

THE THEME OF DEATH IN THE WORKS OF  
HUGO VON HOFMANNSTHAL

by  
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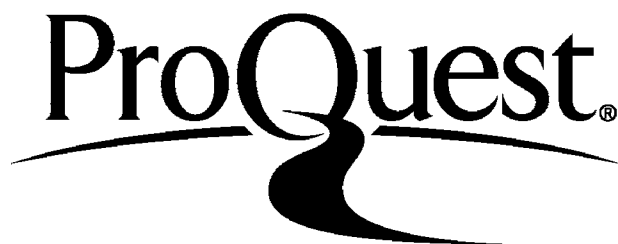
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### Abstract

This thesis examines the development of the theme of death in individual works and in groups of related works, attempting to explain its importance as a major and unifying theme of Hofmannsthal's writing. The first two chapters treat the relationship of death and pre-existence, its symbolic use as a sign of growth and change and its metaphorical function in the poet's struggle to overcome aestheticism. The third and fourth chapters show the experimental treatment of death in the middle period of Hofmannsthal's creative life and discuss the parallel treatment of death and love. They discuss the depiction of death as a moment of ecstatic release from life, indicating that such ecstatic moments also belong to Hofmannsthal's depiction of love and of poetic creation. The fifth chapter considers Hofmannsthal's use of a traditional, Christian portrayal of death. The nature of his belief in this portrayal and his reasons for using it are examined against a background of contemporary history. The link with his earlier work is shown in the translation of figures, images and themes from personal, secular terms into specifically Christian terms. The sixth chapter is concerned with the reasons for Hofmannsthal's mystical treatment of death in the first version of Der Turm and his political treatment in the second version. It discusses his desire to establish a myth and a system of moral values in a void, treating death as the only certainty in human existence and therefore as an abiding determinant of human behaviour. The conclusion summarises the constant elements in Hofmannsthal's characterisation of

the theme of death and the problems which they produce. It attempts to resolve the tension between magical-mystical and moral-didactic elements in the context of neo-platonic thought.

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Abbreviations.

1. Hofmannsthal's works and correspondence.

GLD = Gedichte und lyrische Dramen, (1946).

D I = Dramen I, (1953).

D II = Dramen II, (1954).

D III = Dramen III, (1957).

D IV = Dramen IV, (1958).

L I = Lustspiele I, (1947, 2nd ed. 1959).

L II = Lustspiele II, (1948, 2nd ed. 1954).

L III = Lustspiele III, (1956).

L IV = Lustspiele IV, (1956).

P I = Prosa I, (1950, 2nd ed. 1956).

P II = Prosa II, (1951, 2nd ed. 1959).

P III = Prosa III, (1952).

P IV = Prosa IV, (1955).

E = Die Erzählungen, (1945, 3rd ed. 1953).

Aufz. = Die Aufzeichnungen, (1959).

Briefe I & II = Briefe 1890-1901 & Briefe 1900-1909.

2. Periodicals.

DVJS = Deutsche Vierteljahresschrift für Literaturwissenschaft  
und Geistesgeschichte.

Euph. = Euphorion.

GLL = German Life and Letters.

GRM = Germanisch-romanische Monatsschrift.

N.R. = Die neue Rundschau.

Note on the theme of death

The theme of death in Hofmannsthal's poetry is not a single idea, but a fluid and complex conception which is used exploratively to indicate various aspects of existence, and which is subject to constant re-definition. In considering the works as a whole it is possible to distinguish several relatively consistent usages, and these are useful distinctions provided that a schematic arrangement of the meanings of death is not expected or assumed.

(i) Death is an event in time that indicates the cessation of physical being. This is the least problematic use of the word death, because it is the everyday, commonsense meaning. This use of the theme reveals nothing of the subject's experience of or attitude to death, but only the reactions of the witnesses. Hofmannsthal scarcely ever contemplates the event of death in isolation. If he does, he depicts it as a catalyst to the action of a drama; an example of this is Agamemnon's death which triggers off Elektra's desire for revenge.

(ii) Death also attains a metaphorical value when the poet contrasts it with life in such a way that man is forced to re-assess his attitudes to life. Death is then not only a distant event, but also an immanent presence that is:

an antithesis to all human values and experiences in that it is the reality opposed to the whole of human life, every moment and aspect of which can only exist as in the shadow of death.<sup>(1)</sup>

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(1) Elisabeth Stopp, The Metaphor of Death in Eichendorff, in: Oxford German Studies, Vol.4, Oxford, 1969, p.67.



The metaphor of death, connoting both alternatives to any given mode of existence and a state contemplated in life and entered through the event of death, is the most important one for Hofmannsthal's work. It approaches the Platonic and, by derivation, Christian concept of all life as a contemplation of death. The implicit event of dying is treated as a mystery, for man can neither imagine the cessation of his physical being, nor fathom the laws that determine its time, place and cause. But life-long contemplation of this inevitable event also gives death a moral value as a determinant of man's behaviour. Hence a moral-mystical tension is created, either aspect of which may seem to dominate at a particular moment, without however losing its ultimate dependence on the other aspect. The most significant problem in this concept of death is the need to perceive that the event of death is an intrinsic condition of the metaphor's viability.

(iii) Death attains its metaphorical value through a process of transformation, a sort of 'stirb und werde' process; this is mirrored in lesser transformations that have for a time the appearance of death, but finally avoid tragedy. Their function is generally educative and they are conceived on two levels: first as a simple process, such as the symbolic death of an animal, which educates the beholder to the meaning of death and therefore of life; second, in a more complex manner as the symbolic death of part of the personality in order that a new personality may emerge. The magical or mystical process that Hofmannsthal calls Verwandlung is the most important of these symbolic transformations. It

mirrors the processes by which death attains its metaphorical value, but the event of death is averted. However the parallelism of death and Verwandlung creates a problem, for it calls into question the absolute value of the motif of death.

This study attempts to establish the significances death is given successively and exploratively by means of interpretations of the function and depiction of death in individual works and in groups of related works. Most of the study is concerned with the second of death's meanings and where the word death is used without qualification, or where it is not obviously meant to indicate simply the event of dying or the personification of death, it has the value of a state contemplated in life and entered through the cessation of physical being. This means that Hofmannsthal is primarily concerned with man's assimilation of the idea of mortality into his life, so that the discussion of this concept of death clearly demands the examination of Hofmannsthal's attitudes to life and of the relationship between life and death, especially of the moral obligations created for the living by the inevitability of death.

The notion of death as a reality opposed to, but also reflecting, fulfilling and finally taking over from life, allows for many variations. In the course of this study it is intended to show both the unity of the pattern and the diversity of its individual manifestations. The various views of life and death, their development, origins, psychological and poetic-technical motivation are described and analysed. The study is also concerned with the event of dying as the process by which physical

life is released into another mode of existence and with the meaning of other modes of being, their nature and probability, which however is the aspect of the theme in which Hofmannsthal displays least interest.

## CHAPTER ONE: POEMS AND LYRICAL DRAMAS

(i) Death and pre-existence

In Hofmannsthal's earliest works the subjective state of pre-existence unites life and death. The naive mysticism of pre-existence absorbs the physical being, so that life and death appear to exist without division, without physical constraint and hence without arousing fear. The attitude of man to death that is first discernible in Hofmannsthal's poetry is characterised by absence of fear, a sense of communion with past and present, an intuitive awareness that each single experience is part of the wider experience of being. The Erbe in Lebenslied is unafraid of death, but not because he is unaware of it; he smiles in recognition and acceptance, because death is inextricably bound to life:

Er geht wie den kein Walten  
 Vom Rücken her bedroht,  
 Er lächelt, wenn die Falten  
 Des Lebens flüstern: Tod! (1)

This final version has a serenity achieved by coming to terms with threatening forces, suggested in the following rejected stanzas:

- a) Hingebend und gehalten  
 Beseligt und bedroht,  
 Verrathend: in den Spalten...  
 Des Lebens wohnt der Tod.
- b) Er geht wie den kein Walten  
 Des dunklen Bluts mehr droht  
 Er .. lernte, in den Spalten  
 Des Lebens wohnt der Tod. (2)

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(1) GLD, p.14.

