

2 Battles of the mind: Berg and the cultural politics of 'Vienna 1900'

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On the evening of 31 March 1913 the Great Hall of the Vienna Musikverein erupted as Arnold Schoenberg conducted two of Berg's songs Op. 4, the *Fünf Orchesterlieder nach Ansichtskartentexten von Peter Altenberg*. The audience bawled for composer and poet to be sent to the madhouse, knowing full well that Altenberg was already a patient in the State Mental Institution at Steinhof on the outskirts of the city. Fights broke out, the police were called, and Erhard Buschbeck, a friend of Berg's and an organiser of the concert, was arrested after trading blows with the operetta composer Oscar Straus. At the trial Straus remarked that the thud of the punch had been the most harmonious thing in the whole concert.¹

Although the *Skandalkonzert* has entered the folklore of modern musical history, it is perhaps not fully appreciated just how symbolic this event was, nor how indicative (albeit in a fairly extreme form) of cultural life in the city as a whole. For the glorious cultural florescence of 'Vienna 1900' – now almost as clichéd as is the other Vienna of Johann Strauss and Sachertorte – was riven with factions, spite and, on occasions, violence. As often as not, the aggression focused on a man revered by Alban Berg: the satirist Karl Kraus (1874–1936), a close friend of Altenberg and no stranger to non-verbal altercation. As early as 1897 fists replaced brains when Felix Salten, author of *Bambi*, boxed the satirist's ears for suggesting that the Budapest-born Salten's command of German grammar was less than perfect.² In 1906 Kraus was knocked senseless by Marc Henry, *conférencier* of the 'Cabaret Nachtlicht' after Kraus had attacked him in his journal *Die Fackel* (*The Torch*).³ Other feuds remained at the level of deep personal antipathy, sometimes even amongst artists moving within the same restricted circles and sharing a similar aesthetic. From 1910 onwards the painters Oskar Kokoschka and Max Oppenheimer, both close to the 'Superior Triple Alliance' of Kraus, Loos and Altenberg,⁴ were at loggerheads after Kokoschka became convinced that 'Mopp', as he styled himself, was plagiarising his work. It is no coincidence that each artist produced distinguished portraits of Kraus, Loos and Altenberg as well as Schoenberg and Webern.⁵

The hostile, even violent reception of his *Altenberg Lieder* cannot have entirely surprised the languid, dreamy young composer, for Berg too was an enthusiastic partisan in the intellectual battlefield of late Imperial Vienna. Simply to have set the deranged poet was an act of solidarity almost calculated to inflame the bourgeois Viennese public. Nor would Berg have been shocked that his friend Altenberg, instrumental in bringing him and his future wife Helene Nahowski together in 1907, thought little of his songs.⁶ After the concert Altenberg wrote to Franz Schreker, who had shortly before conducted the uniquely successful Viennese premiere of Schoenberg's *Gurrelieder*:

I understand nothing of this latest 'modern music', my brain-soul still hears, feels, understands only Richard Wagner, Hugo Wolf, Brahms, Dvořák, Grieg, Puccini, Richard Strauss! But the countenance of the modern woman I understand like an alpine pasture and my beloved Semmering.⁷

In a letter to Adolf Loos (1870–1933), undated but probably from around 1910–11, Altenberg berated the architect for his excessive admiration for Schoenberg, Kokoschka and the avant-garde poet Else Lasker-Schüler, who featured regularly in *Die Fackel*. The tone is typical of Altenberg when expressing a forceful opinion:

Your preference for Oskar Kokoschka – Else Lasker-Schüler – Arnold Schoenberg demonstrates exactly the *nadir* of your *intellectual-spiritual machinery*.⁸

Yet when implored by Berg to support the public appeal in Autumn 1911 on behalf of the near destitute Arnold Schoenberg, Altenberg's answer was unequivocal: 'Naturally and with deep commitment'.⁹

Of the Kraus–Loos–Altenberg triumvirate, it was to Altenberg (né Richard Engländer, 1859–1919), the oldest of the group by some years, that Berg was personally closest. They first met in 1906, and in the following year his sister Smaragda introduced the composer to the Altenberg coterie which met in the Löwenbräu bar in the Teinfaltstraße. It is obvious that the older poet took a shine to him, for amongst his numerous letters to Smaragda are several references to Berg's nobility, a typical formulation being 'Alban, most noble of youths'.¹⁰ Although fully aware of Smaragda's lesbianism, Altenberg was for a time extravagantly enamoured of her. The 'relationship' was especially intense between September 1909 and January 1910, and the fifty-year-old poet was not shy of soliciting Berg's direct intervention when things were going badly:

