EXPRESSIONISM IN VIENNESE OPERA
AND WEIMAR CINEMA

by

Katherine Gloede

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Honors Bachelor of Arts in Music Education with Distinction

Spring 2012

© 2012 Katherine Gloede
All Rights Reserved
EXPRESSIONISM IN VIENNESE OPERA
AND WEIMAR CINEMA

by

Katherine Gloede

Approved: ____________________________________________

Philip Gentry, Ph.D.
Professor in charge of thesis on behalf of the Advisory Committee

Approved: ____________________________________________

Philip Duker, Ph.D.
Committee member from the Department of Music

Approved: ____________________________________________

David Suisman, Ph.D.
Committee member from the Board of Senior Thesis Readers

Approved: ____________________________________________

Michael Arnold, Ph.D.
Director, University Honors Program
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to my thesis committee, Dr. Philip Gentry, Dr. Philip Duker, and Dr. David Suisman, who offered valuable comments, criticism, and support throughout the thesis process. Thank you for believing that I could actually fit another thing on my already overflowing plate. A special thank you goes to Dr. Brian Stone, who sparked my interest in Viennese Expressionism during our study abroad to Vienna in the winter of 2010. As always, my family and friends have been a wonderful support system while I stressed about completing this project. I would also like to thank the University of Delaware’s Undergraduate Research Program for financially supporting my research endeavors during the 2012 winter session.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .................................................................................................................. v  

1 INTRODUCTION ................................................................................................... 1  

2 DAS UNHEIMLICHE IN ALBAN BERG’S LULU AND FRITZ LANG’S METROPOLIS .................................................................................................................. 14  

3 THE MEANS VS PURE EMOTION: CHAOS AND PSYCHOLOGICAL INSTABILITY IN EXPRESSIONISM ......................................................................................... 26  

4 CONCLUSION ........................................................................................................ 42  

REFERENCES ............................................................................................................ 45
ABSTRACT

In this thesis, I attempt to identify the characteristics that define Expressionism in the disciplines of opera and cinema by comparing Alban Berg’s Lulu and Fritz Lang’s Metropolis. By comparing the two works, I draw attention to the similarities between two mediums’ and two locations’ forms of Expressionism and formulate conclusions about the relationship between the two works. In my first chapter, I explore how Expressionist artists’ feelings of inner necessity to express pure emotion coincided with a growing interest in psychology. By looking at Freud’s Das Unheimliche, I explore how the uncanny is represented similarly in Lulu and Metropolis. Berg and Lang both create a sense of the uncanny by applying Freud’s concept of the doppelganger, multiple inanimate or animate objects that must be regarded as identical because they look identical, and by creating an unsettling repetition of events. In the following chapter, I support the idea that because Expressionism focused on the portrayal of pure emotion, there was little effort by artists to make their means of expression as comprehensible to the audience as the emotion itself. By examining scenes in which Berg and Lang convey chaos to the audience, I identify techniques that communicate the pure emotion without exposing the artist’s method. By studying the relationship between Viennese Expressionist opera and Expressionist Weimar cinema, the elements that connect the two are clarified, giving us insight into the way the artists understood and interacted with their own works.
Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Art is the cry of distress uttered by those who experience at first hand the fate of mankind. Who are not reconciled to it, but come to grips with it…Who do not turn their eyes away, to shield themselves from emotions, but open them wide, so as to tackle what must be tackled. Who do, however, often close their eyes, in order to perceive things incomunicable by the senses, to envision within themselves the process that only seems to be in the world outside. The world revolves within—inside them: what bursts out is merely the echo— the work of art.¹

Arnold Schoenberg’s words from 1910 strongly convey the principles at the heart of Expressionism. The term Expressionism was coined in relation to art history and aesthetics by Roger Eliot Fry, an English art critic, in 1909, as a foil to the impassive nature of Impressionism.² This became the accepted stylistic title for early twentieth-century Viennese artwork whose main purpose was to express pure emotion without regard for social aesthetics. The style spread to surrounding countries, including the Weimar Republic, where, when the artistic style began to die, it was revived in cinema. MacGowan and Jones quote Fanning defining Expressionism as “a violent storm of emotion beating up from the unconscious mind.”³


In this thesis, I attempt to identify the characteristics that define Expressionism in the disciplines of opera and cinema by comparing Alban Berg’s *Lulu* and Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis*. By comparing the two works, I draw attention to the similarities between two mediums’ and two locations’ forms of Expressionism and formulate conclusions about the relationship between the two works. Viennese Expressionist opera and Weimar cinema are both often compared to Expressionist artwork but are not nearly as frequently compared to each other. This could be due to the differences associated between the two mediums, the two locations, or the two slightly different time periods, but if scholars are able to compare these operas and movies to the same works of art, what is stopping us from comparing Expressionist opera and cinema to each other?

Expressionist style in the musical works of Alban Berg is often defined through comparison to Expressionist art. Rognoni compares Berg’s compositional style to the styles of Klimt and Kokoschka:

His [Berg’s] musical ‘Expressionism’ frequently resembles those teeming colors which envelope the painting of Gustav Klimt, where the human figure seems to loom out of the horreur vacuit of decorative lines, set in stratification of the most complex naturalist and cultural reminiscences…But, like Kokoschka, Berg also possessed a raw-nerved sensibility, penetrating, analytical, which ransacked the impure and irreducible material of human existence in search for a glimmer of light and of hope…

Although Rognoni makes this general comparison, he does not delve deeper in order to identify the specific compositional elements within one of Berg’s works nor does he

---

determine what effect this had on the audience and whether or not this was the same effect the artists intended.

In *German Expressionist Cinema: The World of Light and Shadow*, whose title already references the *chiaroscuro* paintings that the works draw inspiration from, Ian Roberts talks about the Expressionist desire to balance all elements of a cinematic production. In his discussion of balancing elements such as artificial light and shadow, an atmosphere of unease, exaggerated acting, psychological expression, and themes of horror and the supernatural, Roberts draws upon French critic Francois Berge’s writing on the topic, which compare Expressionist cinematic products’ cohesive nature to the balanced paintings of the time. Often, the literature that compares Weimar Expressionist cinema to Viennese Expressionist artwork focuses more on the artistic elements and techniques that cinema incorporates into its products rather than focusing on the intended effect of these techniques in the completed work.

Expressionist Weimar cinema is interesting to compare to Viennese Expressionist art and music, because in cinema, Expressionism focused on the portrayal of the earlier Expressionist qualities that producers of the time thought best defined the style. By using specific techniques, producers attempted to convey Expressionists’ portrayal of pure emotion. Roberts explains that the desire to express pure emotion was motivated by both artistic and economic reasons rather than the inner necessity that Viennese Expressionists felt. Due to the nationalization of Weimar cinema in 1917 and the purpose associated with this, mobilizing the masses

---


6 Ibid., 18-22.
during wartime, Expressionist Weimar cinema is often considered an imitation of a style of art that had flourished elsewhere. Although the motivation for creating Expressionist works was different in Weimar cinema, the product strove to convey the same pure emotions and achieve the same reactions in its audiences.

In my first chapter, I explore how Expressionist artists’ feelings of inner necessity to express pure emotion coincided with a growing interest in psychology. By looking at Freud’s Das Unheimliche, I attempt to draw conclusions about how the uncanny is represented through similar techniques in Lulu and Metropolis. In the following chapter, I support the idea that because Expressionism focused on the portrayal of pure emotion, there was little effort by artists to make their means of expression as comprehensible to the audience as the emotion itself. By examining scenes in which Berg and Lang convey chaos to the audience, I identify techniques that communicate the pure emotion without exposing the artist’s method. In order to understand Expressionist influences in music and cinema, it is necessary to first look at the artwork of the time and the historical context in which it first appeared.

