrace for one sinful kiss from those lips."[51] Once again, the wife ignores this comment and chooses to ask her husband practical questions regarding his encounter with the woman.

The husband next brings up the male singer, whose singing had impeded the husband's conversation with the woman. The husband displays jealously over the woman being impressed by his singing, which he uses as a further criticism of his music. This could perhaps be seen as a subtle taunt of the aesthetics of New Objectivity made by the Schoenbergs, even if the husband is meant to be the figure who initially conforms to the tastes of contemporary fashion. The inclusion of the singer is a catalyst for the wife to point out that she cannot be viewed as completely out of touch with modernity since she liked his singing, further adding that when her husband left her for the other woman at the event, the singer came over to the wife and implied an interest in her with his body language. The wife is essentially challenging the openness of her husband's expressions that so easily admit to seduction at the hands of another woman, by presenting her own admirer and admitting that she appreciated the appeals of a stranger upon her womanhood. It is one of the first tests of her husband's sense of equity that the wife initiates in her own provocative mirroring of her husband's fantasies.

The intensity of the disagreement is raised when the husband's callous reply pushes the wife to ask him if he prefers her female friend to her, his wife, which the husband deflects by asking if he is even allowed to prefer another woman. This prompts the wife to accuse her husband of a behavioral shortcoming that he has exhibited in the past when she describes how she knows that he is attracted to the fantasies of women that his imagination contrives as delusions of grandeur, which are always stimulated by "fashionable" dresses. Yet, once the glamor of this unique newness has dissipated, he becomes disconsolate and invariably compares these women to his wife after the fact. This rationalization is another subtle rebuke against idealistically yielding to aesthetic trends that are popular but fleeting.

The husband denies that he compares his wife to these women, drawing a clear and non-convergent distinction when he says "she, a woman of the world, and you, the good housewife."[52] The husband presents here his binary view of women and their prescribed roles. The wife presents her progressive retort by saying that "women can be both!" Husband:

[50]Ibid.

[51]Ibid., 173. "Eine eheliche Umarmung gäb ich gerne für einen sündigen Kuss dieser Lippen."

[52]Ibid., 181. "sie, eine Frau von Welt, und du, die brave Hausfrau."

"No! There are those who captivate everyone, the others must resign themselves." Wife: "You're wrong; they don't have to. I will prove it to you."[53] The husband's classification of resignation suggests that his wife must also be resigned to the husband's desires for worldly women, which is a permissible condition because his wife cannot be one, by his definition, which further absolves him of degrading his wife because she is fundamentally incapable of fulfilling all of his needs, thereby tacitly giving the man, in his own mind, permission to widen his desires to satiate the needs he feels are entitled to satisfaction. The wife's line where she says she will prove to her husband how wrong he is, is the establishment of the challenge. They both hold their position in unison text, thus ending the first section that frames the problem that the rest of the opera will address, namely that a woman cannot simultaneously be a woman of the world – the representation of a seductress – and a doting housewife.

The transition to part two ensues, with the stage direction reading that the wife starts her transformation and is unseen by her husband.[54] As she is altering her appearance, the wife audibly describes what her metamorphosis will entail: in addition to changing her hair, adding makeup, and wearing clothing of the finest quality, the new *her* will also accommodate the type of behavior that her husband expressed interest in. She will take many admirers and lovers, the latter of whom are "referred to as good pals."[55] She will rotate all these people with emotional detachment, stating that it is all about her living her own life. And in the end, she declares to her husband that he will be remorseful and will eventually come to his wife with the same passionate enthusiasm that he extended towards the other woman. And with that, the wife has changed into a cold, calculating seductress, who has described her plan for implementing her charms with clearly-defined outcomes for her husband, who will take a subservient role as a result of her experimental efforts.

The husband is defiant and disbelieving that his wife could wield such influence over him, ending his rebuttal by stating that "I escape through my other senses to her who can triumph over all."[56] By this, the husband retreats into his irrational non-reality of projected womanhood. He does not believe his wife can actualize his projected idealism of a woman because she is a wife, first and foremost, and as he stated earlier, a wife cannot also be a woman of the world, which is his fantasy of desire. The transition to the second part has now ended, and the opera's most significant narrative arc is about to commence.

The second part opens with a *Zeitoper* stage direction where the wife turns up the light to a significant brightness so that her husband can see the full extent of her changed state. When the husband finally looks upon her, he is overcome by shock at how alluring she looks, signifying his dialectical defeat at this moment. The wife mockingly mimics her husband's surprise, while he argues that he has always appreciated her, indicating his obliviousness to his latent objectifying of his wife as a general practice in their marriage. The ensuing dialogue is underpinned by a more sarcastic and judgmental tone from the wife, and a defensively-placating tone from the husband. His attitude is now reconciliatory when he sees his wife in a new guise and with a new attitude of her own, justifying the wife's earlier observation that her husband becomes smitten

[53]Ibid. "Du irrst, man muss nicht. Ich werde dir's beweisen."

[54]Ibid., 183.

[55]Ibid. "… genannt Kameraden."

[56]Ibid., 185. "Ich fliehe mit meinen anderen Sinnen zu der, die sie alle besiegen kann."

with the charm of novelty. The wife turns her husband's earlier judgments back onto him by presenting her own binary gender qualifications upon men and her husband's clearly-delineated role as "a decent family man," adding that "you make a fool of yourself when you try anything else."[57] He predictably disagrees with this assessment and attempts to dissuade her. His rhetoric towards his wife has now completely changed, and he, perhaps unconsciously, begins speaking of her ingratiatingly using the same signifiers that he employed earlier for describing his "woman of the world." The wife is not impressed, and described his feeble attempts at seduction as "cliché." In a Lulu-like manner of detachment, as we will later see, the wife states: "My husband can speak as passionately as he likes, it leaves me cold: I hear only the unfamiliar voice that tempts and irresistibly robs me of my senses … ."[58] She has adopted the air of a femme fatal, conforming to her intentions from her transformation period earlier, and further mocks her husband by turning his own admission of living in his senses for the other woman against him when she claims that his tender advances are impeding her own senses.

The husband's possessive desire of the new and beautiful drives him to implore his wife to tell him that she is his, to which she, now fully in her Lulu-adjacent temperament rebuffs: "Oh no, my dear sir, you are wrong. I don't belong to anyone for long. In fact occasionally I get lost altogether, for I do as my mood dictates and what gives me pleasure."[59] His wife's rejections only incite the husband to greater depths of lust, suggesting that he should be desirable to her because she knows him. To this, the wife further snubs him by saying that "familiarity breeds contempt. I seek the new!"[60] In a longer monologue, she pushes the issue along with such phrases as:

> that won't last long … I need new things: new people; diversions … where I can write down who's next … whether old but rich, or young but poor; whether an athlete and stingy, or a philosopher and spiritual but badly dressed … as caprice dictates and time allows, that's how I will finally live my own life.[61]

As the husband briefly exits to get champagne, the wife breaks character momentarily in a self-reminder that also reminds the audience that it is all an act and that more is to come at her husband's expense. She states: "He must capitulate. Already he is in love and jealous: but he still needs to be tortured. So here's for more hysteria and speechifying. One certainly reads plenty about that these days."[62] By saying that she is drawing inspiration for her act from contemporary modes of behavior, the wife is expressing the opera's morality as not only a parody, but an

[57]Ibid., 187. "Als braver Ehemann bist du mir sehr lieb … Du machst dich nur lächerlich, wenn du anderes versuchst."

[58]Ibid., 189. "Das lässt mich kalt, wenn's mein Gatte noch so heiss sagt: Ich höre nur auf die fremde Stimme, die lockt und ohne Gnade mir die Besinnung raubt … ."

[59]Ibid. "Nein, mein Herr, da irren Sie. Ständig gehöre ich niemand, komme aber manchmal gänzlich abhanden, denn ich tue, was die Laune mir gebietet und was mir Freude macht."

[60]Ibid., 191. "Bekanntes ist Uninteressantes. Ich suche das Neue."

[61]Ibid. "… doch das verschwindet bald wieder … Ich brauche Neues; Neue; Abwechslung … dort schreibe auf ich, wer eben kommt dran … Ob alt, aber reich, oder jung, aber arm, ob Sportheld und geizig, doch elegant, oder Philosoph und geistig, doch schlecht gekleidet … Was Laune gebietet, und die Zeit mir erlaub; So leb ich schliesslich doch mein eignes Leben."

[62]Ibid., 193. "Er muss zusammenbrechen. Verliebt ist er schon und eifersüchtig; aber er wünscht noch gequält zu werden. Also noch etwas Hysterie und Phrasen. Davon hat man ja heute genug gelesen.

almost grotesque caricature of excessive embellishment to demonstrate the low and disreputable interpretation of the values of current fashion as perceived by someone of virtue like the wife.

