Schoenberg's Tonalities in the Middle Period: Deterritorializing *Pierrot Lunaire*

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Abstract

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Arnold Schoenberg's freely atonal period has been overshadowed in scholarship by his later serialist period. When the middle period is mentioned in literature, it is often viewed as existing only in service of the twelve-tone method. Rather than being an unorganized method of composition as some suggest, Schoenberg's middle period presents music that sees the composer keenly aware of the concepts of tonality. The composer's thoughts on the tonal system are elucidated in his theoretical writing in his *Harmonielehre*. These thoughts are also present in his 1912 *Pierrot Lunaire*.

In this thesis, I argue that *Pierrot Lunaire* makes clear the connection between Schoenberg's theoretical concepts and his compositional practice. Utilizing the Deleuzian concept of the refrain, I analyze *Pierrot Lunaire* as musically presenting Schoenberg's deterritorializing process regarding the elements of tonality, which he then reterritorializes into an atonal framework. What this analysis reveals is a musical work that sees the composer actively working towards hat he believed to be the inevitable usurpation of the tonal framework. Rather than being a chaotically explored dead-end on the path to twelve-tone music, I argue that *Pierrot Lunaire* evinces a complicated, conscious approach towards atonality that is reliant on the composer's own theoretical writings.

"A dead end. Where does one go from here, having abandoned all the rules?" This was the question Leonard Bernstein asked in his 1973 Norton lecture series, referring to Arnold Schoenberg's "middle", or "freely atonal" period.[1] This period, relatively short in comparison with the dodecaphonic period, encompassed the composition of some of Schoenberg's best-known works, such as *Pierrot Lunaire* and *Drei Klavierstücke*, among others. Despite the popularity of these and other pieces from the middle period, academic attention has focused instead on analyzing the later serialist works, with Schoenberg's freely atonal technique suffering comparative neglect. Having gone mostly unchallenged by subsequent scholarship, Bernstein's judgment suggests a consensus view: the middle period was a dead end on the journey toward the achievement of serialism.

When scholars do address Schoenberg's freely atonal period , it often functions as a brief interlude before the eventual dodecaphonic period, beginning with *Funf Klavierstücke* in 1923. Discussion of the middle period, when it does appear, tends to treat it teleologically, arguing that this period merely led to the later serialist method. From this perspective, the middle period therefore only exists as a way station along the path to the later period, and it can only be understood as such. This frameworking of the middle period implies that Schoenberg's approach to atonality was less deliberate than his serialist period. Without in-depth musical analysis of the middle period, such implications remain embedded in our understanding of the composer's oeuvre.

Scholarship on Schoenberg's freely atonal period often downplays the complexity of the music. Instead, the period serves as a putative midpoint between tonality and "true" atonality,

[1] cagin, "The Unanswered Question 1973 5 The XXth Century Crisis Bernstein Norton," YouTube, 2:13:57, April 8, 2011, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kPGstQUbpHQ&ab_channel=cagin.

with the serialist compositions of Schoenberg receiving far more attention. This teleological narrative implies that the function of the middle period is to lead to the later dodecaphonic period. Consequently, the shadow of dodecaphony looms over the middle period in the literature.

Perhaps nowhere is this teleological framework more apparent than in Bernstein's lectures. Bernstein argues that the freely atonal period falls short of "true" atonality. Chiefly, the music's "ungoverned" freedom presents difficulty for listeners. While he does acknowledge the presence of "canonic phrases, inverted phrases, retrogrades," Bernstein suggests that the music lacks an overarching coherence. As I will show in this thesis, ample evidence from Schoenberg's own writings undermines Bernstein's position. Yet Bernstein doubled down on the idea of an intrinsic ungoverned nature in the freely atonal style, arguing that because of the lack of a systematic approach (such as that granted by serialism), it was "difficult for the composer to maintain his atonality. Bernstein then suggests that free atonality cannot truly be atonal because the composer will inevitably give in to some "innate tonal drive we all share universally."[2] Setting aside the implicit Eurocentrism of this remark,[3] Bernstein's argument calls into question the "atonality" of any freely atonal practice, and suggests that the middle period marks a failed experiment in Schoenberg's approach to atonality, or a "dead end." Bernstein's question—"Where does one go from here?"— seems to suppose that tonality, and music history as a whole, must be moving towards some point, and the failure of the freely atonal period is that it was eventually abandoned in favor of dodecaphony.

Historians have tended to agree with Bernstein's dismissive approach to the freely atonal period. Describing the shift in the differing approaches to atonality, for example, Ton de Leeuw

[2] cagin, "The Unanswered Question 1973 5 The XXth Century Crisis Bernstein Norton," YouTube, 2:13:57, April 8, 2011, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kPGstQUbpHQ&ab_channel=cagin.
[3] The implicit Eurocentrism of Bernstein's thoughts on tonality are clearly entangled in the system of tonality itself, and its origins. See Jason Yust, "Tonality and Racism," *Journal of Music Theory* 68, no. 1 (April 2024): 59–88.

describes Schoenberg's middle period as "volcanically and spontaneously explored."[4] This phrasing suggests again a failure on the part of Schoenberg to stick to a coherent logic when composing each piece. Instead de Leeuw casts the composer as a kind of inexperienced improviser, working out the pieces as he goes along. Implicit here is a perspective much like Bernstein's: free atonality becomes legible only in relation to, and by comparison with, the later period. The development of what de Leeuw calls "bound atonality" (serialism) becomes the overriding narrative, to the extent that it overshadows all other narratives of the composer's life and career.[5] Reflecting on Schoenberg's compositional silence in the years between 1914 and 1923, de Leeuw writes: "no compositions were completed [in this period]; instead, Schoenberg reflected on the new situation, and this was to find expression in the 12-tone technique."[6] In fact, throughout these years Schoenberg was sketching new compositions such as a symphony, essays and analyses of his own compositions. Even more important to understanding the gap in Schoenberg's output perhaps, was the outbreak of World War One.[7] The war's impact on the composer should not be understated. Not only did he serve in the Austrian army, his writings illuminate the effect the proceedings of the war had on his psyche.[8] Later referring to his occupation with the conflict as "war psychosis," the composer described the impact of the war on the development of culture, simply stating "then came the war" in an undated essay.[9]

[4] Ton deLeeuw, "From Free Atonality to 12-Note Music," In *Music of the Twentieth Century*, (Amsterdam University Press, 2019): 146.
[5] deLeeuw, "From Free Atonality to 12-Note Music," 147.
[6] deLeeuw, "From Free Atonality to 12-Note Music," 147.
[7] Much of this comes from surviving correspondence and writings from the composer during the feely atonal period. For more on Schoenberg's correspondences and writings during this time, see Joseph Henry Auner and Arnold Schoenberg, "War Clouds: Berlin and Vienna, 1911–1918," in *A Schoenberg Reader : Documents of a Life*, (Yale University Press, 2003): 98–147.
[8] Arnold Schoenberg, *Style and Idea: The Selected Writings of Arnold Schoenberg*, ed. Leonard Stein, (University of California Press, 1984): 104.
[9] Auner and Arnold Schoenberg, *Style and Idea*, 147.

De Leeuw seems to suggest that Schoenberg's serialist method was created after a period of intense reflection on the freely atonal period, when in reality Schoenberg was busy working on other compositions during this silent period. The earliest development in what would later become the serial method came from a scherzo movement of an abandoned choral symphony the composer began work on in 1914.[10] Schoenberg later wrote of this work:

> I had sketched many themes, among them one for a scherzo which consisted of all the twelve tones. An historian will probably one day find in the exchange of letters between Webern and me how enthusiastic we were about this.[11]

The composer continues to write about how the sketches of *Die Jakobsleiter* occasioned the development of the twelve-tone approach, remarking that when he set about to finish working on the oratorio decades later that it was "to [his] greatest pleasure that this beginning was a real twelve-tone composition."[12] Schoenberg's approach to serialism was not independent of other factors; it was not derived from some sort of monastic isolation. Instead, Schoenberg approached it gradually, while simultaneously continuing work on freely atonal compositions.