Viennese Expressionism arose in artwork of 1909, incorporating themes of anxiety and feelings of impending doom in individuals’ personal lives. These feelings stemmed from three major historical events that occurred during this period, which ultimately also mark the end of the period. The first was World War I, whose end coincided with that of Viennese Expressionism. The next event was the influenza epidemic, which killed millions of people including Viennese Expressionist artists, Klimt, Schiele and Schiele’s wife, Edith. The third event was the final dissolution of
the Austria-Hungarian Empire due to the assassination of heir Archduke Ferdinand, the death of Emperor Franz-Josef, and the collapse of his autocracy.\textsuperscript{7}

In addition to the influence of these events, Viennese Expressionism grew out of an art movement known as the Vienna Secession, which was founded in 1897 with a focus on functional artwork, mainly architecture. The Secession was influenced by the \textit{Jugendstil} movement in Germany, the \textit{Art nouveau} movement in France, and the Modern Style in England, all of which called for a new art addressing modern life without reminiscing in past golden ages. One of the first Viennese artists to incorporate elements from these movements was Gustav Klimt who, after breaking from his traditional craftwork, which included mosaics and gold foil work for palaces and theaters, began painting mystical figures portraying a dreamy state of mind with pessimistic overtones of man’s fate in the world. His use of intimate themes such as life and “self” were esteemed by the Secession, but did not win the support of Vienna’s public. Despite his withdrawal from the Secession in 1905, Klimt’s artwork was not publicly accepted and continued to combine the decorative Viennese art tradition with the Expressionist portrayal of faces and fragments of bodies. His works also convey the darker qualities of Expressionism; Chipp writes, “Klimt’s human beings are imprisoned in an elaborate, sensuous environment that has robbed them of the power of free-will and has predetermined their fate.”\textsuperscript{8} These feelings of inner turmoil and impending doom become major themes throughout the Expressionist period.


\textsuperscript{8} Ibid., 10.
Expressionist artwork sought to evoke an introspective experience in its audience:

Expressionist art at its highest...achieves a perfect synthesis and balance between the modernist demand for abstraction—for an autonomous art independent of appearances—and the powerful European ‘Renaissance’ tradition in which man is represented naturalistically and themes are expressed through narrative, symbol, and allegory. 9

The artwork of this movement typically presents a real object or the human form in a distorted way, hoping to create feelings of tension, anxiety, fear, and morbid eroticism. The artwork expresses the inner process of pure emotion and passion through depictions of the “self” that use sharp lines, texture, especially in the subject’s skin, and the reshaping of color and form. In addition, the depiction of personal emotion without regard for the social conventions is apparent in Expressionist artwork. Egon Schiele painted twisted bodies that were charged with sensations, shattered the social image of respectability, and provided a shock value for his audience. Like other artists of the movement, he portrayed human figures, nude or partly clothed, suspended in a neutral background, portraying themes of intimate love fraught with violently tormented and morbid emotions. 10

Due to the public’s hostility towards this new expression in artwork, many young, unconventional artists began meeting at coffee houses to support each other’s work. Café Griensteidl and Café Central were coffee houses where many young artists, writers, and actors gathered including poet Peter Altenberg, leading architect


10 Chipp, *Viennese Expressionism*, 7-14.
Adolf Loos, Karl Krauss, a poet and satirical journalist, and composer Arnold Schoenberg. In addition to sharing experiences of public hostility, these artists often shared political and artistic ideas. Kraus’s controversial journal, Die Fackel, which was filled with political criticism and realistic coverage of the war, was popular amongst the social circle, especially with Loos and Schoenberg. When Kokoschka became a regular attendant, Schoenberg looked into collaborating with the artist on his drama, Die glückliche Hand. Many of the interdisciplinary bonds of support were prompted and funded by Loos, a strong advocate for Modernism, who went as far as to completely fund a concert of Schoenberg’s works and gather an audience for the young composer.11

The parallels in these artists’ philosophies attracted them to each other’s company, and therefore, there are many similarities between the themes present in Viennese Expressionist artwork and music. In Expressionist music, the primary goal was to convey strong, pure emotions. In 1932, Schoenberg wrote a short analysis of his Four Orchestral Songs, Op. 22 for a broadcast in Frankfurt that he could not attend due to illness. In this, he states that the origin of Expressionism is that the music’s formal appearance is guided by feelings for the internal and external processes and that bringing these into expression is what supports the music. In response to criticism that his music does not represent each word in the text, Schoenberg writes,

Now, if a performer speaks of a passionate sea in a different tone of voice than he might use for a calm sea, my music does nothing else than to provide him with the opportunity to do so, and to support him. The music will not be as agitated as the sea, but it will be differently so,

as, indeed, the performer will be. Even a painting does not reproduce its whole subject matter; it merely states a motionless condition.  

Where artists of the time used bright colors for effect rather than an accurate and realistic portrayal of the subject, many Expressionist composers like Schoenberg used dissonances to represent extreme emotional states. This overwhelming and uncontrollable desire to convey an emotion is one of the most significant characteristics of Expressionism. Composers’ use of chromaticism and serialism, which created extreme dissonances and obscured melodies, shocked audiences in the same way that Schiele’s disregard for conventional aesthetics shocked audiences. The choice of text that was set to music also reflected the Expressionist themes apparent in artwork.

Alban Berg, who was born in the central district of Vienna, Austria in 1885, was one musician who composed in an Expressionist style. Berg lived a comfortable childhood with his family until his father died in 1900, which led to a challenging time in which Berg’s grades plummeted and he had an illegitimate child with the kitchen maid. With no training in piano and composition besides what he had learned from his governess, Berg dropped out of school and took a civil servant job until 1906 when his mother inherited enough money to allow Berg to focus on his music studies. In 1904, Berg started taking harmony, counterpoint, and theory lessons with Arnold Schoenberg and after three years moved on to composition. Berg was influenced by Schoenberg’s use of cyclic forms and contrapuntal textures and his use of tonal ambiguity with clear form. Berg’s lessons ended in 1911, but characteristics seen in

---

his last works under Schoenberg’s guidance are also seen in his later compositions, especially his use of harmonic, melodic, and rhythmic motifs to link multi-movement works. After his musical study Berg explored other mediums of art, becoming acquainted with influential Expressionist artists such as Gustav Klimt, Karl Krauss, and Adolf Loos.13

Expressionist style in the musical works of Alban Berg is often defined through comparison to Expressionist art. As previously mentioned, Rognoni compares Berg’s compositional style to Klimt’s looming figures suspended in teeming colors and decorative lines and Kokoschka’s penetrating, raw-nerved sensibility.14 Following Viennese Expressionist artists’ beliefs, inner reality “was associated in the Expressionists’ minds with ‘truth’, a truth that demanded emancipation from the ‘lie’ of convention and tradition.”15 Berg followed Schoenberg in his atonal and twelve-tone compositional style, which aimed for the emancipation of dissonance and a tonal center through nonconventional means. Schoenberg felt that art was an imitation of outer and inner nature and that dissonances in sound were actually less familiar consonances. By composing in a way that created dissonances, he felt that he was expressing the deeper, instinctive nature of music.16 In addition, Berg employs the


15 Fanning, "Expressionism."

element of a shock factor in his works by using extended techniques that were new at the time such as col legno and glissando harmonics in the strings and by setting striking text or text in a striking way, such as a large orchestration for a very short poem. In his *Fünf Orchesterlieder nach Ansichtkartentexten von Peter Altenberg*, Berg sets Altenberg’s “aphoristic and slightly scurrilous texts” when Altenberg was known to be in an asylum.\(^\text{17}\) The text in Berg’s opera, *Lulu*, was drawn from two novels by Wedekind whose works were considered obscene and provocative and whose ban in Germany was only lifted ten years prior to when Berg began working on it in 1928.