When the husband returns, the wife criticizes him and then insists that they dance – a pastime of fashionable intrigue, but also a platform for the seductress to work her charms, which the wife is aware of. Another *Zeitoper* reference is made with her request that he turn on the radio. The husband resists by citing the lateness of the hour and the fact that the music will awaken their sleeping child. The child does end up entering the scene, where the wife responds sternly with: "Can I never have a moment's peace!"[63] Her response is a parody of the husband's earlier complaint that the child contributes to his feelings of suffocation and boredom.

By exhibiting to the husband the traits of the "woman of the world," the wife has taken on stereotypical attributes of her or any husband of the time in her detached and emotionless manner. This has an effect on the husband, who is thrust into a motherly/feminine role to maintain balance in the household. It becomes clear that through her decision to torment her husband, the wife's ploy is ultimately meant to teach her husband empathy and compassion for the trivialities of daily family life by showing him how uncomfortable she can make him when this balance is compromised by a selfish spouse who takes responsibility for granted by retreating into fantastical, imagined constructions of irrationality. This realization in context of the wife is not meant to suggest that she wishes to maintain balance by perpetuating traditional gender-normative marriage rituals, but to emphasize that a respectful balance should not be taken for granted, nor viewed as a tedious and unfulfilling task. The wife continues to emasculate her husband, but since this is a comic parody, he is not resentful for this like the men in Lulu will be, signifying that opera's darker and more sinister tone.

In addition to the parody related to physical attraction and man's objectifications of women sexually, the criticism of modern living and its analogous values extends to a discussion regarding money. Amidst their role reversal, the husband now laments about the unpaid gas bill, expressing concern, while the wife adopts a position parodying male frivolity and lack of responsibility over money by telling him that he cannot possibly imagine that she has the money necessary to pay the bill. When he presses her, she replies that she does not care and that they will "live on credit, the way that all the best people do nowadays. I'm sick of housework anyway."[64]

By the end of the second part, the wife is pressuring her husband to go out with the singer and the woman the husband was fixated on at the start of the opera. With the wife dressed provocatively, the husband expresses jealousy at the thought of the singer seeing his wife in her seductive guise. The wife brushes this off as "outmoded sentimentality. We'll each go our own way: I like the famous tenor, you like my friend, that 'enchantingly vivacious woman.'"[65] The husband has reached his breaking point and cries out that that other woman can go to hell, citing her as the source of his and his wife's unhappiness. When the wife asks if it is really their unhappiness, the husband amends his comment to say his unhappiness. The last line of this

[63]Ibid., 195. "Dass man niemals Ruhe haben kann!"

[64]Ibid., 201. "Wir werden eben auf Pump leben, wie das alle anständigen Leute heute tun. Mich macht die Wirtschaft ohnedies schon krank."

[65]Ibid., 211. "… veraltete Sentimentalität. Wir gehen jeder seinen eignen Weg: mir gefällt der berühmte Tenor, dir meine Freundin, das 'entzückend lebendige Weib.'"

section is the wife asking her husband if he is unhappy, and as she does so, she begins to change back into her regular house attire, along with "her hair and everything else again as it was in the beginning,"[66] as the stage direction reads. The wife has achieved her objective of widening her husband's perspective by precisely giving him "something different, something new" as he cited at the beginning, and the charade of her detached, seductress parody is now at an end.

The third and final part of the opera isolate's the narrative resolution and consolidates the couple's strengthened rapport through their mutual understanding of each other, and the realization that new and fashionable aesthetic trends and its reflective forms of conduct are not as enviable or even practical as idealistic fantasies that have no basis in reality. The husband's complete ideological reversal is expressed in his delivery of contrition:

> HUSBAND: I realize now that I am unhappy. For my happiness was you the way you used to be. My happiness was my dear little wife, whom I slighted because she was faithful, whom I scorned because she loved her home, whom I disparaged because I was everything to her! I want my wife back. Where are you? Have I lost you?
>
> WIFE: Should I be myself again?
>
> HUSBAND: Yes, that is my only wish: you as you used to be! I thought you were the woman of yesterday; you played the woman of today, whom I regarded more highly than you. Now I realize: you are the woman for life.
>
> WIFE: Yes, your wife for life, one who is not prepared to give up husband and child for the dictates of a crazy new fashion.[67]

In the opera's final hurdle – where the theoretical posturing of a lesson learned is challenged into actualization – the singer and woman appear at the house of the husband and wife to tempt the husband's newfound resolve and the couple's commitment to each other. As they are greeted by the husband and wife, the latter duo audibly recognizes that the test of their vows has suddenly manifested itself in the form of the two people that have facilitated the crisis of conscience from the very beginning with their goading of modern fashions. The modern pair complain to the married couple that their presence was missed, adding that "we tried to forget our troubles in wine, dance, and music."[68] The pair cite the very three pillars of the kind of unprincipled disregard for morality that the wife wielded in her charade. The modern pair act as a parody of hedonistic immorality through the indulgence of vices. They act as the ethically unresolved version of the husband and wife, or rather just the husband, although the wife did admit earlier in the section that she became absorbed in her role, implying that a part of her genuinely enjoyed the lifestyle that she was imitating.

[66]Ibid. "Auch die Frisur und alles Übrige wie am Anfang."

[67]Ibid., 213. "MANN: Jetzt seh' ich, dass ich unglücklich bin. Denn mein Glück warst du, so wie du früher warst. Mein Glück war meine liebe kleine Frau, die ich gering schätzte, weil sie mir treu war, die ich verhöhnte, weil sie ihr Haus liebte, die ich verkleinerte, weil ich ihr alles war. Ich will meine Frau wieder. Wo bist du? Wo bist Du? Habe ich verloren? FRAU: Soll ich wieder ich sein? MANN: Ja, nur das wünsch' ich: dich, wie du früher warst. Ich hielt dich für die Frau von gestern; Da gabst du mir die Frau von heute; die stellte ich höher als dich. Nun weiss ich: Du bist die Frau für's Leben. FRAU: Jawohl, dein Weib für's ganze Leben, das nicht, wenn ein Modequartal Verruchtheit diktiert, bereit ist, Mann und Kind aufzugeben."

[68]Ibid., 221. "Wir suchten Vergessen in Wein, und Tanz und Musik."

The two pairs argue in idealistic counterpoint regarding their values via trivial disagreements that are framed as a string of temptations from the modern pair that the married couple successfully resist at every turn. It reaches a point where the modern pair (in unison) explicitly express their view of the husband and wife as a couple and as individuals:

> I considered you a man/a woman of today. Assumed your marriage was modern … . Can this dowdy woman/boring man satisfy you? You, who are made to make many women/men happy, you can be satisfied with just one? That's something no one would do today. Dissolve this connection, or become free within it: Have the courage to live your own life.[69]

The married couple again resist this pressure to conform to contemporary trends, and are laughed and mocked for it by the modern pair, who state: "It's pointless, we've nothing to gain: They are out of date, believe in old ideals and desires."[70] The husband and wife, in their own subtle mocking of the modern pair, parrot these words back to them in agreement, with no hint of malice or reproach for the accusations, which they clearly interpret as compliments of their elevated morality. The modern couple retort by saying that they live their own lives, to which the husband pithily states "that's yesterday's line."[71] The modern couple's final text before exiting reads: "But you're simply faded theater characters!"[72] The opera's closing dialogue is a response to this observation made by the modern couple:

> WIFE: Perhaps we are already a bit faded, while they are still theater characters glowing with color. But there's yet another difference: their play is produced by fashion; but ours … by love … .
>
> HUSBAND: Actually, today they don't even seem that modern anymore … .
>
> WIFE: You see, that changes from one day to the next … .
>
> CHILD: Mamma, what is that: modern people … ?[73]

The subtlety of the operatic parody is rendered most explicit through the admission of theater characters and plays, giving the text an impression of being a pseudo-fable as a fictional story with a moral ending. The entire conception of values is rendered ephemeral by arguing that the modern couple does not even seem that modern anymore, with the wife concurring on that point with her final line. The presentation of a moral lesson is driven home even further by having the child's innocent question close the opera, implying that his parents will teach him what they have come to know, which additionally ridicules and invalidates the fleetingness of fashion because even a child will come to see its shortcomings and superficial shallowness. However, despite the nature of this conclusion, there was still an authenticity to the husband's

[69]Ibid., 225. "Ich dachte, Sie sind ein Mann/eine Frau von heute. Nahm an, Ihre Ehe sei modern … . Kann Ihnen denn diese reizlose Frau/dieser langweilige Mensch genügen? Sie, der/die geschaffen ist viele Frauen/Männer glücklich zu machen, Sie wollten sich mit einer/einem begnügen? Was doch heute kein Mensch mehr täte. Lösen Sie sich aus dieser Verbindung, oder werden Sie in ihr frei: Haben Sie doch endlich den Mut, Ihr eigenes Leben zu leben."

