LULU AND THE UNDOING OF MEN: UNVEILING PATRIARCHAL CONVENTIONS IMPOSED AND OVERTURNED IN ALBAN BERG'S OPERA

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ABSTRACT

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Alban Berg’s *Lulu* is an operatic adaptation of Frank Wedekind’s plays *The Earth Spirit* and *Pandora’s Box*. The opera was composed during First Republic-era Vienna, a time of great social, cultural, and political unrest. The culture was bombarded by changes such as the rise in psychoanalysis, emancipation movements, and the changing role of women. This opera presents an allegoric representation of a high Bürgertum circle and examines its demise. *Lulu’s* significance lies in its relevance to the pervasive and changing views of men and women in First Republic Austria. The uniqueness of the opera comes from its vivid inversion of conventional portrayals of women, men, and marriage.

This thesis examines the significance of *Lulu* through the inversion and mirroring of gender stereotypes regarding desire, control, and marriage. I argue that upon marrying Lulu the husbands become victims of degeneration due to Lulu’s inability to change her promiscuous ways. She is controlled by the men around her and is a reflection of their patriarchal expectations. Sources that guide this study are Catherine Clément’s *Opera, or the Undoing of Women* (1979/1988), Wedekind-contemporary Otto Weininger’s then-influential *Sex and Character* (1903), and three iconic representations of independent and destroyed female characters in contemporaneous Austro-Germanic opera (Kundry, Salome, and Marie).

Chapter 1 introduces the relevant cultural sources that influenced Berg’s conception of *Lulu*. Chapter 2 describes Lulu’s character. Finally, Chapter 3 describes how the male characters are undone by Lulu, or undone by themselves.
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Alban Berg’s operatic adaptation of Frank Wedekind’s Lulu plays, *The Earth Spirit* and *Pandora’s Box*, chronicles the demise of a high Bürgertum (haute bourgeoisie) circle through a complex set of musical and narrative relationships revolving around Lulu, the main character.¹ Lulu is frequently blamed for the degradation and degeneration of the males in her life. Scholars such as Donald Mitchell, George Perle, and Karen Pegley typically categorize her as a *femme fatale*, seeing her as possessing men through beauty and charm only to destroy them. The number of deaths and marriages in *Lulu* certainly warrants this description. As musicologist Karen Pegley states, “sexually alluring *femmes fatales* had the potential to strip males of their reasoning faculties, and, as a result, males often were portrayed as the threatened victims.”² Lulu’s scorecard of dead husbands and lovers propels this view: one down in the first scene and four more by the end of the opera. Traditionally, though, the *femme fatale* dies or goes mad. In *Lulu*, however, the men and the *femme fatale* die.

Adapting the *femme fatale* character to fin-de-siècle and First Republic-era Vienna was one way artists and composers manifested the changing role of women in their artworks.³ During the 1870s and ’80s the idea of the “New Woman” emerged. Women were seeking equal rights with men thus sparking literary and artistic reactions.⁴ It was during this period that Frank Wedekind’s plays were penned. Wedekind was one such writer who reacted to the “New Woman” or the idea of the emancipated women by presenting the notion of the *femme fatale*.

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¹ A synopsis of the opera is in the Appendix.
³ The term fin-de-siècle is used to describe the time period between 1890 and the beginning of World War I in 1914, when Viennese culture was experiencing social and political disintegration as well as great innovations in music, art, architecture, philosophy, and psychoanalysis.
The *femme fatale* as a *fin-de-siècle* idea is found in the literature, paintings, and operas of Wilde, Beardsley, Strindberg, Klimt, Wedekind, and Strauss.\(^5\) Often introduced as independent and alluring characters by composers, authors, or librettists, these women were never allowed full freedom. They are blamed for the “problems” undergone by the male characters, who seek retribution through death.

The First Republic refers to the period between World War I and World War II, 1918–1934, in Austrian culture. During this time the government and economy in Austria was under duress because of the involvement in the war and the fall of the Habsburg Empire. Social and cultural changes were rampant. The middle class, for example, was finally given equal rights. Although Berg was a student of the *fin-de-siècle* “school” influenced by Arnold Schoenberg, Karl Kraus, Frank Wedekind, and Otto Weininger, his active period of composition occurred during the First Republic, making *Lulu* a First Republic-era opera. (The opera was premiered in two acts in 1937.)\(^6\) Berg’s adaptation of *Lulu* reflects and comments upon the changes in society. For women during this time emancipation was not just an ideal like it had been in the early *fin-de-siècle*. Because of increased industrial production and modernization, increasing numbers of lower middle-class women worked in “white-collar” jobs. They earned incomes, were involved in social activities, and campaigned for equal job opportunities as well as the rewording of marriage laws.\(^7\)

Berg’s *Lulu* adapts the *fin-de-siècle* plays of Wedekind to the First Republic-era with a new perspective. *Lulu*’s significance lies in its relevance to the pervasive and changing views of

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\(^5\) Izenberg, *Modernism and Masculinity*, 12.

\(^6\) The premiere of the opera was at the Zürich Stadttheater on 2 June 1937. It was premiered in two acts because upon Berg’s death in 1935 only acts 1 and 2 had been fully orchestrated, act 3 had approximately 300 bars orchestrated and the remainder was in short score format. The full three act opera was premiered on 24 February 1979 at the Paris Opéra. The orchestration of act 3 was completed by Friedrich Cerha.

men and women in First Republic Austria. It portrays an overarching awareness of the natures and contradictions of the male/female dichotomy as seen at the time. While women’s suffrage activism began in the 1880s and created new opportunities for women to be involved in public spaces, including business, the press, politics, as well as the arts, Berg’s First Republic Vienna Lulu went beyond that. Both time periods (fin-de-siècle and First Republic-era) were obsessed with changing roles and expectations of both sexes, especially women but the First Republic went further than the fin-de-siècle. Consequently, typical and stereotypical roles of men in the patriarchal society were also subject to change and questioning. The uniqueness of the opera comes from its vivid inversion of conventional portrayals of women, men, and marriage.

Berg’s setting of Wedekind’s fin-de-siècle drama takes advantage of the accessible adaptability of the subject matter. Lulu in particular does not exercise her freedom as an emancipated woman to simply love them (her men) and “leave” them. Rather, it is more accurate to say that she reflects the male characters’ projections of the ideal woman, and their desire for her desire, their need for an unattainable woman. They also absorb the reflection of their own nature in her, causing their own undoing. Thus Lulu is blamed for their undoings because she is the object of their desires and characters. Her binary nature is created by these male characters; she is at once emblematic of “the female,” possessing beauty and causing desire, while exhibiting masculine traits of promiscuity and control. As musicologist Julius Kapp remarked shortly after Berg’s death:

None of the men can resist the all-powerful ascendancy of Lulu. All of them are lured and conquered by the effluence that emanates from her. Each of them is faced with the problem, each solves it in his own way. One follows his instincts without reflection, another with premeditation, still another despite most vigorous resistance; but they all pursue her, possess her—and are doomed.⁸

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All of the men are doomed because of their obsession with Lulu. She has qualities that entice men to exchange money, freedom, and life to be with her. In this sense, the roles are reversed, the *femme fatale* becomes not the victim of masculine control, but the one who controls.

By the numbers, the opera is about men who have a variety of occupations and social statuses. Berg has created a drama with one lead female character and four main male characters. In total there are twenty male characters, three male characters played by a female (trouser roles), and four female characters. Only two female characters are of consequence and one of these, the Countess Geschwitz, is identified by her obsession with Lulu.

This thesis examines the significance of *Lulu* through the inversion of gender stereotypes regarding desire, control, and marriage. I argue that upon entering a contractual relationship, marriage with Lulu, the husbands become victims of degeneration due to Lulu’s inability or unwillingness to change her promiscuous ways. Upon the fulfillment of the contract, each man wants her to be his own version of Lulu. She is at once a version of an emancipated woman and the object and reflection of male desire and control while exhibiting masculine traits through her actions. By presenting Lulu in this manner, Berg overturns patriarchal stereotypes of marriage. Although he presents Lulu as an emancipated woman, this characterization is deceptive because she does not exhibit any attributes such as financial, artistic, or social independence that would reflect that status. She does exhibit sexual independence, however, which is more indicative of masculine expectations that have been reflected in her character than her exhibiting control over her own being. She is controlled by the men around her but still does not adhere to patriarchal expectations.

Sources that guide this study (other than the opera itself and the subsequent scholarship) are Catherine Clément’s *Opera, or the Undoing of Women* (1979/1988), Wedekind-
contemporary Otto Weininger’s then-influential *Sex and Character* (1903), and three iconic representations of independent and destroyed women in contemporaneous Austro-Germanic opera.\(^9\) Clément’s feminist opera criticism addresses *Lulu* only in passing. The importance of her text to this study, however, is her model for and discussion of how women are “undone” throughout eighteenth- and nineteenth-century tragic opera. Her term “undoing” broadly equals death and or humiliation. She tells the stories of and analyzes how and why operatic women reach their undoings, subsequently uncovering accepted patriarchal misogyny evident in opera. Clément notes that her observations about female characters could be used to analyze male characters.\(^10\) Because of Lulu’s “masculine” traits I contend that the male characters are undone in a similar fashion to Clément’s operatic women. Berg thus inverts operatic expectations. However, it is not inconsequential that Lulu, too, is “undone” at the conclusion of the opera. Berg cannot depart too much from audience expectations. Therefore Lulu is both masculine and feminine: the *femme fatale* aspects of her character are representative of feminine traits while her sexual freedom is representative of the masculine.

The rise of women’s activism and the “crisis of masculinity” in early twentieth-century Vienna were fuelled by scientific and philosophical writings that chronicled views on sex, gender, and the roles of males and females. One philosopher, whose magnum opus proved undoubtedly influential on Viennese cultural life, as well as on Berg, was Otto Weininger. Weininger was a Viennese philosophy student who received notoriety for his dissertation *Geschlecht und Charakter (Sex and Character)*, published posthumously. He ascribed to women all the negative characteristics plaguing the modern age. His text addresses “the woman question,” as he terms it, and argues that women are seeking emancipation. Weininger discusses


\(^10\) Catherine Clement, *Opera or the Undoing of Women*, trans. Betsy Wing (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1988). She describes in chapter 6 how men can be subject to “undoings” similar to women.
women’s need for emancipation and freedom as the “deep-seated craving to acquire man’s character, to attain his mental and moral freedom, to reach his real interests and his creative power.”

Weininger’s views and theories are echoed in Lulu. Berg was influenced by the text; he held Weininger in the same esteem that he held Karl Kraus and Frank Wedekind. I argue Berg’s Lulu is strongly influenced by Weininger’s work. This is especially true for Lulu herself, but also for the male characters. Lulu, the opera and character, seems to be influenced by Weininger’s theories in as much as they can be seen as responses to the contemporary women’s movement.

Finally, in order to situate Lulu in its contemporaneous Austro-Germanic opera tradition, this thesis discusses three other characters who are strong precursors to Lulu. Doing so clarifies the inversion of gender roles and expectations in Lulu. The three important operatic representations of independent women examined here are Kundry, Salome, and Marie (from Berg’s Wozzeck). These characters make evident the cultural preoccupation with woman, relationships, and acceptable relationship roles. Like Lulu, Kundry, Salome, and Marie are the principal female characters in their respective operas; they are also portrayed as seductresses, Kundry because of her curse, Salome because of her unrelenting desire, and Marie because of her uninhibited promiscuity. All three women are portrayed as irresistible enough to cause confusion in relationships, hysteria, jealousy, and even insanity. Consequently they are punished and destroyed for their destructive power over males.

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10 Otto Weininger, Sex and Character, 65.
11 Karl Kraus (1874-1936) was an Austrian writer, critic, and playwright. He is well known for his publication Die Fackel. Berg admired Kraus because of the lecture he gave on Wedekind’s Lulu plays preceding a 1905 production.
12 Kundry is the female character from Richard Wagner’s Parsifal which was completed in 1882. Richard Strauss’s iconic Salome was premiered in 1905. The latest of the three operas, Berg’s Wozzeck, was completed 1925.
Chapter 1 introduces the relevant cultural sources that influenced Berg’s conception of *Lulu*. It summarizes the main thesis of Otto Weininger’s influential work *Sex and Character*. Following the discussion of Weininger I focus on the operatic characters Kundry, Salome, and Marie by examining the related topoi of these operas, through the main female characters. *Parsifal* is important because it predates Weininger’s, Wedekind’s, and Berg’s works but influences all three. *Salome* portrays a *femme fatale* character destroying and destroyed because of her desirability. Berg’s *Wozzeck* portrays not only a woman destroyed for her independence but also the jealousy and subsequent madness of the corresponding male character, Wozzeck. This chapter presents these three characters as contemporaneous models of independent operatic women who were destroyed, models with which Berg was extremely familiar.

Chapter 2 describes Lulu’s character. Lulu is constantly an object and a reflection of the male characters as well as a reflection of their desires. This chapter relates Lulu to Weininger’s ideological view of women as well as to the societal views of women different from Weininger’s. The purpose of examining Lulu and her influence is to relate the character to contemporary cultural views of women. She is a cipher of an emancipated, independent woman. Like the other operatic women, she is partially independent, yet reliant upon men. Her worth, moral and monetary, is ascribed to her by the men in her life. Lulu is the object of the men’s desires, but she does not conform to patriarchal stereotypes of a wife.

Chapter 3 describes how the male characters are undone by Lulu, or realistically undone by themselves. As a model for analysis I will summarize Catherine Clément’s *Opera, or the Undoing of Women* and Susan McClary’s essay “Excess and Frame: The Musical Representation
of Madwomen” in Feminine Endings. For this study these criticisms offer an approach for discussing the male characters. This summary will provide an effective model for analyzing male characters in Lulu who are “undone” through jealousy, death, and insanity. I will analyze how and why each of the husbands are subject to degeneration or undoing leading to their death. Examining male interactions in ensemble scenes shows how their desire and jealousy grow. The gender inversion in Clément’s classic paradigm of “undoing” provides a key to the iconic role Lulu plays in musical, theatrical, and cultural understanding of its milieu.

CHAPTER ONE: CULTURAL INFLUENCES ON LULU

A Summary of Otto Weininger’s *Sex and Character*

Otto Weininger’s (1880–1903) *Sex and Character* was influential in Berg’s Vienna. His work, an intense critique of gender and sexuality in his society, focuses on femininity but also critiques the behavior of men. Today it is a contentious work because of Weininger’s misogynistic and anti-Semitic themes. *Sex and Character* is part of a larger body of Viennese socio-scientific writings on gender and sexuality by authors such as Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), Robert Musil (1880–1942) and Heimito von Doderer (1896–1966).¹

*Sex and Character* was conceived of and executed while Weininger was a student of philosophy and psychology at the University of Vienna. The motivation behind his text was the women’s movement in Vienna. He believed women were seeking emancipation to become equal with men. Much of his text, however, concentrates on women and its central thesis is about the nature of women:

> Women have no existence and no essence; they are not, they are nothing. Mankind occurs as male or female, as something or nothing. Woman has no share in ontological reality, no relation to the thing-in-itself, which in the deepest interpretation is the absolute, is God. Man in his highest form, the genius has such a relation, and for him the absolute is either the conception of the highest worth of existence, in which case he is a philosopher; or it is the wonderful fairyland of dreams, the kingdom of absolute beauty, and then he is an artist. Both views mean the same. Woman has no relation to the idea, she neither affirms nor denies it; she is neither moral nor anti-moral; mathematically speaking, she has no sign; she is purposeless, neither good nor bad, neither angel nor devil, never egotistical; she is as non-moral as she is non-logical. But all existence is moral and logical existence. So woman has no existence.²

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¹ The major works of these authors are as follows: Sigmund Freud’s *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905), *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), Robert Musil’s *The Man without Qualities* (1930–33), and Heimito von Doderer’s *The Demons* (1956). Doderer’s book is relevant aside from the late publication date because the novel explores the mood and society of post-WWI Vienna between 1926 and 1927. He worked on this novel from 1931 to 1956.

² Weininger, *Sex and Character*, 286.
Weininger acknowledges that man cannot exist without the Woman for biological reasons. But even for maternal purposes, he says, woman has no worth. She cannot add to the world through works, spirituality, or sheer existence. When Weininger describes what the Woman is, he is in turn describing the ideal man as the opposite. If women equals nothingness, then man equals the totality of human qualities. However, throughout the book he also classifies levels of femininity in males. He acknowledges a partial femininity in all men and asserts that male Jews and homosexuals have the most inherent femininity. Thus, like women, they are never able to achieve as much as the total man. Weininger could not reconcile with his own Jewish heritage or homosexuality and committed suicide the same year his dissertation was published.

*Sex and Character* was incredibly popular and famous throughout Europe, let alone Vienna. It went through multiple editions within the first few years of publication. Although views of women were changing due to emancipation movements and the actual emancipation of the middle class, there were many presentations, discussions, and representations of women that paralleled Weininger’s. The following section will relate three important operas and their influences on and similarities to *Lulu* through their shared cultural tropes.

**Independent Women in the Austro-Germanic Operatic Tradition**

In the contemporaneous Austro-Germanic operatic tradition, *Lulu* relates to iconic representations of independent women in a continuous, shared tradition of German modernism. By examining Kundry from Wagner’s *Parsifal*, Salome from Strauss’s *Salome*, and Marie from Berg’s *Wozzeck*, it is possible to see similarities in topics, representations, and style. All three

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4 Misha Kavka, “The Alluring Abyss of Nothingness: Misogyny and (Male) Hysteria in Otto Weininger,” *New German Critique* 66 (1995): 125. According to Kavka’s research 28 editions were printed between the years of 1903 and 1947—twelve editions in the first seven years after publication, with four in 1904 alone.
operas were familiar to Berg. Even the principal cultural and dramatic themes presented in *Parsifal* and *Salome* resound in both of Berg’s operas. They therefore provide plausible context from which Berg may have drawn his own views on women in opera. These three operas’ premiere dates span from 1883 to 1925, from the beginning of the *fin-de-siècle* through the First Republic era.

In each of the operas the women exhibit different types of independence. Kundry is forced to be independent, unmarried, and without a romantic or marriage relationship as a result of her sins. Salome is independent in thought and desire, untamed in her expression of adolescent sexuality. Marie’s independence lies in not having a conventional marriage to Wozzeck having a child out of wedlock, asserting sexual independence in her affair with the Drum Major. Marie’s portrayal is the most realistic portrayal of independence. Even so, each of these women’s independence relies on men, much like Lulu’s independence: Kundry through Klingsor’s magic and her service to the Grail Knights, Salome on the royal court, Marie on the financial support of her “husband.” All three characters are dependent upon the patriarchal systems in place in each representative opera.