Whereas the application of Expressionist ideas from artwork in Vienna was a fluent transfer of styles and themes between different mediums, the influence of Expressionist artwork on Weimar film was extremely perceptible. Weimar Expressionist cinema originated in Germany’s first attempt at democratic government, the Weimar Republic, between the end of World War I in 1918 and the invention of sound in German film in 1930. The German population experienced extreme disillusionment after the war, believing the German government’s claims that they were winning during the war and later learning of the abduction of Prince Max and the German death toll after WWI. The Treaty of Versailles led to German land and money loss and a decrease in armed forces. Political rivalries filled the streets with strikes, street fights, and armed revolts, while the Spanish influenza pandemic, uncontrollable inflation, and widespread unemployment left people feeling hopeless and defeated.\(^\text{18}\)

\(^{\text{17}}\) Jarman. "Berg, Alban."

\(^{\text{18}}\) Roberts, *German Expressionist Cinema*, 52.
German Expressionist artwork at the beginning of WWI had portrayed optimism and a morbid anticipation of disaster that would bring about critical change, but by the end of the war, the style had nearly died. In an attempt to validate German film as a marketable export to foreign countries that shunned the country’s products after the war, German filmmakers started incorporating elements of Expressionism into their films.¹⁹ Considering film as an art form led to a flowering of creative talent in the defeated nation that drew on the German soul, unconscious urges, and nightmare visions.²⁰ Threats to individuals, couples, or society, destiny, depictions of a dystopian future, and realistic portrayals of society’s threat to stability are all themes that stemmed from the German public’s feelings after the war. Dream imagery often displayed a desire to reconcile with a harsh reality; madness was in conflict with sanity and blindness was in conflict with vision in the new Expressionist film. Conflicts of reality and identity were closely knit with themes of national identity versus reality.

Expressionist film as a stylistic term is seen by Kristin Thompson as, “applying to a general attempt to minimize the differences among the four aspects of mise-en-scène: lighting, costume, figure disposition and behavior, and setting. The Expressionist film makes, as much as possible, a single visual material of these aspects; the result is an emphasis on overall composition.”²¹ These elements were combined by the collaboration between the many artists that made up the director-unit.

¹⁹ Ibid., 15.

²⁰ Elsaesser, Weimar Cinema and After, 19.

²¹ Roberts, German Expressionist Cinema, 6.
The Expressionist style also drew on *chiaroscuro*, a type of light and dark imagery apparent in paintings such as those of El Greco. The artificial light and shadow was combined with an atmosphere of unease, exaggerated acting, psychological expression, and themes of horror and the supernatural to create a cohesive work that French critic, Francois Berge, compared to the balanced paintings of the time.22

One filmmaker known for combining Expressionist elements with popular film genres was Fritz Lang. Lang was born in 1890, and his parents, being of the upper middle-class and highly valuing the arts, took Lang and his older brother on regular trips to the theater and to evening poetry readings in Vienna, Austria, where they lived. Lang’s parents supported his university education in art and art history until he became involved in the Viennese Café culture that cultivated Expressionist art and music. Rather than succumbing to his father’s will, Lang spent the next period of his life traveling, eventually settling in Paris. At the beginning of WWI, Lang traveled back to Vienna, where he volunteered for duty. Lang was severely injured several times, earning the *Karl Truppenkruez*, Vienna’s highest military honor. During the time he spent recovering and during his periods of leave, he grew interested in the film industry and started writing film scripts and treatments, detailed synopses of a film that are more in depth than the preliminary outlines and are completed before the first draft of the screenplay. Shortly into his film career, Lang was recognized for his gripping storylines, stemming from themes of adventure and eroticism in the childhood stories he read.23

22 Ibid., 6-10.

23 Ibid., 54-55.
Lang worked in close collaboration with Thea von Harbou, an author, actress, and scriptwriter, on *Metropolis*, one of his best know films. Kraucauer states, “Thea von Harbou was not only sensitive to all undercurrents of the time, but indiscriminately passed on whatever happened to haunt her imagination.”24 This characteristic of her works gives historians the opportunity to trace social influences of the time throughout her screenplays. Where von Harbou’s style of writing was what characterized her works, it was the subject matter of Lang’s stories that distinguished his works. “The name of Fritz Lang stood for films where human relations resolve around power, control and domination, and the individual was a mere puppet of hostile forces, malevolent tyrants or super spies.”25 In addition to these plot elements, Expressionist themes are apparent throughout Metropolis, including the destiny of individuals in society, the artificial world of light and shadow, illusion and reality, society’s threat to stability, and dreamlike visions of hope.

It is clear that there are very specific attributes associated with Viennese Expressionist opera and Weimar Expressionist cinema; some characteristics apply to both mediums, while others only define one. In this thesis, I come to identify two distinct subjects that are treated similarly between opera and film. The first one that I will discuss is the uncanny, followed by the expression of chaos.


Chapter 2

DAS UNHEIMLICHE IN ALBAN BERG’S LULU AND FRITZ LANG’S METROPOLIS

“An uncanny effect often arises when the boundary between fantasy and reality is blurred, when we are faced with the reality of something we have until now considered imaginary, when a symbol takes on the full function and significance of what it symbolizes…”

Sigmund Freud first published his research on Das Unheimliche, commonly translated as The Uncanny, in 1919, eight years before the completion of Metropolis and sixteen years before Berg’s death. The inner necessity that artists felt compelled to follow was closely linked with new interest in psychology, and many musicians, including Mahler, Adler, Webern, and Berg, personally looked to Freud to solve problems ranging from asthma to a marital crisis.

In Freud’s work on das unheimliche, he reevaluates its definition by looking at the contradictory nature of the word heimliche, meaning homelike, intimate, and familiar, but also hidden and secretive, therefore, untrustworthy. By adding the prefix –un, Freud comes to a definition of unheimliche that merges with its antonym, something that was intended to be secret or hidden away that despite being repressed


27 John Crawford and Dorothy Crawford, Expressionism in Twentieth-Century Music (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1993), 5.
comes into the open. 28 “The uncanny element we know from experience arises either when repressed childhood complexes are revived by some impression or when primitive beliefs that have been *surmounted* appear to be once again confirmed.” 29 Although this psychological theory is presented through the use of different techniques from one Expressionist medium to another, *Lulu* and *Metropolis* approach the uncanny through similar means.

Freud uses E.T.A Hoffman’s *The Sandman* to illustrate the characteristic elements of the uncanny. In the short story, fantasy and reality meld into one for the main character, Nathaniel, who, after rejecting the stories his caretaker told him about the Sandman who tears out children’s eyes, seems to face the character in his own home. Years later, Nathaniel is still haunted by his encounter with the Sandman and he eventually meets his end due to the Sandman’s reappearance. The uncanny elements that Freud focuses on include the amalgamation of reality and fantasy into a setting that not only the character, but also the audience cannot disentangle. Because there is an unintentional return of what has been repressed, in this case, the Sandman, and a repetition of this uncanny element, a feeling of fate and the inescapable is created when it would otherwise be considered chance. During Hoffman’s story, Nathaniel lusts over what he believes is a woman in a window, but later finds that she is just an animaton. The element of intellectual uncertainty felt when determining whether objects are animate or inanimate is discussed by Freud in *Das Unheimliche*. In


29 Ibid., 155.
addition, Freud addresses the doppelganger, an inanimate or animate object that must be considered identical to another because the two look similar.30

Arnold Schoenberg applied the concept of das unheimliche in his theory of post-tonal music. Schoenberg thought that people associated the relationship between notes as a flicker of tonality, thus making his works seem uncanny to the listener who recognized this as something they knew from the past. According to Michael Cherlin, because Schoenberg acknowledged his predecessors, his music can be heard as surmounting the traditional compositional theory that repressed dissonance. “The sonorities of tonality have not fully disappeared, they have become estranged, evanescent spectres.”31 Following Freud’s model for das unheimliche as something from one’s past that was meant to be repressed but recurs, elements of tonality in atonal music seems to fit the mold of the uncanny from the perspective of the composer, but if members of the audience never tried to repress or overcome tonality, as was highly likely with the average concert-goer at the time of the twelve-tone method’s development, these traces of tonality would have seemed more heimliche than unheimliche. Whether Schoenberg considered das unheimliche from the perspective of the composer or the audience, it is clear that he considered these contemporary developments in psychology when approaching his music.