[70]Ibid., 227. "Da ist nichts zu machen, da ist nichts zu holen: Die sind veraltet, leben in vergangenen Idealen und Wünschen."

[71]Ibid. "Das ist ja von gestern."

[72]Ibid. "Ihr aber seid verblasste Theaterfiguren!"

[73]Ibid., 229. "MANN: Und dabei finde ich sie heute schon nicht einmal mehr ganz modern … . FRAU: Das ändert sich eben von heute auf morgen … . KIND: Mama, was sind das: moderne Menschen … ?"

initial approach to women and marriage because those perceptions were not formed in a vacuum, but through his exposure to social cues that cultivated an aesthetic framework. Just because the husband came to disavow this outlook does not mean that everyone experiencing the same exposure will or should do likewise. So in regard to this specific behavioral facet, there is truth in the socio-cultural formation of these convictions, which will be presented next in a more pessimistic and disastrous variation when symbolically isolated in Berg's *Lulu*.

4. The libretto of *Lulu*

Unlike Schoenberg, who completed his composition of *Von heute* and then wrote promotional texts analyzing themes in the work, Berg never lived to accomplish those things with *Lulu*. Be that as it may, it is highly plausible that had he lived, Berg would have devoted just as much analytical prose to *Lulu* as he did with *Wozzeck*. Therefore, although we do not have a direct insight from Berg himself regarding the types of perceptions his earlier prose on his first opera indicated, Berg's student and biographer, Willi Reich, wrote that "Berg identified himself completely with the conception of the *Lulu* tragedy contained in Kraus's speech."[74] This reference is of course to Karl Kraus's 1905 lecture on *Pandora's Box* that Berg attended. From this testimony, it is conceivable to transplant Kraus's view on the character of Lulu, and to assume that this is how Berg viewed his title character. Kraus expresses his opinion thusly:

> In Lulu we see the depiction of a woman whom men think they are "having" while in fact they are being "had" by her, a woman who is something different from each of them, who shows each a different face and is more seldom unfaithful, more virginal, than the average domestic doll. In her I see the perfect vindication of immorality, in the depiction of a complete woman who has the inspired ability not to be able to remember, a woman who lives without inhibitions but also without the dangers of constant mental conception, and who swills away every experience into oblivion. She is ruled by desire, but not the desire to give birth; she wants to give pleasure not to preserve the race. Hers is not the broken lock of womanhood; hers is constantly open and constantly closed again. She is detached from any desire to give life, but is herself born again when each new act of love.[75]

From this slightly convoluted but discernible character portrayal, Lulu emerges as a highly capable, single-minded, calculating, and emotionless ideal of a woman, who manipulates men for her own selfish gain. Interestingly, Kraus writes that she has no desire to give birth, which Elizabeth Boa elaborates to include the men in the narrative, none of whom wish to have children with her – only to marry her. Furthermore, Boa writes,

> it is clear that motherhood is not for her: to be a mother would desex her. Lulu is just about marriageable to an elderly roué like Goll [her medical specialist husband in the opening scene of the opera], for whom she can be child and bride simultaneously: another child would be superfluous.[76]

These observations of Lulu's character and womanhood serve to introduce her narrative and symbolic function, where it becomes obvious to see just how differently Schoenberg and Berg

[74]REICH, *Alban Berg*, 156.

[75]KRAUS, "*Pandora's Box*," 111.

[76]BOA, *The Sexual Circus*, 67.

portray their respective seductresses. Indeed, *Von heute*'s wife is a mother and bears the instincts of one, whereas Lulu has no such impulses, and is a figure solely devoted to reproduction-less sex as a tool of seduction and power.

Lulu's libretto opens with a prologue, where the animal tamer introduces the animals in his menagerie to the audience. The animals are anthropomorphic representations of the opera's characters, and Lulu is depicted as a snake. She is carried out onto the stage by a handler, at which time the animal tamer describes her attributes:

> She as the root of all evil was created; to snare us, to mislead us she was fated, and to murder, with no clue left on the spot. My sweetest beast, please don't be what you're not! You have no right to seem a gentler creature, distorting what is true in woman's nature.[77]

Even before Lulu can speak to express or represent herself, her identity as a woman is categorized and projected from the male gaze of the animal tamer. The nature of his explicit convictions – particularly as they are presented as truths – reflects institutionalized, traditional perceptions of a juxtaposing dichotomy between the virtuous, innocent man, and the deceitful, corrupting woman. What is more, the fatalistic implication of this introduction to Lulu's character suggests that there is no deviation or redemption from a path that is innately-oriented. From this perspective, Lulu is another Schoenbergian "woman of the world," from the initial point of view of *Von heute*'s husband. But unlike Schoenberg's opera, Berg's depiction of male awareness towards women will not undergo an ethical metamorphosis, but will perpetually seek to reaffirm the animal tamer's original classification of Lulu. Boa presents a similar view of the prologue, arguing how the men all subscribe to this outlook, and that the "murderous impulses reside in the men and arise from domination of women in the name of morality."[78] These distinctions are further paradigmatic of Berg's propensity to embrace modernity while looking back to formal aesthetic orderings of the past, whereas Schoenberg sought to only push forward structurally and emotionally in *Von heute*, where only the sophistication of musical construction remained a perennial mainstay in the manner that he expressed his ideas.

From the very first exchange of dialogue, Lulu begins her subtle seduction of Alwa, in front of his jealous father, by telling Alwa that he would need more than her dancing skills, which is the catalyst of Lulu's feminine seduction through performative means, in the new composition that Alwa, the composer, is preparing. As it will become a motivic gesture of trying to control the situation (with futile results), Dr. Schön, Alwa's father, who is secretly infatuated with Lulu, but is in denial about it at this early stage, attempts to wedge himself between Lulu and whomever she is exchanging pleasantries with. Remembering the animal tamer's prophetic declarations, the subtext of this early dialogue is the beginning of sowing the seeds of a nefarious ulterior motive.

The first scene of act one is also the initial expression of how marriage is depicted in the opera. Lulu's first husband is the medical specialist, whom Dr. Schön describes as a man who has never previously let Lulu out of his sight. So the first impression of a husband–wife dynamic is one of seeming possessiveness and distrust. Moreover, after Dr. Schön and Alwa exit, the

[77]BERG, *Lulu* (libretto), 3. "Sie ward geschaffen, Unheil anzustiften, zu locken, zu verführen, zu vergiften. Und zu morden, ohne daß es einer spürt. Mein süßes Tier, sei ja nicht geziert! Du hast kein Recht, uns durch Miaun und Pfauchen die Urgestalt des Weibes zu verstauchen."

[78]BOA, *The Sexual Circus*, 60.

smitten painter, who has been painting Lulu's portrait in the background during the opening dialogue, immediately starts pursuing Lulu, who keeps repeating that her husband is coming at any moment. The painter is not discouraged by this, showing his complete disregard for marriage as a status that prevents the desire of and chasing after a married woman. The painter cannot control his impulses, and the implication is that Lulu is goading his advances, thereby seemingly absolving the painter because he is under Lulu's control. Berg implies this by writing in the stage direction that the painter is "absolutely in her power."[79] Therefore, from the male-centric perspective, Lulu wants the painter to ignore her position as a married woman and come after her. This is diametrically opposed to *Von heute*'s wife, who only flirts with the idea of infidelity to teach her husband a lesson.

After the death of the medical specialist, whom Lulu does not mourn, she is in disbelief that he is gone because "he keeps me under observation."[80] Once she is convinced that he is dead, she says that "the dance is done."[81] There is an association here between Lulu's performance as a dancer and her performance as a wife. The performing aspect of both implies a staging of insincerity. While *Von heute*'s wife used dance in her temporary charade as a "woman of the world," her dancing was not an authentic staple of her marriage. Lulu, conversely, applies her dancing as both a literal and metaphorical manifestation of her control over men. Even the seemingly innocuous chase around the studio with the painter was a choreographed dance to further entice the painter to her will. Her dance, therefore, is the impetus for her to "snare and mislead," as the animal tamer said she would. In this regard, Lulu's dancing leads to the ultimate ensnaring: marriage. Her ploy worked, as she is newly married to the painter in the opera's next scene.