I come as an artist to you as an artist —. *Help* me! I have offended and wounded your sister whom I worship —. Put in a good word for me with the dear lady, *I implore you*, so that I may *once again become capable of*

*life, capable of suffering —. May God reward you. I implore your help in relieving my torments. Smaragda should forgive me for your sake.*¹¹

Altenberg's feelings for Helene Nahowski-Berg went equally deep, for with her willowy tallness and long blond hair she embodied his physical ideal. Knowing that the eccentric poet posed no real threat, for he famously loved the unobtainable, Berg seems to have harboured neither resentment nor jealousy. Instead, he knew that Altenberg had provided him with an entrée into an artistic circle which he admired with a fervour bordering on reverence. Frequently referring to Altenberg in his letters to Helene, Berg often points to shared features with the poet, not merely in terms of artistic outlook, but even of a personally trivial kind, such as a propensity for nailbiting.¹²

Altenberg was at the heart of a group to which both Kraus and Loos belonged, and which also included the polymath, actor and raconteur Egon Friedell (1878–1938) as well as Gustav Klimt (1862–1918), of whose paintings Kraus thought rather poorly. In June 1908 Berg accompanied Klimt and Altenberg to the great 'Kunstschau' exhibition dominated by Klimt's work,¹³ and to which Altenberg dedicated a glowing sketch in which he talks of 'Room 22, Gustav Klimt-cathedral of modern art'.¹⁴ A letter of 1 July 1908 to his future wife reveals just how well integrated Berg now felt in this seminal group of Viennese artists and intellectuals:

In the afternoon I then went to the 'Kunstschau' ... It was so quiet there to begin with ... then I fled the café terrace, for the piano started tinkling and then they all came marching up: those from the Altenberg party – then the Klimt group – then Karl Kraus by himself – we joined each other, two lonely people. In the evening I then met up with Smaragda at the Altenberg table ... at the Löwenbräu, and then Smaragda went off home with Ida!! I met up with Karl Kraus, Dr Fritz Wittels was there too, and that was really nice.¹⁵

Yet how typical of Berg's servility that as late as 1920 he could still write to Webern, in the course of a letter expressing his proximity to Zemlinsky:

my ignorance in matters of painting and in particular Kraus's condemnation of Klimt [prevented] me from letting my enthusiasm for him be too widely known.¹⁶

Though absent from the *Skandalkonzert* itself, Altenberg had been granted leave from the asylum to attend the dress-rehearsal on the morning of 31 March. Despite hearing all about the uproar at the concert proper, he did not respond directly to the event. Instead, he sent Berg a copy of his latest book *Semmering 1912*, which Berg in fact already possessed.¹⁷ Even inside Steinhof, however, the poet continued writing obsessively, reacting in inimitable fashion to 'what the day brings' (*Was der Tag*

mir zuträgt is the title of the book from which Berg's earlier Altenberg songs of 1906 had been taken).¹⁸ On 3 April, just three days after the *Skandalkonzert*, Altenberg composed a short prose sketch entitled 'Alma' which can only refer to events he had witnessed at the dress-rehearsal. This sketch avoids any reference to Berg's settings of his words, concentrating instead on the frivolous reactions of Alma Mahler, a close friend of the Bergs, during the rehearsal of the *Kindertotenlieder*. These songs were scheduled to conclude the public concert but in the event had to be abandoned because of the rumpus triggered off by the *Altenberg Lieder*. The sketch depicts Alma, decked out in widow's weeds, canoodling with a young man while 'the third *Kindertotenlied* wept' ('das dritte *Kindertotenlied* weinte').¹⁹ In a few succinct lines Altenberg delivers a devastating cameo of Alma's facile reactions to the *Kindertotenlieder*, which had eerily pre-dated the death of her daughter Anna Maria in 1906 – an event which she apparently regarded as a punishment for their composition.²⁰ Although he is not named, the young man in the sketch can only be Oskar Kokoschka (1886–1980), and, as Altenberg knew, would be instantly recognised as such by a contemporary Viennese readership with a well-trained nose for scandal.²¹ Their affair, which was the talk of the town, was commemorated in one of Kokoschka's greatest works, *Die Windsbraut* (1913), depicting the ecstatic union of the artist and his lover. Altenberg's garrulous miniature was not published until 1915, along with a dedication to Gustav Mahler conspicuously absent from the original manuscript. The entire sketch, but especially the dedication, must have been intentionally provocative, especially as Alma had by then finished with Kokoschka and taken up with the German architect Walter Gropius, a leading light in the 'Bauhaus' movement. She went to law, and the sketch disappeared from all further editions of the book *Fechsung*.²² Soon afterwards, Alma gave birth to her daughter Manon Gropius, whose premature death inspired Berg to write what transpired to be his last work, the Violin Concerto.²³