Berg took this sense of the uncanny a step farther in Lulu by applying Freud’s concept of the doppelganger, multiple inanimate or animate objects that must be regarded as identical because they look identical. In addition to the telepathy of

30 Ibid., 136-145.

knowledge, Freud’s definition of the doppelganger includes that “there is the constant recurrence of the same thing, the repetition of the same facial features, the same characters, the same destinies, the same misdeeds, even the same names, through successive generations.”

In Berg’s Lulu, many of the roles are doubled; a contralto plays the Wardrobe Mistress, Groom, and Schoolboy, a high bass plays the Medical Specialist, Banker, and Professor, a lyric tenor plays the Painter and Negro, a heroic baritone plays Dr. Schoen and Jack the Ripper, a heroic buffa bass plays the Animal Trainer and Acrobat, and a buffa tenor plays the Prince, Manservant, and Marquis. Of these roles, the doubling of the Medical Specialist and Professor, Painter and Negro, and Dr. Schoen and Jack the Ripper specifically have intended dramatic effect and cannot just be seen as a practical solution to financial restraints.

In a letter from Berg to Schoenberg on August 7, 1930, Berg wrote, “the four men who visit Lulu in her attic have to be represented in the opera by those singers who have represented the men who become Lulu’s victims in the first half of the opera—in inverted appearance, to be sure.”

Evidence of the intentional doubling of characters is not only seen in Berg’s letter, but also in his compositional technique. George Perle found that Berg consistently uses similar compositional devices and material to highlight the relationship between multiple characters that are played by a single performer and

32 Freud, The Uncanny, 142.
33 George Perle, The Operas of Alban Berg: Lulu (Berkeley: University of California, 1985), 64.
34 Ibid., 60.
points out that the dramatic and formal design of the opera are dependant on these dual roles.\textsuperscript{35} Dr. Schoen is represented musically by his own series, one of the most prominent after Lulu’s, and its unfolding is accompanied by a sustained six-note chord as Jack the Ripper opens the door from inside Lulu’s room to stab Countess Geschwitz. Another example of Berg’s musical treatment of the doubles is seen when a form of Dr. Schoen’s series that is used in his aria in Act II is not heard again until Jack the Ripper’s entrance. Both the Medical Specialist and the Painter are associated with their own musical elements, a series of dyads for the Medical Specialist and three tetrachords for the Painter, which are revisited when their doubles are on stage later.\textsuperscript{36} Because Berg died before he could finish orchestrating Act III, it is important to note that the doubling of parts was deduced by scholars such as George Perle and Douglas Jarman from the sketches of Berg’s particell. Some of the doubling is specifically indicated in notes on the sketches and some has been inferred from Berg’s treatment of tone rows.\textsuperscript{37}

In addition to Berg’s use of specific compositional techniques when working with the doppelgangers, his adaptation of Wedekind’s text was meticulously completed to lend itself to the dramatic purpose of the doubling. Although as a child Berg did not care much for his education, he enjoyed reading and writing and wanted to become a poet. His facility for writing and his acute understanding of playwriting allowed him to compress Wedekind’s \textit{Erdgeist} and \textit{Die Bruechse der Pandora} into a

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 61.

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 106, 112, 127, 129.

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 63.
composition of about a third of the length. Berg eliminates some of the original characters and adds a few additional roles but manages to “preserve the interesting implications of entirely subordinate details of the original drama, in spite of his elimination of the greater part of the original text.” Through Berg’s reorganization of the plot and characters, he heightens the dramatic significance and implications made possible by the doppelgangers. The Medical Specialist, Dr. Goll, dies of a stroke when he walks in on Lulu and the Painter in the first scene of the opera and thus is a silent role. Later, when Lulu has become a prostitute, her first visitor is the Professor, who refuses to speak. The Painter, who kills himself after learning of Lulu’s past from Dr. Schoen, returns as the Negro, her second visitor as a prostitute. In Act II, Dr. Schoen gives Lulu a revolver to kill herself, but instead, she kills him. This performer returns to play Jack the Ripper, Lulu’s third visitor who finally kills her. Each of Lulu’s victims returns and, as Karl Kraus explained it at the 1905 private premiere of Die Büchse der Pandora that Berg attended, “the great retaliation has begun, the revenge of a world of men, which dares to avenge itself for its own guilt.”

When the same actor appears on stage first as one of Lulu’s victims and then as one of Lulu’s visitors when she is a prostitute, he becomes a doppelganger within Berg’s opera. The two characters that the one actor is portraying will, despite a different costume, have the same facial features. Freud’s description of an uncanny doppelganger also includes that the two people have the same characteristics and

38 Crawford and Crawford, Expressionism in Twentieth-Century Music, 126.

39 Perle, Lulu, 65.

40 Ibid., 60.
misdeeds. In the opera, there is an unmistakable recurrence of the same fate when the characters, the Medical Specialist, the Painter, and Dr. Schoen, are exposed to Lulu. Since Lulu’s charm is a threat to all of mankind, the relationship between the characteristics of each of the roles can be seen in a broader sense to represent the general characteristics and misdeeds of mankind. Berg’s doppelgangers do not go as far as to have the same names, as Freud’s description suggests, despite Berg’s ability to accomplish this when compressing the text as he did change many of the characters’ titles. The telepathy of knowledge between the individual characters in each doppelganger pair is not explicitly apparent, but the quote previously mentioned from Kraus’ speech at the private premiere of Die Brüesehe der Pandora provides some insight into the idea that Lulu’s victims are attempting revenge through their living counterparts.

If a member of the audience realizes that the same actor is playing multiple rolls and considers the dramatic significance of this, the scene and the opera as a whole can become uncanny. The actors whose characters have been killed are something from the opera’s past and the relationship between these actors and their original characters was meant to be repressed or hidden to the audience through the actors’ assignments to new roles with diverting costumes and different apparent functions within the opera. When one of the actors reappears on stage, the audience member may first recognize the character as looking familiar and experience an unsettling feeling or a sense of uncanny. Later, if an audience member realizes that the actor playing the role of one of the visitors at the end of the opera is the same actor that was playing one of her victims, the repressed element comes into the open. Through the subsequent introduction of previous actors, the audience member may
begin thinking about these relationships and he or she may come to realize the uncanny repetition of events surrounding Lulu. This could also lead the audience member to make inferences about the fates of Lulu’s visitors.

Whereas the doppelgangers in *Lulu* serve to clearly articulate the cyclic fate of mankind under the influence of Lulu’s presence, the doppelganger in *Metropolis* serves the main purpose of effacing the distinction between reality and the inanimate. In *Metropolis*, the mad scientist, Rotwang, creates a machine-woman that he attempts to use to overthrow Fredersen, the owner of Metropolis and his rival ever since he stole his love, Hel. Maria, a young worker who tries to preach that the workers need a mediator with the head of the city, is captured and her image is scanned onto the robot. While the robot Maria organizes the workers’ revolt against Fredersen, the real Maria escapes from Rotwang and tries to right the wrongs of her doppelganger. Throughout this part of the plot, it is unclear to the audience and to Freder which Maria is the real one, blurring the distinction between animate and inanimate. It is not until the workers tie robot Maria to a stake and attempt to burn her that they realize she is a robot. The physical characteristics of Maria’s doppelganger are identical, causing the robot to be accepted as her, but the destinies and misdeeds of the two are very different.