(2) R. Exner, Hofmannsthals Lebenslied, Eine Studie (Heidelberg, 1964), p.146.

The finished poem shows acceptance based on knowledge of wider perspectives, recognition of death as an inevitability, but one which makes life sweeter and more intense. This fundamental acceptance means that life is easily exchanged for death. The ease is sometimes such that it is impossible to define what is meant by death: whether physical death, or mystical death, which is a temporary death to phenomenal reality, sometimes expressed by Hofmannsthal in the image of descent into the earth:

Ich lösche das Licht  
 Mit purpurner Hand,  
 Streif ab die Welt  
 Wie ein buntes Gewand  
  
 Und tauch ins Dunkel  
 Nackt und allein  
 .....  
 Ins Herz der Welt  
 Allem nah, allem fern. (1)

Hofmannsthal repeatedly uses images deliberately vague or fluid to convey the uncomplicated exchange of life and death. The dream suspends recognition of boundaries between different areas of experience and so links life and death in unquestioning acceptance. The three states are described in conjunction in poems that show death and the dream as influences on life (2). The characters of Das kleine Welttheater find

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(1) The image is explored more fully in Das Bergwerk zu Falun and in the fragmentary tale Die verschleierte Frau. Ich lösche das Licht, GLD, p.189.

(2) See: GLD, pp.186-189, Ich ging hernieder weite Bergesstiegen.... and Brief, the section beginning 'Hast du nicht deiner Sinne dumpfe Flur...!'

acceptance of life and death through dreams. The young lord's haunting dream of a hunt and the stranger's vision of treasure in a river fill them with a joyful desire to experience whatever life may offer; the poet wants to be able to translate experience into poetry in such a way that children in cities will say:

O wüsst ich mehr von diesen Abenteuern,  
Denn irgendwie bin ich dareinverwebt,  
Und weiss nicht, wo sich Traum und Leben spalten. (1)

A voice sings of an old woman dying, to whom her life seems to have slipped by like a dream:

Das ganze glitt so hin und hin  
Und ging als wie im Traum:  
Wie eines nach dem andern kam,  
Ich sterb und weiss es kaum. (2)

<sup>2/1</sup>From the last two quotations: for the poet the indivisibility of life and dream is desirable but for the old woman ambiguous and even regrettable. <sup>1/</sup>Something of Hofmannsthal's awareness of the ambivalence of pre-existence emerges....

The image of intoxication confuses illusion and reality, and translates the magic and mystery of pre-existence. The image occurs in the Chandos-Brief (3), in the Traum von grosser Magie:

Er genoss ... allen Lebens grossen Gang  
So sehr - dass er in grosser Trunkenheit  
So wie ein Löwe über Klippen sprang. (4)

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- (1) GLD, p.377.  
(2) GLD, p.384.  
(3) PII, p.10.  
(4) GLD, p.22.

In his introduction to Des Meeres und der Liebe Wellen Hofmannsthal speaks of the 'Trunkenheit des Todes' (1). Titian expresses an awareness of the intoxicating mystery of life and death through his last painting, which shows Pan, the god of life, and Venus:

so schön, dass ihre Schönheit trunken machte. (2)

and death in Der Tor und der Tod describes his link with Dionysos and Venus (3). The links between Dionysos, love and death become important in the works of the middle period of Hofmannsthal's poetry.

The image of water, a traditional symbol of life, of birth and of rejuvenation, expresses the empathy and fluidity of pre-existence. It frequently translates the unproblematic exchange of life and death. The 'Todeswelle' replaces the 'Lebenswelle' (4). Understanding of death grows in:

Die Stunden! wo wir auf das helle Blauen  
des Meeres starren und den Tod verstehen. (5)

The image shows how death and life reflect and encompass each other, how life flows through us and is replaced by death; the innocent young girls

(1) P II, p.32: '.. wie er (Grillparzer) um sie das Meer aufschäumen liess und die Nacht und den Tod, alle Süsse und allen Schauder in eine Trunkenheit, dass die Herzen in ihr wachsen und harmlose Augen sich mit dem Blick der Dämonen füllen.' The same elements of eroticism, intoxication and death occur in the Idylle, GLD, pp.52-60.

(2) GLD, p.266.

(3) GLD, p.280.

(4) GLD, p.152.

(5) GLD, p.18.

do not fear death because they believe the pattern of nature to be cyclic,  
so that:

das Leben jetzt aus ihren  
schlaftrunknen Gliedern still hinüberfließt  
in Bäumen und Gras.... (1)

Although a profound recognition of the immanence of death in life is found throughout Hofmannsthal's poetry, it is strongest in pre-existence and in those figures who never reach maturity. The gay adventurers of Der Abenteurer und die Sängerin, Florindo and Christinas Heimreise know that the proximity of death gives life new intensity. The adventurer in the first of these relates how the knowledge of possible discovery and death makes his amorous escapades more exciting. These characters pre-figure the situation of Der Schwierige; Hans-Karl's reluctance to accept the social responsibilities others wish to thrust upon him, is overcome by the experience of war; in the face of death he has a sudden vision of marriage to Helene Altenwyl. In Hans-Karl the adventurer's instinctive recognition of death as a quickening impulse, coincides with a more solemn, conscious knowledge of the same fact, which also begins in the early works. This knowledge is frequently expressed by very old, wise people, whose knowledge is not instinctive but empirical. Yet this extreme juxtaposition of the very old and the very young reminds us that they are creations of a very young poet. The various grandmother figures - in Grossmutter und Enkel, Der weisse Fächer and Das Bergwerk zu Falun for

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(1) GLD, p.19.



instance - try to convey the idea to their grandchildren. Fortunio's grandmother teaches her precocious grandson through her knowledge of nature that death is omnipresent in life and so imposes the responsibility of using life properly. Death, as she understands it, is a natural event which is neither to be avoided nor denied, and which makes life more precious:

Ich habe viel erlebt. Ich weiss, dass der Tod immer da ist. Immer geht er um uns herum, wenn man ihn auch nicht sieht; irgendwo steht er im Schatten und wartet und erdrückt einen kleinen Vogel oder bricht ein welches Blatt vom Baum. Ich habe fürchterliche Dinge gesehen. Aber nach alledem habe ich das Leben lieb, viel lieber. Ich fühl es jetzt dort, wo ich es früher nicht gefühlt habe, in den Steinen am Boden, in den grossen schwerfälligen Rindern mit ihren guten Augen. Geh, geh, du wirst erst lernen es liebhaben. (1)

The aged Titian likewise faces death with equanimity knowing he has fulfilled his talents. In the face of death he is suddenly able to create pictures more beautiful and vital than ever before, because death illuminates aspects of life which he had previously not understood:

Indes er so dem Leben Leben gab,  
Sprach er mit Ruhe viel von seinem Grab. (2)

Yet soon enough an unmistakable gap appears between life and death as previously accepted values are questioned. The uncomplicated attitudes of pre-existence disappear behind a growing awareness of lives doomed to servitude and poverty - as described in Manche freilich, Der Schiffskoch, ein Gefangener singt. The poet learns that life and death are neither one

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(1) GLD, p.302.