When the painter and Lulu discuss Dr. Schön's long-standing engagement, the painter wonders what could have really been prohibiting him from marriage, not knowing that it was Dr. Schön's inability to accept committing himself to someone other than Lulu. After the painter leaves and Lulu is entertaining the old man vagrant, Schigolch, she nostalgically laments that she has not danced in a long time, which suggests that she is bored in her marriage to the painter and desires a new conquest. Almost prophetically after this comment, Dr. Schön enters. Lulu tells him that the painter "doesn't know me. How could he know? He calls me 'sweetheart' and 'little bird.' A woman for his bed – and just for bed."[82] In a moment of humanity, Lulu describes the objectifying male outlook towards her womanhood as only a commodity to be possessed for its sexual gratifications. Dr. Schön ignores this and focuses instead on pointing out to Lulu that through his direct intervention, he has now given Lulu two successful husbands, and wants to sever ties with her to build a respectable marriage with his soon-to-be wife. It is now Lulu's turn to disregard what is spoken to her, and to tell Dr. Schön that "if I belong to one man in this world, then I belong to you."[83] Lulu herself is perpetuating a traditional aesthetic of a woman belonging to a man, but this is arguably not what she believes, and is the start of her new dance

[79]"… ganz in ihrem Bann"; BERG, *Lulu* (libretto), 7.

[80]Ibid., 11. "Er hat mich überall im Auge."

[81]Ibid. "Der Tanz ist aus."

[82]Ibid., 19. "Er kennt gar nicht. Was bin ich ihm? Er nennt mich Schätzchen und kleines Vögelchen. Ich bin ihm nichts als Weib und nichts als Weib."

[83]Ibid., 21. "Wenn ich einem Menschen auf dieser Welt angehöre, gehöre ich Ihnen."

of snaring and misleading Dr. Schön, whose entrapment she must now expedite due to his quickly-approaching nuptials. Therefore, any suggestion of vulnerability or appreciative tenderness of the past is not a genuine admission, but a step in her metaphoric dance towards victory. The final moment of success will arrive when the metaphoric dance becomes literal.

The painter's reentry leaves Lulu and Dr. Schön at a dialectical stalemate, but the intentions of her subsequent actions have been made known. With Dr. Schön and the painter now alone, the operatic narrative moves to a philosophical discussion of marriage aesthetics that further distinguishes the polarizing morality of marriage between *Lulu* and *Von heute*. The first thing that Dr. Schön says to the painter is:

> By taking a wife you took half a million marks … your every little wish can be answered … since you have a wife, you ought to see she shows some respect for you … keep her under more observation.[84]

Dr. Schön's text in the initial exchange demonstrates his core beliefs of marriage: the wife carries a financial component that almost borders on bribery, even if the painter was not aware that Dr. Schön would patronize his art studio by secretly buying his paintings. The payout is somewhat reminiscent of a dowry, but Dr. Schön does not give his financial support for any reason other than to use it as an attempt to placate Lulu and lessen the influence that she has over him by emboldening her new husband to be more controlling of his wife due to his enhanced social standing from his newfound success and wealth. To punctuate his point, he echoes Lulu's words of the medical specialist by telling the painter to keep Lulu under observation. From this, we see a tactical continuation of wife-handling by her husband. If history is meant to repeat itself in this way, then this moment essentially seals the painter's fate as future dead husband number two. Yet, beyond the overt displays of spousal dynamics, there is a curious interplay here of an anachronistic conception of a male-dominated marriage that is juxtaposed with Lulu's sexual freedom as an uninhibited seductress. A variety of socio-psychological potentials emerge from this, not least of positing the extent to which Lulu is an initiating aggressor and manipulator, or a reactionary victim. From the inner perspective of the opera itself, with the animal tamer's classifications of Lulu, she has no innocence or impartiality to hide behind. But, from the vantage point of *Von heute*'s elevated and arguably more progressive ethical disposition towards spousal dynamics, Lulu would stand in a far more defensible and justifiable complexion. Theatrically speaking, the opera's male-centric projection of marriage mirrors the formal structure of vocal numbers as dual homages to past eras, while the harmonic language of the music and set design reflect the type of modernized trends that Schoenberg also sought to emulate in *Von heute*.

Dr. Schön continues with the painter, admitting that he has also orchestrated Lulu's previous marriage. He maintains: "Let her know you're the real master… she requires no more than to be made to show unflagging obedience. First you must master your passions. Try to be stronger!"[85] The shock of the revelations of Lulu that Dr. Schön has given the painter are too overwhelming for him, and he commits suicide shortly thereafter. When Dr. Schön looks upon his corpse, he

[84]Ibid., 23. "Du hast eine halbe Million geheiratet … du brauchst dir keinen Wunsch zu versagen … Du hast eine Frau, die einen Mann verdient, den sie achten kann … Nimm sie etwas mehr unter Aufsicht."

[85]Ibid., 27. "Laß sie Autorität fühlen; sie verlangt nicht mehr, als unbedingt Gehorsam leisten zu dürfen. Mach mit dir selber den Anfang! Raff dich zusammen!"

exclaims: "There lies my promised marriage… my engagement's bleeding to death there!"[86] In this grizzly moment, all Dr. Schön can think about is how his contrived scheme has failed, and his prophetic recognition that Lulu's new widowhood frees her again to pursue Dr. Schön himself, where his own engagement is now under serious threat. Although the painter's suicide is attributed to Lulu in order to maintain the symmetry of three dead husbands who later return to exact revenge on Lulu, the symbolism at the end of this second scene from the first act subtly blames the painter's death on Dr. Schön because Lulu wipes the blood from Schön's hands, and it is he who comments that the blood must belong to Lulu's husband. Schön literally has blood on his hands, but by wiping them clean, Lulu absolves him of his sin, in a sense, in order to prepare him for the ultimate fulfillment of his destiny. This is expressed by the scene's closing text, where Lulu declares: "You'll marry me in the end!"[87]

Lulu's stated purpose at the end of the previous scene sets up the motivational impetus of the third scene and attainment of Lulu's greatest seductive endeavor: her final conquest over Dr. Schön. In the now-systematic manner of seductive implementation, Lulu's final victory is perpetuated using her skills as a dancer. Before Dr. Schön enters the fold, his son Alwa is present at the start of the scene in Lulu's dressing room at the theater. He has composed music for Lulu to dance to, and a discussion of marriage enters among a myriad of other topics. Narratively, this moment is crucial because it acts as a mini prelude seduction, where Alwa's infatuation with Lulu becomes an identifiable moment for her to groom Alwa as her contingency plan if and when Dr. Schön permanently exists from the fray. Lulu plants her probing seeds of manipulation by calling forth the memory of Alwa's dead mother. Alwa takes the bait, and in his reverie, expresses how he told his father, as a child, that he must now marry Lulu. It is clear that Alwa had designs himself on Lulu even from childhood in a warped conception of Lulu as simultaneous wife and surrogate mother. In her reply to this, Lulu sets her design in motion by essentially expressing her intentions in the guise of the following generalized platitude: "Your father must be taught to believe in my success. He introduced me to the theater, hoping that someone might be found who was rich enough to marry me."[88]

After Lulu goes back on stage and Alwa is momentarily left alone, his brief but meaningful monolog serves multiple purposes: firstly, it unequivocally identifies Alwa as Berg's narrative doppelgänger when the orchestra plays the familiar opening of Berg's previous opera, *Wozzeck*, upon Alwa's notion that a skilled composer could make the story of Lulu into a successful opera. Secondly, after reflecting on Lulu's life as an opera, Alwa decides that the two opening scenes – characterized by Lulu's failed marriages to the medical specialist and painter, respectively – are no good, and wonders if the third scene (in which the opera's current temporality is situated), will follow the same doomed pattern. After this, the African prince enters, whose intention to marry Lulu had been made known to Alwa by Lulu earlier in the scene. The prince importantly states of Lulu that "through her dancing I see her soul itself."[89] He adds that this quality of

[86]Ibid., 31. "Da liegt meine Verlobung… da verblutet meine Verlobung."

[87]Ibid., 33. "Sie heiraten mich ja doch!"

[88]Ibid., 35. "Ihr Vater soll an meinen Erfolg glauben lernen! Er hat mich ans Theater gebracht, damit sich eventuell jemand findet, der reich genug ist, um mich zu heiraten."

[89]Ibid. "… Abenden ihr Seelenleben aus ihrem Tanz studiert … ."

insight had convinced him that she would make him a suitable wife. Lulu's dancing is therefore once again the single greatest conduit of her seductive allure and desirability as a wife.