I open with this essentially anecdotal material because it demonstrates the extent to which the world which formed Alban Berg was an incestuous one where everyone not only knew everyone else, but also to a large degree knew everyone else's business. These lives have even been diagrammatically realised as the 'Vienna Circles', at the very centre of which intersect those of Kraus, Loos and Schoenberg, within whose common segments can be found the names of both Berg and Altenberg.²⁴ This was also the

world which shaped Helene Nahowski (1885–1976), rumoured to be the illegitimate daughter of the aged Emperor Franz Josef (1830–1916).²⁵ Having spent her life in a world of at best partial privacy may well explain why in later years Frau Berg so fiercely resisted any public knowledge of her husband's passion for Hanna Fuchs-Robettin. Hanna, of course, was not only the sister of Franz Werfel (one of the most popular authors of the day, whom Kraus thoroughly despised) but also the sister-in-law of Alma Mahler-Werfel. True to his literary master, Berg also thought little of Werfel, but because of the close relationship between the Bergs and Alma Mahler he maintained what he described in a letter to Helene as a 'quasi-friendship' ('Quasi-Freundschaft') with him.²⁶ As if these relationships were not already intertwined enough, Anna Mahler, the surviving daughter of Gustav and Alma, was married for a time to the composer Ernst Krenek, who in turn was close to Alban Berg.

Although the Schoenberg–Kraus–Loos–Altenberg–Kokoschka axis by no means tells the whole story of the Vienna which dominated Berg's early artistic life, it is nevertheless the one with the most meaning for him. In a letter of June/July 1903 Berg wrote to his friend Paul Hohenberg: 'So we share the same tastes, which pleases me greatly, for in some things they diverge: Kraus, *Altenberg!*'²⁷ Moreover, this early enthusiasm never wavered, and more than thirty years later, in his oration at Berg's funeral, Soma Morgenstern remarked of the dead composer that he possessed 'the nobility of a new era, which Peter Altenberg, its greatest prophet, heralded: the nobility of naturalness.'²⁸ This naturalness, manifested in an æsthetic functionalism which reduced literature to its essence, was a feature of Altenberg's writing which appealed to a generation of Viennese intellectuals, foremost amongst them Karl Kraus. It formed a literary parallel to what Adolf Loos was trying to achieve in architecture, and for a brief while Altenberg and Loos even tried to co-operate in a joint publishing venture. The short-lived journal *Kunst* (1903–4) was edited by Altenberg, with a section edited by Loos entitled *Das Andere*, whose purpose was nothing less than the 'introduction of Western culture into Austria' ('Einführung Abendländischer Kultur in Österreich').

In matters literary, what went for Berg went also on the whole for his teacher Schoenberg and for his fellow-pupil Webern, and as the following quotations reveal, there was an almost uncanny consensus amongst them as to who was important. Thus Schoenberg, writing in memory of Webern in 1945, declared:

[It] is clear that [Webern] never changed his opinion about Karl Kraus, Peter Altenberg, Peter Rosegger, Gustav Mahler and me. They were his 'fixed stars'.²⁹

Reminiscing about his years in Vienna, the Paris-based Schoenberg pupil Max Deutsch (1892–1982) was quite specific in his recollections of who set the tone for Berg and his contemporaries:

This special style, you had four people – Schoenberg the musician, Karl Kraus the writer, Adolf Loos the architect, and Peter Altenberg the poet – four people, this German writing.³⁰

In a letter to Berg dated 13 December 1911, by which time Schoenberg had been forced from Vienna to try his luck in Berlin, Webern declared:

It would be so nice if all the people who these days are something were together in one town, interacting vigorously: Schoenberg, Klimt, Altenberg, Loos, Kraus, us, Kokoschka and many others.³¹