(2) GLD, p.267.

nor constant. The Terzinen über Vergänglichkeit, which Hofmannsthal calls an 'Auseinandersetzung mit dem Tod' (1) show him perplexed by the mystery of continuity and change; death, as the ultimate sign of change, has made him aware that life is not static, and that growth and development, however painful, are necessary and inevitable. In Erlebnis the poet experiences a dream-like vision of his own death, and as in pre-existence he still recognises death instinctively:

Und dieses wusst ich,  
Obwohl ichs nicht begreife, doch wusst ich es:  
Das ist der Tod. (2)

but to his surprise the vision makes him long for life:

Aber seltsam!  
Ein namenloses Heimweh weinte lautlos  
In meiner Seele nach dem Leben. (3)

From being a force of which it is said: 'dass er nicht mit dem Leben vertauschbar ist, scheint nur am Namen zu liegen' (4), death seems to become life's opposite.

Yet it would be a mistake to think of Hofmannsthal's changing attitude to death as a crisis; rather is there a sporadic recognition of the ambivalence of pre-existence: 'ein glorreicher, aber gefährlicher Zustand' (5), which gradually increases (6). To cling to pre-existence

(1) Hamburger, Hofmannsthals Bibliothek, (Euphorion, 1961, 55), p.33.

(2) GLD, p.10.

(3) GLD, p.11.

(4) Werner Metzeler, Ursprung und Krise von Hs Mystik, (München, 1956), p.86.

(5) Aufz., p.213.

(6) The dating of the poems confirms that there is not simply a chronological development; Erlebnis is a very early poem in which the recognition of the separateness of life and death is already present, while in later poems there appears to be no difference between them.

indefinitely is to prevent any development of personality, but to abandon it for the hazards of life means the loss of innocence, unity and security. Fluctuations in the poet's acceptance of the necessity for change can be demonstrated. Hofmannsthal's poetry shows degrees of flexibility at different times, from an easy transition from pre-existence to life:

Ihm fiel nicht ein, den Reichtum seiner Seele  
Die früheren Wege und Erinnerung  
Verschlungener Finger und getauschter Seelen  
Für mehr als nichtigen Besitz zu achten. (1)

to a painful recognition that life involves suffering and the readiness to incur guilt:

Schmerzen zu leiden, Schmerzen zuzufügen,  
Nun spür ich schaudernd etwas mich umgeben,  
Es türmt sich auf bis an die hohen Sterne,  
Und seinen Namen weiss ich nun: das Leben. (2)

and even the inability to accept the necessity of 'Verknüpfung mit dem Leben.'<sup>(3)</sup> This last extreme loss of pre-existence means the threat of chaotic, futile 'non-life', the emotional climate of the lyrical dramas such as Gestern, Der Tod des Tizian and Der Tor und der Tod.

Growing awareness of the ambivalence of pre-existence produces a change in the portrayal of death. Death in symbolic form plays a beneficial role as healer and teacher. In Das kleine Welttheater, in Der Jüngling und die Spinne, in Der weisse Fächer and in Dämmerung und

(1) GLD, p.25.

(2) GLD, p.37, cf. the merchant's description of life in Die Hochzeit der Sobeide, DI, p.111.

(3) Aufz., p.214.

nächtliches Gewitter the violent deaths of animals or birds form a bridge between pre-existence and life by awakening young people to the knowledge of mortality. In Vor Tag the first experience of love makes a boy feel he has murdered the child he used to be when he comes to wash away his crime 'im Krüglein seines Opfers' (1) and sees a stranger in his mirror. The same image of seeing one's reflection while washing is found in Das kleine Welttheater (2) and likewise signifies the death of part of the personality. The use of such images borders on the traditional use of the Doppelgänger as harbinger of death, and indeed the clearest example is that of Lerch in Reitergeschichte whose encounter with his double at the high-point of his ride anticipates his death. Gotthart Wunberg (3) shows how Mach's concept of 'das unrettbare Ich' (4), the idea of the personality as the sum of the body's sense impressions had repercussions for the poetry of the Jung-Wiener, and indeed the schizophrenic aspects of such

(1) GLD, p.12.

(2) GLD, p.381.

(3) Gotthart Wunberg, Der junge Hofmannsthal. Schizophrenie als dichterische Struktur. (Stuttgart, 1965), esp. pp.23-33.

(4) Ernst Mach, Analyse der Empfindungen (5. Aufl. Jena, 1906), pp.1.31, esp. p.20. Hofmannsthal heard Mach and his colleague Avenarius at the university. Their ideas were taken into the circle of the Caf'e Griensteidl particularly by Hermann Bahr, although Bahr's version of Mach's theories is at least partially a mistaken one. For Mach the personality was held together by the will, which consists according to him, of the interaction of memories and associations which aim to reproduce desirable situations and sense impressions. A misconception arose when the Jung-Wiener championed Mach's theories, since the will is precisely the one ingredient missing from their conception of the personality. Mach knew he was misinterpreted and that such misinterpretations accused him of turning the world into chaos.

images have been noted especially in connection with Mach's theories. It was a convenient peg on which to hang a prevalent sense of gradual disintegration and relativisation. In such Doppelgänger as the boy and his mirror-image in Vor Tag the gradual disintegration of personality and of the bond between the human being and his surroundings which belonged to the state of pre-existence, becomes apparent. The madman in Das kleine Welttheater shares the boy's feeling of division, as if half of him is stealing something from the other half; he feels the sole of his foot on his forehead as he tries to escape from himself 'wie ein Dieb aus einem Fenster' (1). Not only is subject divided from object, but he is divided against himself.

Thus it may be seen that death, although it is not yet a source of fear nor an instrument of justice, is no longer synonymous with life or with the dream. Death has an air of 'otherness' which cannot be neutralised by the ability to see it in its wider context. The different aspects of being have lost their connection with each other and become individual entities; but although alien to each other, they are not inimical in themselves. Hence death retains its benevolent character once the division between it and life has been recognised. Symbolic death, either as the death of another creature, or as the death of part of the subject's personality, indicates and accelerates the growth of new life.

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(1) GLD, p.393.

(ii) The lyrical dramas

The theme of death becomes most interesting in those works in which acceptance of the necessity of change and development is difficult or impossible. The two faces of death, the mystery and the morality, are seen for the first time, but death appears in the lyrical dramas as predominantly moral-didactic. Death functions in the manner of a conscience because it is familiar as the last vestige of pre-existence in which death was recognised as part of the self; but at the same time death continually reasserts itself as an independent force. Like a conscience death voices within the individual the claims of the world outside him.

Two aspects of the loss of pre-existence are important for the theme of death: the victims experience an overwhelming longing for a life as full and as intense as was pre-existence, and a feeling that others live more intensely than they, particularly simple people such as their own servants. Andrea in Gestern suspects that only the supreme experience of death can relieve the condition; the merchant's son in Das Märchen der 672. Nacht watches his servants enviously as they travel purposefully the way of life towards death with equanimity, while he is haunted by morbid thoughts. Claudio, the most articulate and capable of self-diagnosis, says that until he meets death, 'der grosse Gott der Seele', he has never encountered the struggle through which life is attained and pre-existence finally left behind. But death is only one solution to the problems of pre-existence. In the lyrical dramas they are solved sometimes in a new way of life. Thus, within the framework defined by his

interpretation of pre-existence, Hofmannsthal begins to follow lines pointing to a tragic and a comic solution - he preferred the word 'ironisch' for the second of these. In the middle period the matter of genres must be examined more closely, for then it becomes apparent that this is a poetry that sets out from a basic problem and points beyond the immediate solutions of tragedy and comedy to a single redemptive purpose; this fact is only suggested by the early works, in which two basic solutions are offered to the single, central problem of pre-existence.