There is a sudden upheaval, and Lulu is taken off the imaginary stage that is not visible to the opera's audience, and back into her dressing room after she pretends to faint at the sight of Dr. Schön in the audience with his fiancé. Enraged, Dr. Schön enters the dressing room and exclaims:

> Go on dancing! She is waiting there! My future bride wants to see you. Yes, my future bride. Now I order you, for my future bride, continue! Back on stage right away! To your dancing! Go on, fulfil your part, let's hear no more of tiredness![90]

The ridiculous repetitiveness with which he mentions his fiancé suggests that Dr. Schön is trying to urge himself to prioritize his fiancé as a simultaneous excuse to see Lulu backstage and to maintain an aloof public image of non-infatuation with Lulu. His text also constitutes a conflation of dance and duty with expectations surrounding his engagement. A social gesture of traditional values can also be extracted from this episode, where Dr. Schön's male-driven entitlement, particularly as someone who has given Lulu great wealth by proxy of her husbands, allows himself to bully her. This too is a simultaneous representation of his gender-normative, socio-cultural imperative, as well as his attempt at psychological dissembling to deny Lulu's hold over his psyche. Lulu presumably recognizes these ploys of resistance and skillfully uses the opportunity of this meeting with Dr. Schön to initiate her grand manipulation by first appealing to his sense of a masculine need to command obedience (as he projected in his imperative above) with her text that reads: "You're right. You mean to show me where my proper place is. You want to let your chosen bride see my dancing."[91] Slightly placated over his presumed moral victory, Dr. Schön relaxes and inquires why the prince was there, to which Lulu informingly replies that the prince aims to bring her back to Africa as his wife.

The tables quickly begin to turn on Dr. Schön as he expresses doubt over Africa. Lulu retorts, weaponizing her dancing against him, by stating that she was simply following his instruction when she says: "You took me and made a dancing girl of me in hope that some man would carry me away."[92] Dr. Schön begins to hedge with uncertainty, and Lulu capitalizes by bringing into question the longevity of his engagement that has not resulted in marriage yet after three years of stasis. On observing his hesitation, Lulu bluffs by applying reverse psychology, and insists he carries out his plan of marriage, knowing now that he will not. She hammers the final nail into the coffin of his resistance by coldly stating that "you are powerless to cut yourself loose from me."[93] Dr. Schön, now in full desperation, acquiesces to Lulu's will and writes the letter breaking off his engagement that Lulu dictates to him. While writing, Dr. Schön is overcome by prophetic declarations of his own doom with statements such as: "my own death sentence," and the final

[90]Ibid., 37. "Du wirst tanzen! Auch vor meiner Braut! Vor meiner Braut wirst du tanzen! Auch vor meiner Braut! Ich befehle dir, auch vor meiner Braut zu tanzen! Auf die Bühne mit dir! Auf die Bühne! Du bist engagiert, da gibt's keine Müdigkeit!"

[91]Ibid., 39. "Sie haben recht, daß Sie mir zeigen, wo ich hingehöre, indem Sie mich vor Ihrer Braut tanzen lassen."

[92]Ibid. "Sie haben mich ja zur Tänzerin gemacht, damit einer kommt, der mich mitnimmt."

[93]Ibid., 41. "Sie zu Schwach sind, um sich vor mir loszureißen."

words of the scene and first act: "now comes the execution."[94] With her triumph secured, and husband number three all but in her pocket, Lulu returns to the imaginary stage to dance.

The first scene of the second act opens with Dr. Schön and Lulu now married, but far from enjoying a blissful union. Dr. Schön is uncomfortable with the doting attention that Lulu receives from the lesbian Countess Geschwitz, who triggers Dr. Schön's lamenting expression of how his household has been degraded. This moment exemplifies the aesthetic dichotomy of old vs. new in the guise of Dr. Schön's jealousy and desire for traditional social appearances, while Geschwitz represents a new, confident, and sexually emancipated woman that does not need a man's protection, and worse for Dr. Schön, would not conform to a husband's mandate. The start of this scene in the opera is the final example of married home life with the most explicit divergence in husband vs. wife dynamics in the narrative. In this instance, Dr. Schön resembles the early incarnation of *Von heute*'s husband in that they both want submissive and obedient wives. Both wives challenge their husbands on this matter: *Von heute*'s wife enacts a charade to teach her husband not to take their married life for granted. The husband's initial reaction is one of resistance to his wife's newfound independence of thought, even though he eventually accepts the desired attitude adjustment. Dr. Schön, conversely, is old, rich, extremely stubborn, and cannot tolerate any activity in his household that is not solely of his desire or design. As such, while both operas display rigid gender binaries of behavior, as well as examples of sexual freedoms, *Von heute* depicts a greater fluidity of conception and compromise, whereas *Lulu* represents a staunchness of division that cannot be logically mediated, and will therefore only lead to a dialectical battle of wills that will result in momentary victory for one and ultimate destruction for all.

This first scene is also a further example of Lulu's feminine seduction through performative means, where she woos a variety of admirers, including Alwa, which Dr. Schön secretly observes and uses as justification for his displeasure. This moment in the scene also mirrors *Von heute*'s wife when she declares to her husband in the early stages of her charade that she will engage with many new people to stave off her own boredom, listing rich, old, and athletic alike. Lulu hosts an athlete as well in this scene, whereby both women display an unbiased urge for attention from anyone. Marriage is revisited in this scene as the admirers speak alone amongst themselves and admit that they all wish or have previously wished to marry Lulu, presenting her as the archetypal conduit of an idealized fantasy of a wife. The ideality stems from the fact that this mutual desire is entirely rooted in sexual lust alone, where absolutely no one now (or ever) even attempts to extol upon any other perceived virtue that Lulu possesses. In this way, the role of the wife and the purpose of marriage, in the minds of the present assorted company, is purely contingent upon her abilities as a sexual instrument of use. The opera, therefore, reduces the union of man and wife to virtual prostitution.

At the same time, Lulu increases the intensity of her seduction of Alwa, which can be surmised as a foreshadowing of Dr. Schön's impending death, because Lulu has already started grooming her current husband's replacement. This is textually implied when the acrobat and Schigolch both ask Lulu if she has found someone new, which Lulu evades answering. Alwa is important not only for his hinted connection to Berg himself, but because he is the only character who ostensibly knows that he is being manipulated, but remains powerless to resist.

[94]Ibid., 43. "Mein Todesurteil … Jetzt – kommt – die Hinrichtung."

This is most evident when he says to Lulu: "The gods created you to bring the people around you to corruption – not through your conscious intention."[95] By phrasing his expression in this way, Alwa is echoing the characteristics of Lulu's essence that the animal tamer originally presented, with the key impression for both the animal tamer and Alwa being that this impulse in Lulu to destroy is an inherent byproduct of her womanhood. Alwa's obsequious devotion reaches its climax when he exclaims to Lulu: "Destroy me! Put an end to me now!"[96]

Following his observation of this display, Dr. Schön can no longer bear his concealment and emerges from hiding to begin his final confrontation with Lulu. He attacks her verbally, using all of the male-driven, traditionalist angst at his disposal to exclaim the following:

> You wretched thing, were you sent to drag me through the gutter to the grave? My black angel! My unavoidable tormentor! My joy and consolation! You hangman's noose! … Off with you, or by tomorrow I'll be insane and my son will be lying murdered![97]

In her impassioned retort, which is the only time in the entire opera that Lulu expresses herself in a morally-justifiable way, she also comes closest here to resembling *Von heute*'s wife in the manner that Lulu pinpoints and compellingly criticizes her husband's aesthetic foibles and reception of his wife as a representation of his inability to recognize and adapt to the reality and truth of Lulu's character. She states:

> If people killed themselves for my sake, that does not diminish my value. You knew as well why you took me as your wife, as I knew why I took you as my husband. You had cheated on your best friends with me, you couldn't easily cheat on yourself with me too. If you sacrifice your twilight years to me, you have had all my youth for it. I have never wanted to appear in the world to be anything other than what I was taken for; and I have never been taken in the world for anything other than what I am.[98]

Matters progress quickly after this, and Dr. Schön has not changed his outlook one iota. He is subsequently shot five times by Lulu, and as he lays dying, he warns Alwa not to let her escape, because Lulu will now focus her attention upon him, thereby fulfilling Schigolch and the acrobat's inquiry at the start of the scene that asked if Lulu has found someone new. The scene ends with Lulu's arrest for the murder of her husband.

Following her orchestrated escape from prison, scene 2 of act 2 opens. The opera's central palindrome in the preceding orchestral interlude, accompanied by a silent film, designates Lulu's ensuing change in fortune from the exalted position of power that she held in the opera's first half. Beyond the narrative exposition that describes all the characters' situations, the acrobat is

[95]Ibid., 55. "Mit deinen Gottesgaben macht man seine Umgebung zu Verbrechern, ohne sich's träumen zu lassen."

[96]Ibid., 57. "Richte mich zugrunde! Mach' ein Ende mit mir."

[97]Ibid., 59. "Du Kreatur, die mich durch den Straßenkot zum Martertode schleift. Du Würgengel. Du unabwendbares Verhängnis! Du Freude meines Alters! Du Henkerstrick! … Weg mit dir, sonst schlägt's mir morgen über den Kopf, und mein Sohn schwimmt in seinem Blute!"