These women are all portrayed as beautiful with the inherent ability to attract and seduce men, consciously or unconsciously. Because of their seductive abilities the women make the corresponding male characters jealous. When jealousy intensifies in these characters they often progress to the point of madness and even death. As I show in this chapter, this is true in *Salome* and *Wozzeck*, as well as *Lulu*. All of the operatic women described, as well as Lulu, portray conditional or partial independence while relying upon men in some fashion, as will be discussed further. Each independent female character has three categories of men with whom she is involved, or that are involved with her. First, each woman relies on at least one male character
for sex, money, or social standing. Second, each woman attracts men who through desire rely upon her and end up destroyed. Finally, each female is “undone” by a male character who relies too much upon his desire. The operas share the themes of independent women, madness, and unconventional relationships.

Kundry

As is well known, Wagner’s Parsifal juxtaposes strong Christian symbolism with modernist issues of gender, sexual, and power relationships. These themes resonate with fin-de-siècle ideals that inspired the works of Weininger, Wedekind, and Berg. In this, his last opera, Wagner presents views of the quest for the ideal man as well as the purpose of women. Anthony Winterbourne paraphrases Wagner’s “On the Feminine in the Human,” an unfinished manuscript that echoes Wagner’s view of the female as pertinent to Parsifal:

Wagner wrote of women as being the victims of power structures that were determined exclusively by men, and in particular of the entrenched system of property ownership upon which marriage (certainly in Europe at that time) was founded. Wagner expressed the view that emancipation was an ineradicable part of a much grander project that was nothing less than the “regeneration of mankind.”

Women relied on men; their lives, personalities, and existence revolved around men and male systems. When women were portrayed as independent, they were going against patriarchal systems. For Wagner and other composers, this often resulted in the death of the character as retribution for their actions. Although such deaths are unrealistic, they nonetheless reflect societal views and societal changes.

Kundry is an enigmatic character. Independent, in her case, means that she is not tied to men by marriage. She is partially independent in thought and action. As a tool for Klingsor she

seduces at his will; he determines her thoughts and actions. However, she also helps the Knights, providing balsam for Amfortas’s wound and other tasks that seem repentant. The duality of Kundry working for and against the Knights shows some freedom of thought and action.

Kundry works for Klingsor and is used to seduce the Knights so he can obtain the Grail. In retribution for her sins, she is forced to walk the earth until she finds a man who can resist her charms; he who can resist her will redeem her. The world of men measures her worth; she is a place filler moving from time period to time period waiting for someone to resist her. Kundry is a cipher filling a place in the opera. Her worth is ascribed by those around her, and she is used to fulfill their needs. Klingsor needs Kundry to seduce the Grail Knights, she is at their service until someone resists her, and therefore she is reliant upon them. Amfortas relies upon her to heal his wound, the wound she helped inflict that virtually destroys him. Winterbourne states, “her role in the drama is to save a man by amusing in him an impulse more compelling even than the desire for sexual congress.” Her dual purpose is to seduce and save men.

Entwined within her independent character is the notion of Kundry as an ideal or everywoman character. Kundry has seemingly lived multiple lives, had many names, and been many things to many people. In act 2 scene 1 Klingsor summons her by saying:

Get up! Get up! Come here!
Your master calls you, nameless creature,
First sorceress! Rose of Hades!
Herodias one time, and what else?
Gundryggia there, Kundry here!
Come here! Come here then Kundry!
Your master calls: arise!

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Herauf! Heiher! zu mir Dein Meister ruft dich Namenlose: Ur-Teufelin! Höllen-Rose! Herodias war’st du, und was noch? Gundryggia dort, Kundry hier! Hieher! Hieher denn, Kundry! Dein Meister ruft: herauf!
He associates her first with “nameless creature” implying that her identity does not matter; she is more an object or entity existing for his purposes. Most pertinent to Weininger, Wedekind, and Berg, the second signifier, “First sorceress” or Eve, associates Kundry, the only woman of the opera, with original sin. The title “Rose of Hades” opposes titles used to describe Mary, the “Holy Rose” or “Rose of Heaven.”

“Rose of Hades” implies Kundry is a beautiful element of hell, woman as a seductive entity resulting in destruction. Winterbourne addresses the reference to Herodias in the following way: “apart of course from being the mother of Salomé —Herodias was the consort of Herod—her name meaning simply ‘great lady’.”

As Winterbourne states, the name Herodias has multiple associations, most importantly as the mother of Salomé, the girl who forced the death of John the Baptist because of her own desires. The final name, Gundryggia, refers to a valkyrie, though not one of Wagner’s valkyries.

All of these names imply that Kundry, throughout her long history, has been many things to many men. Kundry and Lulu share psychological similarities, but they also share this portrayal as an ideal woman. As will be discussed in chapter 2, Lulu, too, is an everywoman character, referred to by different names—Eve, Nelly, Mignon—by each husband.

Berg was highly influenced by the psychological aspects of Parsifal’s characters as well as the music. One striking similarity is that in Parsifal and Lulu the function of both women is to create sexual congress or (as it will be described in chapter 2 through Weininger) “sexual union.” Elements of Sex and Character can be seen in Parsifal and similarities to both can be seen in Lulu. Berg saw Parsifal performed on 8 August 1909 in Bayreuth and wrote about the experience to his future wife Helene, stating:

I’m writing straight after Parsifal. It was magnificent, overwhelming. I wish we could have shared this stirring, uplifting experience, but as that was not to be—oh, if you were

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8 Winterbourne, A Pagan Spoiled, 63.
here now! Words cannot give you anywhere near the tremendous impression, shattering yet life-enhancing, which this work made on me.  

With Helene he shares the emotional impact that the opera left on him and refers to the experience in his next four letters. As noted above, there are similarities between Lulu and Kundry. Berg could have been drawn to the Kundry-like qualities in Wedekind’s plays or adapted Wedekind’s character, resulting in undeniable similarities.

Winterbourne addresses the psychological similarities between Lulu and Kundry. He states:

It is [Kundry’s] psychological fragmentation, her elusiveness—expressed not least through her several names, and the consequences this has for our understanding of who she is—that almost encourages our interest in the two considered together. It is almost as if Lulu is Kundry disrobed of anything even vaguely religious, for she is a true femme fatale, pursued by men whose primary psychological trait seems to be sexual hypocrisy.

Wagner’s representation of an enigmatic female resonates not only with Berg but with Weininger and his view of “woman.” Both characters are seen as lacking moral qualities and are dependent upon men. These two points are essential to Weininger’s definition of the nature of the woman.

Although there are many similarities between the two main female characters there are also similarities between Parsifal and Lulu. The striking psychological similarity between Parsifal and Lulu can be seen in what amounts to each of these characters’ opening scenes. In these scenes they are both being portrayed as amoral. In act 1 scene 1, Lulu’s husband just died of a shock-induced stroke at the site of Lulu and the Painter together. Lulu’s actions, extramarital relations with the Painter, are deemed inappropriate but her reaction to her dead husband is even more inappropriate. At the sight of his dead body she states, “Now I am rich, What next

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for me?” The painter is repulsed by this response yet he knows she is not to blame; she does not know what is right or wrong. He proceeds to ask her a string of questions about her character to which she does not know the answer and simply replies, “I do not know.” Parsifal too commits an inappropriate act, killing a swan in the sacred forest. After the Grail Knights bring the youth to Gurnemanz, who reprimands Parsifal for killing the swan, he begins to question Parsifal’s character much like in Lulu. He asks Parsifal questions about where he is from, who he is, and who his father is. Parsifal’s reply is always, “I do not know.” These two characters share common initial psychological portrayals. They have both been shown as lesser or weaker than the other characters because of their lack of knowledge and insight into their own actions. In Parsifal (1882) Wagner’s ideas can be seen as a chronological link to Weininger’s view of “woman,” as represented in Sex and Character which influenced Berg and resulted in inherent similarities between Wagner’s and Weininger’s views of women.

Parsifal was an influential opera to many modernist composers, and its psychological underpinnings are evident in Lulu. For Berg’s opera the influence of Parsifal is seen through the similarities of female characters, both of whom are devices of their individual patriarchal societies. These similarities resonate strongly because of similar views presented in Wagner, Weininger, and Berg's works. This is the first example of a cultural trend portraying women as reflective of the misogynistic patriarchal society.

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13 Ich weiß es nicht.
14 Das weiss ich nicht.
Salome

Strauss’s Salome epitomizes fin-de-siècle cultural opinions on gender, sexuality, and control. Weininger’s wildly misogynistic descriptions of women are also echoed in Salome. The opera portrays, as musicologist Lawrence Kramer states, “the processes of modernization (which) threatened traditional forms of social order, a key barometer of which was the norm of inequality between the sexes.” Modernization and social change were the fuel behind works like Weininger’s stemming from what Kramer defines as supremacism, which was “the separation of what was ‘higher’ and ‘lower’ in human nature and society.” He goes on to explain the part of this culture that fuelled misogynistic works such as Weininger’s and Strauss’s. He states:

The origins of supremacist culture lie partly in the rise of economic and social stresses on the middle-class family central to the organization of nineteenth-century life, and partly in the ideological impact of evolutionary science. Basic to the formation was a dualistic, not to say phobic, contrast between cultural progress and cultural regression, evolution and degeneration. Weininger’s organization of this contrast is exemplary.

Cultural supremacism, misogyny, and sexual inequality are now discussed as unacceptable, but in fin-de-siècle and First Republic Austria these modes of thinking were common. The presentation of changes in social order and societal expectations as displayed through the inequality of sexes is not unique to Salome. The theme of change is one of the threads that ties all three operas together.

Salome (1905) exemplifies fanatic misogynistic patriarchal control and fantasy, both fin-de-siècle cultural norms. Salome is an independent woman in thought and action; the character is a presentation of explicit and aggressive female sexuality. She is at once a chaste virginal beauty.

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16 Kramer, Opera and Modern Culture, 191.
17 Kramer, Opera and Modern Culture, 191.
and a destructive seductress, a madonna and a whore. Strauss’s operatic portrayal of Salome as a femme fatale is iconic. Richard Taruskin comments upon the fin-de-siècle preoccupation with this type of character. He states, “voyeuristic fantasies of feminine evil were so rampant in fin-de-siècle culture…the maximalism of the period may have been a vicariously violent male response to the earliest stirrings of female emancipation.”

Femme fatale representations are masculine constructions of an idealized woman, attractive, seductive, and dangerous. Salome, and femmes fatales, are often portrayed as independent, but still in need of men. An overarching theme in Salome is the desire of the unattainable and thus the consequences of such a desire. It is through desire that she is portrayed as independent in thought and action, and thus as an iconic femme fatale.

Like Kundry, Salome is independent, in that she is not bound to any man. However, she is a young girl, sixteen in Wilde’s play, living in the household of her stepfather Herod. The story of Salome is a legendary biblical story in a patriarchal setting. Her independence is portrayed through sexual freedom and freedom of desire. The opera begins with the first example of unattainable desire that establishes Salome as an irresistible force for men. Narraboth, the Captain of the Guard, is smitten with Princess Salome and spends the first three scenes extolling her beauty and becoming increasingly entranced. Narraboth begins act 1 scene 1 by speaking of Salome’s beauty; seemingly she is the object of his unrequited love. Narraboth states:

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19 Strauss’s *Salome* is based on a German translation of Oscar Wilde’s *Salome* (1894), a stage poem.
How beautiful is the Princess Salome tonight!
She has a strange look. She is like a little princess who has little white doves for feet. You
would fancy she was dancing.
How beautiful is Princess Salome tonight!
She is very beautiful tonight.
How pale the Princess is. Never have I seen her so pale. She is like the shadow of a white
rose in a mirror of silver.20

Three out of his first five lines repetitively proclaim her beauty while later lines obsess over her
qualities. Because of his social standing he is not allowed to love Salome. She can manipulate
his desire, which she takes for granted, cajoling him against his orders and better judgment to
arrange an audience with the imprisoned Jokanaan. Thus, Salome becomes his unattainable
object of desire.

Salome is described as dangerous from the outset of the opera. The other soldiers around
Narraboth, especially the page, warn Narraboth. In act 1 scene 1 the page says, “I pray you not
look at her. Something terrible will happen.”21 (Strauss appears to echo the societal fear of
women who appear independent or seek independence.) Narraboth’s first display of desire, as
seen above, is emblematic of the rest of his interaction. He will do anything to be close to
Salome; he retrieves the forbidden prisoner Jokanaan at her request. She entices him, flirts with
him, promises to look at him, and maybe even smile. In act 1 scene 2 Salome states:

20 Richard Strauss, Salome, libretto translated by Lord Alfred Douglas, 1894. As published in Richard
Strauss, Salome, CD Phillips Classics Productions 432 153-2, conducted by Seiji Ozawa. All following quotations
from the libretto are from this translation.

21 Ich bitte dich, sieh sie nicht an! Schreckliches wird geschehn.
You will do this thing for me, Narraboth. You know that you will do this thing for me. And tomorrow I will look at you through the muslin veils, Narraboth, I will look at you, it may be I will smile at you. Look at me, Narraboth, look at me. Ah! You know that you will do what I ask of you. You know it well! (forcefully) I know that you will do this thing.

The few, yet extremely persuasive, words Salome speaks to Narraboth fuel his desire. She knows he desires her, and she uses this knowledge to manipulate Narraboth into releasing Jokanaan for her pleasure, for her desire. Her manipulation of Narraboth to attain Jokanaan echoes one of Weininger’s ideas about women’s vanity. He discusses how the absence of a soul in women is heightened through vanity; women are obsessed with their own bodies and personal beauty. Weininger states, “the love of a man for whom she does not care is only a gratification of the vanity of a woman, or an awakening and rousing of slumbering desires. A woman extends her claims equally to all men on earth.” She may not desire Narraboth at all, but feeds off of his desire for her and uses him to get what she wants. Salome’s desire for Jokanaan causes Narraboth to become desperate and distraught, resulting in his suicide. Narraboth’s suicide establishes Salome’s role as a femme fatale.

Turn-of-the-century depictions of Salome have been summarized by literary critic Bram Dijkstra, who writes of the obsession with the figure of Salome as a bloodthirsty virgin. He states, “in the turn-of-the-century imagination, the figure of Salome epitomized the inherent perversity of women: their eternal circularity and their ability to destroy the male’s soul even while they remained nominally chaste in body.” “She” causes destruction consciously and unconsciously, attracting men and then causing jealousy, hysteria, and death; the fictional

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Stage directions are be indicated in parentheses.

23 Weininger, Sex and Character, 203.

operatic femme fatale, a masculine construction, is a threat to the fictional male characters. After causing destruction, she needs to be “undone” in retribution for her actions. After seducing Narraboth and eventually Herod through her beauty, Salome gets what she wants, the body and lips of Jokanaan, even if only as a decapitated head on a platter. Narraboth and Salome are so intently focused on their desires that they lose control, which is blamed on Salome. Herod succumbs, but not totally, to Salome’s femme fatale ways and has her killed. Salome, as an iconic femme fatale, is addressed by critic Toni Bentley:

When Salome made her dramatic entrance on the European stage in the first years of the twentieth century, middle-class women were largely invisible and silent in public as sexual beings — they were either at home tending their domestic dominion, bedridden with neurasthenia (the chronic-fatigue syndrome of the day), or just trying to breathe between corset bones. Just as nineteenth-century male masochists harbored fantasies of revenge on the femme fatale, women found that in playing the part, they too could exact revenge for their own social, physical, and sexual powerlessness. Salome was not only a misogynist, masochistic male fantasy but a heterosexual, sadistic female fantasy as well.25

Strauss succeeds in bringing the heterosexual, sadistic female character to the forefront, giving her a dramatic, iconic presence. Berg saw Salome in 1906, and was familiar with the opera and character as a cultural symbol.26

Salome is the quintessential fin-de-siècle operatic femme fatale. If Lulu is a femme fatale, she pails in comparison to Salome. Lulu is a beauty, she can be seen as destructive, but she is not, hysterically driven. Salome has a purposeful and driven mindset; she knows what she wants: Jokanaan. Ironically, her desire is frustrated much in the same way that Narraboth’s was. Salome is a character that everyone (audience included) is supposed to desire. For the male characters, this desire is dangerous. The intensity of her character can be seen as hysterical, since she appears mad with desire. Salome is a representation of a certain type of woman, as musicologist

25 Toni Bentley, Sisters of Salome, 33.
Lawrence Kramer states: “a mindless, animalistic, and amoral” creature—Weininger’s “woman.”

Marie

The elaborate musicality and theatricality of Wagner’s *Parsifal* allowed its characters to attain mythic proportions. *Salome*, through its intricate musical features and adaptable story, showcases a male fantasy through a historically controversial and iconic character. The main female character, Marie, from Berg’s first opera, *Wozzeck*, is strikingly different from each of these operatic precursors. Marie is neither myth-like nor an unrealistic cultural fantasy. In comparison to Salome and Kundry she is a realistic woman, but she is a woman concerned with controlling her own sexual interests and using them to assert her power as an individual. In this sense, she builds on aspects of Kundry and Salome. Marie is described as amoral and can be interpreted as the cause of problems. Thus Marie’s nature as a woman affects the men on whom she is reliant. *Wozzeck* is a chronological link between mythical and *avant-garde* styles of *fin-de-siècle* Vienna and the ironic realism of First Republic-era Austrian theater and opera.

The realistic nature of Georg Büchner’s play yielded a social criticism easily adapted to opera. Composer and Berg scholar George Perle discusses Berg’s first experience with *Woyzeck*, stating:

Berg saw the first production in Vienna in May [of 1914], only three months before the outbreak of World War I—the beginning of an epoch during which the degradation of Büchner’s poor soldier suffers at the hands of the representatives of “organized society” was to become the common experience of millions of human beings.

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27 Lawrence Kramer, *Opera and Modern Culture*, 190.
28 *Wozzeck* is an adaptation of Georg Büchner’s play *Woyzeck*. The opera was premiered in 1925.
29 Berg chose fifteen scenes from Büchner’s twenty-five which he organized into three acts of five scenes each.
Class difference is examined throughout the opera. As in *Salome* the reaction to societal change is focused through the portrayal of class and sexual inequality. The focus of the class difference is the manipulation of Wozzeck by the Captain and Doctor. As Wozzeck is tampered with and experimented on, he begins to question his life and consequently Marie and her actions.