Another misunderstanding that stems from a teleological approach to the middle period is apparent in Patricia Carpenter's "The Piano Music of Arnold Schoenberg." Carpenter contrasts Schoenberg's different systems of atonality in examples among his compositions for piano, arguing that Schoenberg can be understood as both a "destroyer" of tonality and as a "builder" of new music, chiefly by means of the serialist works.[13] Like Bernstein, Carpenter argues that free atonality was difficult for both listeners and composers, pointing to the short length of pieces like

[10] The unfinished oratorio *Die Jakobsleiter* originates from this abandoned symphony. See Auner and Schoenberg, 123.
[11] Auner and Arnold Schoenberg, *Style and Idea*, 247.
[12] Auner and Arnold Schoenberg, *Style and Idea*, 247–248.
[13] Patricia Carpenter, "The Piano Music of Arnold Schoenberg," *Theory and Practice* 30 (2005): 16.

Op. 19, *Sechs Kleine Klavierstücke*. The short length of Op. 19 is in part due to the inability of free atonality to "bear the entire burden of construction," that is, to sustain a longer composition. This inability stems from what Carpenter argues is the unsuitability of free atonality to constructing large-scale forms, and she quotes Schoenberg to argue that there is an "impossibility" of free atonality to create "pieces of complicated organization or of great length."[14] In this view, the triumph of serialism over free atonality is chiefly a matter of form.

Despite Schoenberg's quotes being used in support of the argument, it is still nonetheless marred by the same teleology that other arguments have fallen victim to. The passage Carpenter cites comes well after the composer's development of the twelve-tone method. Here too, the music of the middle period suffers from the comparison, as if it existed only in relation to what followed it. However conventional it may have become, this approach does the works a disservice, risking historical inaccuracies and obscuring the musical complexity of this part of Schoenberg's career. The idea that free atonality exists in an effort to compose serial music takes for granted the depth and complexity in freely atonal works.. Possibly worse still, it also misrepresents the approach to serialism, the system that is being suggested as being superior to free atonality. The development of the serial twelve-tone method was complex, involving abandoned works that iteratively approached dodecaphony nearly a decade before the premiere of *Funf Klavierstücke*, to a degree that most historical narratives have oversimplified at the expense of the middle period.

If we wish to understand the works of the middle period more fully, without reference to serialism, we need to develop analytical approaches that do not simply regard them as failed experiments.

[14] Carpenter, "The Piano Music of Arnold Schoenberg," 17.

Schoenberg's middle period cannot be compared with his later period in an effort to understand the freely atonal music he composed. The idea that free atonality exists in an effort to compose serial music takes for granted the depth and complexity in the works. Possibly worse still, it also misrepresents the approach to serialism, the system that is suggested as being superior to free atonality. The development of the serial twelve-tone method was complex, involving abandoned works that iteratively approached dodecaphony nearly a decade before the premiere of *Funf Klavierstücke*.

What I propose, then, is an explanation of Schoenberg's freely atonal music that does not merely rely on comparing it unfavorably with serialism, but instead regards it as a coherent approach to composition on its own. To this end, an important place to begin is with Schoenberg's contemporaneous ideas about composition. The *Harmonielehre* (1910), which he intended as a composition textbook, is invaluable in this regard, as it affords a window onto some of the composer's focused insight into ideas about tonality and atonality at precisely the moment when he was working out his "free atonal" style, as well as how he believes tonality to function more broadly.

In this thesis, I argue that Schoenberg's freely atonal period sees the composer grappling with the concept of tonality, both in his music-theoretical writings and in his compositional practice, with specific implications for the style and techniques he developed in the years before the First World War. In his *Harmonielehre*, a textbook he published in 1910 for students in composition, Schoenberg comments frequently on the concept of "tonality" and the existing tonal system. Schoenberg's thoughts on tonality are complex, and he resorts to using two different concepts of the phenomenon in order to explain his shift towards the freely atonal style of composition. These complicated ideas of tonality are presented musically in the composer's

middle period, and I analyze songs from *Pierrot Lunaire* to show how the ideas presented in the *Harmonielehre* come to bear on the music itself. My analysis is also informed by a Deleuzian approach, using the concept of territorialization and the refrain from *A Thousand Plateaus*[15]. The argument and analysis of Schoenberg's freely atonal period provided is in effort to shed light on a critically misunderstood and underappreciated era of the composer's career. What is revealed is not a chaotic, unorganized approach to atonality, but rather an approach that relies on the composer's theoretical writings.

Schoenberg's Theory

Despite his importance to the development of atonal music, Schoenberg was highly interested in the tonal system. Focusing purely on his status as an atonal composer has obscured the important ways in which Schoenberg defined his freely atonal compositional method in relation to tonality. The composer's *Harmonielehre* provides key insight into his thoughts on the system, how it operates, and its future.

Schoenberg's definition of tonality is idiosyncratic, in that he distinguishes between two different types of tonality, both of which he writes about extensively in *Harmonielehre*. According to Schoenberg, tonality is both a "natural" phenomenon and a "handicap," by which he means that the system both exists in nature and to limit what a composer can create (though luckily for Schoenberg, it "cannot fully paralyze).[16] Tonality is "natural," in this scheme, insofar as it arises from the overtone series, and more specifically from the presence of overtones constituting a musical sound (Klang).[17] Schoenberg's "natural" theory of harmony relies on the presence of each of the seven tones in a scale, which he refers to as "imitation of the tone on the

[15] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (University of Minnesota Press, 1987).
[16] Arnold Schoenberg, *Harmonielehre*, 3rd edition, trans. Roy E. Carter. (University of California Press, 1978), 395.
[17] Schoenberg, *Harmonielehre*, 23.

horizontal plane," as it presents all seven tones that are present within a *Klang* in succession. When the tones present in the overtone series are sounded together, Schoenberg refers to it as "imitation of the tone on the vertical plane."[18] Schoenberg points to the major triad specifically as the simplest of chords, in this respect, because it reinforces the tone by "eliminating the most distant overtones."[19]

Since Schoenberg regards the tone as "the material of music," this "imitation of the tone" forms the foundation of a system of tonality. In this understanding, the tone, as music,'s material, has driven forward a historical "evolution of music," whereby composers have gradually familiarized themselves with increasingly distant overtones in the series. According to Schoenberg, the task of the composer is to continue imitating the tone by means of increasingly remote overtones:

> What is worth striving for is to discover everything that lies within the natural tone, to attain thereby everything of which the human brain with its powers of association and its ability to systematize is capable.What is within reach has its temporary boundaries wherever our nature and the instruments we have invented have their temporary boundaries.What is attainable with the phenomenon outside ourselves, as far as the tone itself is concerned, theoretically speaking, has noboundaries.What has not yet been attained what is worth striving for.[20]

Schoenberg compares this theory with a more conventional understanding of tonality, which he derides as a system that is able to accommodate only some of the tones present in the overtone

[18] Schoenberg, *Harmonielehre*, 26.
[19] Schoenberg, *Harmonielehre*, 26.
[20] Schoenberg, *Harmonielehre*, 319.

series. In Schoenberg's view, this system has placed arbitrary boundaries around the more distant overtone that limits the possibilities latent in the material of the tone.[21]

As I noted above, Schoenberg offers another conception of tonality in the *Harmonielehre*. This version of tonality consists of the "western" system of organizing tones in hierarchical fashion based on relationships defined as scale degrees. Schoenberg defines tonality in this sense rather simply, as the tendency of music to orient around a single tone to grant a sense of completeness: "the idea of closing with the same tone one began with has something decidedly right about it and also gives a certain impression of being natural… He is Alpha and Omega. That is morally right, so long as no other moral code obtains."[22] This definition is conventional, and it places Schoenberg within the theoretical tradition that began with Fétis' writings on tonality.