Very noticeably, however, this list of great names does not include such eminent, quintessentially Viennese figures as Freud, Hofmannsthal and Schnitzler, and the reason is again best summarised in two words: Karl Kraus. As it happens, Kraus had a vacillating opinion of Mahler too, but in this respect at least Berg was able to maintain his independence. The extent of his intellectual reliance upon the satirist emerges, however, in a draft letter which Berg penned on the occasion of Kraus's fiftieth birthday on 28 April 1924. Addressed to the 'Venerated Master' ('Verehrter Meister'), and signed 'in eternal fealty' ('in ewiger Gefolgschaft'), Berg writes that because of his timidity he has spent twenty-five years suppressing the need to express his devotion. Now at last, in a tone of excessive deference reminiscent of his letters to Schoenberg, he expresses what he feels:

My thanks to the lead which your exemplary figure has given me in all questions of art and life since the days of my youth, and which it still gives today as I approach forty. My thanks for the immeasurable bliss with which your written work provides me ... My thanks for the spiritual support which you have provided me with time and again in life's most unpleasant situations.³²

Through the medium of *Die Fackel*, published between 1899 and 1936, as well as through direct personal contact, Kraus was indeed central to the development of Berg's overall perspective on life and art. He was equally important to Schoenberg, although in this instance the relationship was more obviously one between equals. Berg, however, found it difficult, if not impossible, to assert himself in a mature manner with those he stood in awe of. Perhaps most importantly for the future development of Berg's art, it was Kraus who introduced the banned German playwright Frank Wedekind (1864–1918) to a select Viennese audience. Because of censorship, *Die Büchse der Pandora* (*Pandora's Box*), the second of Wedekind's Lulu plays – the first was *Erdegeist* (*Earth Spirit*) – was to remain unper-

formed in public until after the dramatist's death, but on 29 May 1905 Kraus put on a private performance, even playing a small role himself, frustrated actor that he was. For both the dramatist and the composer it was an event with lasting consequences. Wedekind, who took the role of Jack the Ripper in the final scene, found his future wife Tilly in the young actress playing the victim, Lulu. She recalls the occasion:

In the hall, filled to capacity, there sat, one among many, a young man of twenty who looked like an angel. Decades later the world became aware of the lasting impression that the play, the production, and the [introductory] talk by Karl Kraus had made on him. His name was Alban Berg, and one day he was to compose the opera, *Lulu*.³³

Writing to congratulate Kraus on his sixtieth birthday in 1934, Berg enclosed a six-bar excerpt from *Lulu* with Alwa's words to Lulu: 'Eine Seele, die sich im Jenseits den Schlaf aus den Augen reibt' ('A soul rubbing the sleep out of its eyes in the next world'), this being the very quotation with which Kraus had opened his introductory lecture to *Die Büchse der Pandora* nearly thirty years previously.³⁴

Wedekind was also enthusiastic about the then virtually unknown Georg Büchner (1813–1837), who provided the dramatic source for Berg's *Wozzeck*. Büchner had essentially been discovered by the Galician/Jewish writer Karl Emil Franzos, who had first published the *Woyzeck* fragment in the Viennese *Neue Freie Presse* in 1875.³⁵ Thereafter, his cause was taken up with particular vigour by Hugo von Hofmannsthal, for whom Karl Kraus had little but contempt. While Kraus was busy trying to restore the reputation of the great Viennese farceur Johann Nestroy (1801–62), Hofmannsthal published Büchner's short story *Lenz* in his hugely influential anthology of German stories entitled *Deutsche Erzähler* (1912). Büchner's triumphal march through the dramaturgical history of our century can be dated back to the Viennese performance of his comedy *Leonce and Lena* in 1911, while Hofmannsthal went so far as to provide his own reworking of *Woyzeck*, including a new ending to the fragment. At his instigation, *Woyzeck* was brought to the stage for the first time, in Munich in November 1913, to mark the centenary of Büchner's birth, and one year later the Viennese premiere took place, an event which led to Berg's decision to compose his first great opera.

Kraus may have thought very highly of Frank Wedekind, but it is entirely typical of the diversity within unity that characterised the 'triple alliance' that Altenberg should have held Wedekind in particularly low esteem. Berg, who responded so sensitively to all three, might well have heard Egon Friedell (who had a role in the private performance of *Die Büchse der Pandora*) recite his 'Altenberg anecdotes' at the Cabaret Fleder-

maus, which was patronised by Vienna's intellectual élite from its inception in 1907 until its transformation into a strip-joint in 1913:

The Frank Wedekind Conversation

We were sitting one night in the café when Frank Wedekind came by.