In addition to obscuring the distinction between reality and the inanimate, the robot Maria is also used to juxtapose the pious Maria and exhibit the capacity of the *femme fatale*, a theme also apparent in *Lulu*. In *Metropolis*, Rotwang dresses the robot Maria as an exotic dancer and puts her on display for a group of men. The scene quickly transforms into a sea of eyes that cannot detach themselves from the sexual image of the robot they believe is a woman. The allure of the *femme fatale* and her ability to appeal to a man’s primitive instinct is clearly conveyed in this scene. In
Lulu, the ultimate fate of the characters surrounding the femme fatale is portrayed as the effect of their attraction to her and their inability to resist her. When Lulu first appears in the prologue, she is introduced by the Animal Tamer as a snake but is also referred to as a “sweet beast.” Lulu is portrayed as a femme fatale that presents the audience with evidence of the inherent destructiveness of female sexuality when this force is not repressed. The nature of her relationship with Alwa throughout the opera depicts this destructive force, because despite his father’s past relations with Lulu and despite being told by Lulu that she killed his father and poisoned his mother, Alwa is still unable to tear himself from her. After Lulu returns from jail, Alwa calls her repulsive, but when she asks if he finds her repulsive, he kisses her. Like his father, Dr. Schoen, and many of the other characters that come into contact with the femme fatale’s unrepressed sexuality, Alwa is led to ruin by his intimate relationship with Lulu. According to Thomas Elsaesser, “the repression of female sexuality entails an intense eroticism suffusing everything that is asocial, primitive, instinctual, according to a topos that sees nature as devouring, whenever its nurturing function has been perverted.”

When the overly sexual nature of Lulu and the robot Maria is introduced into society, mankind’s primitive nature takes control and chaos ensues. The sexuality of the femme fatale is repressed in order to adhere to social norms, but when the repressed recurs, it is portrayed as distorted and as Freud writes, “that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar.”

Because the uncanny element that is returning is female sexuality, which the men are portrayed

41 Elsaesser, Weimar Cinema and After, 262.

as being naturally attracted to, when this element returns in its distorted form of the feminine fatal, the men are both attracted and repulsed by the scene. The repetition of the fate of those associated with the feminine fatal appears as uncanny to an audience member that is able to separate himself or herself from the feminine fatal’s allure. Because their sexuality is out of control according to social standards, both examples of the feminine fatal are purged from society for the good of mankind.

As mentioned above, another uncanny effect is the idea of the repetition of fate present within both Lulu and Metropolis. In Lulu, because the fate of the people around Lulu seems to recur throughout the opera, the audience, whether they notice the doppelgangers Berg inserted into the drama or not, is left to contemplate this idea of fate throughout the opera. This uncanny feeling is eventually resolved by the death of Lulu, who has brought death to those who fell under her charm. Contrastingly, in Metropolis, this cyclical idea of fate is briefly presented at the very end of the movie. After the “head” and the “hands” reconcile their differences from the “heart,” the workers rebuild their city under Metropolis and return to their life of work. It is important to note that Lang’s original version of Metropolis was around three hours long, but after the film’s premiere in Berlin, the Ufa directed that the film be re-cut and Paramount further shortened the film to two hours. Because much of Lang’s original concept was altered, film historians have striven to restore the original version, although there are still some frames missing.43 Barring the slim possibility that these few missing frames would alter the last scene, the audience is left to question the workers’ uncanny choice to resume their lives under the city. It seems

43 Roberts, German Expressionist Cinema, 66.
unsettling that after destroying their homes below ground, almost killing all their children, were it not for our protagonists, and burning what they thought was Maria at the stake, the workers decided to continue working under the city to provide the energy required for the rest of the people above ground to enjoy Metropolis. Even though the characters in the film are happy with the outcome of their revolt, the situation becomes uncanny to the audience that is able to view the scene as the beginning of another cycle. Ian Roberts quotes Gunning’s observation of the situation, “Nothing changes at the end – Grot is a foreman and management snitch, Freder is the pampered son of the boss who claims to understand the workers after a single grueling shift, Joh remains the boss despite his willingness to destroy the whole city rather than relinquish control over it to Maria.”

Siegfried Kracauer also pessimistically interprets this ending, and in 1947 he wrote, “On the surface, it seems that Freder has converted his father; in reality, the industrialist has outwitted his son…By yielding to Freder, the industrialist achieves intimate contact with the workers, and thus is in a position to influence their mentality.” He continues by arguing that Goebbels appealed to the heart in the interest of totalitarian propaganda, making it clear to the reader that, in his opinion, the political situation in Metropolis is deteriorating as the city continues this cyclic process.

The concept of the uncanny in Berg’s Lulu and Lang’s Metropolis follows the methods of expression characteristic of Expressionist artwork. Viennese Expressionist artwork was characterized by the portrayal of the inner self and the most fundamental

44 Ibid., 69.

45 Kracauer, From Caligari to Hitler, 163.
emotions without regard for the social norms that forced artists to repress these 
instincts. Berg drew from his personal experiences, many having to do with his 
attraction to Hanna Fuchs and his inability to realize this desire while married to 
Helene. In 1931, he wrote to Hanna, “Not a day passes, not a half a day, not a night, 
when I do not think of you, not a week when I am not suddenly flooded by yearning, 
which submerges all my thoughts and feelings and wishes in an ardor that is not 
weaker by a breath than that of May 1925…” He continues by explaining that his 
external appearance might appear happy with Helene and his soul “might be fulfilled 
for a time with the joys of motoring, but could never be able to compose Lulu.”

Because these fervent emotions were repressed within him, he felt the necessity to 
express them in his compositions.

On the other hand, uncanny elements in Lang’s cinema did not necessarily 
originate from soul due to the government’s influence on filmmakers to add 
Expressionist elements to their works when the style was beginning to dissolve in 
artwork. Lang resisted association with Expressionism and in an interview with 
Michael Toeteberg he says, “it’s the theme that dictates the style…I don’t know what I 
took from Expressionism. I may have used it, maybe to get it out of my system.”

Lang understood the characteristics of the Expressionist style and incorporated 
conspicuous elements that would define his works as Expressionist. Freud’s Das 
Unheimliche and the newly developed psychological theories of the time were readily 
incorporated into Expressionist works, whether or not the artist embraced the theories 
or recognized them as a defining element of contemporary culture.

---


47 Elsaesser, Weimar Cinema and After, 188.
Chapter 3

THE MEANS VS PURE EMOTION: CHAOS AND PSYCHOLOGICAL INSTABILITY IN EXPRESSIONISM

Chaos was an overwhelming reality during the height of Expressionism in Vienna and the Weimar Republic. In Vienna, the popularity of Expressionism among artists started around 1909 and coincided with the end of World War I. Augmenting the large number of people lost to World War I, the Viennese struggled with an influenza epidemic that ultimately killed millions. In addition to the chaos these events caused in people’s personal lives, Vienna’s government was experiencing its own form of chaos. After the assassination of heir Archduke Ferdinand, the death of Emperor Franz-Josef, and the collapse of this autocracy, the Austria-Hungarian Empire finally dissolved. Berg first began composing Lulu in 1928, but his work was interrupted twice by other commissions, and the opera was left incomplete when he died in 1935. During this period of time, the political situation in Germany, with the rise of Hitler and the Nazis, left Berg’s works less performed, and the composer struggled to make enough money to support his household. In addition to this form of chaos in Berg’s life, the increasing Nazi presence was also felt by Berg when he was asked to resign from the Prussian Academy of the Arts and was asked to send proof to the Reichmusikkammer, the Nazi “State Music Chamber/Bureau,” of his Aryan origins.48

Despite appearing later in Weimar cinema, after the end of World War I, Weimar Expressionism was influenced by a very similar sense of chaos. Axel Eggebrecht states in his 1927 film critique that *Metropolis* can be seen as a “mirror and image” of its time. After the war, the German population experienced extreme disillusionment when learning of the German death toll and the losses accompanying the Treaty of Versailles. When the filming of *Metropolis* began in 1925, the Weimar Republic was just beginning to recover from a period of crisis. Hyperinflation and political hostility created stressful living conditions for people, while the government struggled to pick up the pieces of its government after the war and satisfy its reparations. The radical left accused the ruling Social Democrats of betraying the ideals of the workers’ movement, while government funded Freikorps, the volunteer military or “free corps,” committed violence against striking workers. A brief Golden Period followed this, beginning in 1924, in which the economy began to stabilize, but this ended with the rise of Hitler and the Nazi party and the creation of the Third Reich in 1933. Historian Katherine Roper wrote that the “intricate mixtures of historical tradition, disappointment over betrayal of revolutionary agreements from 1918, longing for national community, ongoing resentment toward French occupation, ...


economic insecurity, anxiety about changing working conditions, and social tensions” all influenced and are apparent in Weimar cinema.  