The earliest dramatic and narrative explorations of the problem of pre-existence - Gestern, Der Tod des Tizian, Der Tor und der Tod, Das Märchen der 672. Nacht - end in death or disillusion: a solution unacceptable to some because of its severity. The earliest works are also the most subjective in their treatment of death. With increasing maturity the presentation of the problem of pre-existence becomes less subjective and more obviously like conventional drama, while death and sorrow are overcome, or voluntarily embraced. Thus the heroes and heroines of the group of works written around 1897 perceive more readily what is necessary for their own salvation and seek it out. Increasing maturity also shows increasing self-awareness; the poet's tendency to apparently arbitrary severity of judgment diminishes: the younger the poet the more his heroes' problems represent his own, the greater his need for self-chastisement, hence the more urgently he inflicts a severe judgment. In time the poet becomes aware of the claims and responsibilities of the world outside him, and of problems which are variations of his own,

and of the manifold possibilities of dealing with them.

The variety in the depiction of death in the lyrical dramas is often overlooked. Complementary works temper each other's conclusions and indicate the breadth of the poet's horizons. Der Tor und der Tod, which we shall consider in detail, expresses the belief that fidelity to an ideal or to a person is the basis of a good life. Der Tod des Tizian contrasts the fulfilled life of the dedicated artist Titian with the empty lives of the dilettantes and aesthetes who are his disciples, and Hofmannsthal suggests in his proposed conclusion that the disciples would have been taught the same lesson as Claudio in a similar manner by death. (1) The lesson is repeated in Der Kaiser und die Hexe which portrays the final stages of the relationship between the emperor and the witch in whose power he has been for seven years. His attempt to escape her has become a lottery of death: in some sense one of them is bound to die. For if he conquers his passion she will die; it is literally true when she

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(1) The disciples were to have been confronted with the plague: Es sollte diese ganze Gruppe von Menschen (die Tizianschüler) mit der Lebenserhöhung, welche durch den Tod, die Pest, die ganze Stadt ergreift, in Berührung gebracht werden. Es lief auf eine Art Todesorgie hinaus. Das Vorliegende ist nur ein Vorspiel - alle diese jungen Menschen stiegen dann, den Meister zurücklassend, in die Stadt hinab und erlebten das Leben in höchsten Zusammendrängung, - also im Grund das gleiche Motiv wie im Tor und Tod. (Hofmannsthal-George Briefwechsel, p.234). The common motif is a death which is both consummation and correction. It was to be the force through which the disciples learned what life was about. The energising effect of the plague in this work is probably the first and crudest example in Hofmannsthal's poetry of death acting as a spur to life.



tells him:

Ich kann nicht leben  
Ohne dich. (1)

He is threatened not by physical death, but by:

Schmach und Tod für meine Seele ... (2)

They fight the threat of extinction with opposing weapons - the witch with constant change, the emperor by learning to be steadfast. The escape from the witch is an escape from the seductive, but ultimately futile, dangerous state of pre-existence; the emperor knows he must escape his lack of commitment, indifference to others and self-doubt of pre-existence, but he is haunted by the memory of easy pleasure. In a wider sense it is the problem of Jedermann: the struggle of man to free himself from the tyranny of his senses in order to save the life of his soul. Like Jedermann the emperor must learn the difference between essence and appearance, quite literally since the witch seeks to deceive him by assuming different guises.

The means of his salvation are also those of Jedermann's, his deeds and his faith: he releases a sentenced captive, gives gold to a poor man, restores the deposed emperor to dignity, and when tempted by the witch covers himself with the 'heilige Fahne', and he concludes with a prayer of gratitude for the angels who save him from the witch at every turn:

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(1) GLD, p.341.

(2) GLD, p.339.

Wo ich hingriff, dich zu spüren,  
 Taten sich ins wahre Leben  
 Auf geheimnisvolle Türen,  
 Mich mir selbst zurückzugeben. (1)

The emperor's struggle to survive points to a modification of the portrayal of death as judge and executioner. Alkestis and Der weisse Fächer stress that there is a loyalty to the force and spirit of life which is more important than the fidelity to a person which outlasts his individual life. These works show that the Treue advocated by death in Der Tor und der Tod is not an absolute virtue in life. For if the person or the ideal to which a man is faithful should be removed, he is obliged to make adjustment so that his attitudes do not become rigid. Miranda and Fortunio in Der weisse Fächer are both prepared to pay more in sorrow than is demanded, so that sorrow becomes a hardened attitude, a matter of pride, no longer a spontaneous emotion, and so threatens their own lives. Fortunio's grandmother, who has lived through the deaths of all those close to her, teaches him that the obligations of those left behind is to use life to the full, not to insult the dead as well as the living by throwing life aside in vicarious spiritual death. Fortunio remains unmoved until he sees his cousin Miranda wasting her life in sorrow too, then he tells her:

.. es gibt hochmütige, eigensinnige Seelen, die mehr für ein Ding bezahlen wollen, als das Leben verlangt. Die, wenn das Leben ihnen eine Wunde schlägt, schreien: ich will mir weh tun! und in die Wunde

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(1) GLD, p.370.

greifen und sie aufreissen wie einen blutenden Mund. Die in ihr Erlebtes sich verbeissen und verwühlen wie die Hunde in die Eingeweide des Hirsches. Und an diesen rächt sich das Dasein, so wie es sich immer rächt: Zahn um Zahn, Auge um Auge. (1)

Miranda begins to learn that life outlives sorrow. The end of the work is deliberately indecisive, but the implication is that both characters learn through death that life is the greater force and death its proper conclusion:

Das Leben trägt ein ehernes Gesetz in sich, und jedes Ding hat seinen Preis: auf der Liebe stehen die Schmerzen der Liebe, auf dem Glück des Erreichens die unendlichen Müdigkeiten des Weges, auf der erhöhten Einsicht die geschwächte Kraft des Empfindens, auf der glühenden Empfindung die entsetzliche Verödung. Auf dem ganzen Dasein steht als Preis der Tod. - Dies alles aber unendlich feiner, unendlich wirklicher, als Worte sagen können. (2)

The words show how delicate is the balance to be maintained between the opportunities and obligations of life and the knowledge of mortality. Man must be aware of the 'ehernes Gesetz' in life, but if this prevents him from embracing life's possibilities he does life a wrong and it will avenge itself; he must bear in mind the knowledge that all life ends in death, but death must not be allowed to take over life prematurely, for this devalues both life and death. This is maturity: the ability to live each moment to the full, while retaining knowledge of the past and thought for the future. We have already a personal, undogmatic statement of the problem of Das Salzburger grosse Welttheater: it is immaterial what rôle a man is obliged to play, but what matters is how he manages to

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(1) GLD, p.317.

(2) GLD, p.316/7.

play it.

Die Frau im Fenster and Die Hochzeit der Sobeide show the enforced rôle prevailing over the human will in a struggle resolved only in death, while Der Abenteurer und die Sangerin shows the greater effort of will to accept, conquer and survive circumstance in this world, rather than seek refuge in death.

Together the variety of the works shows that what threatens life is rigidity, yet there is a temptation to ignore this variety and this may clearly be attributed to the popularity of Der Tor und der Tod and to a lesser extent of Das Marchen der 672. Nacht. Der Tor und der Tod is taken to represent the theme of death in Hofmannsthal's early work for two reasons: because Claudio is the most articulate of Hofmannsthal's early heroes and his fate the most acute expression of the poet's own dilemma, and further because a whole generation identified itself with this figure, as an earlier generation had with Werther. The impression is strengthened by the repetition of both problem and solution in the tale Das Marchen der 672. Nacht. These two works deserve close scrutiny not because they represent the whole treatment of death in the lyrical dramas, but because they have been taken to represent it, and because the degree to which they are representative throws light on the relationship of the poet to his material.