In act 1 scene 1, the Captain begins to confuse Wozzeck and makes him question his life and actions. As the scene begins, Wozzeck has been dutifully shaving the Captain at a quick pace. The Captain questions Wozzeck’s motives and the motives behind his hasty work, implying someone with a clear conscience would not work at a quick pace. The Captain states, “a good man, whose conscience is clear, does everything at a leisurely pace.” The Captain is referring to the fact that Wozzeck has fathered a child out of wedlock, and the child is not “blessed” by the church. He thus insults Wozzeck’s character and draws judgmental and classist conclusions about Wozzeck’s character. Wozzeck, subservient to the Captain, is respectful of the Captain and their interaction. This interchange pushes Wozzeck into, at best, a contemplative state. His actions and seemingly nonsensical phrases in scenes 2 and 3, however, suggest madness or hysteria. This interchange also affects his relationship with and perception of Marie.

Marie is not conventionally tied to either male character with whom she interacts, Wozzeck or the Drum Major, but she needs both of them. Part of Marie’s independence also includes her sexual freedom. Marie’s initial scene, act 1 scene 3, shows how she is perceived. The military band marches on the street outside of Marie’s window while Marie and her neighbor (Margret) admire its leader, the Drum Major. Marie has obviously become smitten with the Drum Major. Margret takes this opportunity to point out Marie’s desire for him and her

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reputation as a less-than-respectable woman: “Why you…Madame Innocence! I, at least, am a respectable woman, but your eyes, as everyone knows, can pierce through seven pairs of leather trousers.”32 As Marie admires the Drum Major she is reminded of her low standing, even among the poor. Marie is a woman who is not tied to any man and satisfies her sexual desires when she pleases. She is seen as a loose woman, a whore. Marie goes on to describe herself in this manner. Speaking to her little son, in act 1 scene 3, she says, “Come, my child. Some people! You’re just a poor little son of a whore, yet your bastard face brings untold joy to your mother!”33 She is realistically conscious of her actions and their consequences. Judging from her perceived past, a history of disreputable sexual relationships, Marie will have no problem pursuing the Drum Major.

It is Marie’s relationship with the Drum Major that causes Wozzeck’s mental state to change. Marie and the Drum Major’s short scene, act 1 scene 5, is an animalistic display of seduction resulting in a sexual encounter. After the Drum Major forcefully woos Marie, she finally gives in, saying, “Oh well, it’s all the same to me!”34 Marie’s encounters with men are reduced to satisfying a need for sex, or in Weinigerian terms, satisfying the need to create a union. She is not without moral or conscience like the other women, but is amoral because she does not conform to society’s prescribed morals. After her encounter with the Drum Major, Marie sits in her room with the child, reading the Bible and marveling at her new earrings from the Drum Major. Wozzeck enters the scene to give her money and questions the earrings, knowing they had to be a gift.

32 Was Sie, Sie “Frau Jungfer!” Ich bin eine honette Person, aber Sie, das weiß Jeder, Sie guckt sieben Paar lederne Hosen durch!
33 Komm, mein Bub! Was die Leute wollen! Bist nur ein arm’ Hurenkind und machst Deiner Mutter doch so viel Freud’ mit Deinem unehrlichen Gesicht!
34 Meinetwegen, es ist Alles eins!
Wozzeck: What have you got there?
Marie: Nothing.
Wozzeck: I can see it shining underneath your fingers.
Marie: An earring – I found it –
Wozzeck: I have never found anything like that – not two at a time.
Marie: Am I bad?

Previously pondering the gift, she now questions her actions and concludes the scene, saying:

Marie: I am bad. I could kill myself. God, what a world! Everything goes to the devil: man, woman, and child!35

She is aware that what she has done is wrong but does not ask man or God for redemption. In this opera the poor lower class accepts its fate.

Wozzeck is obsessed with Marie for obvious reasons: she is the mother of his child and his wages go to her. However, it is her relationship with the Drum Major coupled with the Captain and Doctor’s tinkering that pushes Wozzeck over the edge. Wozzeck has confronted Marie about her earrings as well as about the Drum Major. But upon seeing them dancing together, Wozzeck loses control of his life. Wozzeck’s jealousy and desire for Marie causes him to succumb to madness or hysteria. He murders her and commits suicide.

Societal preconceptions formulate the creation of the works discussed in this chapter. Weininger’s work and the three operas show the cultural precedent for portraying women as a product of and tool for patriarchal society. The portrayals were frequently misogynistic fantasies of women and how they could serve man. These works are examples of the artistic and intellectual culture that influenced Berg and the conception of Lulu.

Berg’s last opera differs from these because in Lulu the woman is not the only recipient of change-related denigration as a result of going against patriarchal society. The men in Berg’s

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operas are also subject to the ills of their own patriarchal systems. In *Lulu* he presents a woman who is a projection of male ideals, as will be discussed in the following chapter. But when she deviates from expectations, the men in turn are affected by her deviation from their system, a dynamic addressed in chapter 3.
CHAPTER TWO: THE CHARACTER OF LULU

Lulu’s character is constantly questioned by her fellow characters, as well as by scholars and critics: who is she, where does she come from, why does she act the way she does?

Musicologist Leo Treitler succinctly summarizes the layers of Lulu when he states:

Her bonds are the personae—all fantasies and fears through which the male characters project their hopes and dreads vis-à-vis woman—embodiment of feminine evil and instinctive seductress and destroyer of men; Helen of Troy; the first woman and wife of Adam—now the uppity, serpentine Lillith, now the pure and obedient Eve; the innocent child; the Pierrot and dancer, both objects of the male’s gaze; bourgeois domesticity, embodied in Madonna on one side and whore on the other; playgirl (and daughter) of the devil; Narcissa toying with lesbianism; the creature of nature; the frail dependent; the oppressed woman seeking freedom and self-realization in prostitution.1

Some of these typologies are recognized by the other character. She is known as Eva to the Painter, an innocent child to Schön, and a lesbian to the Countess. However, none of them truly know who she is or what she is capable of. These characterizations play an important role in discerning how her character was formed and by whom. The secret of Lulu’s many characters I argue, lies in how it mirrors each of her male counterparts.

In the prologue, the Animal Tamer introduces the audience to Lulu as a serpent, the root of all evil:

Walk up, walk up! and spend a pleasant hour / Fair ladies, noble gentlemen, with me; Inside my tent you’ll have thrill – and chill – to see / The beasts I have in my menagerie / Tamed by superior force of human power. Hey, Harry! Go and fetch our serpent out! / 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.2

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2 Alban Berg, Lulu, Prolog. Hereinspaziert in die Menagerie,/ Ihr stolzen Herren, Ihr lebenslust’gen Frauen,/ Mit heißer Wollust und mit kalt Grauen/ Die unbeseelte Kreatur zu schauen,/ Gebändigt durch das menschliche Genie./ He, Ajust! Bring mir unsere Schlange her!/ Sie ward geschaffen, Unheil anzustiften./ Zu locken, zu verführen, zu vergiften – Und zu morden – ohne daß es einer spurt./ Mein süßes Tier, sei ja nur nicht geziert!/ Du hast kein Recht, uns durch Miaun und Pfauchen/ Die Urgestalt des Weibes zu verstauchen.
The serpent, Berg tells us musically and through the libretto, is Lulu, who is created to destroy. It is no coincidence that the pseudonym given to her by the Painter is Eva (Eve). Eve is seen as perhaps the first and most significant *femme fatale*, at least in a Judeo-Christian framework. Upon committing the first sin she is seen as the root of all evil, directly tied to the snake in the Garden of Eden. For Berg and Wedekind, she is the snake in the circus. This iconic religious significance is echoed in Wedekind’s title *Pandora’s Box*, where Eve can be seen as similar to the mythical Pandora, the Greek equivalent to Eve. In the prologue the snake is Lulu’s character, created to snare and mislead (implying that Eve was created to snare and mislead.)

She is posed, paraded, and objectified and presented as an ideal projection of masculine fantasy from the outset of the opera. Berg, following Wedekind, equates the snake with “woman,” a reincarnation of Eve, the root of original sin, the root of all evil. The opera’s iconic female is projected as the image of death and destruction, created or fated to be this type of character.

The rules of patriarchal society have failed to tame her; the text implies that nature can never be fully tamed. This trope, in conjunction with the Eve/Serpent themes, is evident in today’s feminist criticism, contemporary feminist writings, and Wedekind. Feminist biblical scholar Reuven Kimelman states:

> By eating from the tree, Eve changes the rules of the garden and becomes, if only momentarily, as God -- the arbiter of right and wrong. Not satisfied with the role of servant of the law, she aspires to be its master and maker. By becoming maker of the rules, divine authority is displaced by her own. Eve fails not because of her frailty or mortality, but because of her deficiency in knowing; not, mind you, of right and wrong, which she does know, but in realizing the consequences of her act. As the source of the

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3 Pandora was the mythical first woman on earth, her name means all-gifted because she was given a power by each of the gods. The beautiful Pandora was created to be the wife of Epimetheus. She was given a jar, or box, that was beautifully adorned and was never to open it. She was tempted by various sources the least of which was curiosity, and opened the jar which unleashed all of the plagues of the world: old age, sickness, insanity, pestilence, vice, passion, greed, jealousy, etcetera. There was one good thing in the bottom of the jar, and that was hope.
knowledge of good and evil, God alone makes such distinctions.⁴ In this reading of the Garden of Eden story, the author notes that Eve has a desire for control and power and succeeds in breaking the rules by taking fruit from the tree of knowledge.

Eve is still subject to the consequences of God, commonly seen as a masculine presence. Wedekind critic Ward B. Lewis comments on the opening scene: “This allegorical representation of autonomous female sexuality posed a threat to masculine hegemony and a challenge to patriarchal misogyny.”⁵ Women who followed their own sexual will in this era, who operated like a man in a man’s world, who challenged societal norms, were destined for destruction. Lulu’s “autonomous sexuality” is her emancipation and in her undoing she is “punished—fallen, abandoned, [and] dead.”⁶

But through her sexuality she not only challenges patriarchal rule, but also embodies it. Raised by Dr. Ludwig Schön, she was “nurtured” by means of masculine practices and ways of the world. Thus her affairs, though inappropriate for a woman, would be expected, or at least accepted, from a man. Lulu’s actions therefore mirror the masculine traits engrained in her character by Schön. This is how Lulu differs from her operatic predecessors in that this aspect of her sexuality may be seen as masculine gendered. Thus describing Lulu as sexually voracious to describe male ideals and points of view; to reiterate Leo Treitler’s statement, “the male characters project their hopes and dreads vis-à-vis woman.”⁷

After the Animal Tamer’s description of the serpent, he further mentions all of the other animals: the tiger, bear, monkey, and even earthworms and lizards. These animals are linked to

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⁶ Catherine Clément, Opera, 7.
individual characters through their respective twelve-tone series, motives, or chords. George Perle succinctly describes the animals and their representative characters:

The Animal Tamer, inviting the audience to see the beasts in his menagerie, is identified with the composer, Alwa, though the two roles are assigned to different performers. The music that accompanies the Animal Tamer’s description of his beasts associates each of them with one of the characters of the drama. Though none of the latter is named in the Prologue, Dr. Schön is musically identified as the tiger, the Acrobat as the bear, the Marquis as the monkey, Schigolch as the “crawling creatures of every region,” the medical specialist as the lizard, Countess Geschwitz as the crocodile, and Lulu as the snake.8

The circus was a fascination of Wedekind’s, and became a theme in his works. To Wedekind the circus was a “clearly allegorical representation of a truth of life.”9 Thus Berg’s adaptation gives the audience a glimpse into a farcical setting of circus animals who have been tamed by the “superior force of human power.” The opera is a metaphorical view into the circus of Berg’s First Republic Vienna, where the players have been tamed, honed, and changed by society’s laws into stereotypes. The superior power that formulates Lulu’s character, the power ultimately in control of this opera is misogynistic patriarchal society.

In the prologue, the initial description of Lulu positions her as the *femme fatale*. Unlike Salome, however, Lulu is more than just a *femme fatale*. Lulu can be seen as an “everywoman” character, subject to ironic social criticism depending on which role she portrays: a *femme fatale*, wife, mistress, dancer, prostitute, child, as elements of all of these typologies but always enacting the accepted male-gendered activity of promiscuity.

This chapter discusses the character of Lulu as a projection of contemporary cultural and social issues: the struggle for social independence, the unfolding of masculine control, as well as the realities and ideologies of the women’s emancipation movement. These ideas are focused through the discussion of Lulu as an everywoman character, Lulu in light of the idea of the

“emancipated woman,” and consequently Lulu in respect to Otto Weininger and his portrait of the woman. These elements show how the opera represents, through Lulu’s character, ideals formulated by society. Lulu therefore has a more important role than a mere femme fatale or empty cipher; she is a mirror for more nuanced cultural projections. As I will show, Lulu is not an independent force but a projection of patriarchal ideals and manifestations. Degeneration occurs when the men meet their own reflection in Lulu’s character.

**Femme Fatale**

The femme fatale title imposed on Lulu is an artistic reaction to fear of women, or the changing role of the women. This aspect of her character has been discussed by critics and scholars, and also suggested by the composer. As a result of the femme fatale label, Lulu is pigeonholed and blamed for the deaths in the opera. As previously stated, femme fatale characters are masculine constructions of an idealized woman: attractive, seductive, and dangerous. The character of Lulu is no different: beautiful, seductive, and young. All four of the men with whom she engages are drawn to her, engrossed with desire, and experience degeneration leading to death fueled by jealousy. The husbands are privy to the full force of Lulu as a femme fatale. Although the femme fatale may cause a male to engage in compromising situations resulting in obsession and often death, in operas the is the anti-heroine. Femme fatales cannot live, they have challenged the limits of feminine sexuality and meet their

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11 The four relationships I refer to are Lulu’s three marriages (Goll, Painter, and Schön) and her final relationship with Alwa, which is not referred to as a marriage.

12 Characters such as the Athlete or the Schoolboy are treated more comically.
ends. Although she is killed at the very end of the opera, Lulu differs because she is allowed to live through four relationships and many other men before meeting her end.

The fascination with the *femme fatale* in the early twentieth century coincides with the rise of feminist activism. The criticism implied within the construction of Lulu as a *femme fatale* is masculine fear. In the opera male characters fear the reality of Lulu because she is promiscuous and commits adultery. They are afraid of her sexual agency. Viennese men, especially from the working and upper middle classes, feared women gaining emancipation and participating in their realms (employment and voting, for example).

Characters in the opera do not label or recognize Lulu as a *femme fatale* as such. Rather they see her as a child, lover, object, beauty, or prostitute and they interpret her actions as the cause of their own problems. Because Lulu’s men do not attribute her power over them to their own personality traits, Lulu becomes a *femme fatale*. Lulu’s qualities are emblematic of misogynistic fears, traditions, and stereotypes in Viennese culture. As I will explain throughout the rest of this section, however, other cultural notions are also responsible for the deaths of Lulu’s husbands.

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**Lulu as an Everywoman Character**

As a wife, object, beauty, mistress, child, dancer, and, finally, as a prostitute, Lulu is what men make her to be. She mirrors their desires, thus firmly establishing masculine bias in regard to the masculine/feminine binary evident in the opera. Karl Kraus describes her as a “maze of femininity, a labyrinth in which a fellow might lose track of his senses.”¹³ She reflects the realities of social stereotyping. Lulu can be described as a maze of femininity because she was molded by men, making her a projection of male fantasies. As a mirror of masculine ideals she

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reflects only male ideas of what a woman should be. The mirror aspect of Lulu’s character not only represents the view of women at the time but also comments on the opinion of the emancipated woman. Lulu’s reflective nature represents of the dualism of society and is essential to understanding Lulu’s relationship to operatic history and innovation. Representative of the masculine ideals and traits, Lulu is best seen through her relationships. She has relationships with four men representing four distinct social categories. Her character reflects the ideals, standards, and expectations of each man.

To her first husband, Dr. Goll or Der Medizinalrat, she is certainly an object. She is a trophy, the wife of a doctor representing a higher class. As the opera opens, her portrait is being painted. It has been commissioned by the Doctor to preserve a lasting image of her. However his image is tainted by the gaze of other men. Standing as their object, she absorbs the gaze of her absent husband (for whom the painting is being executed), the critical and controlling gaze of Schön, the adoration of Alwa, and the lust-filled gaze of the Painter. However she is seen, the portrait remains visible or on stage throughout the opera and is reinforced by its own motivic idea. The portrait is a consistent reminder of the idealized feminine sexuality while Lulu’s character is a projection of masculine sexuality. The relationship of the portrait to Lulu’s actual character is another mirror presentation in the opera.

To the Painter, Lulu is a source of income who furthers his social climb, his muse. Their relationship began before the Doctor’s death, as can be seen in act 1 scene 1 which focuses on the Painter’s lust for Lulu. He lusted after her and pursued her while being employed by the Doctor. In act 1 scene 1 the Painter is a tool of the Bürgertum. His profession is treated as utilitarian. He is executing a portrait of the likeness of Lulu, not an artistic rendering. He is not
regarded as an artist or creative genius, which would make him socially equal to the others. To
the Painter, Lulu is only a vehicle.

After their rendezvous and subsequent death of the Doctor in the first scene, however,
Lulu is no longer the Painter’s muse, but his object. Although the portrait shows her as the
Doctor’s wife, she gains in social and economic stature as the Painter’s wife in act 1 scene 2. As
a wife, she is a medium for his social growth. She is his “Eva,” a perfect beauty who benefits
him. His blindness to Lulu’s character is unmasked by Schön, who tells him “you are living a life
of blindness and I cannot bear to see it.” The Painter’s naivety benefits Lulu (she maintains her
affair with Dr. Schön) and ultimately hurts him. This assault on his idealism drives him to kill
himself because he sees only his view of Lulu. His undoing will be discussed further in chapter
3.

Of Lulu’s four relationships, Dr. Ludwig Schön knows the most about her and maintains
the most control over her. Lulu exists in upper-middle class society, moving up socially
according to the changing status of her changing husbands, but her background is obscure. She
was clearly not born into the Bürgertum. Act 1 scene 2 reveals that at the age of twelve Lulu was
taken from the streets by Schön. “She used to sell flowers by the Alhambra Café every evening
until half-past twelve,” he tells the shocked Painter. One scene later, act 1 scene 3, Lulu offers
insight into her character, telling Schön, “you took me and made a dancing girl of me in hope
that some man would carry me away.” He has created her, taken a child from the streets and
given her a profession. Essentially he has controlled her since he first discovered her and
engineered her jobs and marriages ever since.