Because Expressionism focused on the portrayal of pure emotion, it makes sense that there was little effort by artists to make their means of expression as comprehensible to the audience as the emotion itself. Despite obscuring their methods for creating pure emotion, Expressionist artists used very specific techniques, meticulously creating a framework that would support the raw, emotional experience they hoped their audience would undergo. In Lulu, Berg generates a sense of chaos that accompanies the psychological instability in specific scenes through compositional techniques such as juxtaposing changing rhythms or tempos representing psychological instability and ostinato patterns representing psychological stability. This concept of juxtaposing elements to create chaos is also seen in the choices of acting style, musical accompaniment, and filming techniques in Lang’s Metropolis.

“It is inherent in the spiritual attitude of Expressionism that formal devices should not be clearly recognizable from the sounding surface of the music; for Expressionism is to a large extent an adventure into the subconscious.” From Jan Maegaard’s words, we can deduce that the underlying techniques used by Expressionist composers to convey psychological states can be identified through an in depth investigation. John and Dorothy Crawford accomplished just this, taking a closer look at works by composers such as Schoenberg, Webern, Berg, Bartok, and


Ives, which they identify as Expressionist. They found that often, psychological instability is represented through metric means, such as changing rhythms and meters and rubato; harmonic means, such as chromaticism, dissonance, and the distortion of melody; and structural means, such as forms that do not repeat material. Emotional balance is seen in elements such as ostinato patterns and regular forms, and the juxtaposition of contrasting elements and other means of presenting contrast like large harmonic leaps, new playing techniques, asymmetrical form, changes in the form or content of text, and changes in texture were used to convey changes in psychological states.53

Berg implements many of these techniques during Act I, scene ii of Lulu. During this scene, Dr. Schoen reveals some information about Lulu’s past and his history with her and encourages the Painter to exercise more control over his wife. The Painter is shocked by what he learns and instead of going to talk to his wife, as he tells Dr. Schoen he is going to, he locks himself in a room and kills himself. Berg not only represents the psychological chaos of the Painter’s experience in this scene, but also that of Dr. Schoen, whose plan in talking to the Painter was to finally free himself from Lulu. The section of music accompanying this scene is labeled as the Monoritmica and begins when Dr. Schoen and the Painter are left alone to have their conversation (m. 669). Berg uses compositional techniques including the distortion of tempo and rhythm to convey the sense of chaos to the audience without making his method transparent.

53 Ibid., 16-20.
As Dr. Schoen begins revealing information about Lulu to the Painter, the tempo increases in stages that are specifically written in the score, moving from eighth note equals 76 to a high point of half note equals 132, about seven times as fast. From that point, the tempo slows, eventually returning to the original tempo. The peak of this accelerando occurs when Dr. Schoen and Lulu find the painter’s corpse, telling us that Berg used this device to depict Dr. Schoen’s psychological chaos rather than the Painter’s. The intensity created by the increasing tempo culminates at the point when Dr. Schoen realizes that his plan has backfired and he is still under the control of Lulu’s charm.54 “Distortion and the grotesque play an important role in depicting psychological states, whose meaning, while intensely felt, must remain hidden.”55 The distortion that Crawford and Crawford reference can be seen in this extreme increase of tempo, which the audience perceives as distortion and which creates an atmosphere of chaos for the audience.

In addition to the distortion of tempo in this scene, Berg also distorts the durational values of the *Hauptrhythmus*, the chief rhythmic motive that Berg identifies in the score using the symbol RH. “The RH occurs in its prime aspect and in its normal durational values except in connection with turning points in the dialogue between Dr. Schoen and the Painter and in the unfolding drama.”56 Perle continues on, describing the instances in the conversation where the RH is used in its retrograde form; this includes when the Painter exclaims “O Gott! O Gott!” and Dr. Schoen


responds, “Kein ‘O Gott!’… Geschehn ist geschehn!” (“No ‘Oh God!’ What’s done is done!”) (m. 679), the moment when the Painter finally understands what he is hearing and an extreme moment of chaos for the character, whose marriage has been exposed as being built on fraud. Berg clearly juxtaposes the prime and retrograde forms of the RH in his setting of Dr. Schoen’s words, “Ich komme nicht hierher, um Skandal zu machen. Ich komme, um Dich vor dem Skandal zu retten.” (“I didn’t come here to make a scandal. I’ve come to save you from a scandal.”) The first sentence is set to the prime form of the RH and the second sentence to the retrograde, emphasizing the difference in psychological thought processes through a clear juxtaposition of musical material. In the 1996 Glyndebourne Festival Opera production of Lulu, Stephan Drakulich, the Painter, and Wolfgang Schoene, Dr. Schoen, clearly articulate the differences between the RH and the retrograde during this scene. The two performers convey the intensifying chaos of the conversation through the written distortion of tempo, their effective acting, and the intense expression of emotion through their voices.\textsuperscript{57}

It is also interesting to examine the moment when the Painter seems to gain control of himself again in front of Dr. Schoen. While the tempo has increased, there is an ostinato pattern apparent in the soft drumbeat accompanying the moment\textsuperscript{58}; Crawford and Crawford specifically list ostinato patterns as a compositional element associated with psychological stability, because the repetition of the ostinato engenders a sense of familiarity. This feigned stability is revealed to the audience and

\textsuperscript{57} Alban Berg: Lulu, directed by Graham Vick (1996; West Long Branch, NJ: Kultur), DVD.

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., 211.
Dr. Schoen when Dr. Schoen and Lulu find the painter’s dead body, but his instability is foreshadowed by Berg’s use of the retrograde RH during the last moments he is seen on stage as the Painter. While the majority of audience members may not be able to identify the changes in rhythm as the distortion of the original Hauptrhythmus when watching or listening to the opera, the audience should perceive the feeling of pure chaos emanating from the music accompanying the chaos of the scene.

The concept that the artist was trying to express pure emotion without making his means of expression comprehensible to the audience can also be seen in Expressionist Weimar cinema. When asked in a 1925 interview with Ludwig Spitzer by what means psychology can be introduced into film, Lang’s response was “special effects in the widest sense of the word.” Later in the interview, when Lang starts revealing some of the techniques being used in the filming of Metropolis, he says, “Why take away the naïve joy with which we face the world of film…”59 Similarly to how form and technique in Expressionist musical works were not meant to be apparent to the average audience member, new filming techniques were used in Weimar cinema to create a chaos that would not be transparent. As Guenther Rittau, a German film director and the cameraman during the filming of Metropolis, explained, “The cameraman is the modern magician, there is no such thing as “impossible” for him.