(iii) Der Tor und der Tod and Das Märchen der 672. Nacht

Der Tor und der Tod continues to explore the problems of pre-existence while giving life once more to a literary form known in Germany since the fourteenth century Ackermann aus Böhmen, the duologue between death and his victim. Their struggle results in the physical triumph of death but the moral victory of his victim.

Der Tor und der Tod has a strict economy of form which makes it the most acute expression of the dilemma of pre-existence. Claudio retains no more than the memory of the intensity of pre-existence and a familiarity with death that makes it instantly recognisable. Art, religion and human relationships have not given him anything, for he has not put anything into them. He is contrasted with the people he has misused and who in spite of their unhappy fate are:

dreimal selig dennoch gegen dich,  
Der keinem etwas war und keiner ihm. (1)

Unlike them Claudio is incapable of abandoning himself to a task, a relationship or an ideal. To him every experience is relative, nothing perfect or whole. Only an encounter with death brings him to full realisation of where he has gone wrong. Death comes unexpectedly as teacher and judge, to destroy but also to awaken Claudio to knowledge of life. Is Claudio's simultaneous enlightenment and condemnation unfair, or is Hofmannsthal saying that man has instinctive knowledge of what life involves? This is a question to be considered in assessing the nature of

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(1) GLD, p.290.

Claudio's guilt.

The dual rôle of judge and teacher means that death is ironical. Claudio's reaction to death is fear of destruction, but death first heals and teaches. He points out that he is not a stranger, but is everywhere in life, - in a leaf that falls, a flower that fades, and he claims all things at the appropriate moment. At this point there is an enormous gulf between the strength of death and the weakness of Claudio, caused partly by the poet's anxiety to destroy Claudio. In a sense Claudio's arbitrary destruction can never be reconciled with death's claim to appropriateness, and Claudio who is no student of nature cannot be expected to believe in a similarity between himself and the falling leaf.

The dying Claudio relives his life which is symbolically re-enacted by those he has rejected. He regrets his lost opportunities and begs for a second chance. Death has become for him the one perfect experience of life. It cannot be relativised, it permits no argument and no contradiction; by its intensity as the perfect moment, timeless, because there is no going back and no going forward in the same dimension, it makes Claudio come alive for the first time. Death has apparently become its own opposite; from being annihilation it has become consummation and fulfilment. But when this process is complete he reverts to his original task of destruction. Yet death remains a triumph, for Claudio, seeing his fate is inevitable, affirms its acceptance:

Da tot mein Leben war, sei du mein Leben, Tod!

Was zwingt mich, der ich beides nicht erkenne,  
 Dass ich dich Tod und jenes Leben nenne?  
 In eine Stunde kannst du Leben pressen,  
 Mehr als das ganze Leben konnte halten,  
 Das Schattenhafte will ich ganz vergessen  
 Und weih mich deinen Wundern und Gewalten. (1)

This rôle of healer and judge has a personal rather than a traditional, religious ethical basis. It is true that Claudio knows better than Jedermann, whom the figure of death must tell that his life has been misspent, that he has excommunicated himself from human society through his selfishness, but Claudio's death and his remorse are an end in themselves. In the Christian allegories death is not an end, but a passport to a life of another order. Thus there is no doubt that the people in these plays die as physical beings and attain another existence. About Claudio's fate there is no such certainty. What life, if any, follows his death, whether his death is real or 'symbolic' are matters of some doubt.

The confusion has two sources. The textual source has been disposed of in the edition of Der Tor und der Tod by Mary Gilbert, and originates in the stage direction:

Im Zimmer bleibt es still. Draussen sieht man durchs Fenster den Tod geigenspielend vorübergehen, hinter ihm die Mutter, auch das

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(1) GLD, p.290; this was written at the same time as Hofmannsthal was reading Euripides for his Alkestis; the same idea occurs in Euripides: quoted here from Erwin Rohde, Psyche, Seelencult u. Unsterblichkeitsglauben der Griechen, (Freiburg i.B., 1894), p.1 and p.545:

Wer weiss denn, ob das Leben nicht ein Sterben ist,  
 und, was wir Sterben nennen, drunten Leben heisst.

Mädchen, dicht bei ihnen eine Claudio gleichende Gestalt. (1)

The simple explanation of the second Claudio figure is that Claudio's body is lying on the stage and the Claudio-figure in death's procession is a dead soul like the girl or the mother.

More serious are the exegetical objections to Claudio's death.

Hamburger suggests the personification of death

tends to turn the whole action into an allegory of an inward process, so that one can almost expect Claudio to begin a new life when the curtain has fallen. (2)

But there are strong textual indications that Claudio must die. The poet expressly states: 'er sinkt tot zu den Füßen des Todes nieder' (3). The phrase 'dicht bei ihnen' describing his reunion with his mother and friends, who belong to death - 'lass mir, was mein. Dein war es' (4) - suggests he has joined the ranks of the dead. Death told him at the beginning of their encounter:

Mein Kommen, Freund, hat stets nur einen Sinn. (5)

The objection to Claudio's actual physical death is the absence of tangible guilt. Claudio's sins are those of omission and this minimises them in the eyes of some critics:

Schon um seiner allzukleinen Schuld willen, wollen wir nicht so

(1) M.E. Gilbert (ed.) Der Tor und der Tod, Oxford, 1962, Introduction p.xxi; GLD, p.280.

(2) Hamburger, Poems and Verse Plays, (New York, 1961), Introduction, p.li.

(3) GLD, p.292.

(4) GLD, p.286.

(5) GLD, p.280.



recht an den wirklichen Tod des Claudio glauben. Und wir möchten wahrhaben, was uns eine Ahnung sagt: sein 'Tod' ist nur eine innere Erfahrung, sein Tod wird hineingenommen wie ein Trank, der sich dann als verwandlungswirkenden Zaubertrank erweist. Tödlich ist er nur insofern, als er dem alten wehrlosen und todeswürdigen Selbst Platz zu machen vermag. Claudio würde also weiterleben, wenn auch vielleicht nicht als Claudio. Die Hingabe an den Tod, die freie Tat des Selbstopfers hat ihn ins Leben erlöst. (1)

Now although this interpretation is comforting, for Claudio's guilt is indeed apparently too trivial, it seems to misunderstand the nature of guilt in Hofmannsthal's works as a whole, to overestimate his maturity at this stage and to fail to see how it is necessary for him as man and poet to inflict such severe judgment on the character he has created.

Frequently the sins of Hofmannsthal's heroes, although ostensibly committed against other people, are committed against life itself. This presupposes belief in life's sanctity, not necessarily in a specifically religious sense, but at least as a power that cannot be created or restored at will and so should not be abused. It presupposes too knowledge of such sanctity, the knowledge that death gives Claudio, when it tells him:

Was allen, ward auch dir gegeben,  
 Ein Erdenleben, irdisch es zu leben.  
 Im Innern quillt euch allen treu ein Geist,  
 Der diesem Chaos toter Sachen  
 Beziehung einzuhauchen heisst,  
 Und euren Garten draus zu machen  
 Für Wirksamkeit, Beglückung und Verdruss.  
 Weh dir, wenn ich dir das erst sagen muss. (2)

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(1) Karl J. Naef, Hugo von Hofmannsthal. Wesen und Werk. (Leipzig u. Zürich, 1938), p.52.

(2) GLD, p.281/2.

Here we find an answer to the earlier question whether, according to Hofmannsthal, man has some instinctive notion of what life involves.