Peter Altenberg said: 'Ha, here comes that pasty-faced wretch!'

'Come on, Peter,' I said, 'make it up again with him.'

'What!?!' said Peter Altenberg, '*me* make it up with him?? That's *quite out of the question!* I'd rather make it up with any *other* of my mortal enemies!! But not with him! And why not? With all the others it would be more or less private and personal, *subjective* animosity! But him I hate *objectively!* *Worlds* divide him and me! He is Satan, Beelzebub, the *Antichrist* here on earth!'

'Fine,' I said, 'but supposing he lends you three hundred crowns?'

'What do you mean!?! He's not going to lend me it anyway!'³⁶

Through *Die Fackel*, with its promotion of both Wedekind and Altenberg, a whole generation of young artists and intellectuals in Central Europe learnt to perceive the world in a very specific way. Ludwig Wittgenstein, for instance, even took copies of Kraus's journal with him to the fastness of his hideaway perched above a Norwegian fjord. By means of the most precise and targeted use of German, over which he had a supreme control – no language doubter he! – Kraus cast a critical and often hilarious eye upon the social, political and artistic foibles of the dying Habsburg Empire. It was a very partial view, its prejudices (against, for example, Klimt's paintings and Freud's psychology) as forcibly articulated as its enthusiasms. High among the latter was the miniaturist Altenberg, health fanatic, drug-addict, alcoholic, wooer of young girls, and for many quite simply the biggest fool in Vienna. For Kraus, however, he was the most important writer in a city full of literary talent, most of which he despised. Where others in Vienna were given over to artifice and superficial decoration, Kraus believed that Altenberg, with his love of children and nature, was genuine, and that a single word of his was worth more than an entire lending library.³⁷ Of especial importance was Altenberg's view, shared with the notoriously misogynistic philosopher Otto Weininger,³⁸ that women were essentially of æsthetic and/or sexual importance. In no way could they match the 'intellectual' genius of men, for woman's genius was an 'æsthetic' one. As has been pointed out, Weininger's notion of the 'otherness of women' ('Anderswertigkeit der Frau') soon became associated in Kraus's mind with the writings of Frank Wedekind.³⁹

Alongside Altenberg and Adolf Loos, whose pioneering new building on the Michaelerplatz (1910–11) caused at least as much offence as the *Altenberg Lieder* – 'a horror of a building' ('ein Scheusal von einem Haus') is how one contemporary critic described it⁴⁰ – Kraus often stood shoul-

der to shoulder. Perhaps especially significant in the shared perceptions of the triumvirate were their reactions in two important areas. First, their insistence on the centrality of female sexuality, and a woman's right to exercise control over her body in the way she thought fit. This included an unusual tolerance of prostitution which Berg seems to have shared not only artistically but in his everyday life too, for writing to Helene in 1910 he says 'a prostitute's position [is] no more or less offensive than associating with people whom you and many others consider quite unobjectionable'.⁴¹ Smaragda Berg's girlfriend of the moment was a prostitute, and a general tolerance of homosexuality was a notable feature of the Kraus set. The second distinguishing feature of this 'triple alliance' was its disdain for excrement, and a belief in the primacy of function over decoration: Kraus famously said that he and Loos between them had taught the world to recognise the difference between an urn and a chamber pot. Reading *Vita Ipsa* (1918), the last book Altenberg published in his lifetime, Berg noted in the margin those aspects of the book which instantly brought Loos to mind. Not surprisingly, he reacted positively to a text like 'Applied Art' ('Kunstgewerbliches') which confirms Altenberg's continuing adherence to the Loos–Kraus aesthetic:

My little inkwell is made of brown glass, fabulously easy to clean, costs two Crowns, and moreover is called 'Bobby', well 'Robert' nowadays. It is thus a work of art, it fulfils its purpose, disturbs nobody and is a beautiful brown.⁴²

In Berg's copy of *Vita Ipsa*, this not unironic passage is annotated with a single word: 'Loos'.