And yet, for all his magic, one must not notice that it is ‘magic.’ The less noticeable, the better his work.”\textsuperscript{60}

Many new filming techniques were used throughout Weimar Expressionist cinema to capture the essence of early Expressionism’s exploration of the human psyche and its extreme states. As historian Rainer Metzger explains, “[Expressionism] always set its sights on tumultuousness and fragmentation, on separation and collision, and right to the last moment it poured out its heart and soul in the search for a language to convey violent and nervous exertion.”\textsuperscript{61} A team of artists and technicians, which included the set designer, cameraman, art designers, and screen play writer, worked closely to implement new filming techniques and new combinations of the film’s individual aspects. This group, referred to as the director-unit, strived to create a cohesive product that would convey the desired emotions through every element of the film. This focus on group composition and artist merit was very different from the composition process used to develop mainstream and commercial Hollywood films of the time.

In addition to the geometry apparent in the city scenes of \textit{Metropolis}, the influence of Expressionist and \textit{mise-en-scene} artists can be found in some of the stark contrasts in pivotal scenes.\textsuperscript{62} The clear juxtaposition of contrasting elements in film is


\textsuperscript{61} Roberts, \textit{German Expressionist Cinema}, 22.

\textsuperscript{62} Ibid., 59.
very similar to its use in music. For example, artificial light and shadows in the *chiaroscuro* style were paired with violently contrasting, exaggerated acting styles to demonstrate how the environment can influence thought and emotion, creating an atmosphere of unease or inner turmoil.\(^63\) In fact, Gustav Froelich, the actor cast as Rotwang, was not Lang’s first choice for the role, and his acting was criticized as only displaying a slight variation and modulation between horror and ecstasy.\(^64\) Not only did this combination of techniques demand extra attention to acting and lighting styles, but it also required collaboration during the construction of models and during the planning of camera set up.

When new techniques created unforeseen issues during filming, the director-unit worked as a team to develop a solution. In Rittau’s film review, he talks about the problems posed by using a miniature model to film the panoramic view of the Eternal Gardens, explaining that because the model was so small, the model had to be moved past the camera, rather than the camera sweeping across the model.\(^65\) In addition to these techniques, *Metropolis* implemented special effects including scale models, back projection, mirror-shots, and stop-frame animation to meld living and inanimate elements into one image.\(^66\) When the director-unit could not use filming tricks to achieve the desired effect, as they found when filming the floods in the worker’s city, they resorted to extremely expensive special effects. In this instance, they acquired

\(^{63}\) Ibid., 10, 96.

\(^{64}\) Thomas Elsaesser, *Metropolis* (London: British Film Institute, 2000), 26-7.


four reservoirs of water and motors to propel the water with enough force to break the cement sidewalks. As Theodor Loos, the actor that played Josaphat, recalls, “I spent the nicest seaside holiday of my life last year at the al fresco pool of ‘Metropolis’ in Neubabelsberg.”

One of the most complicated scenes to film was that in which Freder first experiences the workers’ lives under the city. During the scene, Freder watches as the workers struggle to keep up with the demands of the Moloch Machine; the machine turns into a monster, throwing the workers from their workstations in an explosion and devouring the workers in its huge mouth. Because the scene could only be filmed once, careful and exact planning was required for weeks before the filming of a scene that only amounted to a duration of about two and a half minutes. Eugene Schuefftan’s “mirror-trick process,” spiegeltrickverfahren, which combined live acting with model sets, was especially important during the filming of this scene. Through this process, a special matte-shot device was created by partially scratching the tain off a mirror through which the action could be filmed, while a painted backdrop or scenery was reflected back into the image. By using new techniques such as the Schuefftan process, the audience was free to experience the chaos that the character was experiencing without removing themselves from the action due to unbelievable or previously explained special effects.

---


68 Elsaesser, Metropolis, 25.
Less immediately noticeable techniques were used to convey a sense of chaos throughout the robot Maria’s interactions with the workers. When the robot Maria makes her first speech in the catacombs urging the workers to revolt, a sense of energy is perceived by the audience not only from the workers’ desperate attitudes and Brigitte Helm’s heightened acting style and robotic movements, but from the way the scene is presented to us by the director-unit. During the first speech the audience hears by the real Maria, the camera focuses on Maria and Freder, alternating between straight-on shots of the two with an occasional view of the scene from the perspective of the hidden Rotwang and Joh Frederson. Looking at the first minute of the scene, we are only presented with two cuts of Maria, two of Freder, and one aerial view. This seems considerably more controlled when compared to the eleven cuts of Maria interspersed with four cuts of the workers during the first minute of the robot Maria’s speech. In the second speech, some of the cuts used are jump cuts, which create a sense of confusion through the discontinuous image created when the subject, Maria, is viewed from a slightly different angle. This technique also creates a charged atmosphere and a sense of increased urgency when viewed by the audience, The rapidly changing vantage points do not necessitate the audience’s understanding of the plot and serve as a jarring effect to convey the growing sense of chaos.

In addition to the tension created by these filming techniques, the music accompanying the two scenes is another element that contributes to the sense of chaos. In the orchestral score that accompanied the 1927 premiere of *Metropolis* and that accompanies many of its restorations, the music between the two catacomb scenes is

---

69 Timed from the first view of Maria in each catacomb scene in the Kino International 2010 restoration of Metropolis released in New York.
very different. During the real Maria’s speech to the workers about peaceful mediation, the original theme from Maria’s first appearance in the Eternal Gardens is revisited. The flowing melody traded between high-wind solos and swelling strings is juxtaposed by the high-brass melody used during the robot Maria’s rally. The short melody, characterized by large leaps in the brass and fleeting, descending woodwind figures, is briefly presented when Rotwang first conceives his plan for revenge and is repeated with little variation during Maria’s proposal of violent action. It is interesting to note that the music used to accompany the robot Maria’s rally is different from the music played when the robot is created and is later seducing the men in Yoshiwara, despite the similar images, like the sea of floating eyes and heads, used in both instances. By using different music for the seduction of the people of Metropolis and the rally of the workers, a clear divide is created between the threat the robot poses by appealing to man’s sexual instinct and the threat the robot poses to all of society as a femme fatale. Because Joh Fredersen intended the robot to be used to influence the workers and discredit Maria, it makes sense that the music is different as Rotwang unleashes the full potential of the robot in his alternative plan to destroy Metropolis and kill Joh Fredersen’s son. The juxtaposition of the two different musical ideas adds to the chaos created by the filming techniques without being transparent to the audience.

The two styles of acting Helm uses for Maria and the robot are highly indicative of the music in these two scenes. Her movements seem to reflect the type of gestures used to conduct music in the two styles; Helm’s gestures in the first scene are smooth and sweeping, reflective of Freder’s sentimental feelings and Maria’s call for peaceful revolution, and match the flowing music that accompanies the scene, whereas
her movements for the robot Maria are rigid and jarring like the brass melody with its large leaps and syncopation. Close-ups of the robot’s face reveal Helm’s ability to distort her features, consistently squinting one eye while often biting her bottom lip and tilting her posture backwards or towards one side. Her enticing gestures towards the crowd are repeated through the brass melody and culminate in a violent gesture in which the robot savagely pulls at the lacing on top of her dress, almost tearing it open. By combining extreme acting styles with potent musical accompaniment and specific filming techniques, the director-unit creates a scene that evokes a sense of chaos, especially when the audience has the ability to compare the earlier scene of Maria’s speech with the robot’s rally. While the emotion associated with the chaos is clearly presented to the audience, the director-unit’s compositional techniques are not exposed to the audience while they are experiencing the film.

Often in Expressionist works, the idea of chaos is linked with the *femme fatale* figure; as Elsaesser explains, “many of the literary or visual embodiments, especially in the late nineteenth century have to do with projection onto the desired woman an aggressiveness and destructiveness whose subjective correction is guilt and self-punishment.”70 While I would argue that in the instances I explore from *Lulu* and *Metropolis* there is no sense of guilt or desire for rectification developed in the *femme fatale* as her actions lead to disaster, I agree that the women are assigned to aggressive roles. Lulu’s allure is irresistible to almost everyone around her and is the cause of most of the deaths in the opera, and the robot Maria’s call for violent revolt is clearly aggressive. Both Lulu and the robot Maria bring chaos into the plot of their stories, whether they are aware of it or not.