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14 Ich kann dich in deiner Blindheit nicht so weiter leben sehen.
15 Sie verkaufte Blumen vor dem Alhambra-Café, jeden Abend zwischen zwölf und zwei.
16 Sie haben mich ja zur Tänzerin gemacht, damit einer kommt, der mich mitnimmt.
Schön, like the others, is unable to resist her sexually. He has kept her as a mistress, a commonplace within his social standing during this time period. Their affair is brought to attention dramatically in act 1 scene 2, the Painter’s death scene. Schön confronts the Painter about Lulu and other men. He informs the Painter that Lulu has not been respectful of him as a husband, meaning she been sleeping with Schön himself. It is through his affair with Lulu that he begins to lose control. Schön is engaged to a girl approximately Lulu’s age. The first mention of his engagement is in act 1 scene 1, but the pivotal discussion between Lulu and Schön is in act 1 scene 2 before the Painter enters. In this scene they both admit that the Painter is blind to Lulu’s ways, but also to Schön’s control over her marriages and the affair. The purpose of their interaction is for Schön to end the affair, as their dialogue shows:

Dr. Schön: If Walter weren’t such a spiritless young fellow, he’d have been on the track of your little escapades well and truly.
Lulu: He is not spiritless! But blind! Blind to me and himself too. He is blind, blind, blind…
Dr. Schön: But if his eyes were opened!
Lulu: He doesn’t know me. How could he know?! He calls me “Treasure” and “Bird of Paradise.” A woman for his bed—and just bed.
Dr. Schön: Can we make an end now!
Lulu: I am at your service!
Dr. Schön: Through me you made a good marriage. And then another good marriage. Your life is easy. Your husband’s doing well, thanks again to my contriving. And if there’s more you want, unknown to him, go and take it! But kindly leave me out of your game.

As their dialogue continues, Schön states:

Dr. Schön: I shall not permit our meeting…
Lulu: Not even you believe what you are saying.
Dr. Schön: …excepting in the presence of your husband.17

Upon stating his desire to end the affair, Schön continues to assert control over Lulu. As quickly as he reminds her that he has created her successes, he destroys her current marriage by telling the Painter of Lulu’s affair.

Eventually, in act 1 scene 3, Schön gives up his engagement and agrees to marry Lulu. Due to Lulu’s persistence Schön finally agrees to marry her. Schön succumbs to his own creation and gives himself over to her. He has had her as a child, a mistress, and finally his wife. Until this point he has controlled virtually every aspect of her life, directly and indirectly. Schön has arranged her first two marriages and indirectly pushed her into prostitution. As a dancer he put her on stage to entice men and to attract a husband. After a job well done on Lulu’s part Schön created advantageous marriages, essentially paying the husbands a dowry to marry her. The contractual exchange of money for marriage indirectly pushes Lulu to literal prostitution at the end of the opera. Upon his death she is forced to make an existence using the one tool she has, sex. He took it upon himself to create an ideal woman who has qualities that are desirable for a variety of men, creating a relationship of control.

Lulu’s relationship with Alwa (Dr. Schön’s son) is unique in that she is not technically married to him, but by the end of act 2 scene 2 they begin a relationship that simulates a marriage. To Alwa, Lulu is the ideal of all the things she had been to each of the other husbands. To him, the static idealistic portrait is the most important of all her images. He watched his father create this woman whom men should be interested in and he adored her alongside the Painter while she was still married to Goll. In act 1 scene 3 Alwa puts Lulu, as the dancer his father created, on his stage in his production. Even though he blindly follows Lulu through each relationship, he too realizes there is something about her that causes problems. In act 2 scene 1 he states,
The gods created you to bring the people around you to corruption – not through your conscious intention. I am also flesh and blood! And if we hadn’t grown up as brother and sister, you and I together … But I have to admit there are certain moments when all one’s inner self seems just about to blow up into atoms. Still, better not speak of that… 18

He progresses through the opera admiring her and the qualities others have given her, while neglecting what he sees as dangerous about her.

During her relationship with Alwa, she makes one choice for herself, the choice to become a prostitute. In act 3 scene 2 Lulu and Alwa escaped to London because in act 3 scene 1 she was being blackmailed into prostitution. She could not be forced to have her sexual agency controlled, thus they escape. Although she makes the choice of prostitution while still exhibiting male-gendered qualities, she has to make a living for her “family.” In turn, although she uses her body as sexual currency, she has control over all interactions. Until this point Lulu has been controlled by the men in her life who have given her character attributes. The one element she has had control over is her body, with which she has been promiscuous and relatively sexually emancipated. Because she no longer has a controlling male figure, she is reduced to prostitution, which can conversely be seen as an elevated state of autonomy.

Because Alwa is the weakest of Lulu’s men, their relationship never reaches marriage. He cannot provide for or support the woman he adores. Throughout his interaction with and relationship to Lulu he has been subordinate to everyone else. Their relationship is no different. He cannot support her but only worships his ideal of her.

Lulu as an everywoman character is similar in operatic tradition to Kundry. More importantly, she is an everywoman character who represents what men want, a construction. Her existence was planned by the men in her life, particularly Schön, whose own fate is sealed when

18 Mit deinen Gottesgaben mach man seine Umgebung zu Verbrechern, ohne sich’s träumen zu lassen. – Ich hab’ auch nur Fleisch und Blut. Und wenn wir nicht wie Geschwister nebeneinander aufgewachsen wären…/ Ich versichere dir, es gibt Augenblicke, wo man gewärtig ist, sein ganzes Innere einzürzen zu sehen. – Aber sprechen wir nicht davon!...
he is no longer the puppet master. The notion of “woman,” a generalized type with little or no qualities of her own, is a cultural trope which will be addressed again in the discussion of Weininger’s views of women.

**Weininger in Berg’s Society**

*Sex and Character* is a blatant misogynistic turn-of-the-century essay seeking to prove the moral inferiority of woman and Jews. However, it was not perceived in this light when it first appeared. The publication of the work and subsequent suicide of the author in 1903 caused Weininger to be “almost immediately immortalized by his culture as a young genius.”

Weininger scholar Susan Anderson states, “Weininger’s theories found a receptive audience in a culture where scientific discourse dominated in attempting to clarify the mysteries of human nature.” His influences reached far into Viennese and German culture, as well as elsewhere in Europe; he had an effect on important thinkers, writers, artists, and composers such as Karl Kraus, Sigmund Freud, August Strindberg, Richard Strauss, and Alban Berg. Important to Berg was Wagner’s influence on Weininger. The works of Wagner played an indelible role in the musical and artistic language of Berg. Weininger frequently refers to Wagner’s aesthetics and operas as model examples of representations of woman.

Berg was, of course, well versed in contemporary literature and writings as well as the social and political trends of the time. The *Frauenfrage*, the woman question or the notions of emancipation, were well known to Berg socially and artistically. He was influenced by *Parsifal*

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and *Salome*, as discussed in chapter 1. These operas were more than musically influential because they provided operatic constructions of iconic women. Kundry represented a destructive force and “everywoman,” while Salome was an iconic *femme fatale*. Both characters fit into Weininger’s view of the woman. Berg noted the importance of Weininger as well as other contemporaries in a letter to his future wife, Helene Nahowski. On August 17, 1907 he wrote of ideals in society and listed those he believed to be influential:

> And in the shadow of these two (Nietzsche and Ibsen), so many names: Strindberg, Oscar Wilde, Gerhart Hauptmann, Wedekind, Karl Hauer, Weininger, Wittels, Karl Kraus, Hermann Bahr. Why should our hearts beat faster just to hear these names mentioned, if we had not in ourselves the same strivings and aspirations, the ideals they clung to, transposed by their pens into real and tangible life?

His list shows the importance and stance of Weininger among his influences. Musicologist David Schroeder echoes other Weininger critics when he writes, “Weininger’s *Geschlecht und Character* was one of the most popular books in Vienna during the first two decades of this century, with twenty-six printings between 1901 and 1925; Berg’s own copy was heavily annotated.” Berg’s familiarity with Weininger’s work is also evident in a letter to Schoenberg from May 1915. In this letter Berg refers to Alma Mahler’s central role in the collection for the Schoenberg Fund. This letter follows a series of letters chronicling miscommunication dealing with the delivery of Schoenberg’s *Egmont* score. Alma Mahler’s seeming mismanagement of the scores and funds upset Schoenberg. Berg, trying to rectify matters, wrote:

> She (Alma Mahler) is, after all only a woman! Her behavior is now as unpleasant as her actions at the outset of the campaign were magnificent. Being a woman to the n\(^{\text{th}}\) power, she combines to the highest degree cultivation of the good with the bad characteristics of a woman, thus the negative are just as prominent as the positive and as disturbing as the others are gratifying. But that’s why one must measure all her words and deeds only with the yardstick of a woman and cannot take her more seriously than she really is.

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Therefore I beg you, dear Herr Schönberg, not to take Frau Mahler’s actions too seriously. At bottom she knows—as far as a woman can comprehend it at all—who you are and she surely desires that these differences be cleared away. It’s nothing but capriciousness, born of the moodiness of a woman used to dispensing favor and disfavor according to momentary caprice and whim. For love to turn to hate and hate to love, creatures like that need no greater reason than we need to decide between a light and dark tie. Maybe that is what Weininger calls the amorality of woman. That would also explain everything else: the playful, unscrupulous ability of one and the same creature to adapt herself.\(^{24}\)

Berg indirectly refers to Weininger throughout the first paragraph, the most telling is the underlined passage of the last sentence. He makes it known that Alma is not as serious, trustworthy, intelligent, or capable as a man, not of the same caliper as, Herr Schoenberg, a man.

The second paragraph refers to Weininger’s ideas on the morality of woman specifically. Making mention that Alma Mahler’s drastic change of mood and character is just like a woman, manipulating to get what she wants. The translator notes that this description of Alma Mahler is not unique. Berg’s letters frequently reflect his knowledge of Weininger’s text when referring to Frau Mahler.\(^{25}\) The importance of this excerpt is to show how Berg’s writing reflected the societal views of the woman and how he specifically referenced Weininger. Although Berg’s familiarity with Weininger is evident in his own writings, I argue that his knowledge of Weininger is also evident in the character of Lulu.

\(^{24}\) Alban Berg, *The Berg-Schoenberg Correspondence: Selected Letters*, edited by Juliane Brand, Christopher Hailey, and Donald Harris (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1987), 243. The underlined and boldface underlined words are preserved from the translation; a simple underline indicates one line in the original letter while boldface underline indicates two lines.

The Emancipated Woman

Ideas about women that dominated Western society in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries kept women in a separate sphere from men. Historian Robin W. Winks states:

Women bore society’s ultimately greatest responsibility—procreation—and it had been decided by their very nature that this was to be their primary contribution to human history. They were “obviously” physically more delicate than men, and therefore their psychological makeup was assumed to be correspondingly more fragile. They were more sensitive, more emotional, incapable of the hardening necessary for business, public life, or war. They were as innocent of strong sexuality as were children. All of this was believed in the sense that to challenge it was to put oneself among the revolutionaries… There was in every nation fundamental and legally enshrined inequality based upon gender.26

These archaic values and social conventions fuelled emancipation movements throughout Europe.

The Viennese emancipation movement began during the fin-de-siècle as a middle class movement. The middle class, particularly the lower-middle class, did not have voting rights or equal job opportunities. An initial request by women was for the freedom to study at university, allowing educational training for all professions so women could support themselves.27 Women also wanted equal employment rights, as well as the relaxation of marriage laws. Men interpreted this initial part of the movement as women wanting and claiming to be equal with men. As Germanist scholar Lynda King reports, however, “they [women] never contended men and women were equal, for that would have meant a radical alteration of a social structure they basically supported.”28 As a middle class movement there was a focus on individual women’s rights. The beginning of the movement was practically and ideologically influential. The movement resulted in more rights for the middle class and for women. As King states, “by 1910,

28 King, “The Woman Question,” 76.
twenty-six percent of all white collar jobs in trade were women, and from 1882 to 1930, the number of women working in banking and insurance offices climbed eighteen fold. More women in the work place, especially during World War I, forced them to be granted full citizenship, including the right to vote. Resistance to emancipation movements, women’s or middle-class, was part of the greater anxiety of men toward change.

As a whole though, even during the First Republic, women were never thought of as equal, even though they did gain the right to vote in 1918. Antiquated marriage laws were still in place and divorce remained taboo. First Republic-era Austria saw drastic changes because of the fall of the Habsburg empire, growth of industry, increase in psychological analysis, and the psychological effects that World War I had on the nation. These changes in Berg’s society allowed for a change in the emphasis of the role of women from Wedekind’s drama.

*Lulu* focuses on a small social group and their interactions. Berg’s small-scale representation presents a manageable view of the established patriarchal society and how a deviation from it caused problems. *Lulu* is representative of upper-middle class ideals for both Berg and Wedekind. In both Wedekind’s and Berg’s dramas Lulu is sexually uninhibited. Sexual propriety is, however, imposed upon Lulu through the men she is involved with, particularly Schön. The dualistic nature of her “masculine” sexual profligacy and male imposed sexual propriety reflects society’s ambiguity towards the “woman” and emancipation. Many authors, artists, and composers of liberal *fin-de-siècle* and modern Vienna (like Wedekind and Berg) supported women’s movements, homosexuality, and generally freedom of expression yet their works convey the opposite stance. In *Lulu* this contradictory dualism is evident in all of the

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30 Evident in act 2 scene 1, Schön’s death scene, during his descent to madness he tells Lulu to kill herself with his revolver. She offers divorce as a alternative which he believes is the “final insult.”
mirrors or binaries evident. In the opera Berg comments upon many issues prevalent in his society but presents each side, not committing to any point of view, such as emancipation, homosexuality, marriage, or prostitution.

It is both right and wrong to call Lulu a force of sexual destruction: right because she is promiscuous, flirtatious, and desirable, but wrong because her promiscuity has been ingrained in her and not seen as something she is free to exercise in her own right. Her relations with men allow her to interact in higher society and are essential to her survival. As Klaus Völker, a critic contemporary to Wedekind states, “her sexual power over men becomes the means of her social self-preservation.”

Lulu represents a masculine view of an emancipated woman, a woman with sexual freedom who has no morals, and no concept of the results of her actions. This was a common reaction to or interpretation of the pervasive changes in society. Analysis and commentary that sought to come to terms with die Frauenfrage (the woman question) was common; one example that will be explained later is Otto Weininger’s *Sex and Character* which was trying to show “scientifically” (psychologically) and sociologically that women were inferior to men.

Lulu cannot be a realistic emancipated woman in this opera because she seldom desires freedom. She acknowledges her freedom only once, in her famous exclamation from act 2 scene 2, “Oh, freedom! Thank God in heaven.” Most importantly the soaring line, orchestral/harmonic build up, and high tessitura suggests that her exclamation is a climax. One interpretation of this moment relates her text and melody to her literal freedom from prison at the peak of the opera, just after the middle point of the opera. Another is that Lulu is now freed from

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32 O Freiheit! Herrgott im Himmel!
her previous patriarchal controls. All of her husbands are dead and for the first time in her life, Schön is no longer arranging and controlling her marriages and desires.

Prior to marriage, what each husband found in Lulu was a sexually attractive, desirable woman with whom they engaged in pre-marital sex. But upon marriage they did not want a sexually free woman; such a wife did not fit with society’s marriage rules for women, because she was behaving like a man. When Lulu enters marriage she seemingly maintains her sexual freedom while the men have their patriarchal stereotypes crushed and lose control of their lives. Lulu seems immune to the preconceived notions of marriage. Lulu was not reared in a traditional patriarchal home and does not totally conform to the masculine constructed institution of marriage. Rather, she maintains extra-marital “relationships” as she had when married to the Doctor and the Painter; the practice of extra-marital affairs was common among men in Berg’s time. She even maintains other men while married to Schön, the one man she claims to have loved.

In the upper-middle class during the First Republic emancipation was an ideal for many of this circle’s women, a cause to fight for. It was, however, more of an ideal, because they did not need freedom like working class women. They had economic support from their husbands and fathers, the patriarchy. Lulu is a cipher of an emancipated woman because she has found her freedom from working class society in the Bürgertum through its men. She did not fight for her freedom or entry into the privileged class; she worked for it through sex. Although she may be described as an independent force of destruction, she is not independent. Like the three women

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previously discussed (and many other operatic characters) is dependent upon men because her character is a projection of male images and ideals. Berg takes the supposedly independent woman character and makes her more dependent than the three characters previously examined. Her independence was created by the males in her life, through cultural stereotypes, for their benefit.

**Lulu Interpreted through Weininger**

Lulu is described as a destructive female force by contemporary writers as well as the current scholars previously mentioned. The contemporary and current condemnations of Lulu also force discussion of her as representative of sexual freedom in women. Literary critic Ward B. Lewis discusses the Lulu plays and the reaction to them, distilling the problem of Lulu. He states, “this allegorical representation of autonomous female sexuality posed a threat to masculine hegemony and a challenge to patriarchal misogyny.”\(^{34}\) Recognizing the threat women played, many of the writings about women in this period tried to explain their inferior nature to men.\(^{35}\) Writers were trying to express the potential danger women represent if they were given equality with men.

Weininger’s text presents one popular view at the time. While his book may be seen as outrageous to the current reader, it expresses important cultural values. Weininger scholar Susan Anderson states, “his work articulates in an extreme fashion prevailing male fears of a feminization of society in the wake of women’s suffrage movements, the increasing number of

\(^{34}\) Lewis, *The Ironic Dissident*, 28.

\(^{35}\) One one essay whose view point is strikingly opposed to Weininger is August Bebel’s *Woman Under Socialism* (*Die Frau und der Sozialismus*) published in 1879 and reprinted in 1913. Bebel writes that women are equal to men, and could only become emancipated from their present subservient role when the whole of society changed, emancipating all people.
women in the work force, and an amoral aestheticism in the arts." Weininger’s work shows a specific view of misogynistic patriarchal society.

*Sex and Character* discusses women’s emancipation in a much different fashion from those writing the history of the movement. He discusses women as soulless creatures, shameless, immoral, and seeking to gain male qualities. Weininger did not intend to discuss or define women’s emancipation in terms of social rules, economic, or educational independence. His definition and explanation added to the complexity of criticism surrounding women’s emancipation:

What is of real importance in the woman question, the deep-seated craving to acquire man’s character, to attain his mental and moral freedom, to reach his real interests and his creative power? I maintain that the real female element has neither the desire nor the capacity for emancipation in this sense.