In a recent article, Markus Böggemann has helped elucidate and clarify the composer's bifurcated conception of tonality. Böggemann refers to Schoenberg's theory of tonality based on the overtone series as "tonality as a natural phenomenon."[23] By contrast, he calls the theory of tonality organized around the sense of completeness granted by a fundamental tone as "tonality as a historical phenomenon."[24] As he demonstrates, the two senses of tonality are often in conflict with one another in *Harmonielehre*. Indeed, Schoenberg argues that the "natural phenomenon" will inevitably displace the "historical" one. This struggle between the two concepts is given political undertones, with the different concepts of tonality representing monarchs or dictators:

[21] Schoenberg, *Harmonielehre*, 319–320.
[22] Schoenberg, *Harmonielehre*, 128.
[23] Markus Böggemann, "Concepts of Tonality in Schoenberg's Harmonielehre," in *Tonality 1900–1950: Concepts and Practice*, ed. Felix Worner, Ullrich Schiedeler, Philip Rupprecht. (Germany: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2013), 102.
[24] Böggemann, "Concepts of Tonality in Schoenberg's Harmonielehre," 105.

> If, for example, the supreme lord becomes weak and his subjects strong, a situation that arises only too often in harmony. Just as it is hardly inevitable that a conqueror will endure as dictator, so it is no more inevitable that tonality must take its direction from the fundamental tone, even if it is derived from that tone… And even if here the struggle does end with the victory of the one fundamental, that victory is still not inevitable. This one question (which fundamental shall reign) could just as well remain unanswered, seeing that so many others are still unanswered. A piece can also be intelligible to us when the relationship to the fundamental is not treated as basic; it can be intelligible even when the tonality is kept, so to speak, flexible, fluctuating. Many examples give evidence that nothing is lost from the impression of completeness if the tonality is merely hinted at, yes, even if it is erased.[25]

Schoenberg's primary concern with music is the intelligibility of a piece, or its ability to be understood. He argues that the need to restate the fundamental tone is a historical artifact, one which is no longer necessary. The natural phenomenon of tonality is more intelligible according to Schoenberg because it adheres to the "potentiality" within a single tone, which derives from the overtone series.[26]

Böggemann highlights the teleological quality of Schoenberg's theory of tonality as a natural phenomenon, pointing out that he conflates the "naturalness" of atonality with historical inevitability. In *Harmonielehre*, tonality has become a disposable method to be used in the presentation of music. "Tonality" becomes paradoxical in this sense, as he removes its context as a property of music, instead making it a compositional tool. As a compositional tool, it becomes

[25] Schoenberg, *Harmonielehre*, 128.
[26] Böggemann, "Concepts of Tonality in Schoenberg's Harmonielehre," 104.

doubtful that it holds any intrinsic natural qualities, as it is dependent on the intentions of the composer.[27] The perspective Böggemann provides clearly delineates and explains Schoenberg's distinct definitions of tonality. A clear understanding of these definitions helps lead to a new approach to understanding the middle period.

Schoenberg's writings on tonality, especially when they concern tonality as a natural phenomenon, find resonance with the concept of the "refrain," as Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari understand this term in their *A Thousand Plateaus*. The refrain, they write, is a territorial assemblage; a function by which a territory is marked and defined. An assemblage can be understood as the increase in dimensions of a multiplicity, or rhizome, which on its own is understood as a system that contains multiple points, all of which can (and must) be connected to one another.[28] The refrain, then, is a rhizome or multiplicity that has increased dimensions, and signifies a territory. The concept of the refrain, notwithstanding its musical associations, applies generally to social and physical spaces.[29] The territory serves to fulfill some task or deed, which involves "an activity of selection, elimination and extraction, in order to prevent the interior forces of the earth from being submerged."[30]

Whatever lies outside the territory defined by the refrain, according to Deleuze and Guattari, is "chaos."[31] These forces of chaos, or that which exists outside the space defined as the territory, do not remain static. Rather, they consist of "directional components, namely "milieus and rhythms."[32] The constitutive aspects of a given milieu are subject to constant development and change, because they are able to be overwritten by other forces of chaos The two write that:

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[27] Böggemann, "Concepts of Tonality in Schoenberg's Harmonielehre," 104.
[28] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 7–8.
[29] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 312.
[30] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 311.
[31] Deleuze and Guatarri, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 311.
[32] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 313.

> Every milieu is coded, a code being defined by periodic repetition; but each code is in a perpetual state of transcoding or transduction…The notion of the milieu is not unitary: not only does the living thing continually pass from one milieu to another, but the milieus pass into one another; they are essentially communicating. The milieus are open to chaos, which threatens them with exhaustion or intrusion.[33]

Even as they respond to chaos, milieus are also "territorialized" by the "territories" that exclude them.[34] In a Deleuzian framework territories are both markers of location as well as functions themselves, constantly integrating (that is, territorializing) milieus into the space of the territory. The territory, then, is not a fixed set of contents; it is the "product of territorialization," which is a dynamic and iterative process[35] Like the milieus that lie outside of the territory, those that are territorialized are constantly shifting, developing into "motifs and counterpoints, reorganizing forces and regrouping forces.[36]

Territories are defined by the iterative processes, as well as by the refrain, which organizes. Of equal importance to the Deleuzian framework (and, I will argue, to understanding its application to Schoenberg's free atonality,) are the processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization. Deterritorialization occurs when the territorialized milieus within a territorial assemblage "take on an autonomy that makes them swing over into other assemblages."[37] The milieus become decontextualized from the original territory, and form a new territory, with completely new functions and associations. According to this framework, the capacity for

[33] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 313.
[34] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 314.
[35] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 315.
[36] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 322.
[37] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 325.

deterritorialization is also latent within any of the territorialized functions within a territory. Deleuze and Guattari reiterate this point in the very introduction to the concept of the refrain, writing:

> One opens the circle not on the side where the old forces of chaos press against it but in another region, one created by the circle itself. As though the circle tended on its own to open onto a future, as a function of the working forces it shelters.[38]

The milieus present within the territory are the driving forces behind deterritorialization, not the territory as a whole. Reterritorialization, by contrast, is a "complementary" function or process.[39] Reterritorialization can be best understood as "the establishment of a new relationship and the beginning of a new process and new territories."[40] This is the recontextualization of the milieus that have become alienated from the original territory. The concept of the territorial assemblage, or the refrain, therefore depends on the functions of territorialization, with deterritorialization decontextualizing the concepts inherent to the assemblage, and reterritorialization recontextualizing and providing a new territory for milieus.[41]

These Deleuzian concepts help us to understand the function of the concept of tonality in *Harmonielehre*. Schoenberg states that the tone itself contains its own forces of development, much as every territory comes into being with the capacity for its own deterritorialization. We can understand Schoenberg's process of composing freely atonal music as a process of deterritorialization, whereby Schoenberg takes from the tonal system the twelve tones that

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[38] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 311.
[39] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 143.
[40] Ineta Kivle, "Search for Stability: Rhythm in the Philosophies of Husserl, Deleuze & Guattari," *The Polish Journal of Aesthetics* 61, (February 2022), 88.
[41] Deleuze and Guattari utilize the term "reterritorialization" nearly every time deterritorialization is brought up. What the two fail to provide is a succinct, independent definition of reterritorialization, often relying on simply referring to it as a "complementary" or "contrasting" force that acts upon the territorial assemblage. See Ineta Kivle, "Search for Stability: Rhythm in the Philosophies of Husserl, Deleuze & Guattari," *The Polish Journal of Aesthetics* 62, (February 2022), 81–94.

territorialize the historical phenomenon of tonality. By deterritorializing the tones in the manner that Schoenberg considers to be their natural tendency towards development, the tones have been reterritorialized. That is, they act now as a territorializing milieu within a freely atonal territory. By understanding Schoenberg's compositional practice through Deleuzian concepts, it becomes possible to listen to and analyze the freely atonal period as a musical setting of Schoenberg working out his ideas on atonality.

As interesting as Schoenberg's writings are, what matters most to my argument is their implication on the music of the middle period. Schoenberg's thoughts did not come from nothing; they are informed by his compositional method, and explain his own evolution as a creator of atonal music. The ideas espoused by Schoenberg's writings become clear in the music through close musical analysis.