[98]Ibid., 61. "Wenn sich die Menschen um meinetwillen umgebracht haben, so setzt das meinen Wert nicht herab. Du hast so gut gewußt, weswegen du mich zur Frau nahmst, wie ich gewußt habe, weswegen ich dich zum Mann nahm. Du hattest deine besten Freunde mit mir betrogen, du konntest nicht gut auch noch dich selber mit mir betrügen. Wenn du mir deinen Lebensabend zum Opfer bringst, so hast du meine ganze Jugend dafür gehabt. Ich habe nie in der Welt etwas anderes scheinen wollen, als wofür man mich genommen hat; und man hat mich nie in der Welt für etwas anderes genommen, als was ich bin."

fixated on exploiting Lulu's beauty for his personal gain. He combines these fantasies with projections of their future married life together. Lulu knows what he desires from her, so when she finally reemerges after not being seen for two years, she enters into another performative display of her feminine skills, but this time, of feigned decrepitude to discourage the acrobat and motivate his departure. In this second half of the opera, the institution of marriage has taken its most explicit form of sexualized manipulation by turning Lulu's womanhood into a financial venture. At this point, the venture is still reputable as it relates to performing initiatives, but as the trajectory of the opera darkens, so too will the perceived uses of Lulu.

The only semblance in this scene of pre-and-post palindromic behavior is Lulu's continued sexual manipulation of Alwa. Her remorseless reminders to Alwa of his slain father are narrative ploys meant to prompt recollection of the animal tamer's original designation of Lulu's true nature, even now in her diminished and vulnerable state. The validation of her nature is given by Alwa in his inability to resist Lulu, even though he again acknowledges her function of ruining men. There is also a symmetry of uncontrollable sexual appetite between *Von heute*'s husband and Alwa, where they express similar desires towards their respective women, approaching the appearance of an insecure need for validation, precisely when both women are behaving in a cold and detached manner to the men. In this instance, the husband exclaims: "Come, give me a kiss, darling. Tell me you are mine alone."[99] Alwa, likewise, demands the following in a repeated sequence bordering on childish begging: "Come, give me a kiss!"[100] The second act ends with Alwa now firmly taking the place of his father at Lulu's side, thereby emphatically setting in motion Dr. Schön's prophecy of doom for his son.

One significant pathological detail of Alwa's infatuation with Lulu is his constant reference throughout the opera to Lulu's childlike eyes. It is the most consistent reference to Lulu's allure (apart from looks to her portrait) that Alwa makes when he is in the throes of idealized projection. It suggests that regardless of what Lulu has done, including murdering both of his parents, Alwa has seemingly never ceased to behold Lulu as somehow innocent and virtuous via the connotation of his motivic articulation of her eyes. It is perhaps a nostalgic reference to their shared childhood upon first meeting. This may further demonstrate Alwa's own psychological state[101] of stunted mental growth where he never managed to evolve past the time both his parents were alive, which may account for why he is so perplexingly able to forgive Lulu her crimes while verbalizing awareness of her destructive tendencies and capabilities. It underscores a tragic co-dependency that ultimately leads to his own murder at the end of the opera. Moreover, there is a point of symmetry between Alwa acting as Berg's doppelgänger in *Lulu*, and Alwa's lack of psychological development, to a similar comment that Theodor Adorno made about Berg:

> If it be true that intellectuals should not be fathers, then Berg was the most unfatherly man one could imagine; his authority was the total absence of authoritarianism. He successfully avoided becoming an adult without remaining infantile.[102]

[99]SCHOENBERG, *Von heute* (libretto), 189. "Komm, lass dich küssen, Liebling. Sag, dass du nur mir allein gehörst."

[100]BERG, *Lulu* (libretto), 75. "Komm, gib mir einen Kuß!"

[101]For a compelling text that delves into Alwa's psychological makeup, see PLATT, "A Jungian Analysis," 279–303.

[102]ADORNO, *Alban Berg*, 34.

Scene 1 of act 3 is unique for its introduction of many new characters and multiple, simultaneously-running dialogues. Lulu's position in the scene is one of disadvantage, where she is attempting to extricate herself from two different blackmail schemes. Despite Lulu's precarious and deteriorating situation, the opera's male-centric projections of womanhood perpetuate unabated in the manner in which the assembled men sexually fawn over a fifteen-year-old girl, who is only ever referred to by her age. The men shamelessly share observations of her physique in earshot of the girl's mother, who objects by citing the girl's age, which the men brush off as incidental. Even with her mother as a chaperone, the girl's presence as the only adolescent at the formal evening event is curious, and arguably serves to suggest that a new feminine object of sexualized obsession has materialized to replace the role previously held by Lulu. This theory implies that it is not Lulu alone who came into existence to corrupt men, but that it is rather the needs of the men of this society that create their idols of infatuation, justifying Karl Kraus's position on the matter. Indeed, as Elizabeth Boa concurs with this notion, "… it is not the *femme fatale* who produces insane and murderous jealousy, but the jealousy which invents the *femme fatale*."[103] The young girl herself seems receptive to this assumed role when the stage direction reads that she covertly leaves her mother's side to follow the groom into another room,[104] intimating that she may be looking to be sexually active or is aware that she can use her womanhood to manipulate men.

The theory of the girl becoming a new Lulu is further subtly advanced during Lulu's conversation with the Marquis, who is blackmailing Lulu to become a prostitute in order to avoid being turned over to the police as an escaped convict so that he may either financially profit from selling her body or collect a slightly smaller reward from the police for Lulu's successful arrest. In the exchange, Lulu denies her suitability for prostitution, stating that it would have been different if she was still fifteen. Her specific citation of this age is telling. The gender aesthetics of this dialogue reflect the opera's essence of womanhood because prostitution, in the Marquis's estimation, is more than a business: he believes that women exist as sexual objects to be used, irrespective of their social standing, and that this is the most effective function that they may serve.[105] Lulu vehemently argues against being sold into prostitution, but the matter remains unresolved between her and the Marquis.

The concept of marriage is briefly readdressed in this scene when the acrobat, who is also blackmailing Lulu for money, informs her of his need of capital in order to marry a girl. When Lulu asks him why he has been reaching out to Geschwitz, the acrobat replies in the standard moral disposition of the opera: "She's a female who is of noble birth. As a man who knows the world, I'm better equipped than any of you in the art of polite conversation."[106] At the end of the scene, Lulu manages to extract herself out of her current predicament by employing her final act of performative seduction that results in a beneficial outcome for her: she manipulates Geschwitz into misleading the acrobat in a way that will remove him as a threat (and yield his implied death), which also gives her and Alwa the chance to escape the event before the police

[103]BOA, *The Sexual Circus*, 14.

[104]BERG, *Lulu* (libretto), 81.

[105]Ibid., 83.

[106]Ibid., 89. "Weil das Frauenzimmer von Adel ist. Ich bin Weltmann und versteh mich besser als irgendeiner von euch auf den vornehmen Konversationston."

arrive at the Marquis's behest. The ploy works and the scene ends with Lulu having evaded capture or being sold into prostitution. This is fleeting, however, as Karl Kraus observes:

> In order to escape from one blackmailer she has to throw herself into the arms of the next, becoming everyone's victim and sacrificing each one, until, exhausted, she encounters the ultimate and quintessential avenger of the male sex – Jack the Ripper.[107]

The final scene of the opera presents Lulu at her lowest point: a beseeching, independent prostitute on her first day on the job, who no longer has the ability to influence outcomes in her favor. The only familiars by her side now are Alwa, Geschwitz, and Schigolch, who nostalgically reminisce of Lulu's past beauty as captured in the portrait that the painter made of her in the opera's opening scene. Lulu reminds the group that the painter was only interested in her sexually, while Schigolch expresses the truth of their situation within the context of the opera's male-driven perspective: "Any man she falls in the hands of today could never form a conception of what our existence was."[108]

In the last episode of the opera, Lulu brings back Jack (the ripper). It is the final time that a man will objectify Lulu physically. After an unsuccessful debate over the price of her services, Lulu takes Jack into a room offstage where he murders her, and upon exiting and returning to the stage, likewise deals Geschwitz a fatal stab wound, thereby fulfilling the symbolic design of man's revenge against Lulu by having her three clients double the roles of her three dead husbands, with Jack being the double of Dr. Schön. The nature of this ending emphatically accentuates the divergent conclusions of *Von heute* and *Lulu* in their opposing final message regarding the gender duality. The lack of marriage being mentioned in any capacity or implication in the final scene of Berg's opera suggests that there is no future for the characters beyond this point in their own minds, even before they start dying in quick succession. It also implies that Lulu has exhausted her inventory of potential suitors to seduce and exploit because her only remaining companions are in no position to provide her with the luxury and social standing that she would use as starting points to attract men and women of status. Coveting these existential commodities further reflects the anachronistic social structure of a successful woman in Berg's opera, where they are ultimately jockeying for position in a man's world. This is in stark contrast to the freedoms availed to women in *Von heute*, where the narrative events there result in a cathartic outcome for the gender balance. Moreover, as Silvio dos Santos suggests, Lulu's position in both halves of the opera is really an example of semantics, where marriage is presented as a form of "sexual slavery,"[109] which is not mutually exclusive to Berg, who viewed Lulu's roles as wife and later prostitute as fundamentally identical.[110]

[107]KRAUS, "*Pandora's Box*," 104.