He saw the goal of this movement as women attaining male character, almost literally. Throughout the book when referring to women he usually means married bourgeois women, just like Lulu. He believed that women who have been lauded by society as emancipated throughout history have had physically masculine traits. This description furthers the notion that criticism and analysis stemming from the emancipation movement propelled the misogynistic views toward women. Men, according to Weininger and his society, had mental power, moral ability, and freedom superior to women. His definition regards their desire for education and social independence as symptoms of the desire to become male. Because of the prevailing attitudes linked to a Weiningerian-like belief, women could never attain equality.

Chapter twelve of *Sex and Character*, titled “Woman and Her Significance,” begins with the description of what woman is. It is written in a philosophical manner, in contrast to the “First

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Part” which assumed a more biological or empirical stance.\textsuperscript{38} His first distillation of women declares, “the most general and comprehensive statement of the nature of woman is that it is completely adapted and disposed for the special mission of aiding and abetting the bodily union of the sexes.”\textsuperscript{39} Women are first and foremost interested in creating unions, they are driven by the desire to create sexual encounters.

These unions were only acceptable if entered for the purpose of motherhood. Weininger, like much of his bourgeois society, did not agree with women’s sexual openness, especially if it was not for the purpose of mothering a child. In their introduction to \textit{Jews and Gender}, Barbara Hyams and Nancy Harrowitz state, “despite the move towards sexual openness, women in Weininger’s day who acknowledged sexual pleasure while shirking the duties of motherhood were still seen as embodying the culture’s worst fears about the meaning of women’s emancipation.”\textsuperscript{40}

This illicit pleasure is seen in \textit{Lulu} during act 1 scene 1. This scene can be interpreted as Lulu creating a union with the Painter. This is the first of many unacceptable unions in which Lulu is involved, unacceptable first because she is not married to the Painter, second because the union is purely out of sexual drive, and third because nowhere in the opera is motherhood mentioned. The unacceptable unions are the demise of the men who engage in them and ultimately the demise of Lulu herself.

Act 1 scene 1 is a seduction scene between the Painter and Lulu. Lulu uses her sexuality to attract and seduce the Painter into sexual union. This physical union is reflected in the musical structure. In Example 1, mm. 156–85, Lulu and the Painter sing a canon at the octave with the point of imitation beginning seven eighth notes after the initial statement.

\textsuperscript{38} Chapter twelve is in the “Second or Principal Part: The Sexual Types” of Weininger’s book.
\textsuperscript{39} Weininger, \textit{Sex and Character}, 259.
\textsuperscript{40} Hyams and Harrowitz, “A Critical Introduction,” 4.
Throughout the canon, significantly led by Lulu, the interval of separation becomes shorter and shorter, causing finally the two to sing in rhythmic and melodic unison, creating a union. The voices maintain an approximate one-measure time lag until m. 170, in example 2. This section begins with a motive similar to the initial statement of the canon in m. 156 (Example 1), but here the point of imitation is reduced to five eighth notes.

Example 1: Act 1 Scene 1 mm. 156–59.

Example 2: Act 1 Scene 1 mm. 170–72.

In Example 2, the second time the canon is introduced, not only is the point of imitation shortened, but the texts have become more similar. It is however the Painter who is creating the shortened time lag. The duality of the two characters has begun to coincide. The action has come closer to union.
Example 3 presents the third and last statement of the canon. Like Example 2, it begins with a variant of the motive in Example 1, m. 156. The Painter’s line begins three eighth notes after Lulu, again reducing the distance of the point of imitation. In m. 184 the point of imitation is reduced again, to one eighth note until they reach a musical union in m. 185.

In this first scene Lulu is married to Dr. Goll, and is being painted by the Painter. Her sheer presence in the same room with the Painter, posing on a stool in Pierrot costume, could be viewed as flirtatious and seductive. Weininger would say she is acting like a woman, creating a union with the available man in her presence, which is expressed musically through temporal and tonal unison. Berg’s presentation of the music and text points to the bodily union between the Painter and Lulu as being the most important. This in turn transitions to another of Weininger’s many views of women applicable to Lulu. Weininger states:

As a rule, the woman adapts herself to the man, his views become hers, his likes and dislikes are shared by her, every word he says is an incentive to her, and the stronger his sexual influence on her the more this is so.\(^{41}\)

\(^{41}\) Weining, *Sex and Character*, 262.
For Weininger, woman are mindless, frequently adapting themselves to the far superior man. As an everywoman character, Lulu has different qualities that each of her different men enjoy, or even create. After all, she has been placed into the bourgeois society by Schön, and, furthermore, she acts as he has taught her to act in his society. The key to her survival in the opera, until her demise, is her ability to adapt to each husband or lover. By shooting Schön she breaks the cycle, losing her controlling figure. This can be seen as an interpretation of Weininger’s ideal of woman, or as Lulu finding a way to survive in the misogynistic, patriarchal world. Berg’s opera and Wedekind’s plays comment on their respective changing societies. The opera is a presentation of a small cross section of bourgeois society “tamed by the superior human force,” the force of old established patriarchal stereotypes.

Lulu is a combination of influences. She is an artistic construction, a male artist’s construction, of societal fears of woman as well as the ideal view of woman. She is at once a *femme fatale*, an everywoman, and a type of an emancipated woman. All of these broad societal constructions are evident in her character as well as in specific contemporary beliefs expressed in Weininger’s writings. Her character is affected by misogynistic views of women manifested through her multifaceted character and lack of sexual inhibitions. Lulu is held up in the opera as a view of women in general; she is seen as the one destructive female amidst a world of men. Seeing Lulu’s character as a reflection of patriarchal society is one side of the looking glass. In the following chapter, I will discuss how the male characters are affected by their own constructions by examining what happens to them when patriarchal society is reflected onto its creators.
This chapter seeks to show how men in *Lulu* are “undone” by the patriarchal system through the inversion of stereotypes of marriage in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In this chapter I will show how *Lulu* differs from the other operas examined in this study. The previous chapters have shown women as filtered through masculine constructions – mainly gender expectations and stereotypes – and as icons for Austro-Germanic cultural creativity. After examining the steadfast impact of misogynistic constructions on Lulu, it is also possible to see the constructions as representative of an overarching crisis of masculinity.

Historian Gerald Izenberg states:

> A social and psychological crisis of masculinity helped shape both the thematic concerns and the formal innovations of the early Modernist revolution in the arts. The centrality of gender to an understanding of Modernism has been made evident by feminist scholarship over the past few decades primarily through the analysis of Modernism’s patriarchal “construction,” or deformation, of female identity. More recently it has been recognized that gender identities are mutually implicating, and that in an era when men still largely dominated cultural production, changing images of the feminine were reactions to disturbances in masculine identity.1

The opera not only shows patriarchal construction but also “disturbances in masculine identity.”2 Lulu’s four main lovers (Goll, the Painter, Dr. Schön, and Alwa) represent four different levels of social stature and masculinity. Each remains subject to the powers of change brought forth by the society they have helped to construct.

**Clément**

In her book, *Opera, or the Undoing of Women*, Catherine Clément proposes the notion of undoing to analyze female characters in serious or tragic operas from Monteverdi through

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Strauss. Rather than use a traditional musicological approach, she carefully examines plots and specific characters in an informed literary and cultural critique. As Clément presents the stories of operatic women, she shows that “from the moment these women leave their familiar and ornamental function, they are to end up punished–fallen, abandoned, or dead.” In chapter two, titled “Dead Women,” she describes the deaths of Cio-Cio San, Carmen, and Isolde. She resolves that it does not matter how these or any of opera’s female character die, because the deaths are consistent: “death by a man.” She states:

Dead women, dead so often. There are those who die disemboweled, like Lulu at the sacrificial knife of Jack the Ripper, in a cruddy attic of smoggy London; there are those who die for having embodied too well the false identity of a marionette-woman or for having simply affirmed that they are not there where the men are looking for them… Those who die of nothing, just like that – of fear, or fright, or sadness, or anxiety.

The theme of dead women pervades Clément’s book. She tells the stories of operatic women and analyzes how and why they are undone. She tells numerous stories, like Cio-Cio San’s, which ends in suicide, or Lucia’s, the story of deception, murder, and madness. They die of many different causes but the root of them all is male humiliation. Men are exposed, in this criticism, as the cause of the deaths of countless women. However, men’s stories, and the possibility of men being undone, are not left out of Clément’s discussion.

In chapter six, titled “Madmen, Negroes, Jesters, or the Heroes of Deception,” Clément acknowledges that men are sometimes subject to the same deaths, ailments, and ends as women. In doing so she notes that the differences between men and women are not black and white; women embody masculine traits and men can have feminine traits. In comparing the undone woman to the undone male, she writes:

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3 Clément, Opera, 7.
4 Clément, Opera, 47.
5 Clément, Opera, 47.
Eve is undone as a woman, endlessly bruised, endlessly dying and coming back to life to die even better. But now I begin to remember hearing figures of betrayed, wounded men; men who have women’s troubles happen to them; men who have the status of Eve, as if they had lost their innate Adam. These men die like heroines; down on the ground they cry and moan, they lament. And like heroines they are surrounded by real men, veritable Adams who have cast them down. They partake of femininity: excluded, marked by some initial strangeness, they are doomed to their undoing.6

She uses Eve and Adam as the stereotypical gender dichotomy. Eve, representing women in opera, has disappointed mankind through her sin, surrendering to proverbial temptation. Of course, the Eve archetype is seen in Lulu, as was discussed in the previous chapter. The idealistic Adam, here projected on to any operatic hero, is a strong masculine figure who is not susceptible to the trivial strife of women. Men who are undone, however, are not totally masculine. According to Clément, “madmen, Negroes, and jesters, for their part, are not real men.”7 These men, like women who are weaker than “real men,” will be destroyed. They will be undone because they are deceiving the stereotypes of their gender. Most importantly, the are also “Others.”

The conventions and expectations of marriage, as well as the conventions and expectations of men and women, form the frameworks of the “undoing” of Lulu’s men. Although Clément spends little time on madmen, I take the portion of the chapter that describes “madmen” as highly pertinent to the men in Lulu. They are subject to the same humiliation as Clément’s women. The opera kills off four men: one by stroke (Goll), one by suicide (the Painter), and two by murder (Dr. Schön and Alwa.) Although Lulu is on hand at each of these deaths, only in the death of Dr. Schön can she be said to have been “responsible” (though, even this is potentially accidental). Each man’s death is, obviously, contingent upon their views of and relationship to Lulu, but is also inherently related to the interactions with the other men. By

6 Clément, Opera, 118.
7 Clément, Opera, 119.
examining the stories of Lulu’s men, it is possible to redirect the focus away from Lulu as a stereotypical Weiningerian construct onto the complex network of male relationships that formulate the changing notion of “Lulu” or “woman.”

**Lulu**

Berg’s opera makes concessions to Clément’s “traditional” model, and more importantly societal expectations, by having Lulu die in the end. The dramaturgy focuses on how men relate to Lulu in all situations, but I will focus on the four main relationships, three of which result in marriage. Throughout *Lulu*, the deaths of the male characters are almost comically anti-heroic, at least in how they are timed and staged and thus resonate with Clément’s “madmen.” Lulu is linked with each death through marriage. She could be blamed for each death because she fits the *femme fatale* mold or because she openly sullies accepted contemporary views of women. As a reflection of male desires, however, she is only partly to blame. It is through the auspices of marriage that I believe inversions of gender stereotypes are readily identified.

There are no courtships or weddings, no exchanges of vows, and no affirmations of devotion in *Lulu*. However, there are three marriages or rather three contrived relationships called marriages. The marriages are arranged. Dr. Ludwig Schön, the main male protagonist, directly facilitates two of the three marriages and indirectly enables the relationship between Lulu and Alwa with the one remaining marriage between Lulu and himself. Although none of Lulu’s husbands explicitly states that upon marriage he expects to convert her into a proper wife, this conversion is implied because they all die upon learning of her infidelity. Thus Lulu’s character calls into question “the assumption of the monogamous patriarchal family.”

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A proper Viennese wife or ideal bourgeois woman of both fin-de-siècle and First Republic era did not challenge the accepted social roles. Rather, she complemented her husband spiritually, culturally, and socially. Historian Gerald Izenberg states, “a wife’s cultural involvement and attainments were necessary contributions to her husband’s social standing and thus his masculinity, yet at the same time culture was a quintessentially feminine pursuit.”\(^9\) Lulu does not bring any of these attributes to her respective marriages and does not contribute as a typical wife. Lulu’s character is more like a bürgertum husband than wife. Christine Schönfield notes in her *Commodites of Desire* that due to “strict social and moral codes as well as economic and psychological factors contributed to a social climate in fin-de-siècle Vienna where premarital and adulterous relationships became commonplace.”\(^10\) It was acceptable for a bürgertum husband to have extra-marital affairs with women of lower standing, while their wives (of equal standing) were not supposed to be sexual beings. Lulu, however, is portrayed as a sexual being and was trained to use her feminine assets by a man, for men, in the same manner as a man. She is at once a stereotype of a typical woman and the mirror opposite, an atypical woman, a more man-like woman.

She attracts the husbands through her looks and attempts to fit into their lives through their images of her, reflected in the fact that they each assign her a different name. She is called Nelly, Eve, Mignon, or Lulu depending on the husband. As Schön reveals Lulu’s background to the Painter, in act 1 scene 2, they discuss her names:

Dr. Schön: With a background such as Mignon has, it’s impossible to expect the standards of conduct usual in good society.

Painter: Who is this you mean?

Dr. Schön: I mean your wife.

Painter: My Eve?

Dr. Schön: I called her Mignon.

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Painter: I’d gathered her name was Nelly.
Dr. Schön: That name came from Dr. Goll.
Painter: I called her Eve...
Dr. Schön: What her name is I don’t really know.11

Essentially it does not matter to the men who Lulu is because they will assign to her the names and traits they desire to see. The way in which her sexuality and character are constructed she confounds accepted standards and traditions. Berg presents a different view of marriage, perhaps a critique on reality, exposing social myths.

One of the myths Berg exposes in the opera has to do with traditional marriage roles in his Viennese circle. Musicologist Julian Johnson discusses Berg and Wedekind’s brand of social commentary, concluding that they both chose to expose “bourgeois myths and hypocrisies.”12 In her discussion of the marriage theme in Wedekind’s works, Elizabeth Boa states, “opera and theatre are a mixed motif in Wedekind’s work; they represent at once a utopia of freedom set against marriage and the family, and a market where artists starve or prostitute themselves.”13 In his adaptation of the Lulu plays, Berg maintains Wedekind’s dichotomy as defined by Boa. When Lulu enters into marriage she seemingly maintains her freedom while the males give up something and in turn lose their lives.

The institution and act of marriage in this opera is representative of the patriarchal society on which Berg was commenting. The dominance of a patriarchal society in Austria and Germany and traditional roles of masculinity came into question between the 1880s and 1920s. Izenberg discusses this crisis of masculinity in Europe, specifically in Germany and Austria:

The contemporary sense of masculinity depended so heavily on its opposition to femininity. Men could only be “men” only if women remained “women,” and the actual power of the women’s movement mattered less than what it betokened for the future.¹⁴

In essence the changing roles of women caused changes for men too. This summation is essential to the opera because Lulu reflects the ideals of the men while breaking the mold of what a woman is supposed to be. The male characters in the opera unintentionally help Lulu to challenge accepted norms. Schön “raises” her to behave as male. Because of her dual nature as a female constructed by men she embodies the double standards of bourgeois society. The double standard allowed men to engage in extra-marital sexual relationships and solicit prostitution, while women could not. Through her sexual deviance, the men of her relationships are destroyed. Each man dies after witnessing or hearing of Lulu’s infidelity. However, as previously discussed, her sexual deviance is conditioned by the patriarchal system governed by the male proprietors. Lulu is male in her sexual behavior–she learned this from Schön–she has been taught to be a bourgoise cheating husband, not a wife. It is their system that allows for their own undoings to progress.

The “Undoings”

*The First Husband, Dr. Goll – Act 1 Scene 1*

_Herr Medizinalrat_, Dr. Goll, is Lulu’s first husband. Little information is given about Goll, though he can be seen as representing the older generation’s upper-middle class. His death is introductory, symbolic, and brief (but is an ideal entry point for all of her future husbands). The first, brief “Recitative” from act 1, scene 1 (mm. 86–131) is especially significant because it displays the complex interrelationships between the male characters and their relationships to Lulu, as well as establishing the pattern for their undoings. Prior to his death each man faces the

truths that Lulu is 1), not faithful to his construction of her, and 2) each faces her promiscuity literally. As their ideals are shattered they are destroyed.

The first scene begins with a museum-like presentation of Lulu (through her portrait) to both the audience and male characters. To Goll, Lulu is an object to be preserved, remembered, hoarded, and adored; he has created a setting for the drama about to ensue. This scene revolves around the beginning of Lulu’s relationship with the Painter, his mounting expressions of lust and desire to the death of Goll, marriage, and death again (of the Painter this time). It begins with Lulu on a pedestal posing for her portrait commissioned by Goll. The Painter is being paid by her husband to create her likeness; essentially being paid to adore Lulu, to lust after the beauty on display.

As the scene progresses, the Painter’s interaction with Lulu becomes more involved, though not physically. The only stage direction for the painter in this “Recitative” section is “in front of the easel, painting.”¹⁵ His presence is integral, even though he does not have any lines. As Berg scholar Silvio dos Santos states, “as the creator of Lulu’s portrait, the Painter plays an important role in establishing Lulu and her portrait as objects of desire,” the object of the male gaze.¹⁶

Goll has not yet been in the scene even though it is his object being painted. His commission, the portrait of Lulu, establishes his claim to her. The portrait is Goll’s assertion of ownership over Lulu and thus symbolic of their marriage. He is asserting his haute-bourgeois, patriarchal right to Lulu by having a painting executed. Lulu brings nothing to the marriage but her beauty, which is preserved in the painting. The brief scene exerts a sense a relationship from a bygone era, reminiscent of the world of the Habsburg aristocrats, where the wife is put on display.

¹⁵ vor der Staffelei, malend
display before a crowd of people to entice and beguile them in order to further her husband’s reputation. Lulu has no skills other than her beauty with which to enthral her audience.