Central though they were for Berg, and indeed to Viennese culture as a whole, Kraus, Loos and Altenberg have nevertheless to be seen in the context of a larger and more heterogeneous Viennese picture. For the city in which Berg came to maturity was the centre of an artistic and intellectual renaissance probably unparalleled in modern times. Whereas Paris, with which Vienna might best be compared, had seldom stagnated, many felt that in the latter part of the nineteenth century Viennese artistic life had languished. Although this artistic decline has to be understood in relative terms – for the city was after all home to Brahms, Wolf and Bruckner – there is no doubt that in the course of the 1890s a new generation of artists and thinkers, many of them Jewish, had set the place alight. A major centre

in this revitalisation was the Café Griensteidl, a venerable establishment opposite the rear entrance to the Hofburg, the Imperial Palace. Forming what one critic has described as a 'sub-society', the cream (as they saw themselves) of Viennese intellectual and artistic life would meet there to drink, read newspapers, debate, and to stay warm and dry in winter.⁴³ This was the place where Schoenberg (1874–1951) and his future brother-in-law Alexander von Zemlinsky (1872–1942) met for coffee and discussion, along with painters, writers and revolutionary politicians. Indeed, it should not be forgotten how important in world terms were these 'politics in a new key', as Carl Schorske has dubbed the activities of Griensteidl habitués like the Socialist leader Victor Adler, the radical pan-German extremist Georg von Schönerer who was so admired by Hitler, and Theodor Herzl, the founder of Zionism.⁴⁴ The Café Griensteidl was the chief meeting place for the writers and poets of 'Young Vienna' who had put the city back on the map of European literature. With the critic and essayist Hermann Bahr at its hub, 'Young Vienna' – whose members included Hofmannsthal, Schnitzler, Salten and Beer-Hofmann as well as, briefly, Altenberg – took it upon itself to rejuvenate Austrian letters from a consciously cosmopolitan perspective. Generally rejecting the Naturalist tendency newly popular in Germany, where Gerhart Hauptmann enjoyed considerable success with such socially-committed dramas as *Vor Sonnenaufgang* (*Before Sunrise*, 1889) and *Die Weber* (*The Weavers*, 1893), the 'Young Viennese' placed the accent firmly upon a poeticisation of reality and an acute examination of the individual, often pathological, psyche. The social and biological determinism of the Naturalists gave way to works dealing with dream-states and visions; depictions of physical distress yielded to portrayals of extreme psychological subtlety. The forms beloved of the 'Young Viennese' were the lyric, the fairy-tale, the short story and the dramatic sketch. Not Zola and Hauptmann but Maeterlinck, Baudelaire and Jens Peter Jacobsen were their models. A glance through the poets who inspired Berg's early songs will suffice to demonstrate the prevailing literary tastes of Vienna 1900. Alongside Goethe and Romantics like Heine, Mörike and Eichendorff, all of whom were perennial favourites with earlier generations of composers, are ranged such names as Mombert, Hofmannsthal, Dörmann, Rilke, Holz, Schlaf and Liliencron.

Along with 'Young Vienna's' fascination for morbid states went a notable tendency towards posing and self-stylisation, all of which proved too much for Kraus, who in 1896 took the impending demolition of the Café Griensteidl as the opportunity to launch his first great satire *Die demolirte Literatur* (*Literature Demolished*). Its opening sentence 'Vienna has been demolished into a metropolis' ('Wien ist zur Großstadt demolirt worden') was followed by a string of cruel but hilarious pen-portraits of the 'Young

Viennese' gathered round Hermann Bahr, the 'gentleman from Linz' who indicated his talent by letting a lock of hair fall over his brow. Schnitzler is dismissed as a cliché maker who cannot get beyond death-bed scenes and sweet young girls seduced by middle-class lechers. The precociously gifted Hugo von Hofmannsthal, later to become Richard Strauss's most treasured librettist, is written off as 'Goethe at his school-desk' ('Goethe auf der Schulbank'). With unerring aim, Kraus unmasked the pretensions of what he felt was a self-selecting literary élite blessed with no special talent. Significantly, the only writer spared the lash of the satirist's pen was Peter Altenberg.⁴⁵

Parallel with the writings of 'Young Vienna', the artistic scene in Vienna entered the modern era with the painters of the Secession ranged around the dominant figure of Gustav Klimt. Kraus belittled the work of Klimt,⁴⁶ just as he despised 'Young Vienna'. Linking 'Young Vienna' and the artists of the Secession was both a love of allegory and a fascination with decoration. They also shared a strong awareness that however 'modern' they appeared, they also were rooted in the past, and it is this awareness of a common heritage in nineteenth-century art, and earlier, which provides an overarching link (a 'family resemblance' as Wittgenstein would have called it) not only with such an apparently revolutionary figure as Schoenberg, the creative reworker of Brahms and Johann Strauss, but also with Kraus and Loos.⁴⁷