Op. 21, *Pierrot Lunaire*, is a song cycle that Schoenberg composed in 1912, setting the text of Albert Kaebenbergh's symbolist poetry of the same title under the pseudonym "Albert Giraud" to music.[42] Relying on the guidance of the commissioner, actress Albertine Zehme, Schoenberg composed *Pierrot Lunaire* to consist of three symmetrical parts, each with seven poems.[43] The three parts of the cycle contain a narrative progression, with the first part portraying the titular character Pierrot as an artist whose muse is the moon. In the second part of the cycle Pierrot has become a shadow of his former self; the moon has been completely blotted out by enormous black butterflies, and the subject matter that Pierrot sings of becomes increasingly macabre. The final part sees Pierrot as a bored, empty shell, who in the final moments of the cycle dreams nostalgically of his past.[44] The instrumentation of the cycle

[42] Bryan R. Simms, *The Atonal Music of Arnold Schoenberg, 1908–1923*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 121.
[43] Simms, *The Atonal Music of Arnold Schoenberg*, 123–124.
[44] Simms, *The Atonal Music of Arnold Schoenberg*, 125–126.

consists of two woodwind instruments, two stringed instruments, a piano, and a soprano vocalist, who sings in a Sprechstimme style. *Pierrot Lunaire* premiered in Berlin on October 16th, 1912, and was first published in 1914.[45]

Pierrot Lunaire is one of the best-known and most-performed works of Schoenberg's freely atonal period. Most published analyses of the work to date have focused on the form and structure of individual songs in the cycle. The analyses that follow depart from these by taking more thoroughly into consideration Schoenberg's thoughts on tonality. Using set-theory analysis, I analyze similarities across different songs in the cycle, as well as repeated general motifs that suggest the two different definitions of tonality that Schoenberg provides. What emerges from this approach is a picture of the composer grappling with the consequences of what Deleuze and Guattari help us understand as his deterritorializing and reterritorializing of the elements of tonality, both as a natural and historical phenomenon. Thus, my Deleuzian analysis elucidates how Schoenberg was working out his ideas about tonality in his compositional approach, even as he had developed them in prose in *Harmonielehre*.

Ancient Scents

The tension between Schoenberg's "natural" and "historical" conceptions of tonality reaches an apex in "O Alter Duft," the final song in *Pierrot Lunaire*. Here there are strong hints of "historical" tonality from the outset: the opening motif, which appears in both the right hand of the piano and the vocal line, suggests the tonal area of E major. Every pitch in this motif is diatonic to the key of E major, and the right hand reaches a cadence on an E major triad in m. 3 (see example 1). The melody is so strictly diatonic, indeed, that it seems uncharacteristic of Schoenberg, even in comparison with earlier historically tonal compositions, such as *Verklärte*

[45] Simms, *The Atonal Music of Arnold Schoenberg*, 127.

Nacht and *Friede auf Erden*. In other words, Schoenberg appears to be composing purposefully tonal-sounding passages. It is as if Schoenberg has reached back in time to write in a style that predates his own, in which tonality consists of hierarchical relationships between pitches.

The opening motif is accompanied by a chromatic ascending and descending passage in the left hand of the piano (see Example 1). This chromatic line (which also includes leaps) interferes with the E major tonal area that is suggested by the soprano and right hand, with both the hint of a key and the chromatic quality of its antithesis becoming slightly obfuscated as a consequence. This left hand chromaticism suggests Schoenberg's concept of tonality as a natural phenomenon. The juxtaposition of the chromatic line in the left hand with the opening motif musically suggests the overtone series present within "historical" tonality and their capacity for development.

Example 1. Opening E major motif accompanied by chromatic passage

The tonal center established by the opening motif does not last. In m. 6, the vocalist resolves downward from an F-sharp to an E, which is not echoed in the accompaniment, with the right hand of the piano playing instead a D major triad in second inversion, signaling an exit from the E major tonal space . What follows is a less diatonic passage in the voice, with the

piano playing pseudo-triadic harmonies in the right hand and an angular, disjunct line in the left hand, beginning in m. 7 (see example 2). This section again suggests a connection between Schoenberg's compositional approach and his theoretical writings, with “tonal” music yielding to “foreign harmonies.” The music continues in this atonal manner. The vocal part in mm. 10–13 is reducible to a prime form of (012345789), which suggests a nearly completely chromatic conception of the passage (see example 3). This prime form is important, as it recurs throughout the rest of the song.

Example 2. The exit from the E major tonal area after m. 6

Example 3. Vocal part prime form mm. 10–13

The opening motif reappears twice again in the "O Alter Duft." The first instance occurs in m. 14. Here, Schoenberg transposes the left and right hand of the piano up an octave in comparison to the beginning of the movement, but they are identical in pitch-class contents. The soprano is identical to the beginning of the song as well, although it is metrically offset by two beats in comparison to the first statement of the opening motif. This short section, lasting until mm. 17–18, suggests again the key of E major (see example 4).

Example 4. Return of the E major tonal area in mm. 14–18

The final occurrence of the opening motif is in mm. 26–27 in the viola and cello parts. It appears without any accompanying musical material, consisting only of the thirds that originally sounded in the right hand of the piano (see example 5).

Example 5. Opening motif, now unaccompanied, in violin and cello.

The opening motif functions, then, as a refrain, both in the musical and deleuzian sense. If the first two appearances of this motif signaled the key of E Major, the third, by contrast, obscures this tonal orientation. When the refrain appears at the end of the song, it does so after an eight-measure passage that is decidedly atonal. The reappearance of the motif clearly echoes the beginning of the piece, but its meaning has changed. It is instead an eerie cry of what once was. Its eeriness is the consequence precisely of its inability to return the music and the listener's ear to the tonal space of E. There is a "failure of presence" of the tonal signifying power that this motif once had. According to Mark Fisher, this "failure of presence" is one of the causes of the feeling of the eerie, referring to the absence of elements that can explain eerie or unsettling elements or situations.[46] This absence of the tonal space of E is this failure then, despite the appearance of the motif which had been so squarely situated within this tonality.

[46] Mark Fisher, *The Weird and the Eerie*, (London: Repeater Books, 2016): 62.

Beyond assuming an eerie quality, this appearance of the motif *deterritorializes* the historical phenomenon of tonality. When it first appears, the motif (as *refrain*) defines the territory of E major. The presence of the chromatic line supporting the motif suggests not only Schoenberg's notion of atonality sprouting from tonal harmony but also the Deleuzian idea of the territory creating its own means to "open onto a future, as a function of the working forces it shelters."[47] Throughout the progression of the song, atonal passages repeatedly evoke this early chromaticism, until at last, when the motif sounds for the final time—confirming its status as a *refrain*—it has been *reterritorialized*. E major has opened onto an atonal future.

The freely atonal sections of "O Alter Duft," share certain recurring material. Throughout the atonal sections, the piano plays trichordal harmonies that do not correspond to a given key or even suggest a tonal center. This feature harkens back to the beginning of the movement, and as we will see below, Schoenberg uses this harmonic technique throughout *Pierrot*. Other elements recur as well. The prime form in mm. 10–13 repeats almost exactly in mm. 21–23 as (012346789), appearing again in the soprano part (see example 6). The similarity of these sections invites their direct comparison, which reveal Schoenberg developing the material over the course of the song. These chromatic passages also are strictly bounded by the tonal passages, starkly separating the two styles. This duality recallsSchoenberg's own bifurcated understanding of tonality: as both a "historical" and a "natural" phenomenon. Their separation shows Schoenberg's belief in their distinction, and the chromatic turn the motif takes at the end signals his belief in the eventual usurpation of "historical" tonality.

[47] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 311.

Example 6. Vocal part prime form, mm. 21–23.