This pattern of guilt is repeated in the works of Kafka. The parallel between Josef K. and Claudio has been suggested by Josef Mühlberger (1); his comments on Josef K. called to judgment for wasting his life, apply also to Claudio. Josef K. says:

Ich bin angeklagt ... aber ich kann nicht die geringste Schuld auffinden, wegen der man mich anklagen konnte.

Claudio too tells death it is not time for him to die since he has done nothing. The illogicality of K.'s contention is pointed out with terrible simplicity by one of the officials:

Sieh, Willem, er gibt zu, er kenne das Gesetz nicht und behauptet gleichzeitig schuldlos zu sein.

The critic's comment applies as much to Claudio:

Er kennt das Gesetz nicht, das heisst: er hat nicht den Glauben, den Kafka umschreibt:

'Das Unzerstörbare in sich befreien, oder richtiger: unzerstörbar sein, oder richtiger: sein.'

Kafka's Sein is surely the sense of indestructibility produced in Claudio by death. At last he realises he is alive as a human spirit, and if it is meaningful to speak of his survival after death, this survival must be as spirit. Claudio's awareness of himself enables him to maintain his moral triumph over death, although death must triumph physically. Indeed Mary Gilbert points out that the encounter with the death-god and Claudio's

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(1) The quotations which follow are from his study - Josef Mühlberger, Hugo von Hofmannsthal. Franz Kafka. Zwei Vorträge. (Esslingen, 1953), p.57.

impressive expression of faith in his own survival would be pointless if he were not actually facing death (1). Hofmannsthal comments that it is precisely the inevitability and irrevocability of death which affects Claudio's redemption:

4.I.94. Der Tor und der Tod.

Worin liegt eigentlich die Heilung? - Dass der Tod das erste wahrhaftige Ding ist, das ihm begegnet, das erste Ding, dessen tiefe Wahrhaftigkeit er zu fassen imstande ist. Ein Ende aller Lügen, Relativitäten und Gaukelspiele. Davon strahlt dann auf alles andere Verklärung aus. (2)

If death were not actual, but merely a pale shadow of itself, a bad dream, another meaningless event in Claudio's meaningless existence, it would not be the end of deception and relativisation, but merely another and worse example of them. For Claudio nothing is certain if not death.

Yet compared with conventional dramatic guilt, incurred and expiated through a specific act often within the context of the play, Claudio's death appears unmotivated. Hofmannsthal said of his Christian allegories that their third dimension was supplied by the belief of the audience, without which they are pointless and probably incomprehensible. To this extent, that it demands certain beliefs, undogmatic though they be, Der Tor und der Tod resembles the allegories. The power of the author of an allegory differs from that of the author of a straightforward play; he may direct his characters almost like puppets, for they are

(1) M.E. Gilbert, Der Tor und der Tod, (Oxford, 1962), p.xxi.

(2) Aufzeichnungen, p.106.

subordinate to an idea. This is also the basis of Totentanzdichtung, the genre to which Hofmannsthal allots the work. But Totentanzdichtung uses stereotyped characters whereas Der Tor und der Tod is strongly personal. Indeed it is not a social or religious work like the Christian allegories, but one whose third dimension is clearly subjective. Claudio's sins are not so much those of the common man, but of a particularly privileged group, to which the poet obviously belonged. The arbitrary judgment made on Claudio cannot be explained<sup>except</sup>/in terms of the poet's anxiety to destroy a part of his own personality lest it become a threat to his development as man and poet.

Hofmannsthal became for his contemporaries the creator of Claudio as Goethe had been the creator of Werther for his generation of young men; and just as there was no reprieve for Werther, there could be none for Claudio. For both poets were young and could see only an extreme solution to the problems afflicting their heroes and to some extent, themselves. Greater maturity enabled them to avoid the extremeness of tragedy, but Naef, in supposing Claudio evades death to be transformed, overestimates Hofmannsthal's maturity. But Hofmannsthal remained the creator of Claudio longer than Goethe remained that of Werther. He was labelled aesthete and dilettante, because his contemporaries, fascinated by the confessional, subjective aspects of the work, ignored the self-critical ones. The cathartic function of Claudio's death is sometimes overlooked because of a peculiar quality of Hofmannsthal's work; in the works which treat the themes of pre-existence it is nearly impossible to

speak of development. As Richard Alewyn points out (1), the difference between Goethe's and Hofmannsthal's spiritual constitutions is responsible for such different criticism in such similar situations; Goethe, he says, tended toward acute crises, Hofmannsthal to chronic sufferings. Thus having disposed of Claudio, Hofmannsthal does not close the door on the problems of pre-existence, but continues to investigate them in the works which follow. Objections to the severity of his judgment on his heroes likewise continued, but pleas for mercy show how much Hofmannsthal's need to rid himself of his tendency to aestheticism is underestimated.

Das Märchen der 672. Nacht, in which another young man emotionally enfeebled by over-intellectuality and burdened by leisure and wealth, ventures into an ugly and brutal world in search of life and finds instead death, brought from Schnitzler the protest that the work could not be a Märchen, but must be the account of a dream, from which the hero awakens (2). But Hofmannsthal's purpose was not to take the step back from life involved in creating yet another variation on the topos 'life-is-a-dream', but on the contrary to take a step nearer.

Like Claudio the merchant's son pursues any opportunity to find the intense experience he thinks must be 'life', but dies without ever finding it. His guilt lies in his attempt to buy life; like Claudio and Andrea,

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(1) Richard Alewyn, Über Hugo von Hofmannsthal, 2. Aufl., (Göttingen, 1960), p.64 ff., esp. p.66.

(2) Schnitzler, letter to Hofmannsthal 26.II.1895, in: H.vHofmannsthal-Arthur Schnitzler Briefwechsel, (Frankfurt a.M., 1964), pp.63/64.

though without their coldness, and like Jaffier in Das gerettete Venedig, he uses people instead of considering them as equal to him in human dignity. Hofmannsthal makes of this a crime, since for the victims it is a denial of a meaningful life as individuals.

The tale has a remarkable parallel in Andrian's Garten der Erkenntnis. The heroes of both believe the secret of life is to be found in other people and this belief causes their deaths. The merchant's son envies his servants, who seem to live more intensely than he, but at the same time resents and blames them for his fate. Andrian's hero, Erwin, is similarly attracted by the hope of learning Erkenntnis from others, but becomes disenchanted when he learns:

dass alle Menschen unerkant und andere nicht kennend, fremd durch die Rüstung ihrer täglich sterbenden Schönheit, vom Leben in den Tod gehen. (1)

He realises eventually, as the merchant's son scarcely does even in the glimmer of recognition at the end of Hofmannsthal's tale, that the secret lies in his own soul.

Both heroes have a penchant for the morbid. The merchant's son dwells on the thought of death as a ceremony:

nie verliess ihn auf lange der Gedanke an den Tod, und oft befahl er ihn unter lachenden und lärmenden Menschen, oft in der Nacht, oft beim Essen.... (2)

The contrast between the thought and the situation emphasises his isolation

(1) Leopold Andrian, Das Fest der Jugend. Des Gartens der Erkenntnis erster Theil und die Jugendgedichte, (Berlin, 1919), 4th ed., p.41.