Indeed, a major factor in Loos's and Kraus's disapproval of Klimt, the Secession, and later the arts-and-crafts-oriented 'Wiener Werkstätte', lay in their self-confessed ethical rejection of ornamentation. One of Loos's most celebrated essays is tellingly called 'Ornament and Crime' ('Ornament und Verbrechen', 1908), and its message was one which appealed especially to Schoenberg as he moved towards a new musical language. Given originally as a lecture, it is very probable that Berg was present when Loos delivered it again at the Akademischer Verband für Literatur und Musik in 1910.⁴⁸ Intriguingly, although Loos and Altenberg rejected decoration on intellectual and ethical grounds, their strident aesthetic functionalism might also be linked to the nature of their sexuality. It has been convincingly suggested not only that Loos's loathing of ornamentation was linked at a deeper level to his fear of mature female sexuality (he was married three times, to progressively younger women),⁴⁹ but that 'Ornament und Verbrechen' can be interpreted as a document which 'amounts to the criminalization of women'.⁵⁰ Hence the 'Haus am Michaelerplatz' can conceivably be regarded both as a revolutionary step in the development of functional modern architecture and, in its denial of sensuality, as realising the 'utopia of the disavowal of mature female sexuality'.⁵¹ Whether Berg understood it as such must remain a moot point, but the

widespread fear of women at the turn of the century, recorded so starkly in Wedekind's Lulu tragedies, was something to which the composer could respond with searing intensity. He will have been equally alive to Altenberg's endless fascination with pre-sexual and pubescent girls, typical not only of the *fin de siècle* preoccupation with adolescence, but also of its dual perspective on women: the *femme fatale* on the one hand, the *femme fragile*, the apparently asexual 'child-woman', on the other.

The 'frozen music' of architecture is the art-form most immediately affecting everyday life, and in few other places had developments in architecture made more of an impact than in 'Vienna 1900'. From the 1850s onwards, central Vienna had been rebuilt on a scale at least as great as that of Haussmann's reworking of the Parisian cityscape. Monumental and historicist, also quintessentially style-less in the view of the novelist (and friend of Berg) Hermann Broch,⁵² the new Vienna with its patchwork of mock-Gothic, Classical, Palladian and Renaissance buildings horrified Loos. In an essay of 1898 he compared the emptiness of these theatrical façades, which made them so appealing to at least one aspect of the Viennese temperament, with the paste villages which Potemkin had erected in an attempt to fool Catherine the Great that the endless steppes were being successfully populated and that out of emptiness was coming forth plenty.⁵³ It was, therefore, entirely consistent that Loos should in time have come to support the new music of Schoenberg and his followers with a financial generosity that often left the architect in dire straits. It says nothing for Schoenberg's better nature that he could (or would) never appreciate the sacrifices which Loos made on his behalf, and also for the art of other revolutionaries such as Kokoschka who offended against bourgeois Viennese taste. It is yet another of Vienna's ironies that Loos, celebrated for his iconoclastic views and an architectural spareness that shocked and offended in equal measure, was also profoundly hard of hearing. Altenberg, with his usual bluntness, described him in a uniquely Viennese phrase as 'der terische Adolf Loos' ('that Mutt'n Jeff Adolf Loos').⁵⁴ Understandably enough, Loos's deafness was meat and drink to a section of the Viennese press, as Berg reported in a letter to Schoenberg soon after the *Skandalkonzert*. The anonymous critic 'Veritas', who had described Altenberg's texts as 'anal poetry' and Berg's songs as a 'hoax', also took the opportunity to describe Loos, who had been present at the concert, merely as 'the well-known deaf architect', for whom such works probably represented the 'music of the spheres'.⁵⁵ Kraus himself, who had been absent from Vienna in late March, was unable to experience directly the poisonous atmosphere surrounding the concert, but in mid-April he gave a highly successful public reading from Altenberg's latest book, attended by Berg,⁵⁶ and in *Die Fackel* of 8 May 1913 he commented belatedly on the

scandal. It was not, he contended, a response to the 'New Music' as such, but rather an example of a negative response in which the Viennese press had managed to stoop below even its own execrable standards.⁵⁷

For their part, Berg and Schoenberg were supportive of Loos when obloquy was heaped upon him on account of what his critics saw as the alien functionalism of his building on the Michaelerplatz. In a letter to his teacher dated 6 December 1911, accompanied by a quite effective pencil sketch of the building which was causing so much offence (Schoenberg was now living in Berlin), Berg reports how Loos had given him some practical advice on how to further the public awareness of Schoenberg's music. He also tells Schoenberg how he naturally intends going to Loos's lecture on his Michaelerplatz building. He continues:

By the way, one Viennese paper implied that Loos had gone mad as a result of the building and was seeking treatment in an institution. That's typically Viennese!⁵⁸

By this time, as both Berg and Schoenberg knew, Loos's friend Altenberg was already undergoing treatment in the Inzersdorf Sanatorium. Both had learned from Kraus, however, that the press in Vienna was as fickle as it was venal. Sympathy for Loos's functional aesthetic was central to all the composers of the 'New Music' in Vienna, but they also responded to the architect as a human being, expressing their support for him in 1928 when his alleged involvement in paedophile activities resulted in a suspended prison sentence of four months.⁵⁹ When a *Festschrift* came out to celebrate his sixtieth birthday, there were contributions from both Schoenberg and Webern as well as a nine-line double acrostic by Berg in which the initial letters spelled 'Adolf Loos' and the last letters 'Alban Berg'.⁶⁰

Although the 'Haus am Michaelerplatz' had turned Loos into the most famous architect in Vienna, it remained (typically) the only large-scale design he was able to realise in the city. If searching today for other Viennese buildings which express something of the spirit of Loos, above all in their functionalism and movement away from decoration, then it is to the work of Otto Wagner (1841–1918) that one must look: buildings such as the pumping station at the Nussdorf dam on the Danube-cut, the Postsparkasse in the city centre and the block at No. 40 Neustiftgasse in the seventh district all indicate a new attitude towards function in architecture which parallels the new musical language being developed by Schoenberg and his pupils in the dying years of the Habsburg empire.

When late in 1911 Schoenberg published his *Harmonielehre*, which he dedicated to Mahler, he also paid fulsome tribute to the example which Karl Kraus had set him, even admitting that there was more of Kraus in the work than was perhaps proper. A year previously, in the 300th edition of

Die Fackel, Kraus, whose understanding of modern music was probably not great (his favourite composer remained Jacques Offenbach), had expressed his appreciation of the relationship between Schoenberg's innovations and the writings of Peter Altenberg by publishing on facing pages a facsimile of Schoenberg's setting of Stefan George's poem 'Sprich nicht immer vom Laube', from *Das Buch der hängenden Gärten*, and Altenberg's sketch 'Widmung [Sommerabend in Gmunden]', soon to be republished in *Neues Altes*, where of course Berg found his texts for the *Altenberg Lieder*.

Throughout their lives, the triumvirate of Berg, Webern and Schoenberg retained an allegiance to the 'triple alliance' of Kraus, Altenberg and Loos, whose desire for a new simplicity coupled with a frank assessment of the role of female sexuality proved to be of lasting importance. However, the world in which these ideas first came to fruition ended for ever with the outbreak of war in the summer of 1914. To begin with, Berg and Schoenberg, who both donned uniform, took a rather more patriotic and bellicose view of events than Kraus, whose linguistic clarity scythed unerringly through the popular jingoism of the day. Significantly, however, in his fiftieth-birthday letter to Kraus, Berg made a point of thanking him for the spiritual support he had given him during the war, 'in life's most unpleasant situations ... not to mention my military service of more than three years.'⁶¹

The spirit of Kraus, which meant so much to Berg, was nowhere better articulated in wartime than in the rhetorical masterpiece 'In dieser großen Zeit' ('In these great times'), first delivered as a lecture and finally published in *Die Fackel* in December 1914. Whereas the unpredictable Altenberg reacted in his usual instantaneous manner with an outspoken attack on France fairly typical of the response amongst intellectuals in Austria at the outbreak of war, Kraus had initially remained mute.⁶² When eventually he broke his silence, Kraus examined the causes of war, providing an analysis of twentieth-century civilisation and its discontents which remains in crucial respects as valid today as when the lecture was first delivered. War is the outcome of a catastrophic failure of the imagination, Kraus argued, for if its consequences could be imagined, it would never happen. Once it has broken out, its iniquities are fuelled by a press whose ultimate function is not public illumination but the creation of wealth within the capitalist system. Horrified by the bombardment of Rheims Cathedral, Kraus recognised that 'culture' is an early victim of a world where people now count only as consumers: 'Menschheit ist Kundschaft' ('To be human is to be a customer'). When, he asks, with a demand still resonating, unanswered, at the end of the twentieth century, will the greater age break, when cathedrals make war against people?⁶³