The text itself provides additional evidence to support this interpretation:

German	English
O alter Duft aus Märchenzeit, Berauschest wieder meine Sinne; Ein närrisch Heer von Schelmerein Durchschwirrt die leichte Luft. Ein glückhaft Wünschen macht mich froh Nach Freuden, die ich lang verachtet: O alter Duft aus Märchenzeit, Berauschest wieder mich! All meinen Unmut gab ich preis; Aus meinem sonnumrahmten Fenster Beschau' ich frei die liebe Welt Und träum' hinaus in selge Weiten... O alter Duft - aus Märchenzeit!”	O ancient scent of days gone by, Intoxicate once more my senses. A host of entertaining pranks Sails through the weightless air. Good fortune brings me once again Those pleasures far too long neglected. O ancient scent of days gone by Once more intoxicate me. All my ill humour is dispelled And from my sun-encircled window I view afresh the love-filled world And dream beyond the blissful distance ... O ancient scent – of days gone by![48]

The opening motif corresponds at each appearance of the words “O Alter Duft,”as if E major were redolent of “ancient scents,” something that properly belongs to the past. The final opening

[48] Roger Marsh, “O Alter Duft,” Oxford International Song Festival, 1996, https://oxfordsong.org/song/banalit%C3%A9s

motif is also paired with the final time "O Alter Duft" is sung, although crucially, the invitation to intoxicate Pierrot's senses is absent. The music also fails to intoxicate the tonal senses, and the music ends with Pierrot saying the words "days gone by,"[49] as if to highlight the transformation of the motif from its original form. The music ends with the vocalist softly singing "Märchenzeit" while the piano plays rising pseudo-triadic harmonies that do not indicate a tonal area, much like how they operated in freely atonal sections of this song. "O Alter Duft" ends atonally while reminding listeners of the tonal beginning, which was only thirty measures earlier. This resembles Freud's theory of the uncanny, which is defined by the unfamiliarity of previously familiar things.[50] "Unheimlich" in German translates to uncanny, and is based on the word for "homely" or native," which in German translates to "heimlich." Freud labels the "unheimlich" as a variation, or "sub-species of *heimlich*." With the earlier motif of "O Alter Duft" appearing without a specific tonal area, the result is an unfamiliar, uncanny version of the beginning of the song.

Bernstein, too, detected a whiff of E major in "O Alter Duft, yet for him its presence represents a failure on Schoenberg's part, a shortcoming in his freely atonal music, rather than being a conscious compositional choice on the part of Schoenberg. According to Bernstein, the freely atonal system breaks down in such moments, giving into an "innate tonal drive we all share universally."[51] Like Schoenberg, Bernstein conflates tonality to be some natural force in the world, rather than a compositional tool. The misunderstanding of Schoenberg's theories on Bernstein's part is that the "historical" rather than the "natural" phenomenon is being focused on.

[49] This word directly translates to "Fairy tale time" in English
[50] Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (The Hogarth Press, 1925): 220–221.
[51] cagin, "The Unanswered Question 1973 5 The XXth Century Crisis Bernstein Norton," YouTube, 2:13:57, April 8, 2011, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kPGstQUbpHQ&ab_channel=cagin.

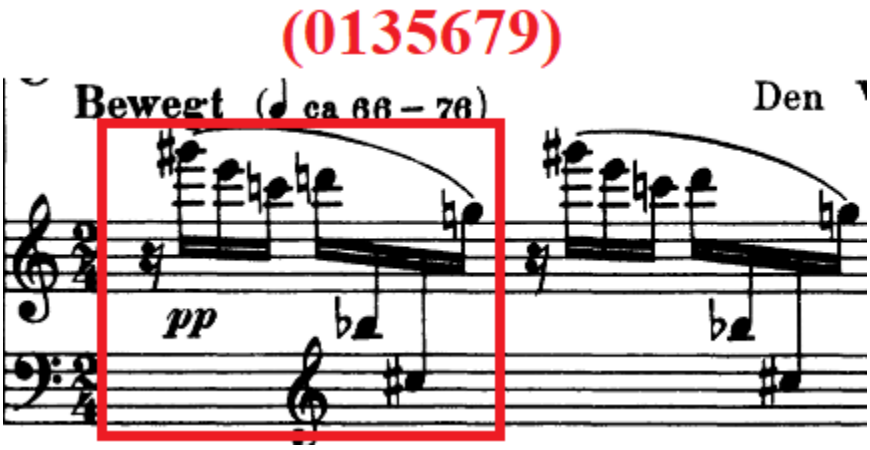
Free atonality is presented as an ungoverned style that exists only to later evolve into the serial method, rather than being its own style that Schoenberg approached.

"O Alter Duft" stages a conflict between Schoenberg's twin concepts of tonality. As the refrain reterritorializes over the course of the song, it dramatizes Schoenberg's conviction that chromaticism lies already latent within each pitch: the historical phenomenon thus gives way to the natural one. Analyzing the entire song cycle provides a new lens on how to not only listen to individual songs, but the cycle as a whole.

The Refrain

Utilizing elements such as rhythm and contour, Schoenberg provides a refrain that undergoes constant development, ending up with a figure that barely resembles the original example on a pitch level. In the first two parts of *Pierrot Lunaire*, a refrain is first introduced and iterated upon. Indeed, the opening gesture of the cycle's first song, "Mondestrunken," presents the refrain as the first musical material in the song cycle: a descending sixteenth-note figure consisting of seven notes beginning on "e" of beat one. This pattern, which I will hereafter refer to as the "ostinato motif," repeats throughout almost all of "Mondestrunken," is introduced with a prime form of (0135679) (see example 7). The pattern undergoes its first change in m. 5, where seven chromatic tones are used out of order (see example 8). This can be heard easily, as the same rhythmic figure is employed for this first change. M. 6 features another development of the ostinato motif, with the pattern beginning on the downbeat of the first beat. Despite this subtle rhythmic change, the second beat of this instance of the ostinato motif remains the same as the opening motif, signalling it as being another instance of the motif (see example 9). In m. 11 the flute plays the ostinato again, following a five-measure absence.

Notwithstanding the substitution of a G-sharp for the original F-sharp, the figures are otherwise identical. The flute again plays the ostinato figure in m. 15; here, however, it resembles more closely the version of the ostinato in m. 6. Schoenberg subjects the ostinato to pitch substitution again in m. 16, with C and F replacing the original two final pitches. In m. 25 both the piano and flute play the figure but out of sync with one another, with the flute playing a beat after the piano. Here, moreover, the ostinato undergoes audible development, being transposed downwards by a minor third twice. The flute again plays the ostinato alone in m. 29, as the prime form (013569), which is identical to the original ostinato, albeit one tone is missing (see example 10). This figure in the flute repeats twice more, subtly changing as ascends, with their prime forms being (0123589), returning to the seven-pitch structure of the ostinato, although some of the pitches have changed. The piano repeats the original figure in the bass register of the piano in mm. 35–36, and then the piano and flute play it together in the final measure, their entrances offset from one another by a beat.



Example 7. First instance of the ostinato motif in “Mondestrunken.”

Example 8. First development of the ostinato motif, m. 5.

Example 9. M. 6 instance of the ostinato motif.

Example 10. M. 29 instance of the ostinato motif in flute.

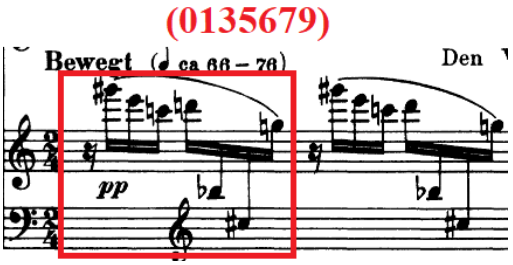
With Deleuze, we can understand the function of the ostinato in "Mondestrunken" as that of a "refrain," even though it is not a conventional refrain in a music-technical sense. In this function, the ostinato defines the territory of the song by drawing the listener's attention to its repetition. In the absence of the markers of what Schoenberg understood as tonality in the historical sense, repetition thereby provides an alternate ground for the listener's experience. Schoenberg develops this material as he would any other, so that by the end of the song, the ostinato becomes a warped version of what it once was. Whereas it seems initially to be a repeated, stable figure, by the end it is no

longer even internally stable as the piano and flute play it out of sync with one another. The material of the refrain has broken down, and it is no longer able to be heard as one continuous unit. A change in the refrain, or the territorial assemblage, in Deleuzian terms, is characteristic of a deterritorializing process. Such a process is at work in "Mondestrunken," as Schoenberg develops and changes first the tones themselves, then returns to the original pitches and changes how they are presented.