70 Elsaesser, *Weimar Cinema and After*, 262.
Catherine Clement writes, “the prima donna is the prisoner of a machinery, and booby trapped by a machination. She is a living doll to be carried off and taken around for one’s personal pleasure…” This statement holds true for both the robot Maria, who is literally a machine doll made to fulfill Rotwang’s desire for retaliation and possesses the ability to hypnotize men with her sex appeal and Lulu, an empty female figure blindly realizing her destiny as a threat to all mankind. Lulu says herself in Act I, scene ii, “Was bin ich ihm? Er nennt mich Schaetzchen und kleines Voegelchen. Ich bin ihm nichts al Wei!“ (“What am I to him? He calls me ‘little treasure’ and ‘little bird.’ I am nothing but his woman!”) The person she is referencing in this quotation is the Painter, her husband at this point in the opera, who has no knowledge of her past history and therefore sees her as something more than the empty woman she considers herself to be. Clement continues, “[she is] a stuffed animal endowed with a maternal voice, a teddy bear that, in her womanly weakness, will never get away.” This is where her reference to the prima donna starts to diverge from the femme fatale, who is considered strong due to her threatening allure and appealing maternal side and therefore is treated as a danger to society. When the Andreas Huyssen analyzes the female figures of Metropolis, he not only defines the robot Maria as threatening to society, but also the real Maria. He identifies her womanly qualities of affection, emotion, and nurturing as threatening to the male-dominated, unrelenting society and

71 Catherine Clement, Opera, or the Undoing of Women (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1979), 26.

72 Ibid., 26.
views her prophesy of the reign of the heart as a direct threat to Fredersen’s power.73 Even the female characteristics that can be seen as weaknesses are defined here as strengths rather than the maternal faults that Clement describes.

Carolyn Abbate identifies this threat in her writing on Salome, the eponymous femme fatale figure of Richard Strauss’s opera. She states that the threat posed to society is the femme fatale’s attack of gender systems when she displays the male privilege of expressing and realizing sexual desires.74 Abbate references both Lawrence Kramer and Eliot Gilbert who have written about the instabilities created by fin-de-siecle gender systems and the attack of patriarchal culture by corrosive, unbridled female sexuality, respectively.75 In the scene in Lulu when the Painter learns of Lulu’s past from Dr. Schoen, the information that causes chaos in the Painter’s mind is that of Lulu’s past sexual history. When Dr. Schoen realizes that the Painter has killed himself and he is no longer safe from the sexual allure posed by Lulu, the chaos of the scene reaches its peak for him. The juxtaposition of the real Maria and the


74 Carolyn Abbate, “Opera: or, the Envoicing of Women,” Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship, ed. Ruth A. Solie (Berkeley: University of California, 1993), 236.

robot Maria in *Metropolis* make it clear that the *femme fatale*, the robot Maria, causes chaos by openly using her sexuality to gain power over and manipulate the people of Metropolis. In the scene when the robot Maria is first introduced to the people of Metropolis, she is displayed as a scantily dressed, erotic dancer in a club downtown. Rotwang uses this setting to demonstrate the robot’s ability to manipulate men using her sexual appeal, proving that the *femme fatale* has more power and influence over the people of Metropolis than Joh Fredersen does as the male, political leader. It is this power to manipulate the patriarchal gender system and therefore the actions of the people that allows the robot to cause chaos throughout Metropolis.

In both *Lulu* and *Metropolis*, the *femme fatale* is the main source of chaos throughout the work. As the pure emotion being presented to the audience in these scenes, the artist’s goal is to create the feeling of chaos without allowing his method to be apparent to the audience. For Berg, this meant composing according to the rules of twelve-tone composition, but including elements of distortion in rhythms and tempos, whereas for Lang, the choices made in acting style, musical accompaniment, and filming techniques provided the basis for his expression.
Chapter 4

CONCLUSION

Berg’s *Lulu* and Lang’s *Metropolis* both exhibit characteristics that were typical of Viennese Expressionist artwork. The artists’ feelings of inner necessity to express pure emotion coincided with a growing interest in psychology, and both Berg and Lang incorporated ideas present in Freud’s *Das Unheimliche* into their works. The doubled actors on stage in *Lulu* and Maria and the robot Maria in *Metropolis* act as doppelgangers that serve to highlight the unsettling repetition of events throughout the plots. In addition, in *Metropolis*, the doppelganger also blurs the distinction between reality and the inanimate and serves as a *femme fatale* character that juxtaposes the pious Maria. This doppelganger character is also present in *Lulu*. In both, natural female sexuality is seen as destructive when it recurs in the distorted form of the *femme fatale* whose sexuality has not been repressed according to social norms.

Furthermore, the Expressionist desire to convey pure emotions to the audience is seen in the presentation of chaos in *Lulu* and *Metropolis*. The theme of chaos reflects the historical events that were occurring at the time the two works were created. In Vienna, the collapse of the government and the death toll from the war coupled with the growing Nazi influence to create a sense of chaos, whereas in the Weimar Republic, hyperinflation and government hostility fueled a crisis period in their history. Although artists’ focuses were to make the emotion more comprehensible to the audience than the means of achieving that effect, techniques used to convey chaos can be identified in both Weimar cinema and Viennese opera. In
Act I, scene ii of *Lulu*, Berg uses compositional techniques such as the distortion of tempo and the distortion of rhythm to convey the growing feelings of chaos experienced by the two characters. He also uses ostinato patterns to juxtapose the distortion and convey a sense of feigned psychological stability. When the real Maria and the robot Maria’s catacomb speeches in *Metropolis* are compared, three techniques used to convey chaos are highlighted: the acting styles used by Brigitte Helm, the number of film cuts used and rate at which they change, and the music from the original film score that accompanies the scene.

Expressionist music and cinema have been compared to Viennese Expressionist art by scholars such as Luigi Rognoni and Ian Roberts, but despite being labeled under the same stylistic term, the two mediums are rarely compared directly to each other. Defining the characteristics of Expressionism present in the late Expressionist works such as *Lulu* and *Metropolis* helps us to determine whether or not the stylistic label of Expressionism is accurately applied to these works. Because the term Expressionism is applied to works in various mediums, works that were created in different places, and works that were completed during a wide range of years, it is important to understand what the connecting threads between the works are in order to fully grasp what makes these works Expressionist.

Comprehending these relationships helps to provide a better understanding of the influences and origins of these works and gives us new insight into the ways the artists interacted with their products. An interdisciplinary study of Expressionist cinema and opera provides interesting correlations between how artists with similar artistic goals achieved the same effects in their audiences despite using different means, living in different places, and creating their works at different times. With a
better understanding of the artists and their works’ origins, we are able to make more informed judgments and more accurate analyses of the works of this period.
REFERENCES


Clement, Catherine. *Opera, or the Undoing of Women*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1976.


Rittau, Guenther. “Trickaufnahmen in Metropolis,” from: Mein Film 60 (1927), 6
Trans. Holger Bachmann and Meg Tait in Fritz Lang’s Metropolis: Cinematic
Visions of Technology and Fear, ed. Michael Minden and Holger Bachmann.


Rognoni, Luigi. The Second Vienna School: Expressionism and Dodecaphony.

Roper, Katherine. “Looking for the German Revolution in Weimar Films.” Central

Spitzer, Ludwig. “Fritz Lang uber den Film Zukunft,” from: Die Filmtechnik, 15 July
1925. Trans. Holger Bachmann and Meg Tait. in Fritz Lang’s Metropolis:
Cinematic Visions of Technology and Fear, ed. Michael Minden and Holger

University, 2010.