It is out of character for Goll to leave Lulu alone in this setting; he guards and guides interactions with Lulu. She is not acknowledged as a woman, or a human being, because she is so thoroughly a constructed object. Goll’s control over Lulu is implied throughout the scene by references from the others. They state:

Alwa: This is the first time I’ve seen you all on your own.
Schön: He never lets you out of sight.
Lulu: He should have been here by now…

Goll has created a situation where, if left alone, Lulu the object may become Lulu the human being, and hence fall out of his control.

In addition to the Painter, Dr. Schön and Alwa also desire Lulu. Dr. Schön, an editor-in-chief, is seemingly in control of the initial section of the “Recitative.” Schön sits behind the Painter as if he has commissioned the portrait, instructing the portrayal of Lulu. This is evident in his instruction to the Painter, “You need to work a little more from the model. The hair is bad. Your mind isn’t really on the subject.” Meanwhile Alwa enters looking for his father; but, he too is enthralled by the lovely object of the “Recitative.”

These two characters are present from the beginning of the scene and their importance to Lulu and the rest of the drama is interwoven into the musical texture. Berg does this by relating the pitch material of the opera’s basic series to the three integral characters (Lulu, Dr. Schön, and Alwa). The basic series, as theorist George Perle says, “pervades the opera as a whole and may

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17 Alwa: Ich seh’ Sie heute zum erstenmal ohne ihn. Schön: Er läßt Sie doch sonst nie allein. Lulu: Er sollte schon längst da sein…
18 Sie müssen hier ein wenig mehr modelieren. Das Haar ist schlect. Sie sind nicht genüngend bei der Sache.
be said to represent Lulu’s universe in a general sense.”\(^{19}\) Example 4 presents the P\(_0\) form of the basic series as it appears in the first measures of the scene.

In Example 4, the row weaves Alwa, Dr. Schön, and Lulu together. These characters, and the music presented here, are the foundation of the opera. Although Schön only sings two notes (G and A), one of which he shares with Alwa, his position in the middle of the row foreshadows his position in the opera’s narrative. Schön is in the middle of everything; he formulates Lulu’s character, arranges her marriages, marries her, and serves as a “go between” for Lulu and every male character in the drama. Berg’s row construction and character placement creates a semiotic distinction between the two men (Alwa and Schön) and Lulu. Alwa and Schön sing the notes of the natural hexachord (C, D, E, F, G, A). This is the first hexachord of the tone row, placing these men in a superior position while subverting the role of Lulu, the female, by position and by the content of her hexachord. Lulu’s hexachord, in this example, is by default the chromatic notes excluded from the natural hexachord (C\#, D\#, F\#, G\#, A\#, B). The chromatic tones set her aside from the men as “the other” her tones in comparison to the natural hexachord are the exotic

\(^{19}\) Perle, *The Operas of Alban Berg: Lulu*, 93.
and forbidden. Thus this initial presentation of the basic series not only weaves the characters together but it presents the distinct divide between male and female.

   Doctor Goll, who enters late in the scene is blind-sided by his own undoing. He does not make his entry until m. 196, and he is dead by m. 218. Upon his entry he only makes a few declamations:

   Doctor: (from outside the door) Open the door!
   Lulu: (jumping up) Where can I hide? O God, now where can I hide?
   Doctor: (banging at the door) Open the door!
   Painter: (starts to go to the door)
   Lulu: (holding him back) He’ll strike me dead!
   Doctor: (similarly) Open the door!
   Lulu: He will strike me dead! (on the ground before the painter…clasping his knees)
   Painter: Please get up.
   Lulu: He’ll strike me dead. (the door falls with a crash into the studio)
   Doctor: (with upraised walking-stick he dashes towards Lulu and the Painter quite breathless and with bloodshot eyes) You swine! You (he grasps struggles for breath and dies of a stoke).20

This interchange allows the Doctor’s brief appearance on stage as well as a glimpse into Lulu’s fearful mindset.

   Goll’s undoing is caused by his humiliation, which occurs upon seeing Lulu with the Painter, a lower class artisan. He dies of shock—a stroke—at the sight of his perceived ideal wife and marriage being tarnished. It is an ironically apt death for his social standing and profession as a doctor. His narrow construction of what and who his wife is allows for disruption of his patriarchal assumptions. He placed her on a pedestal as an object, neglecting her as a human, woman, or sexual being. As his wife, she was supposed to ignore sexual desire for anyone else.

   With this first death it is evident that Berg is breaking away from operatic tradition. In

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nineteenth-century operas Lulu, the cheating wife, would have been killed. Berg is showing, through this husband, one reaction to an “independent woman” in that the older, bürgertum, husband is shocked to death at the thought of his wife as a sexual being.

The Second Husband, The Painter – Act 1 Scene 2

At the outset of the opera the Painter is seen as a lustful artisan. He has little control over his lust, which ultimately propels him to sex and then marriage with Lulu. Their marriage is advantageous for him because he moves up in society through association with Lulu who is connected to the wealthy Dr. Schön. This is revealed when Schön states to Lulu, “your husband’s doing well, thanks again to my contriving.” After the death of Goll in act 1 scene 1, and the Painter’s subsequent marriage to Lulu, he becomes more successful because of the portrait. But their relationship is short and transitional, exposing masculine constructions, control and the dangers of blind success that lead to the Painter’s undoing. Where Goll’s death scene introduces the control of Dr. Schön and the other men, the Painter’s death strengthens Schön’s control over Lulu and progresses ultimately to his own death.

Act 1 scene 2 begins in “a very elegant drawing-room” as opposed to the “shabbily equipped studio” of scene 1. Their new life is more comfortable for the Painter as he has become an artist instead of an artisan, enabled by the portrait, the symbol of Goll’s objectification of Lulu. Through the veil of success he is absorbed in her beauty and his new life. As a wife she is his muse and has grown satisfied and complacent. What he saw in the portrait is what he wanted as a wife. As a couple their interaction, at least on stage, is brief. He offers a few adoring phrases while she plays her role; she is his “servant.” She mirrors his desire. It is Lulu who refers

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21 Ich habe deinem Mann eine Position geschaffen.
to herself as a servant. She is playing the role he needs, his muse. This can be seen in the opening of scene 2.

    Painter: (entering from the right holding a few letters) Eve!
    Lulu: (smiling) Your servant!
    Painter: The post has arrived.22

He goes on to comment on letters received that detail the sale of his portrait of Lulu and his success. As he exits the scene to work, she again refers to herself as his servant.

    Painter: And now to work. (kisses Lulu goes to the steps leading to the studio but turns round at the portière) Eve!
    Lulu: Your servant!

At this point in their conversation he invokes a few adoring phrases.

    Painter: (coming back) I find you so beautiful today. Your hair brings to me the breath of morning.
    Lulu: I’ve just been in the bath.
    Painter: Ev’ry day now it’s as though I’ve never looked on you before. (He drops to his knees in front of the chaise-lounge, and caresses her hand)
    Lulu: You are aweful.
    Painter: You are to blame.
    Lulu: You are spoiling me!
    Painter: You are my own, all else is nothing now I have you and I am utterly absorbed and lost. (bends deeper over Lulu).23

As his servant her role is now to keep inspiring him through her beauty. The Painter’s undoing begins the moment he is blinded by his lust for Lulu in act 1 scene 1. Upon marriage, it seems, he forgets that their union was founded on adultery, and more importantly he forgets that their interaction resulted in the death of her first husband. Like Goll, despite all evidence to the contrary, he expects that Lulu would conform to his expectations. She was to be his “servant”

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and benefit him; it would be unthinkable that she would commit adultery. As with Goll, he is undone because his narrow construction of her makes him blind to the one constant of Lulu’s character: promiscuity.

The Painter is blind to Lulu because of the role she has played in securing his professional and social success. For him, she is a version of an archetypal wife, perhaps even a stereotypical one, vainly beautiful, eye-candy at the breakfast table. This view is similar to how Weininger described women. Because he can only see her in light of his construction, as an object of beauty and inspiration, he is shocked by the true nature of Lulu. The reality is that Lulu causes his death.

Prior to the Painter learning about Lulu, Dr. Schön enters the scene to assert control over Lulu. The musical form used in this portion of the scene (mm. 533-668), a sonata exposition, can be interpreted as a reflection of Schön’s control and as a reflection of his perceived Habsburg bürgertum roots. Schön, as stable and venerated as sonata form itself, is in control of and begins the principal theme (mm. 533-53). He tells Lulu that he wants their affair to end; he wants his creation, to be obedient and appreciate the relationships he has created for her. We are led to believe that they have been having an affair for at least the duration of the opera. It is especially relevant that they have been having a liaison during Lulu’s marriage to the Painter.

During their interaction, Schön and Lulu comment on the absent Painter’s character:

Schön: If Walter weren’t such a spiritless young fellow, he’d have been on the track of your little escapades well and truly.
Lulu: He’s not spiritless!
       But blind! Blind to me and himself, too. He is blind, blind, blind…

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25 Although Schön’s relationship to the sonata form is representative of his control he does not maintain control, in the recapitulation of the exposition (act 1 scene 3) Lulu has now gained control over Schön thus nullifying the effect of the principal sonata theme.

26 Schön: Wenn Walter nich so ein Kindergemüt wäre, ware er deinen Seitensprüngen schon längst auf die Spur gekommen. Lulu: Er is kein Kindergemüt/ Er sieht mich nicht und sich nicht. Er is blind, blind, blind…
Schön has advantageously created the marriage between Lulu and the Painter and propelled the latter’s success. Schön has created this relationship with the knowledge that he could take advantage of the Painter’s blindness. At no time does it matter or occur to Schön that Lulu might be attached to him or even love him. It is evident that she is attached to him when she says:

If I belong to one man in this world, then I belong to you. Without you I should be – I will not say where. You took me by the hand and led me, you gave me my food, you gave me clothing from that day when I tried to steal your watch. Do you think I can forget it? Who except you in all the wide world has ever paid real attention to me?27

Lulu delivers these words in the secondary theme of the sonata—gavotte and musette—m. 587–614. It is fitting that she is linked with the secondary or, as Perle labels it, the “subordinate” theme, which in Berg’s time was conventionally described as the feminine theme or section. The dance styles further classify this section as feminine and subordinate, because they are “bodily” genres. Lulu reflects non-comittally on her marriage and on Schön’s wish to end their affair regardless of the attachment he has created. The only solution to Schön’s “Lulu problem” is to inform the Painter of his blindness. Thus Schön exerts his control not only over Lulu, but over the marriage as well.

The Painter’s humiliation begins when Schön engages the Painter in conversation. Schön begins to unmask Lulu by stating to the Painter, “you’ve married half a million marks.”28 This line signals the end of the sonata exposition and the beginning of the “monoritmica” section, mm. 669–957, and the beginning of the Painter’s undoing and death. The line is also important because it is marked with rhythmic significance, the “fate rhythm,” as indicated in the score by

27 Wenn ich einem Menschen auf dieser Welt angehöre, gehöre ich ihnen. Ohne Sie ware ich – ich will nicht sagen, wo. Sie haben mich bei der Hand genommen, mir zu essen gegeben, mich kleiden lassen, als ich ihnen die Uhr stehlen wollte. – Glauben Sie, das vergißt sich? Wer außer ihnen auf der ganzen Welt hat je etwas für mich übrig gehabt?
28 Du hast eine halbe Million geheiratet…
the symbol RH¯ (Hauptrhythmus, chief rhythm). The rhythm indicated in Example 5 occurs in this basic form and in permutations throughout this section. It is notated at least thirty-nine times throughout the “monoritimica,” indicating that the Painter will not survive.

The rhythm signals his death, which is caused by Schön’s determination to inform him of Lulu’s “disrespect.” Schön’s intent is to disrupt his life. His intent coupled with the presence of the “fate rhythm” infers that Schön wishes for the Painter to cease existing. Schön points out the Painter’s “blindness:”

Dr. Schön: You’ve married half a million marks…
Painter: Do you dare to say it was wrong to do so?
Dr. Schön: And now you’ve made a name for yourself, you have freedom for your painting. Your every little wish can be answered.
Painter: What do the two of you want of me?
Dr. Schön: Since you have a wife, you ought to see she shows some respect for you.
Painter: Doesn’t she show respect?
Dr. Schön: No!

The Painter does not know to what Schön is referring. His view of their marriage is clouded by artistic success and connubial bliss, since Lulu is his wife and artistic subject. He does not suspect that she could be unfaithful. Schön goes on to weave the web of their affair, telling the

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Painter to “consider just how much you must thank her for.”\textsuperscript{31} Referring to the Painter’s artistic success, which he has sponsored, Schön goes on to say, “…and then…and then consider, only you are to blame for what has happened.”\textsuperscript{32} In fact, Schön is the one to blame; for the Painter has naively been blinded by his personal success, forcing him to trust the powerful and successful Schön.

Schön then proceeds to inform the Painter that Lulu has lied about her past, her family, and that she has a history of being deceptive. The deceptive nature of her quality expresses the masculine part of her character, she evades honesty to maintain affairs. Schön thus places part of the blame on Lulu for “deceiving” the Painter into thinking that he has some control over the situation. This prompts the Painter to confront her alleged deceit. His exit marks the end of his undoing; he leaves not to confront Lulu but to commit suicide.

The Painter is undone by the humiliation of learning that his wife, whom he knows little to nothing about, has lied about her character and committed adultery. He ignores the fact that Lulu was unfaithful to Goll when they met; he only sees Lulu as a manifestation of Goll’s object (the painting). He ignores that at the portrait sitting there were two other men fawning over her. Upon marriage he forgot about her indiscretions and believed nothing could happen to his marriage; after all, she brought him such great success. He is undone by his own preconceived notions of marriage, as well as by his success. Blindness, to a painter, is fatal on every level.

Berg portrays the Painter’s undoing musically. As George Perle indicates, “a five-part canon on the RH¯ for unpitched percussion instruments marks the death of the Painter.”\textsuperscript{33} Berg takes his “fate rhythm” which began the section (monoritmica) and concludes with the Painter’s

\begin{footnotesize}
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  \item Bedenke, was du ihr zu verdanken hast…
  \item …und dann…und dann mach dich dafür verantwortlich und nicht sonst jemand.
  \item Perle, \textit{The Operas of Alban Berg; Lulu}, 207. The canon surrounding the Painter’s death occurs in mm. 748–64.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
fateful suicide. The Painter’s position as an artist is reinforced by his death. Suicide was marked as an artistic, often feminine death. The Painter’s undoing places him within his social class while exposing his blind notions of marriage. Blindness, to a painter, is fatal on every level.

*The Third Husband, Schön’s Undoing – Act 1 Scene 3 and Act 2 Scene 1*

Dr. Ludwig Schön is arguably the most masculine and powerful character in the entire opera. Until the midpoint of the second act he has maintained control over the progression of the opera. The midpoint of the opera reflects the large scale mirroring evident in *Lulu*. Schön’s control begins in act 1 scene 1, when he controls how Lulu is portrayed in the portrait. His control was manifested in Lulu’s marriage to the Painter, making the relationship monetarily beneficial to the Painter. But in act 2 scene 1, the power has shifted away from Schön. I argue that the whole act unfold a transition of power from the dominant male, Dr. Schön, to those who would like to be in control, namely The Athlete, Schigolch, Alwa, and Lulu herself, though are unable to maintain it. Although the act is a transition of power, it is also the point of the opera where Lulu’s masculine traits are the most pronounced. This transfer of power unfolds simultaneously with the degeneration of Schön.

Upon finally marrying Lulu, Schön is overcome by jealousy-induced rage after seeing his wife interact, often flirtatiously and with sexual implications, with other men. His degeneration yields madness, or hysteria. The most masculine controlling character of the entire opera succumbs to the most feminine of ailments. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries madness was regarded as a particularly feminine disorder. In Susan McClary’s chapter, “Excess and Frame: The Musical Representation of Madwomen,” she explains that:

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34 Otto Weininger’s suicide in Beethoven’s *Heiligenstadt* apartment predicated the success of his writing. Berg himself attempted suicide in 1903.
Over the course of the nineteenth century, psychiatrists obsessed over mechanisms of feminine dementia to the extent that madness came to be perceived *tout court* as feminine—even apparently “normal” ones—as always highly susceptible to mental breakdown precisely because of their sexuality. The surveillance and control that had always characterized the psychiatric profession became focused on the “problem” of Woman, and so it has remained with substantial help from Darwin and Freud.35

McClary summarizes ideas presented in Elaine Showalter’s *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture 1830-1980*.36 Although Showalter’s text is about English culture, Weininger expresses similar ideas regarding Germanic culture.

Izenberg suggests that in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Austria and Germany there was concern about masculinity that resulted in more attention paid to male anxiety and hysteria.

Contemporary concern about “degeneracy”—the supposed weakening of the physical and mental constitution of men because of the rapid pace of modern life and its ever greater demands on human energy—led both to the psychiatric classification of such mental diseases as “neurasthenia” and to a typology of mental illness implying a radical difference between the pathological and the normal. The insistence of the psychiatrists Charcot and Freud that hysteria was a male as well as a female disorder caused a near-hysterical reaction on the part of many psychiatrists.37

Culturally, hysteria was being recognized as an ailment for both sexes. In opera, madness or hysteria was a marker of unreason primarily reserved for female characters. McClary emphasizes three operatic women who were subject to madness: Monteverdi’s nymph, Donizetti’s Lucia, and Strauss’s Salome. After examining what musically sets these women apart from the stylistic tendencies of their times, she shows that “madwomen strain the semiotic codes from which they emerge, thereby throwing into high relief the assumptions concerning musical normality and reason from which they must—by definition—deviate” (at least in the nineteenth century).38

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35 McClary, “Excess and Frame,” 84.
38 McClary, *Excess and Frame*, 86.
In contrast, male deaths in opera are often heroic, rarely resulting from madness. Berg, however, creates male mad scenes in both *Wozzeck* and *Lulu*. The male mad scene arises increasingly in twentieth-century opera, notably *The Rake’s Progress* and *Peter Grimes*, and in Berg’s operas. Schön’s madness is brought on by marriage, jealousy, and the shift in power. It is marked by the change in musical framework that sets him aside both musically and dramatically from the remaining characters. At the end of act 1 he is pushed into an outsider’s role, no longer the conquering victor in control.