The refrain pattern that appears first as an ostinato in "Mondestrunken" recurs in some form in nearly all of the first fourteen songs of the cycle, albeit in ways that can prove challenging to hear. "Colombine," for example, features the refrain in m. 38, presenting it with the prime form (012346T) (see example 11). While this prime form is noticeably different from the version of the refrain in Mondestrunken," the rhythmic figuration asserts a resemblance. The contour of the melodic line recalls the ostinato as well, with its falling melodic line making intermittent leaps upwards, usually by thirds. Even if the prime form of the figure in "Colombine" is noticeably different from that of the ostinato, it contains over half of the same pitch classes, with the other half deviating by small intervals. It amounts to a slow, meticulous development of the ostinato figure by the means of chromatic alteration. Indeed, the refrain appears next in "Der Dandy," at m. 12. This time, the refrain has a prime form of (012346) (see example 12). Though it has one note less than the previous instances of the refrain, the pitch class set is identical with that of its appearance in "Colombine," excepting the dropped ten from the prime form. The final instance of the ostinato motif in the first part of *Pierrot Lunaire* is in m. 6 of "Der kranke Mond," the seventh song in the cycle. At this point the refrain has already developed to the brink of unrecognizability. The most evident continuity is the rhythm, as

even the contour has begun to change. In its prime form, (023468,) another six-pitch evocation of the ostinato motif, this occurrence is quite different from all earlier iterations (see example 13). Yet the pitch content is nearly identical with the refrain in "Colombine," with the only difference being the omission of C-natural in "Der kranke Mond."

Example 11. Ostinato motif in m. 38 of "Colombine."



Example 12. Ostinato motif in m. 12 of "Der Dandy."

Example 13. Ostinato motif in m. 6 of "Der kranke Mond."

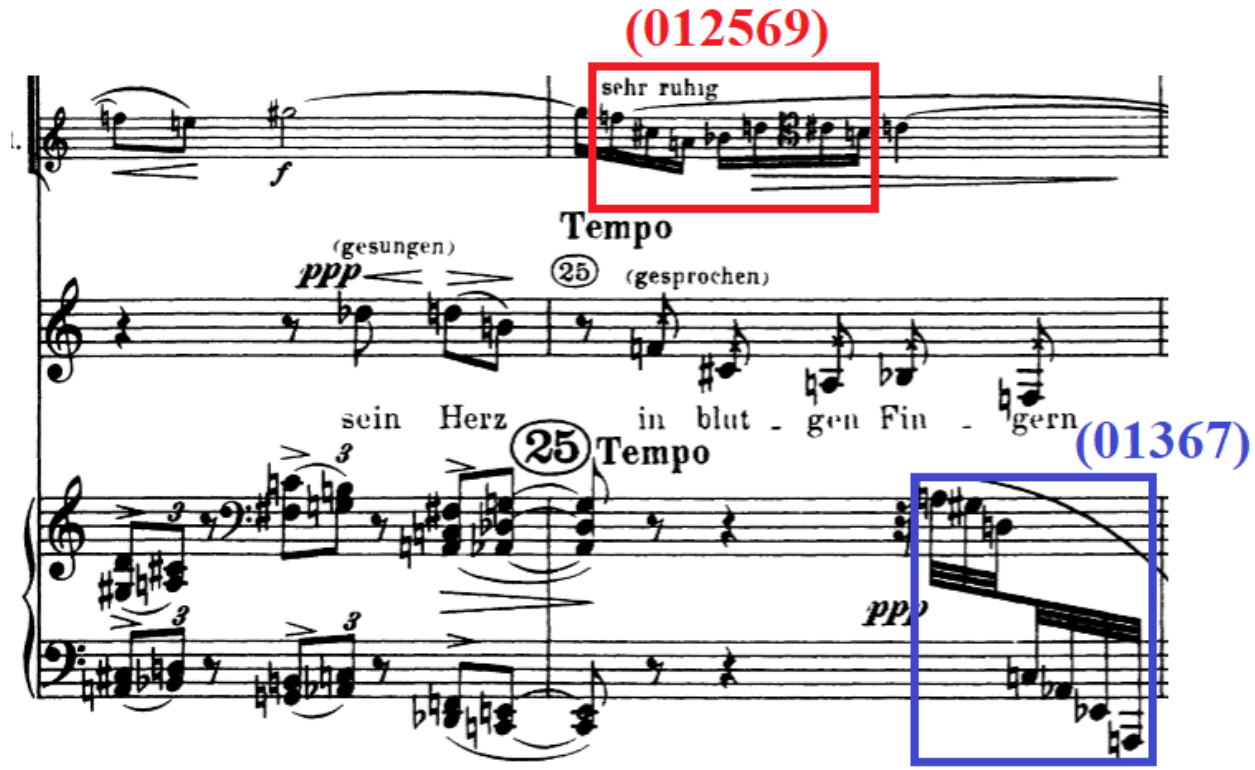
In Part 2 of *Pierrot Lunaire*, the ostinato motif recurs in m. 20 of "Raub" in the piano, at the very end of the piece. Its status as refrain is highly attenuated, since it traces

an entirely different contour than we have encountered so far, alternating between large leaps in both directions. At first glance the only feature similar suggesting a connection between this passage and the refrain is the rhythmic similarity. Yet the prime form recalls the motif featured throughout the first part of *Pierrot*, this time with a prime form of (013458T) (see example 14). "Rote Messe," the next song in the cycle, features the ostinato motif in m. 20 in the piano. Here, the refrain is much more audible as such on account of its contour, with the prime-form (0124569) (see example 15). In "Rote Messe," the ostinato motif undergoes further development, forming a sort of parallel to "Mondestrunken," which first introduced and altered the motif in Part 1. In "Rote Messe," however, this motif has undergone significant development. The ostinato motif appears again in m. 25 in both the cello and piano, and the two-beat offset of the parts recalls again the development of the motif in "Mondestrunken." The version of the ostinato motif in the cello has the prime form (012569), while in the piano it consists of just five pitches, with the prime form (01367) (see example 16). The reduction of the ostinato motif from seven pitches to five continues in the next song, "Galgenlied," by far the shortest song in the entire cycle. Galgenlied also marks the point at which the instrumental parts shift from a pointillistic to a denser texture, with Schoenberg introducing an accelerando. Every detail in this song assumes greater importance because of the shortened length; here the motif has the prime form of (02357), or a five-note minor scale, a decidedly historical tonal form (see example 17). The refrain appears next in "Enhauptung" at m. 27, where it takes the form of a six-pitch figure whose prime form is (023468) (see example 18). In this iteration, the refrain has radically transformed from its first appearance in "Mondestrunken," and yet it develops almost seamlessly from the

version in “Enhauptung,” by means of simple chromatic alterations. The final instance of the refrain in the second part of *Pierrot Lunaire*—indeed, in the entire cycle— occurs in m. 5 of “Die Kreuze.” Here the ostinato motif assumes a familiar melodic contour, but with a notable alteration what until this point has been its most consistent dimension: its rhythm. The ostinato in “Die Kreuze” is in diminution, sounding in thirty-second notes. Rhythm is the element of the ostinato motif that Schoenberg has not altered, to this point, but now it, too, becomes involved in the ongoing process of development. Other rhythmically similar segments immediately follow this evocation of the ostinato motif in the piano; however, their contours differ, leading to my conclusion that this is, indeed, the final instance of the motif in *Pierrot* (see example 19).

Example 14. Ostinato motif in “Raub.”

Example 15. Ostinato motif in “Rote Messe,” m. 20.



Example 16. Ostinato Motif in “Rote Messe,” m. 25.

Example 17. Ostinato motif in “Galgenlied,” m. 9.

Example 18. Ostinato motif in “Enhauptung,” m. 27.

Example 19. Ostinato motif in “Die Kreuze,” m. 5.

This musical ostinato can be seen as a direct musical example of the Deleuzian refrain, going beyond just semantic similarity. The initial instance of the motif in “Mondestrunken” is presented several times in succession, defining the prime form of the figure through repetition. This is akin to defining a territory. The musical elements that are subsumed into this territory, those which define it, are rhythm, contour, and pitch. Within “Mondestrunken” Schoenberg begins to develop the motif by altering each of these elements, so that each new instance of the refrain is different from the preceding ones. With Deleuze, we can understand this as a process of deterritorialization, and the alteration of these elements aligns with what Schoenberg’s theoretical writings reveal to be his beliefs about the “natural” course of their development. In this view, the ostinato motif serves as a sort of analogue to the historical phenomenon of tonality. When it first appears in “Mondestrunken,” the motif grounds the listener, recurring at the end of the

song much like a cadence, or a return to the tonic. Relying on his concept of "natural" tonality, Schoenberg utilizes the elements that he believes to exist within this system in order to create freely atonal music. He effectively reterritorializes these naturally tonal elements that had existed in the original territory. The five-note minor scale in "Galgenlied" further reinforces a connection between tonality as a historical phenomenon and the function of the refrain, since it invites a conventionally "tonal" interpretation. It is perhaps surprising that this "tonal" version of the refrain should appear close to the end of the second part of *Pierrot Lunaire*, rather at the beginning. To begin with this refrain might serve to make the connection stronger; however, the song is unique in its extremely truncated length. Details such as this become much more noticeable in this song, calling into question their meaning.