[108]BERG, *Lulu* (libretto), 105. "Wem sie heute unter die Hände gerät, der macht sich keinen Begriff mehr von unserer Jugendzeit."

[109]SANTOS, *Narratives*, 121.

[110]Ibid., 124.

5. Aspects of womanhood and femininity

Following the narrative analyses of *Von heute* and *Lulu*, it is necessary now to investigate some of the analogous principles regarding cultural receptions of women and their place in society that were circulating around the time that Schoenberg and Berg composed their operas, which included these themes. Indeed, in the aftermath of First World War, "the so-called New Woman of Weimar was under considerable pressure to conform to traditional expectations."[111] Moreover, as Karen Pegley writes, the sense of woman as being ambiguous and incomprehensible was presented by artists in Berg's (and likewise Schoenberg's) time in order to represent their sexuality as stemming from an innate occurrence that is divergent from a man's rational way of thinking. *Femme fatales* utilized their sexual gifts to diminish men's logic, thereby rendering these men as the seductress's victims in artistic narratives that depict sexualized dichotomies of engagement between the two genders.[112] Tropes of the womanhood of *Von heute*'s wife and Lulu will emerge in the following historical contexts.

In her 1929 article, "This is the New Woman," Elsa Herrmann writes how

> to all appearances, the distinction between women in our day and those of previous times is to be sought only in formal terms because the modern woman refuses to lead the life of a lady and a housewife, preferring to depart from the ordained path and go her own way.[113]

One can see the independence of the wife's female friend in Schoenberg's opera in this description, which was initially so alluring and unique to the husband, where the characterizing "modern woman" or "woman of today" was one of the catalysts instigating the spouses' dialectical argument in *Von heute*. Herrmann goes on to write: "For every genuine woman of yesterday it was quite natural to make all manner of sacrifices in a completely selfless fashion, provided they served to advance the social ascent of the family or one of its members."[114] This is precisely the manner in which Dr. Schön wanted Lulu to behave and to dutifully serve his household. Conversely, "… the woman of today is oriented exclusively toward the present. That which is, is decisive for her, not that which should be or should have been according to tradition."[115] This description is symptomatic of Lulu's focus, to the displeasure of all of her husbands. It is also the mantra that *Von heute*'s wife adopts in her parodying charade, where both operas aim to denounce the "woman of today" for her propensity for nefarious seduction and corruption of men. To this end,

> the new woman has set herself the goal of proving in her work and deeds that the representatives of the female sex are not second-class persons existing only in dependence and obedience but are fully capable of satisfying the demands of their positions in life. The proof of her personal value and the proof of the value of her sex are therefore the maxims ruling the life of every single woman of our times, for the sake of herself and the sake of the whole.

[111]KAES, JAY and DIMENDBERG (eds.), *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook,* 195.

[112]PEGLEY, "*Femme Fatale*," 253.

[113]KAES, JAY and DIMENDBERG (eds.), *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, 206.

[114]Ibid., 207.

[115]Ibid.

The tone of this passage carries a connotation of an emancipatory perspective, which is presented here as a righteous pursuit of equality. The male-centric gaze of *Von heute*, and particularly *Lulu*, sought to twist this outlook into a representation of woman's destructive capabilities, which *Lulu*'s animal tamer presents to be a staple of innate womanhood, where Herrmann's idea in the passage above is repurposed to depict how the new woman's "work and deeds" only lead to male ruination.

Indeed, Judy Lochhead proposes a similar idealized view of Lulu, whose

> character does not embody any essential feature of "Woman." Rather, the Lulu character depicts a social construction of "Woman," a construction which plays out to tragic and destructive ends in the opera.[116]

This "construction" is ascribed to Lulu explicitly, again, by the animal tamer, particularly when he has her carried around in the prologue like an object devoid of any authentic, self-governing agency. Lulu is an idea as much as a person, and this is made clear by Karl Kraus's analysis of womanhood in Vienna in his, Berg's, and Schoenberg's time. Lochhead also describes the reception of Lulu's womanhood as either authentic or satirical, depending on the interpretation. The wife in *Von heute* overtly embodies both sides of this notion in her effort to maintain a semblance of traditional virtue, while demonstrating a critical position by parodying an ability to reflect the projected stereotypes that the opera is portraying as superficial and fleetingly-fashionable. These theories serve to portray the malleability of these female operatic characters as products of their socio-cultural time as much as theatrical entities of outlandish embellishment.

The male-gaze, particularly as it is epitomized in the aesthetic views and behaviors of Dr. Schön, is embodied in a 1925 authorless newspaper article titled, "Enough is Enough! Against the Masculinization of Women." The attitude presented here argues against the social trends that women are adopting, which many men are finding to be offensive:

> women no longer wanted to appear asexual; rather fashion was increasingly calculated to make women's outward appearance more masculine … and we observe more often now that the bobbed haircut with its curls is disappearing, to be replaced by the modern, masculine hairstyle: sleek and brushed straight back. The new fashion in women's coats is also decidedly masculine … fashion is like a pendulum swinging back and forth.[117]

This passage illustrates Schoenberg's disdain for volatile changes that engulf a sense of fashion at the expense of traditional values, which he expressed as a driving force against the ideals of *Zeitoper*, while the description of the masculinization of women[118] above is perfectly synonymous with the character of the Countess Geschwitz, whose masculine looks and projections are reviled, and render her an outcast at nearly every turn in *Lulu*.[119]

The article ends by presenting a declaration:

[116]LOCHHEAD, "Lulu's Feminine Performance," 228.

[117]KAES, JAY and DIMENDBERG (eds.), *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, 659.

[118]For a study that investigates this subject thoroughly, see SUTTON, *The Masculine Woman*.

[119]Santos presents a detailed analysis of Geschwitz's gender identity in the sixth chapter of his book. See SANTOS, "Masculine, Feminine, and 'In-between'," 150–182.

> It is high time that sound male judgment take a stand against these odious fashions, the excesses of which have been transplanted here from America. In the theater we might enjoy, one time, seeing an actress playing a man's part if she is suitable for the role; but not every woman should venture to display herself in pants or shorts, be it on stage or at sporting events. And the masculinization of the female face replaces its natural allure with, at best, an unnatural one: the look of a sickeningly sweet boy is detested by every real boy or man.[120]

These are relevant expressions because they mirror Schoenberg's reactionary ideas against current fashions, as constituting a superficial mass appeal at the expense of more traditional approaches. Although Schoenberg did not directly play up these characteristics of masculine women, the parody of a masculine-oriented independence of thought and behavior was prevalent in the wife's charade. Berg, of course, took up these precise descriptions, again in the form of Geschwitz, but it was not a parody: Berg made her into a grotesque caricature of a woman, which is a darker form of symbolism than Schoenberg's lighter satirical fare. Nevertheless, one may argue that Berg also took up this anonymous author's call to take a stand against this new version of a women by having both Lulu and Geschwitz murdered by the same person as an implementation of "sound male judgment" against this novel fashion.

The institution of marriage – a central paradigm of both *Von heute* and *Lulu* – enters the fold in a 1929 article by Lola Landau, titled "The Companionate Marriage," which puts into question the legitimacy of perpetuated marriage norms at the time of writing. Importantly, Landau creates context by first stating how

> by the end of the previous century, the bourgeois marriage had evolved into an economic institution; the family had become a small trust with the earnings and operation of capital. The magnetic attraction of monetary accumulation, however, led increasingly to marriage for money, which suppressed its original sense of ethical community.[121]

Moreover, as Landau writes, the "woman of our day" stands at the core of this debate over a woman's need to carry herself now as financially and morally separate from men, where a woman has as much right to pre-marital sex as a man, all of which influences changing attitudes in the establishment of marriage. Elizabeth Boa concurs on these points as she posits that the *Lulu* plays on which Berg based his opera

> assert the value of sexual liberation against bourgeois marriage in which men own women as possessions, but show that freedom is impossible in the world of the free market and in the face of murderous male possessiveness.[122]

Moreover, Boa continues, the connection between Dr. Schön and Lulu exemplifies the notion that "women are property owned by men, bound to accept the role of mistress or wife if they are not to sink to the even more insecure status of prostitute."[123] Therefore, the society of the opera punishes Lulu by relegating her to this exact fate because she finds herself to be unmarried at her lowest point, where she can neither be a mistress, as those potential men are more interested in

[120]KAES, JAY and DIMENDBERG (eds.), *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, 659.