In act 1 scene 3, Schön succumbs to Lulu’s irresistible nature by calling off his engagement, at her urging. Lulu is free of marriage, somewhat independent, and she is back on stage dancing. She states to Schön, “you took me and made a dancing girl of me in hope that some man would carry me away.” She makes this statement backstage announcing to him the Prince wants to carry her away, to Africa, outside of his reaches. This news ignites jealousy in Schön; his creation cannot be taken away. His jealousy brings on self-doubt, and he questions whether he should marry his fiancée. Lulu plays to his weakness when she states, “well you know all too well that…that you are powerless to cut yourself loose from me…” He has rescued her from the streets, created a dancing girl, funded her marriages, and maintained an affair; now he cannot let her go. During this scene his last representation of control appears; the last musical instance of the sonata marked in Berg’s score as “sonate-reprise.” Perle identifies this as the recapitulation. At Lulu’s urging he crafts a letter to his fiancé ending their long engagement. It is at this point that Schön loses control of his life, emotionally but shown musically by the conclusion of the “sonata” form threaded through act 1. Lulu is now in control.

39 Sie haben mich ja zur Tänzerin gemacht, damit einer kommt, der mich mitnimmt.
40 Sie wizen zu gut, daß…daß Sie zu schwach sind, um sich von mir loszureißen.
42 The sonata exposition occurs mm. 533-668, development mm. 1209-88, recapitulation 1289-1361.
of all of the masculine traits Schön has instilled in her, she is exhibiting more reason and logic while he is subject to jealousy. His jealousy sparked, he ends his engagement at Lulu’s crafting, and, like the other husbands, he throws himself at Lulu. The tables have now turned. Instead of Schön arranging marriages for Lulu she now arranges their marriage. It seems as though he is getting retribution for destroying Lulu’s marriage one scene earlier.

Until this point Lulu has maintained a mysteriously seductive character operating within the drama. The male characters desire her; they have created her, and unknowingly created a desirable woman with male traits. Now she seemingly has gained power but not total control. Schön too recognizes his defeat and states, “I – feel – the axe falling.”

Musicologist Julian Johnson discusses the transfer of power in relation to the powerful psychological process:

The remarkable sonata development in Lulu that leads to the dramatic climax at the end of Act I, presents a powerful psychological process unfolding between Lulu and Schön in which their relative positions of power are gradually reversed, such that Schön capitulates entirely to Lulu’s demands. The degree to which such musical materials and processes impart depth and life to the idea of the subject is underlined by those moments when it is withheld.

Berg reinforces the role reversal described by Johnson when he seals Schön’s fate by employing the hauptrhythmus as the final gesture of the act. In Example 6 (mm. 1360-61) the fate rhythm in the low winds, brass, and piano are the last sounds heard in this act.

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43 Jetzt – kommt – die Hinrichtung…
The use of the fate rhythm in its unadulterated form in Example 6 frames Schön’s death and degeneration in the scene to come, just as it was present in the Painter’s death.

Berg’s dramatic and musical structures in this scene fit within McClary’s argument. A mad scene is created by framing the character in an ostracizing way and no longer allows the audience to identify with her (or him). This occurs through structural framing, dramatic framing, and repetition. The only difference is that Berg’s text allows the man to fall to madness, not the woman.

The first section of act 2 scene 1 is extremely short (mm. 1-94), focusing on Schön’s jealousy. It is the first scene in which Schön no longer exhibits acts of control over Lulu, which
brings about the beginning of his downfall. This section involves the Countess, Schön, and Lulu. The focus is on the underlying relationship between Lulu and the Countess, an interaction that assumes lesbianism. When Schön enters marriage with Lulu he loses all sense of the masculine control and power that is traditionally associated with marriage. The Painter’s fate has become his own. This occurs as Lulu is gaining masculinity. He thinks that the unfaithful character that he created will give up her fondness for other men. Lulu continues in her ways, and is unfaithful to Schön with, the audience is led to believe, Countess Geschwitz. Due to the transfer of power from Schön to Lulu at the end of the previous act, he is no longer able to control her or those surrounding her, and his jealously prevails. This scene, however, is more than a transfer of power, it is a transfer of gender.

Scene 1 begins with the Countess and Lulu in conversation. Although the Countess is frequently present, she and Lulu scarcely interact verbally, making their relationship striking. This interaction is indeed one of the lone female-to-female interactions in the whole opera and calls attention to the fact that the Countess has replaced Schön as Lulu’s lover. Their interchange is that of polite conversation: the Countess has invited Lulu to a “lady artists ball,” brought her flowers, and admired the portrait all in Schön’s presence. In this first, short reference to lesbianism, Berg uses the stereotype of “male costume,” when the Countess states, “I hope I may prevail on you to wear male costume? (indicating Lulu’s portrait; with restraint,

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45 It is well documented that Berg’s sister, Smaragda, was a lesbian and that he more-or-less accepted her sexual preference and homosexuality in general. In the collection of letters to his wife: [Alban Berg, Alban Berg: Letters to His Wife, translated by Bernard Grun (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1971), 110,] he writes about his sister to his future father-in-law: “I have also a brother who married a poor girl, and a sister whose abnormal condition and Lesbian inclination is her family’s desperate sorrow. But alas, there is no sanatorium for her; no place where these tendencies could be cured, where she might be saved from the dangers they carry with them, and from other people’s malicious gossip. Had I the time, I would make this letter twice or three times as long, and deal in detail with homosexuality: those afflicted by it and those who, because they are not so afflicted, treat these sick people as criminals.”

46 Geschwitz: Sie glauben nicht, wie ich mich darauf freue, Sie auf unsem Künstlerin zu sehn.
but warmly) Here you’re a fairy-tale creature.”47 We can also see that she has begun to assume the guiding role that Schön had played, in treating Lulu as an image projection of her own fantasies.

The Countess’s brief encounter with Lulu in this scene has masculine undertones because she has usurped the “male” role in their relationship. The relationship between the Countess and Lulu has achieved the further “emasculating” of Dr. Schön, as Lulu’s masculine traits continue to flourish. As feminist scholar Bettie Wysor states, many fictional lesbians were “male-imitative.”48 In musicologist Karen Pegley’s discussion of Countess Geschwitz, she notes that Berg’s representation “was not of a true lesbian type but a negative social stereotype—that is, a restrictive, standardized image of a weak and imbalanced woman.”49 Berg contributes to Pegley’s characterization by casting Lulu, in the Countess’s eyes, as the male partner, first through the male costume (a stereotypically lesbian cross-dressing), and second through the Countess’s admiration of the portrait of Lulu as Pierrot-- a costume that Silvio dos Santos describes as androgynous.50 The allusion to homosexuality is not a means to interpret Berg’s personal feelings, but rather an allegorical projection of a cultural stereotype.

This brief interplay (mm. 1-39) between the Countess and Lulu is also crucial in establishing that Schön is no longer in control. Indeed he stands helplessly by, knowing he cannot control the actions of his wife.51 At the end of the “Recitative” Schön comments sarcastically but ineffectually upon the relationship unfolding before his eyes; Schön is already suspicious of his wife and her relations with other men, but now he is suspicious of her relations

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47 Countess: (auf das Bild Lulus deutend) Hier sind Sie wie ein Märchen.
50 Silvio dos Santos, “Ascription of Identity,” 208.
51 Measures 1-39 are a “recitative” (labeled in the score) between Lulu and the Countess, the following section is an arietta (mm. 40-60) as labeled by George Perle.
with the Countess as well. Schön is unable to control his jealousy, which is one of the causes of his death. The elements compound, causing death. Loss of control causes his jealousy to increase creating humiliation, which is the last phase prior to his death.

In the “Recitative” (mm. 1–39) and “Arietta” (mm. 40–60), Berg foreshadows Schön’s death through allusion to the numerical significance of his death, the five gunshots. In Example 7 the five note rhythmic figure is the first of many illusions to the five shots that kill Schön.

This five-note motive begins to assume the function of the broader fate rhythm in alluding to death, particularly Schön’s death. His brief soliloquy, the “Arietta,” uses the five-note rhythmic motive, framing his own loss of control. In Example 8 illustrates how the five-note figure is used within the “Arietta.” Here the rhythm is incorporated melodically rather than the strictly rhythmic use in Example 7.

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52 This section is not labeled “Arietta” in Berg’s score but is supplied by George Perle to fill in missing titles.
In these examples and throughout this scene Schön’s line has become more repetitive and less complex. It is also significant that the *hauptrhythmy* is employed in this section as well. He is reflecting on the loss of control within his own house, foreshadowing the “loss” of his family and “normal” marriage, which he called off in order to marry Lulu. Example 9 illustrates the *hauptrhythmy* in this scene.

It is at this point in the scene (mm. 1–94) when he begins to turn outward, with moments in the soliloquy that begin to show his hysteria:

(Alone, looking around) So it’s come to this! The plague is here. Thirty years I’ve laboured and this is my life at home—the home I’ve chosen. (He makes a sudden movement, and looks round.) My God, can someone hear what I say? (He draws a revolver.) There’s no one I can trust now for certain. (With the cocked revolver in his right hand, he speaks through the closed curtains of the balcony window.) This is my life at home! The fellow has nerve! (He seizes the curtain and tears it aside. When he finds no one there, he comes forward again. With an outburst!) Has madness come and conquered my reason already? All filth—all filth. (Hearing Lulu coming he hides the revolver again.)

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It is during this reflection that the audience can see and hear his change in character. The change of character is particularly prevalent in the fragmentary syntax and exclamations with which he describes his situation, bemoaning all Lulu has brought to his household. His paranoia is shown through the stage directions. During this moment he gets out a revolver and puts it away again. He knew from the moment he was forced to sign the letter to his fiancée that he would not be able to control Lulu and that the marriage would be a mistake. He created her for him to control and other men to marry; but, when he marries her, his lack of control over her has been assured.

The second part (mm. 94–337) of the scene is an ensemble number for Schigolch, the Athlete, the School Boy, and Lulu. Alwa is also present in the later half of this scene. This section is the most explicitly comedic number in the entire opera, with various lovers or would-be lovers popping out of trap doors and from behind stairwells (not unlike Strauss’s *Rosenkavalier*). What makes this setting especially bizarre is that these male characters (and the Schoolboy, sung by a mezzo, as well as Geschwitz) have all seemingly taken up residence in Schön’s house. In the first scene, act 1 scene 1, Lulu is also surrounded by men who are not her husband, in her husband’s home. Similarly Lulu has allowed these men into the home when Schön is away. The stage directions of act 2 scene 2 illuminate the slap-stick absurdity of the scene:

Schigolch: Comes through the open curtains on the balcony and down the stairs, holding on to the banister; still asthmatic and short of breath.

Athlete: Coming noisily down the stairs, carrying the School Boy in his arms.

They spill, in a gaggle, onto an empty stage, consuming Schön’s cigars and liquor with no regard for his right to property. Furthermore, their lascivious discussion of Lulu furthers the idea that if 

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54 It is important to note that although Countess Geschwitz is not visually or vocally present in this section, she is hiding in the scene witnessing the discussion and Lulu’s interaction with the other characters who desire her.
Schön has created Lulu to be an object for men to enjoy, then that is what they will do. The Schoolboy relentlessly expresses his infatuation with Lulu to the other men, while Schigolch and the Athlete both express that they wanted to marry her. Upon Lulu’s entry into the scene, she tells them of a visitor she expects, a new man whom they expect to be the Prince. They explain their desires as follows:

The Athlete: You know she was the girl that he (the Prince) wanted to marry.
Schigolch: And she was the girl that I too wanted to marry.
The Athlete: You say that girl you wanted to marry?
Schigolch: Is she not the girl you also wanted to marry?
The Athlete: Oh, yes. She’s also the girl that I wanted to marry.
Schigolch: Yes, she’s the one girl that all have wanted to marry.  

The almost ridiculously repetitive interchange allows the audience to know that she is desired by more than just the main, bourgeois, men. Schön’s Lulu is desired by all types of men, including his own son. Perhaps more importantly, regardless of the life-and-death importance has for Schön’s frayed sanity, the repetitive patter emphasizes the absurdist dimension of the scene and lends a kind of dreamlike quality to Schön’s mounting insanity.

Amidst the interaction with the other men, Alwa enters to see Lulu. In the course of Schön’s degeneration, from controlling businessman to jealous partner/husband, the sight of Lulu with Alwa pushes him to a state of hysteria. Schön believes he has been betrayed by his own son. This is an even bigger betrayal than Lulu’s because of the familial relationship. Berg ingeniously show this depiction by linking the two men together through their row content.

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After this interchange the characters find out that Schigolch is not Lulu’s father, which until this scene had been implied.

56 In Peter Gay’s, *Weimar Culture: The Outsider As Insider*, he addresses this theme in his chapter “Revolt of the Son.” He identifies the “Expressionists” as a disparate group of artists seeking to make all things new. This was in contrast to those who wished to preserve nationalistic German qualities and traditions in the postwar era.
In Example 10 the dependence of Alwa on his father is evident in the row relations. The
relationships between these two row structures are discussed by George Perle, as follows:

The chief serial sets of the opera, after the Basic Series, represent Dr. Schön, the man of
power and money, and his son Alwa, the creative artist and composer. Alwa’s
dependence on his father is a symbol of the dependence of art, for its very existence, on
power and money. Corresponding trichordal segments of the two series commence with
the same pitch class.\footnote{Perle, The Operas of Alban Berg: Lulu, 95.}

The two characters are related by their musical DNA. The linking pitch classes are shown with
dashed lines between them. The pitch structure of the row relates the two characters; between
each trichord they share the same pitch classes. Although the relationships between the row
structures does not display a hierarchy it does show the dependence of the two figures on one
another.

Alwa and Lulu’s conversation does not suggest physical intimacy, but rather an
unrequited love on Alwa’s part. Lulu’s lines suggest a platonic relationship, which she is
manipulating.

\footnote{This analysis comes from George Perle, The Operas of Alban Berg: Lulu, 95.}

Artists he specifically mentions are Walter Gropius, Erich Mendelsohn, Bertolt Brecht, Kurt Weill, Paul Hindemith, and Alban Berg because they all jointed the Novembergruppe.

\footnote{Artists he specifically mentions are Walter Gropius, Erich Mendelsohn, Bertolt Brecht, Kurt Weill, Paul Hindemith, and Alban Berg because they all jointed the Novembergruppe.}
I have always admired one thing about you. You’re always so positive and strong. You are always so sure of yourself. You didn’t even mind the risk you ran of falling out with your own father. You always stood up for me like a brother to defend my interest.\footnote{Was ich immer am höchsten an dir schätzte, ist deine Characterfestigkeit. Du bist immer so vollkommen sicher, wenn du auch fürchten mußtest, dich deshalb mit deinem Vater zu überwerfen. So bist du trotzdem immer wie ein Bruder für mich eingetreten.}

Despite her expression of “fraternal” affection, what Schön hears of their dialogue suggests that the two younger people are having an affair. Schön appears in this section unbeknownst to the other characters and observes all of them. His first statement, “good God, it’s my son!” is evidence of the repetitious framing that propels his hysteria. He continues to watch, but lacks the fortitude any longer to confront them. When he sees the other men his line is marked with the repetitive motive. Throughout this section Lulu’s interactions with other men are not out of the ordinary for her character. She has learned what Schön has trained her to do, entice and entertain men. But now that she has control she has assumed the role of his wife, his ultimate undoing—his death—results from his lack of control.

In the third section (mm. 338–651), Berg presents Schön’s death in a similar fashion to the abrupt deaths of the Doctor and Painter. However, for a composer as numerologically obsessed as Berg, the fact that his death occurs at the exact middle of the opera is significant. I will also draw parallels between Schön’s ultimate degeneration and that of the Painter (act 1 scene 2). Although Berg uses similar dramatic and narrative devices to portray the downfalls of both characters, there are elements of this section that set it apart from the other undoings. Formally Schön is associated with sonata form, which begins in act 1 and continues throughout act 2 scene 1. This instrumental form is associated with reason and formality and is so used when Schön is in control and successful. But, in act 2 (mm. 380–552) Schön’s form is now a self-contained song form, a five-strophe aria. The five-strophe aria, with its set-piece reminiscent of an older form of opera, marks his undoing through his fall into unreason, paranoia, and hysteria.
The section begins with the tempo directive “tumultuoso,” as Schön is ready to literally take aim at the Athlete. He does not shoot and makes his entrance rather by mocking Alwa and interrupting his conversation with Lulu. He does this by repeating nonsensically his earlier words from act 1 scene 2 (the Painter’s death), “revolution has broke out in Paris,” implying that the revolution has broken out in his own living room. In act 1 Alwa bursts in to interrupt his father and Lulu, reversing the roles, and the paternal “natural order of things.” Berg thus frames each death with expressions of hysteria. There is of course no revolution, but the reference does foreshadow the Jungfrau stock crash during act 3, which is set in Paris. The melodic contours of the two moments are also very similar. Because of the link to the Painter’s death scene, the interruption—introduced by Schön himself—foretells Schön’s own death.

Beginning with the first strophe of his aria, Schön’s tone towards Lulu has changed. It is possible to further examine his changing tone or character by seeing each line of the strophes, and thus pointing out specific musical principles furthering his demise. Repetitive elements in Schön’s text as well as in the music are the frameworks of Schön’s madness. These elements help to further isolate Schön from the other characters, thus highlighting his change in character and mental state.

1 Strophe: You wretched thing, were you sent to drag me through the gutter to the grave? You black angel! You unavoidable tormentor! You joy and consolation! You hangman’s noose!

2 Strophe: Off with you, or by tomorrow I’ll be insane and my son will be lying murdered! I’ll go on my own way, you understand? It is your own fate you must settle. [Lulu: This won’t go off.] Shall I keep your hand steady? [Lulu: Is it really loaded?] This is not a joke. What was that? [Lulu: Nothing, it’s just your persecution-mania.]

3 Strophe: Have you some more men hidden here? A couple or so… whom you entertain? Did you come down the chimney to see us? Are you also an athlete? I’m sure you will stay for a meal!
4 Strophe: Five bullets should be quite enough. Get over it! –I will not assist my own servant to put horns on my forehead! Get over it! [Lulu: Is not divorce the answer?] The final insult! So tomorrow another would pursue his path of pleasure where I have shuddered from horror to horror, with suicide to haunt me and you unscathed! Why should I divorce you? What does divorce mean when two people in a life-time have grown together leaving each a half-person! You see your bed with the blood-offering lying there? (reaching for the revolver) Let me! I’ll help you and do the job for you.

Lied: Although for my sake a man may kill himself or kill others, my value still remains what is was. You know the reasons why you wanted to be my husband, and I know my reasons for hoping we should be married. You let your dearest friends be deceived by what you made me, yet you can’t consider yourself caught in your own deception. Though you have given me your later and riper years, from me you’ve had my youth in flower as fair exchange. I have not asked in my life to appear in another color than the one which I am known to have. Nor has any man in my life been led to look on me as other than what I am.