As I have mentioned previously, the refrain does not appear in part 3 of *Pierrot Lunaire*, though stray evocations of it persist. "Heimweh," for example, opens with a clarinet part whose rhythm recalls the refrain's sixteenth notes. The contour is sharply different however, consisting of alternating upwards and downwards leaps (see example 20). This same figure occurs again in m. 20, cementing its status as no longer being the same refrain. The disappearance of the refrain in the third part of *Pierrot Lunaire* corresponds with the juxtaposition of chromatic, "atonal" elements with those that suggest tonality as a historical phenomenon. When the refrain is no longer heard to have its territorializing function, it signals the triumph of "natural" tonality of the "historical," much as Schoenberg decided was correct.

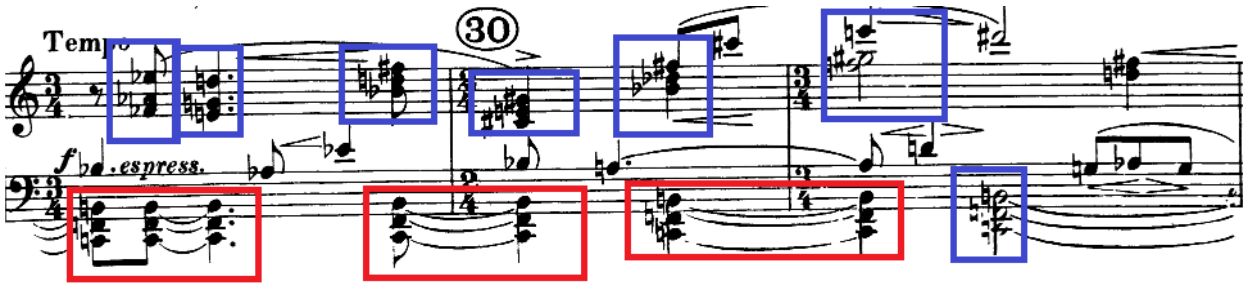
Example 20. Opening of "Heimweh."

Blissful Distances

The refrain represents one of two main ways in which Schoenberg evokes tonality as a historical phenomenon in *Pierrot Lunaire*. The other is by means of trichordal harmonies, which feature much more prominently in Part 3 than the ostinato motif, as well as the first two parts. Such harmonies have already been encountered in this analysis, specifically in "O Alter Duft," and they appear in nearly every song in the cycle, though rarely do they evoke so clearly a recognizable key or tonality. Elsewhere, these pseudo-triadic harmonies tend to be much more free in comparison. I will return to the significance of this difference for understanding "O Alter Duft" below, but let us first evaluate how Schoenberg uses these harmonies in the rest of the cycle, and how he develops them along the way.

"Mondestrunken" begins in a highly chromatic manner, with multiple contrapuntal lines intersecting with one another in the instrumental accompaniment. There are brief moments of pseudo-triadic harmony in the piano, such as in m. 10, but they never last longer than a measure until a textural change later in the song. This highly contrapuntal chromaticism, as I argued above, suggests Schoenberg's conception of tonality as a "natural" phenomenon, representing what he regarded as the potential for development latent within the tone; here we see him composing in such a way that each part explores that potential independently. In m. 29, when the texture changes, Schoenberg begins invoking the historical phenomenon of tonality. This section includes more sustained rhythms in the strings and piano, along with more trichords in the piano—often, in fact, two different trichords, one in each hand (see example 21). Reversing the situation we encountered in the first section, there are brief evocations of the "natural"

phenomenon of tonality here, such as the highly chromatic scale passage in the flute in m. 37 (see example 22). Furthermore, the vocal part does not noticeably change in this section, instead remaining highly chromatic and disjunct. Between the brief pseudo-triadic harmonies of the first section, and the intensely chromatic passages of the second section, we witness a deterritorializing process in action, as Schoenberg reckons compositionally with the tone's capacity for development.



Example 21. Trichords in mm. 29–31, "Mondestrunken."

Example 22. Chromatic scalar passage in flute, m. 37.

Rather than catalogue all such instances in which Schoenberg juxtaposes musical elements representing both of the conceptions of tonality he articulated in *Harmonielehre*, let us consider a few key moments in the cycle. "Colombine," for example, begins with chromatic, disjunct lines in the piano, violin, and voice, which assert contrapuntal independence from one another. In m. 10, however, the piano part features triadic and trichordal harmonies, which then continues until the end of the song, while the violin and vocal lines maintain their chromatic identities (see example 23). In this case, then, the juxtaposition of elements representing the two forms of tonality occurs

differently than “Mondestrunken” and “O Alter Duft,” since here they overlap with one another temporally for longer stretches.

Example 23. Mm. 10–14 in “Colombine,” trichordal piano part contrasting with chromatic violin line.

The first song in Part 2, “Nacht,” again alternates between sections of music that suggest one or the other conception of tonality. One of the most notable elements of this song is the so-called “MOTH” motif, as identified by Jeffrey L. Gillespie.[52] The motif is based on the statements of pitch classes (014), or [+3, -4].[53] This motif undergoes constant variation and repetition throughout “Nacht,” forming unique overlapping “networks” of the motif that appear throughout, all based on the simple [+3, -4] motif of the song’s opening.[54] For example, the “MOTH” motif is enlarged in chains, where the first pitch of each of the three statements of the “MOTH” motif forms a larger “MOTH” motif, or what Gillespie refers to as “TRIMOTH.”[55] The effect is not too dissimilar from

[52] An in-depth analysis of the MOTH motif itself is beyond the scope of this analytical section, as the analysis includes not only the [+3, -4] intervals that characterizes the motif itself, but also how the motif is augmented, developed, and inverted throughout the song. See Jeffrey L. Gillespie, “Motivic Transformations and Networks in Schoenberg’s “Nacht” from *Pierrot Lunaire*,” *Intégral* 6 (1992): 34–65.
[53] Gillespie, “Motivic Transformations and Networks in Schoenberg’s “Nacht” from *Pierrot Lunaire*,” 37.
[54] Gillespie, “Motivic Transformations and Networks in Schoenberg’s “Nacht” from *Pierrot Lunaire*,” 64–65.
[55] Gillespie, “Motivic Transformations and Networks in Schoenberg’s “Nacht” from *Pierrot Lunaire*,” 39.

that of the tonal refrain I have identified above. This motif repeats throughout the song, undergoing subtle changes, all while referring back to the prime statement of the theme. Like the refrain, the presence of this constantly repeated motif also invokes the historical phenomenon of tonality through territorializing processes, allowing for the repetition of intervals to grant the music a tone (or group of tones) to constantly refer back to. The song even ends with the MOTH motif stretched out and played as a quartal harmony, or on the horizontal plane, even further imitating Schoenberg's idea of the "aesthetic completeness" created by a piece of music ending where it began.[56] The MOTH motif, in this analysis, represents the historical phenomenon of tonality. The motif gradually assumes ever-greater importance over the course of the song, forming a musical analogue to what transpires in the text: "Finstre, schwarze Riesenfalter Töteten der Sonne Glanz."[57] Beyond just the overall texture of the song being "blotted out," the suggestion of "natural" tonality is also engulfed by this motif's territorializing process, despite the high degree of chromaticism present within the song. This presents a unique occurrence in the cycle of the "historical" phenomenon of tonality taking precedence. Before and after this song, the differing elements of tonality either remain juxtaposed, or the naturally tonal elements eventually deterritorialize the historical elements and then reterritorialize them into an empty gesture, as in "O Alter Duft."