(2) Erzählungen, p.8.

from other people. The same is true of Erwin; the face of a mysterious stranger brings thoughts of death:

Und dem Erwin ... fiel plötzlich als Gegensatz das Gesicht der Geliebten ein, mit geschlossenen Augen wie eine Maske unter dem Helm ihrer goldfarbenen Haare, in der öden und hochmüthigen Schönheit des Todes. Im niedrigen Gesicht des Fremden war Sanftmuth und Bosheit, Furchtsamkeit und Drohung und das ganze Leben. (1)

Both heroes are fascinated by thoughts of death, while life remains alien; yet life is what they secretly desire, and at the same time fear. The merchant's son cherishes strange, mysterious mottoes about death - 'Wenn das Haus fertig ist, kommt der Tod' and 'Wo du sterben sollst, dahin tragen dich deine Füße' (2); Erwin enjoys funerals and encounters with people obviously close to death. Neither fears death, for each has cultivated a familiarity with his idea of it. This idea is never a source of fear:

eher hatte er etwas Feierliches und Prunkendes und kam gerade am stärksten, wenn er sich am Denken schöner Gedanken oder an die Schönheit seiner Jugend berauschte. (3)

But death is for them always an external event; they have no sense of their own mortality, of the immanence of death in life and hence of the reciprocity of life and death. Thus when death overtakes them it is doubly horrifying. The importance of death in Das Märchen der 672. Nacht

(1) Andrian, op.cit., p.40.

(2) I do not know whether these sayings have any authenticity in the Arabian Nights, whose wisdom they are obviously meant to resemble; apart from contributing to the oriental atmosphere, they convey the idea of death coming at the appropriate moment, though only death can judge its appropriateness.

(3) Erzählungen, p.8.

lies in the discrepancy between anticipation and realisation. Instead of being beautiful, death proves to be ugly and terrifying. The hero's idea of death is the crassest contrast to his actual death. The motto 'wo du sterben sollst, dahin tragen dich dein Füße' becomes grossly ironic. The merchant's son's mission on behalf of one of his servants becomes a nightmare journey, as, haunted by the memory of his other servants, he ventures further and further into the coarse, common world which is totally foreign to him and with which he cannot cope. Finally he strays into an army barrack and dies after being kicked by a horse. Erwin is pursued by a mysterious stranger in whose expression all the ugliness of life is perceived and who becomes for him the personification both of his unused life and of death. It may be said that the realistic element in the death from physical injury of the merchant's son indicates less sympathy with death than the physical and psychological decline of Andrian's hero. But the final scenes of the two tales are remarkably similar. Each character lives out his last agony in a claustrophobic, nightmare state between consciousness and unconsciousness, reflecting on the futility of his life. Erwin dies 'ohne erkannt zu haben' (1) but the merchant's son shows the beginnings of recognition when he 'starrte in sein Leben zurück und verleugnete alles, was ihm lieb gewesen war. Er hasste seinen vorzeitigen Tod so sehr, dass er sein Leben hasste, weil es ihn dahin geführt hatte.' (2)

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(1) Andrian, op.cit., p.58.  
 (2) Erzählungen, p.28.



Yet whereas Andrian's tale is, on his own admission, his symbolic leavetaking from his youth, Hofmannsthal's does not have this function, so that again the poet's judgment seemed too severe, and this time the severity was emphasised by the absence of self-condemnation on the part of the hero. It is true that the fairy tale, like the allegory, demands something of its readers, leaving them to find the point or moral of the story. But clearly they did not always do so; they failed to observe that the tale is less subjective than Der Tor und der Tod, both because of its quasi-oriental setting and because the narrative technique provides the author with a means of distancing himself from his subject and creating a critical undertone beneath his account of the events; phrases such as 'er wahnte vollig einsam zu sein', 'indem er sich ... berauschte' contain an element of hindsight and judgment. However this element was not strong enough to counteract the smooth flow of a beautiful poetic language, nor to disguise the fact that Hofmannsthal was re-opening questions seemingly disposed of with the death of Claudio.

(iv) Die kleinen Dramen

In view of the criticism levelled at Der Tor und der Tod, it is ironical that the group called Die kleinen Dramen have escaped such adverse criticism; for the sympathy they show with death is far greater than may be found anywhere else in Hofmannsthal's poetry, and of all his early works they might most properly have been described as decadent. Yet because the main figure is a woman, the situation erotic, and the setting

exotic, the element of subjectivity so apparent in Der Tor und der Tod or Das Märchen der 672. Nacht is minimised. Moreover the motivation of death is closer to that of conventional drama. Moral, physical or social limitations correspond to the pre-existent hero's spiritual and emotional self-imprisonment. Death is the result of a clash between the heroine's will and the circumstances which hold her prisoner. Like his early heroes, Hofmannsthal's heroines are suspended between reality and fantasy, living in a narrow world from which they simultaneously long and fear to escape. Two of the Kleine Dramen end in death, the third Der Abenteurer und die Sängerin depicts similar problems but shows how they are overcome and new life achieved.

Die Frau im Fenster (1897) shows the discovery by Madonna Dianora's husband of her infidelity and her death. While the limitations of Claudio's mind confine him to pre-existence, to a world of people and possessions to which he is indifferent, Dianora cannot escape from the moral and physical bonds that tie her to a husband whom she did not choose. Claudio's first free act, his acceptance of death is not unlike Dianora's, the choice of her lover, which leads to her death. The relationship between death and love was also indicated in the claim of death in Der Tor und der Tod to be 'aus der Venus Sippe'. But before Dianora dies, love showers on her blessings like those of pre-existence: she feels herself to be in communion with the world, things that were frightening are now friendly, physical limitations have ceased to exist:

Ich könnte gehn am schmalen Rand der Mauer,

und würd so wenig schwindlig als im Garten.  
 Fiel ich ins Wasser, mir wär wohl darin:  
 mit weichen, kühlen Armen fings mich auf. (1)

Her lover has the power to transform physical reality which the poet ascribes to the magician in Ein Traum von grosser Magie - her description of him is similar to that of the figure in the poem:

                                  seine Schritte  
 sind leichtrer als der leichte Wind im Gras  
 und sichrer als der Tritt des jungen Löwen. (2)

However the lover has a double in a priest, who may thus be considered as a projection of the taboo attached to the figure of the lover. For this wilful return to a state of pre-existence, however beneficial and desirable to the heroine, is an escape from responsibility for those dependent on her. The supreme expression of the suffering caused by the abdication of human responsibilities is the death of Anna in Das Bergwerk zu Falun. In Die Frau im Fenster it is represented by the wound which Dianora's husband receives in his hand the day her love affair begins, and which never heals. (3) The wound also has a function as a dramatic mechanism for Messer Bracchio is looking for a salve when he comes upon his wife letting down a ladder for her lover, and kills her.

But in effect she chose death when she chose her lover; for her attitude to death combines the emotions of fear and longing. Her reactions

(1) D I, p.60.

(2) D I, p.73.

(3) Something like d'Annunzio's own writing may be discerned in this mixture of the physical, the erotic and the religious.

follow the same pattern as Claudio's. Increase of life, brought about by love, is followed by fear of destruction when she is discovered by her husband. This in turn gives way to a sense of triumph (1). Her affirmation of her own destruction is symbolised by the gesture with which she embraces death; Claudio says:

Ich will mich an die Erdscholle klammern,  
Die tiefste Lebenssehnsucht schreit in mir. (2)

and of Dianora it is written: 'sie streckt die Arme gegen den Boden' (3). Affirming their kinship with living nature and hence their mortality, they anticipate the gestures of Jedermann and of the beggar in Das Salzburger grosse Welttheater. In death Dianora too finds her life illuminated; she sees her childhood and youth pass before her and feels like Claudio, kinship with her dead family - 'heiss sie freundlich mir entgegenkommen' (4). But this feeling of kinship is also symptomatic of a sympathy with death felt before death becomes a present reality. For although imminent death at first frightens her, her emotional hold on life is weak and undermined by resignation to an inevitable fate. She knows before she is discovered

(1) See the stage direction, D I, p.73/74: Sie dreht den Kopf und sieht wie ihr Mann in der Türe steht. Sie springt auf, ihre Züge verzerren sich in der äussersten Todesangst.... Dianora sieht ihn unaufhörlich nach: sie kann die Augen nicht von ihm abwenden. Wie der Vorhang hinter ihr zufällt, fährt sie sich mit den Fingern über die Wangen, ins Haar. Dann faltet sie die Hände und spricht lautlos mit wilden Durcheinanderwerfen der Lippen ein Gebet. Dann wirft sie die Arme rückwärts und umschliesst mit den Fingern den Steinrand, eine Bewegung, in der etwas von tödlicher Entschlossenheit und wie eine Ahnung von Triumph liegt.