5 Strophe: Kneel down. Murderess! On your knees! Kneel down…and don’t dare try to rise again! Pray to God for strength!...

In the first strophe the framing repetition is the text. Schön blames Lulu five times, with five “you” or “du” phrases, for the strife she has caused him. Leo Treitler has addressed this strophe, specifically Schön’s blaming Lulu for death and destruction:

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In his life and death struggle with her, Schön calls Lulu “death's angel.” Much of the critical literature, however, betrays the belief that this is the standpoint of the opera and hence-of the author.\(^{61}\)

Treitler says that even though Schön blames Lulu for the death of his family circle, the death of the other men, and ultimately his own death, she is not to blame. Death, he says, is a symptom of those who blindly throw themselves upon her.

The revolver is brandished in the second strophe and Lulu tries to wrench it away from Schön, or at least to point it away from herself. The fate rhythm returns in this strophe. It is unclear (to the first time observer), however, who is to be killed. It would seem, in this section that it is Lulu because Schön has been pointing the gun at her. The rhythm concludes the strophe on Lulu’s line “nothing it’s just your persecution-mania.” Although this line can be perceived as another insult to Schön, it also shows she is aware of his character change. Schön makes Lulu aware in the third strophe that he knows about all of the guests hiding in the house. In this strophe, the third and middle strophe, the melodic motion of the instruments reaches a static point, except for Schön’s ten-note motive. This motive is the slowest most deliberate line and it refers to the Countess: “Did you come down the chimney to see us?” This strophe is perhaps the most detached and musically simple (for Schön). As his reason slips, his musical material reflects an increasing simplicity.

A possible interpretation of the fourth strophe is that Lulu is trying to reason with the hysterical Schön, but by suggesting divorce she insulst his sense of propriety and patriarchal convention. As a legal, cultural matter, divorce was seldom allowed. According to the Austrian General Civil Code of 1811 non-Catholic marriages could be ended in divorce under few circumstances, one being adultery with evidence, not just suspicion.\(^{62}\) Socially it was just as

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\(^{61}\) Leo Treitler, “History and Archetypes,” 117.

 unacceptable. Schön implies that if he granted her a divorce she would just go and sleep with more men, while he would commit suicide in jealousy. By having her take her own life, he would be saving his own life and honor, while shifting all moral responsibility for the scandal upon her. Ironically, it is only in this strophe that he acknowledges his own dependent attachment to Lulu when he states, “What does divorce mean when two people in a life-time have grown together leaving each a half-person!” Indeed, his words echo the language of the conventional wedding ceremony, the scriptural words about two individuals becoming one flesh. He has spent her life and a large part of his own, according to the libretto, creating her character to benefit himself. It is at his time of vulnerability that he acknowledges he needs her. This strophe is not immediately followed by the fifth verse, but is interrupted by the Lied der Lulu, in which Lulu acknowledges that she is but his construction (the text for the Lied is printed above, between strophes four and five of Schön’s aria).

At this virtual middle point of the opera, Lulu is now the most reasonable character. In the Lied she presents a logical counterargument for Schön’s killing her, or having her kill herself. It is this reason and rationale that makes the audience aware that, at least during this moment, Lulu knows she has been created by Schön. She acknowledges that she has not sought any freedom from her life, and that her qualities are not wholly her own. By stating that she has not asked in life “to appear in another color than the one which I am,” she implies that she is aware of her own character. However, by acknowledging in the previous lines that Schön has “made” her, she is fully conscious that she a projection of his will and desire. Lulu cannot be anything other than what Schön made her, and that is what other men see. This rational statement is thus followed by the fifth strophe, in which Schön dies.

Still believing that Lulu is the one that will die, Schön forces her to point the revolver at
herself while it is in her hand. By trying to force her to kill herself, he still believes he is the dominant power figure. This is evident when he states to Lulu, “pray to God for strength!... .” The fate rhythm begins again in the strings with two statements before the five fatal shots are fired. His pseudo-control is also evident in the five-strophe aria. Although the aria is often stereotyped as a lighter, less reasonable form, it still is a form thereby exhibiting control through its inherent structure. This is followed by a “tumultuoso” section, which continues the rhythmic repetition while Schön dies.

The repetition of the five-note motive and recurrence of the fate rhythm frame Schön’s hysteria within the five-strophe aria. The combination of these elements highlight his undoing. Through form and repetition Schön loses his grip on reality. Treitler discusses this as follows:

Order would be represented in any case by “masculine” elements—words, harmony, rhythm, and, above all, form. (Schön’s five-strophe aria, at the conclusion of which he is shot by Lulu, is a last desperate attempt to maintain musical order, and as he dies he falls into musical disorder; his row dissolves into the basic set of the opera.)

Schön cannot cope with his creation as a wife. The man with the most reason and success has forced his own death through unreason and failure. He dies because he witnesses the truth of Lulu with other men and Lulu as a practitioner of masculine sexual freedom. Although he has no proof of actual adultery, it and the resulting scandal are implied. He dies because as Lulu points out to him, he cannot come to terms with her as a projection of him. Schön’s stated and unstated patriarchal views of his wife subject him to the most elaborate undoing.

Alwa’s Undoing: Act 3 Scene 2

As the last male to be undone, Alwa, reflects his investment in Lulu through the eyes of others. He was first seen in act 1 scene 1 observing the execution of the portrait. It is that version

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of Lulu, the objectified gaze of others, that he holds as his own, the objectified view of others. Even after seeing her shoot his father his image of Lulu is still that of the innocent Pierrot painting. Because of his innocent desire for her Alwa helps Lulu escape to Paris and London, a notion confirmed by Alwa’s stealing, preserving, and transporting the portrait as a relic of Lulu in “better days.”

The other undoings made the opera progress because of their reliance upon the theme of control. That is, each husband had his own idea of how to control Lulu while Schön had been the impetus and overarching figure of control for each marriage. Alwa’s undoing is of little consequence because his views of Lulu are not his own, nor does he have a controlling force pushing him to marry her. He has no control over her. On the contrary, when they escape to London Lulu’s prostitution supports Alwa’s life. In their “attic room” the only glimmer of hope Alwa has is when the Countess brings the portrait to their room. He reflects:

> But why on earth…? With this picture before me, I feel my self-respect is recovered. I understand the fate which compels me. Who stands before those lips with their promise of pleasure, before those eyes as innocent as the eyes of children, before this white and rosy-ripening body, and still feels safe within his bourgeois code of rules, let such a man cast the first stone at us!64

This is in part his elegy to his former life, and to her. It is through prostitution that Lulu regains her female sexuality. The palindromic gender inversion that occurs throughout the opera (along with the narrative, musical, and relationship palindromes) is reflecting back to the beginning of the opera, to the fictional time when Lulu was being adored by men other than her husband. In this section Lulu has taken control of her female sexuality abandoning the masculinized sexual freedom by seeking prostitution. Her sexuality will provide for her family circle (Alwa,
Schigolch, and the Countess). She now takes over the masculine role of provider, which Alwa cannot fill, through her feminine sexuality.

Their deaths are, however, eminent. When Lulu’s second caller, the Negro (played by the same actor who played the Painter—a doubling conceit that originated with Berg, not Wedekind), enters the scene, Alwa and Schigolch hide. Alwa stays in the attic and when the caller tries to hurt Lulu he attempts to save her. The weak artist cannot defend himself and the Negro “hits Alwa over the head with a cudgel.”\(^65\) This death is perhaps the most heroic of the opera in that Alwa selflessly tries to save Lulu from harm, but it is also the most pathetic, because he is so quickly dispatched. His stereotypes of Lulu were so wrapped up in the other men’s views of Lulu that he could not have a real relationship with her. But his death was to defend her “image,”—the creation of others—as if it was the real thing.

*The Retribution: Lulu’s Death*

Although the focus of this thesis is on the patriarchal stereotypes present in the opera and how they are turned back upon the male characters, it would be impertinent not to discuss Lulu’s own undoing. Any control Lulu gained upon marrying Schön or from being freed from bondage through his death was lost upon her return from prison. At that point in the drama she has lost her controlling male figure and most importantly lost her *raison d’être*, her beauty, from the cholera contracted in prison. Prior to her return in act 2 scene 2, the Athlete, boasting that he will marry her and take her away to perform in his show, states “she’s coming, my bride, who will soon be called the prettiest female acrobat of our era,” reminding us that her primary value lies in her

\(^65\) Er schlägt Alwa mit einem Totschläger über den Kopf.
objectification. He consequently responds to her appearance by stating, “How can you have the impudence to come here looking pale as death and fit for nothing?” Now the Athlete refuses to marry her because she will not benefit him. Thus, Lulu’s glimpse of freedom coincides with her spiral downward to death. Her degeneration continues through act 3 scene 1, where during the elaborate ensemble number the Marquis is tries to blackmail Lulu into prostitution. She, Alwa, the Countess, and Schigolch escape to London so she will escape both Marquis and the law. But as an outlaw, she is unfit for respectable work, or social respectability of any sort.

The last scene can be seen as a retribution of the world of men upon Lulu. She could not live up to any of her husbands’ separate expectations of a wife, and each dies because their expectations were not meet. The structure of the last act brings back each husband, reincarnated as one of the prostitute Lulu’s johns. George Perle discusses the significance of this gesture:

The overall dramatic and formal design hinges upon the three dual roles of the Medical Specialist and the Professor, the Painter and the Negro, Dr. Schön and Jack. Since each of the three entrances in the final scene reintroduces extended musical episodes originally associated with one of Lulu’s three victims, the final scene serves as a formal recapitulation in the musical design of the whole.

As Perle suggests, the “husbands” reoccur in order, and humiliate Lulu in proportion to their treatment in real life. The Professor does not speak and does not stay with Lulu long, reflecting the brief, mute stage appearance of the Doctor. The Negro represents the extravagance that was present in the Painter, but also the naivety and the sense of being “bought” (“ein halbe Million” becomes “ein Goldstück”). He is Alwa’s murderer. Lulu’s third visitor, Jack, is her undoing. As Clément states, “dead women, dead so often. There are those who die disemboweled, like Lulu at

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66 Mein Leben ist so wenig mehr wert, und ich hätte es gern ihrem Glück geopfert. Ach was… ich pfeif’ drauf! Irgendwie werd’ ich nun doch wohl zum Teufel gehn!
67 Woher nimmst du die Schämlosigkeit, mit einem solchen Wolfsgesicht hier zu erscheinen?
the sacrificial knife of Jack the Ripper, in a cruddy attic of smoggy London. He stabs her, then stabs the Countess. Schön’s double seeks the death of Lulu, in retribution for his own death, and he achieves it, in Cerha’s realization, to the same tune that “resolves” the sonata form and which had symbolized the bond between himself and Lulu. These three men, doubling the husbands, know nothing of her and yet take her life as a symbolic retribution for the deaths that occurred around her. She is undone because she could not maintain the control handed her by Schön’s death, because no one in the opera could grasp control.

69 Clément, Opera, 47.
CONCLUSION

_Lulu_ has been interpreted as an opera presenting the emancipated woman, contemporary lesbianism, or a _femme fatale_. There is, however, an opportunity for another interpretation. By examining the opera through the male characters and patriarchal constructions and stereotypes, it is possible to see that Lulu (the character) is a projection of misogynistic constructions, while _Lulu_ (the opera) exposes the ills of society through inverting the specific expectations of marriage. As a projection of misogynist constructions, however, she thus reflects masculine traits in her character.

The opera, like Wedekind’s plays, expresses an allegorical representation of a high Bürgertum social circle through marriage, death, and power. Moreover, by interpreting the story of Lulu and the men in the opera through the changing views of both men and women in Viennese culture, it is possible to see the character of Lulu as a representation of patriarchal society.

The three contemporary operas discussed (Parsifal, Salome, and Wozzeck) show that there was an operatic cultural precedent for labeling independent women as deviant simply for breaking social norms. They are each seemingly punished and destroyed for being a woman. They are accused of being versions of patriarchal “women:” desirable, driven by animalistic sexual urges, and dangerous. These female characters were largely reliant upon men through the masculine construction of patriarchal society. _Lulu_ is also subject to these precedents. Each of these characters, Kundry, Salome, Marie, as well as Lulu, are male artistic constructions, representing views of their society. As time passed between _Parsifal_ in 1882 and _Lulu_ in 1937, operatic styles become more realistic, presenting women and men as reflective of cultural trends.
and values. In each of these operas the female characters discussed are undone by men within their patriarchal systems and beliefs. *Lulu* introduces a change in this pattern. Although, Lulu is undone or destroyed at the end of the opera by misogynistic murder, each of her male companions is also destroyed. In *Lulu*, men too are punished for their nature, undone because of their blind faith in and adherence to patriarchal beliefs, and their unwillingness to change or adapt.

The psychological trend in *fin-de-siècle* and First Republic Vienna to blame, demonize, and negate “the Woman” is evident in *Lulu*. Otto Weininger’s *Sex and Character* is one such example. His book echoes Wagnerian ideas and has similarities to Freud’s views of hysteria and madness. Berg was familiar with Weininger’s pseudo-psychological ideas as evident in his letters to Schoenberg. The character of Lulu, as an amoral, characterless, and promiscuous creature echoes Weininger’s view of the women. The difference in *Lulu* is that the opera highlights how men construct the character of Lulu and how they are thus destroyed. The expectations supposed by the institution of marriage undo each of the male characters through the course of the opera. As a projection of masculine stereotypes, Lulu unravels patriarchal expectations of marriage.

The opera conforms to contemporary operatic tradition by presenting a woman as a reflection of what men want. Lulu dies a tragic and humiliating death because she does not fulfill their expectations. Before this happens, all of the men die tragic and humiliating deaths because their projections are reflected back on them, causing them to lose dignity, success, mental stature, and control. By portraying male undoings Berg’s opera is innovative and unconventional. It reflects the changing views in First Republic Vienna while testifying to time-honored Germanic operatic tradition.
APPENDIX: SYNOPSIS

Prologue

The Animal Tamer introduces the audience to the animals of the menagerie, animals tamed by human force. The main attractions in the menagerie are worth seeing; the tiger, bear, monkey, and reptiles, but the star of the show is the snake. Each animal represents a main character; most notably Lulu is associated with the snake. The Animal Tamer describes the snake: “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…you have no right to seem a gentler creature, distorting what is true in a woman’s nature.”\(^1\) This scene presents the animals who have been tamed by superior human force, introducing a segment of society to comment upon the societal forces that have tamed them. The prologue gives a brash but realistic typology of the opera’s main characters.

Act 1 Scene 1

Lulu’s portrait is being painted at the request of her husband, Dr. Goll. As Lulu poses in Pierrot costume, Dr. Schön and Alwa Schön observe. Dr. Schön is a successful newspaper editor-in-chief and keeps Lulu as his mistress. Alwa, Schön’s son, is a composer. Schön and Alwa exit, leaving the Painter with Lulu. Lulu’s role is as a seductive object being presented for all of the men. She is too much for the Painter to resist. As the Painter pursues her, Dr. Goll enters and immediately dies of a stroke, from the shock of what he has seen. Each of the male characters present in the scene, aside from Dr. Goll, will become Lulu’s husband or in the case of Alwa, a boyfriend in a marriage-like relationship.

\(^1\) Libretto 42.
Act 1 Scene 2

After Goll’s death, Lulu is now married to the Painter. In this scene she is once again visited by men while her husband is away. The first visitor is Schigolch. He is an old man; it is implied that he could be her father. When Schön visits he is trying to stop their visits due to his impending marriage. Lulu protests his suggestion thus prompting Schön to inform the Painter of Lulu’s ways. The Painter is clueless about Lulu’s visitors. He is greatly distraught by the truth of Schön’s words and kills himself.

Act 1 Scene 3

Unmarried, Lulu returns to her profession as a theater dancer in one of Alwa’s productions. She has a new prospect of marriage to the Prince, who is going to take her to Africa, away from Schön and Alwa. As Lulu performs she sees Schön and his fiancée, which causes her to exit the stage and refuse to perform for Schön’s future bride. Lulu and Schön converse about her actions and she begins taking control from him and ultimately coerces him to craft a letter ending his engagement. Only after this moment does she agree to finish the dance.

Act 2 Scene 1

Finally married to Schön, Lulu maintains her collection of male admirers. Schön is fraught with jealousy because he is aware of her nature. His jealousy comes not just from his suspicion of Lulu and her men, but also from Lulu’s relationship with Countess Geschwitz. After Schön leaves for the Stock Exchange his home is filled with men (Athlete, Schoolboy, Schigolch) who desire Lulu. When Schön returns he witnesses all of the men in his home, which
now includes his son. He has a revolver and ultimately tells Lulu she must kill herself. However, she turns the revolver on him and kills him.

**Interlude/Film Music**

The silent film chronicles Lulu’s arrest, trial, and time in prison for the murder of Dr. Schön. During her prison time Lulu purposly contracts cholera from the Countess to fuel an elaborate escape plan.

**Act 2 Scene 2**

This scene begins in the same location where Schön was murdered, now logically Alwa’s home. Alwa, the Athlete, Schigolch, and the Countess are planning Lulu’s escape from prison. The Countess sacrifices herself to free Lulu and they exchange places. Meanwhile the Athlete plans to take her away, wed her, and make her a circus performer. When Lulu returns her beauty is diminished, and the Athlete no longer desires her. However Alwa finally gives in to his desires for Lulu, even though she murdered his father, and goes away with her.

**Act 3 Scene 1**

Alwa and Lulu now live in Paris. The scene begins with a lavish, well-attended party in their home. All of the guests are confident in and gambling with their Jungfrau railway shares. Lulu is being blackmailed by the Athlete and the Marquis (a pimp) because she is still wanted for the murder of Dr. Schön. The Marquis wants to sell her to a brothel in Cairo. Lulu will not agree to his terms and has to escape. News breaks that Jungfrau stocks have crashed and the party breaks up. Lulu and Alwa escape before the police come for her.
Act 3 Scene 2

Lulu, Alwa, and Schigolch now live in London in destitution. Lulu avoided prostitution through the Athlete and Marquis but now is a prostitute out of her own need. Her work supports Alwa and Schigolch as well. The Countess arrives, bringing back the portrait of Lulu in the Pierrot costume, an image of her former self. Lulu entertains a series of three “johns,” the first of which, a professor, is tacit and is played by the same actor as Doctor Goll. The second client, a black man, is represented by the same actor who played the Painter. This character kills Alwa. The final client to see Lulu is Jack—Jack the Ripper—who murders Lulu and then the Countess to end the opera.
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