[121]Ibid., 702.

[122]BOA, *The Sexual Circus*, 3.

[123]Ibid., 69.

blackmailing her for a profit. Prostitution is her only recourse following her separation from socially-sanctioned roles of male ownership. In his 1905 lecture on *Pandora's Box*, Karl Kraus intimated the same ideas, albeit from a man's perspective, when he wrote that

> a man may dream about having a free female companion; but reality will force her to belong to him as wife or mistress, because his needs for social respectability will always take precedence over his dreams.[124]

Gone are the days where a woman only waited to be married and devoted all of her time to raising children and managing the household, which the "woman of today" does not have the time to devote to such activities. In addition, with the advent of birth control, "the woman has escaped from the slavery of her own body," where this newfound freedom also yields independence in the workplace, and "signifies as well a looser psychological tie to the man."[125] As a result, Landau concludes,

> no wishful romanticism can force woman back to her earlier way of being. If, however, the man of today continues to seek the woman of yesterday, his creature, the pliant helpmate, he will be bitterly disappointed not to find her anymore.[126]

This conceptual battle of old vs. new is at the heart of both operas, and all marriages in both works are supremely tested using these exact principles. While Schoenberg's husband and wife managed to eventually overcome their discord through mutual understanding, Berg's men never stopped searching for the woman of yesterday, and there was never a possibility that Lulu would fulfill that precise role. Berg's opera offers no compromise or reconciliation to the dilemma of marriage, whereby what Landau terms as disappointment is elevated to death and murder as Berg's only solution to the ideological impasse that his married couples experience as methods to solve their disagreements.

As a final observation on the male rebellion against the "woman of today," at the end of *Lulu*, Jack might not have wanted to murder Lulu because she was a prostitute, but because she was a working woman. If one subscribes to the assumption of male revenge, taking into consideration that Jack is Dr. Schön's doppelgänger, then it stands to reason that Jack kills Lulu as punishment for her obstinate rejection of the kind of virtuous and subservient wife and woman that Dr. Schön wanted Lulu to be. In that sense, Jack has murdered Lulu's gender independence, which also accounts for his subsequent murder of Geschwitz as well, as she is not a prostitute but expresses a form of independence that the male gaze throughout the opera has interpreted as unwanted recalcitrance to their moral hegemony. Gerald Izenberg presents a similar view of this moment writing that

> if Lulu's death at the hands of Jack is the masculine revenge on the feminine woman whose very desirability turns her into a fearsome goddess, Geschwitz's murder is a punishment for women who would unsex themselves and destroy the only possibility men have for salvation.[127]

[124]KRAUS, "*Pandora's Box*," 104.

[125]KAES, JAY and DIMENDBERG (eds.), *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, 702.

[126]Ibid., 703.

[127]IZENBERG, *Modernism*, 71.

Furthermore, Geschwitz arguably becomes a woman finally when she is murdered. Her lesbian orientation categorizes her as a pseudo-man for sharing a love for Lulu with other men, but sharing death with Lulu by the hand of the same man binds the two women through their gender, because Jack represents patriarchal vindication against women who do not sufficiently conform to the male imperative of their socio-moral function, which, as seen above, includes masculinized women.

6. Conclusion

The libretti of *Von heute auf Morgen* and *Lulu* showed their composers' willingness to adopt certain popular stylistic trends that ultimately stood to reflect multiple representations of past vs. present, or more specifically, historical tradition vs. new attitudes of interpretation. As operas, the two works sought to parodistically mirror the topical and contemporary tenets of *Zeitoper*, while retaining the integrity of an established lineage of German opera that Schoenberg and Berg explicitly endorsed in their prose texts and formal construction of presenting their works as numbers operas. The central characterization of this dichotomy in this article investigated how both operas symbolically represented womanhood and marriage as a reproduction of the social dilemma at the time that was at an ideological crossroads regarding dynamics between men and women. Karl Kraus in particular exposed the hypocritical nature of this connection between the genders, which Schoenberg and Berg rendered theatrical in their operas. This conceptual division was portrayed via the interactions between husband and wife. Schoenberg's narrative conflict stemmed from the farcical disparity between the modern "woman of today," and a more outdated but virtuous and still morally-independent woman. Berg's impression of this division was one of a more violent and reactionary distinction, where the innately-antagonistic and corrupting nature of the *femme fatale* was pitted against an unmoving ideology of male-oriented logic. Both operas further enriched their similar but varying depictions of womanhood and marriage by emphasizing an explicit separation between the idealized and unfulfilled desires of the seduced man and the futile reality of forcing women to conform to these fantasies. An ironic dissimilarity, perhaps, is that *Von heute*'s husband was attracted to his projection of the "woman of today," while Lulu's husbands and admirers wanted to tame the modern impulses in her that never would have allowed her to be a subservient wife with a more traditional temperament. Although Schoenberg's husband and wife ultimately achieved an ideological unity and cathartic balance, the men in Berg's operas never learned this lesson, and were destroyed for their inability to adjust and resist the temptations of their desires.

In *Von heute*, the wife equates the entire ordeal of the experiment she enacted with her husband to resisting the false seductions of fashion, but in the deeper symbolic scope of perception and behavior, what Schoenberg terms as fashion can be an expanded metaphor for sexualized gender relationships, and how these connections can be exploited to manipulative ends. In that regard, Berg's *Lulu* takes Schoenberg's template and completely removes ethics, accountability, and a sense of restraint to depict what could have happened to Schoenberg's husband and wife if they did not pull back and recognize the long-standing detriment to their marriage that would have resulted from a permanent continuation of the wife's charade or the husband's covetous desires of his illusory projections of women. There is irony here as well in this distinction because although *Lulu* is the more phantasmagorical of the two operas, its own

Kraus-oriented parody of socio-sexual practices are grotesqueries rooted in reality, whereas the moral denouement of *Von heute* can be viewed as unrealistic wishful thinking in its message of elevated morals and happy endings amidst newfound marital bliss that reads almost like a fairy tale. For this reason, *Von heute* is somewhat contrived in its explicit desire to criticize contemporary aesthetics. Its lack of subtlety diminishes its scope of theatrical allure precisely because its characters almost directly say to the audience that this experience is a lesson in morality.

Interestingly, despite this reproach of righteousness, Berg made the same comment about *Lulu* to the conductor Erich Kleiber. Although Berg was under immense pressure from Nazi censors, fearing for his opera's life on the stages of Germany, he may have convinced himself to perceive *Lulu* in a more flattering way to justify its presence on programs in that country. In a letter to Kleiber written on March 21, 1934, Berg wrote: "Now that I have an overview of it, I am even more convinced of the piece's profound morality. Lulu's ascent and descent are balanced; in the middle the great reversal, until finally – like Don Juan – she is taken by the devil."[128] One would be hard pressed to agree with Berg that *Lulu* is, in effect, a cautionary tale that maintains a moral message at the end of the opera, as Lulu's death somehow absolves all the sordidness of the opera. Nevertheless, Berg made his pronouncement – even under duress – which is comparable to *Von heute*'s message of morality, from a certain perspective.

By removing the component of visceral deduction through a complex layering of abstract symbolism, like *Lulu* possesses and inspires, *Von heute*'s transparency does not yield any sort of a dramatic climax with a provocative ending. Despite this observation, there is a dialectical mini-conflict at the end between the two opposing couples in the form of their aesthetic argument where neither party gives in to the other. In spite of this late-stage example of tension and release, the opera rather ends like a pedantic lecture from which an attendee calmly stands up and leaves. As such, there is no comparison of *Von heute* and *Lulu* as examples of compelling theater, even if Schoenberg's opera is meant to be a lighter work of a comic disposition. However, one may argue still that the opera's positive resolution is another indication of its *Zeitoper* leanings away from Expressionistic turmoil. Yet, regardless of how one may interpret the effectiveness of these works' narrative intrigue, there is meaning in juxtaposing the two works as reactionary vehicles of their composers' socio-cultural perceptions and values, which results in two very distinct outcomes that are nevertheless derived from an identical framework and ethical/temporal emplacement.

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[128]STEIGER (ed.), *Alban Berg*, 118. "Jetzt wo ich es überblicke bin ich erst recht von der tiefen Moral des Stückes überzeugt. Lulus Auf und Abstieg hält sich die Waage; in der Mitte die große Umkehr, bis sie schließlich – wie Don Juan – vom Teufel geholt wird."

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