Throughout the first two parts of *Pierrot Lunaire*, Schoenberg seems to repeatedly invoke the "historical" and "natural" conceptions of tonality by means of such juxtapositions, whether simultaneously or in different contrasting sections.[58] In Part 3,

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[56] Gillespie, "Motivic Transformations and Networks in Schoenberg's "Nacht" from *Pierrot Lunaire*," 52.
[57] "Black, enormous butterflies have blotted out the sun's bright rays."
[58] There also exist several pieces that seem to stem from one another through the use of leading-tone motion, played with no pause from one piece to the next. The most overt time this occurs is between "Valse di Chopin" and

although both concepts remain present, often only one is present in a single song. "Heimweh," the first song in the third part, presents both of these tonalities similarly to the previous two parts, with the use of pseudo-triadic sections in the piano contrasting with the more chromatic lines in the vocals and other instruments. Yet there are also evident departures from the procedures Schoenberg employed in Parts 1 and 2. The pseudo-triadic section is quite short, lasting only from the beginning until approximately m. 11, before seemingly breaking down and conforming to the chromaticism present in the other parts. The piano returns to playing pseudo-triadic figures in m. 20; however, the notes are much shorter, so that no single sonority ever sounds for long. Additionally, mm. 23–24 contains these pseudo-triadic harmonies moving by chromatic or near-chromatic stepwise motion in a sixteenth-note passage (see example 24). It is as if the historically tonal elements have been altered during the chromatic section of this song, and they are now carrying certain elements associated with the naturally tonal elements as it tries to reestablish itself.

Example 24. Mm. 23–24 of "Heimweh." M. 24 features chromatic stepwise motion between chords.

"Madonna," with the piano playing a repeated A-sharp at the end of the former song that then immediately resolves upwards by a half-step to B, a tonal gesture towards tonic and dominant relationships.

Both “Parodie” and “Der Mondfleck” break the pattern introduced by the first two movements of Part 3, introducing a new way in which Schoenberg handles the differing phenomena of tonality. Both songs are some of the most thoroughly chromatic in the entirety of the song cycle, clearly evoking the naturally tonal phenomenon. The few times in which pseudo-triads even appear in “Parodie,” such as a brief section in mm. 5–9, the independent chromatic lines of the other instruments utterly overwhelm what might otherwise suggest “historical” tonality. Additionally, much as at the end of “Heimweh,” the pseudo-triads proceed in fast rhythms, moving chromatically from one sonority to the next. The pervasively contrapuntal “Der Mondfleck,” meanwhile, features no pseudo-triadic sonorities at all, consisting instead of rapidly moving canonic lines from beginning to end. Later in Part 3 the penultimate song in the cycle, “Heimfahrt,” continues this trend, with few elements that suggest the historical phenomenon of tonality.

By contrast, the nineteenth song in the cycle, “Serenade,” which is situated between “Der Mondfleck” and “Heimfahrt,” evokes historical tonality. Here, the piano plays pseudo-triadic sonorities throughout most of the song, departing briefly from this texture to play a disjunct melody in mm. 30–45. Even this disjunct melody, however, lends itself to a “tonal” interpretation, since it repeats the outline of an E-flat minor triad over two and a half octaves—though, to this degree, the chord’s identity as such is much attenuated (see example 26). The cello part, meanwhile, is highly chromatic, and yet it evokes the tonic and dominant relationship that is such a defining feature of the “historical” conception of tonality, with frequent pitches that are then lowered by one semitone and then immediately go back up a semitone, mimicking leading tone functions.

After the rest of the ensemble enters in m. 46, the other instruments utilize this motif, whose strong sense of resolution or closure recalls "historical" tonality. Schoenberg's compositional process in this final part of the song cycle is no different from the first two parts. Rather than incorporating both "historical" and "natural" tonality within a single song, such as in the first two parts, each song now seems to only invoke one conception. The two concepts of "tonality" themselves undergo development in the cycle, as well as the tones contained within both concepts. "O Alter Duft," represents a departure, then, by returning to what we witnessed in the first two parts, with contrasting sections evoking the two conceptions of tonality in alternation. What could this mean, recalling Bernstein, other than a failure on the part of Schoenberg, whereby he abandoned his development of a "natural" tonality in favor of "yielding" to the "historical" concept? Had he finally realized that there was nowhere left to go from here?

Example 26. E-flat chord repeated in piano part.

Though the refrain from the beginning of *Pierrot Lunaire* does not reoccur in "O Alter Duft," the establishment here of a tonal space centered around E accomplishes much the same thing: a musical feature for the listener to refer back to, that grounds the music in some "completeness."[59] Both the ostinato motif and the overt tonal gestures are repeated and developed when they appear throughout the cycle. These elements

[59] Arnold Schoenberg, *Harmonielehre*, 128.

territorialize the sections of the music in which they appear, allowing for multiple different elements to become associated with one another under this umbrella. The two elements undergo constant deterritorializing processes, spurred on by those same elements that they territorialize, until they are reterritorialized into an unrecognizable form. The ostinato motif becomes barely identifiable by the end of part two, and the few times it is even suggested in part three it is doubtful that the ostinato motif could be considered as present. Likewise, chromatic melodies are juxtaposed with the tonal space of E, both simultaneously and in contrasting sections, until finally the elements used to evoke the tonal space are no longer be able to signify tonality, instead appearing as a ghastly echo, haunting the song at the very end of the cycle. Schoenberg accomplishes a reterritorializing of the entirety of *Pierrot Lunaire* in these final moments of "O Alter Duft." The elements that have been utilized to suggest both the historical and natural theories are used in this final song, with the ending showing the usurpation of the natural phenomenon. The historical tonal elements are present only as an echo of what once was in the music;in this respect, "natural" tonality triumphs. The entire song cycle is then contextualized as Schoenberg grappling with the elements of both of his theories on tonality, before finally demonstrating the belief in the usurpation of the historical by the natural.

Where Does One Go From Here

The reputation of Schoenberg's freely atonal period continues to suffer from a relative scholarly indifference to the music by comparison with the larger body of work in the composer's later serialist period. One goal of my analysis has been to reveal the deliberate quality of the music of the middle period; to show that Schoenberg was not

writing erratically before he developed his serial technique, but with a discernible logic, which becomes clear by analyzing *Pierrot Lunaire* in the light of the composer's contemporaneous writings. Analysis of other works from the period lies beyond the scope of this thesis, but I would suggest in closing that they, too, evince similar signs of Schoenberg working out his ideas about tonality and atonality: the ABA structure of first movement of *Drei Klavierstücke*, or the triads played in the fourth movement of the composer's String Quartet no. 2, seem especially ripe for this type of reading. It is perhaps possible to contrast the beginning of the middle period with the end, with Bernstein's announcement of the period with the lyrics "Ich fühle luft von anderem planeten"[60] yielding greater significance when analyzed alongside Schoenberg's *Harmonielehre*.[61]

A greater understanding of the music of Schoenberg's middle period is achieved through this analysis of "historical" and "natural" gestures of tonality. What this new analysis based on a close reading of Schoenberg's *Harmonielehre* strives for is to dispel the notion that this period exists only in service of setting the stage for the later dodecaphonic compositions. What I have offered here instead is a glimpse of Schoenberg working out a compositional approach that operationalizes important concepts from his theoretical writings of the same period. Twelve-tone music then advances a more formal organization of Schoenberg's atonality. After Schoenberg developed dodecaphony, he abandoned these overt gestures toward the "historical" phenomenon of tonality that characterize and give meaning to the style of his middle-period works, instead gesturing

[60] "I feel air from another planet."
[61] cagin, "The Unanswered Question 1973 5 The XXth Century Crisis Bernstein Norton," YouTube, 2:13:57, April 8, 2011, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kPGstQUbpHQ&ab_channel=cagin.

towards forms and resolutions present within this version of tonality. The middle period, far from a dead end, represents a convergence of theory and practice that has mostly gone overlooked because of the emphasis that writers since Schoenberg himself, later in his career, have placed on the importance of serialism. Analyzed alongside Schoenberg's own writings, as I have shown, *Pierrot Lunaire* evinces a more organized and methodical approach to atonal composition than we have previously recognized. Future analyses of this and other works from the period may reveal even more about Schoenberg's approach to atonal composition during this neglected and misunderstood era of his career.

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