(2) GLD, p.282.

(3) D I, p.81.

(4) D I, p.76.

that her situation is impossible, for although she can deceive her husband, she cannot deceive herself:

Doch kommen Stunden, wo all der Betrug  
nichts fruchtet, wo ich nichts ertragen kann. (1)

Although less capable of self-diagnosis than Claudio, she is aware of a division in herself caused by the necessity of reconciling within herself duty and inclination. The division is healed only in death.

If the heroine of Die Frau im Fenster resembles Claudio, that of Die Hochzeit der Sobeide (1898) shares some features with the hero of Das Märchen der 672. Nacht. Both works are set against oriental backgrounds; both heroes attempt to escape from a narrow world; but their methods fail, both are haunted by thoughts of death. Sobeide, like Dianora, pursues an unattainable ideal of truth, unattainable because she too has been forced into deception by others. Like Dianora she has been married for reasons of expediency to a man whom she has not chosen. Although he gives her her freedom to go to the man she loves, she must learn the hard lesson between a beautiful illusion and an ugly reality; the situation turns into a Reigen, as Sobeide calls it, for she discovers that not only is she shared by her husband and the young man Ganem, but she shares the affections of Ganem with another woman, whom Ganem in turn shares with his father. Sobeide returns to her husband, unable to adjust to the loss of her illusions and commits suicide:

So bitter ist dies Leben:  
ihr ward der Wunsch erfüllt: die eine Tür,

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(1) D I, p.58.

an der sie lag mit Sehnsucht und Verlangen,  
 ihr aufgetan - und so kam sie zurück  
 und trug den Tod sich heim, die abends ausgegangen  
 - wie Fischer, Sonn und Mond auf ihren Wangen,  
 den Fischzug - um ein grosses Glück. (1)

Like the merchant's son who pinned his hopes of attaining life on the power of his money to buy it, Sobeide has misplaced her trust in the faithless Ganem. When she discovers she is merely a link in this chain she feels her love has been sullied beyond reparation:

So war an allem nichts, und hinter allem  
 ist nichts. Von allem dem werd ich nicht rein:  
 was heut in mich kam, kann nicht mehr heraus,  
 aus anderen vielleicht. Ich bin zu müd. (2)

A gap has opened up in her life which she feels can be bridged only by death: she is bound to pre-existence and so she cannot fulfil the duties of a wife, for greater maturity is required before the humiliations to which Sobeide is subjected, can be overcome. Sobeide chooses, since she lacks such maturity, to break the body that houses a broken spirit:

Dies ist so seltsam: unsre Seele lebt in uns  
 wie ein gefangner Vogel. Wenn der Käfig  
 zerschlagen wird, so ist sie frei. (3)

But throughout the work Sobeide's fatalism, her tenuous connection with life, is even more evident than Dianora's. She speaks of herself as the possession of her husband and as clay in the hands of the man she loves; she does not want to be the mistress of her own fate, and tells her husband:

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(1) D I, p.157.  
 (2) D I, p.144.  
 (3) D I, p.156.

eine rechte Frau  
 ist niemals ohne Herrn: von ihrem Vater  
 nimmt sie der Gatte, dem gehört sie dann,  
 sei er lebendig oder in der Erde:  
 der nächste und der letzte ist der Tod. (1)

This is indeed the pattern of her own life. For, like that of Madonna Dianora, there is a side of Sobeide's character which points to her eventual suicide. Like the merchant's son she is haunted by thoughts of death; but whereas he thinks death will be beautiful and is disappointed and horrified by its violence and ugliness, Sobeide contemplates it with horror, but in fact dies fully reconciled to her death; she is aware of the immanence of death in life, but not as a moral spur, rather as a dark force seeping into our existence:

aus den Wipfeln eines Baumes,  
 da fallen schwarze Tropfen in den Becher  
 und mischen Nacht und Tod in unser Trunk ...  
 .....  
 Der Tod ist überall: mit unseren Blicken  
 Und unseren Worten decken wir ihn zu,  
 und wie die Kinder, wenn sie was verstecken  
 im Spiel, vergessen wir sogleich, dass wirs  
 nur selber sind, die ihn vor uns verstecken. (2)

Her husband describes her relationship with the world in his final speech:

so lautlos fällt ein Stern. Mich dünkt, ihr Herz  
 war mit der Welt nicht fest verbunden. (3)

Sobeide finds in death a refuge from a world where she can find no place and which she does not understand. Death is, as for Claudio, an end to 'aller Lügen, Relativitäten und Gaukelspiele'. The warring forces within

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(1) D I, p.108  
 (2) D I, p.129.  
 (3) D I, p.157

her, the old spirit in the young body, the deception she has been obliged to maintain in spite of her love of truth, the ideal of her love and its grotesque reality are all reconciled in death. Death, whom she described as her last master, will console her as her husband and lover failed to do.

In allowing his heroine to die by her own hand Hofmannsthal removes from her death the element of censure in his judgment on Claudio. For suicide emerges from his works as a dignified death: in his essay on Ibsen's dramatic characters, he recalls:

das traurige Wort eines jungen Mädchens aus der guten Gesellschaft..., die ein paar Wochen vor ihrem Tod mit elegantem Lächeln sagte:  
Après tout le suicide calme, c'est la seule chose bien aristocratique qui nous reste. (1)

Again, in his sketches for a drama about Alexander the Great, the hero says:

das ist das letzte, was ich vom Leben verlange: den freien Tod, - Nachdem er das Gift aus dem Ring ausgesogen hat, dankt er den geheimnisvollen Göttern, die ihm, wie dem Schiffsbrüchigen die Planke, den Trost des eigenen stillen Todes statt des Sklaventodes zugeworfen haben. (2)

The emphasis on free, personal death recalls both Rilke and Novalis.

Sobeide's speech on the immanence of death in life and the frightened attempts of human beings to conceal or forget it, approaches the ideas of the eighth Duino Elegy. For Novalis, particularly in the Hymnen an die Nacht, death is likewise a refuge and a homecoming. It is likewise associated with night and with the consummation of love. Although in these

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(1) P I, p.91/92.

(2) D I, p.431.



two works of Hofmannsthal's the association of love, night and death lacks the cosmic dimensions of the Hymnen an die Nacht, the beginnings of such a mystical consummation can be discerned in the suicide of the Maltese Knight in Andreas oder die Vereinigten. In his sketches for its completion Hofmannsthal noted the words of Novalis:

Alles Übel und Böse ist isoliert und isolierend, es ist das Prinzip der Trennung! (1)

As we have seen, the ultimate expression of division is the Doppelgänger with its traditional connotations; the recognition of one's own double heralds death, and Dianora and Sobeide recognise the division in themselves and choose to heal it in death.

But what are the implications of this choice? They enter, or perhaps return to a world without divisions, but if death means a return to pre-existence, why is it proscribed and censured elsewhere but not here? There may be no demand by the reader for further explanation, since, in terms of dramatic technique, these two deaths can be explained as the expiation of tangible guilt. Yet they represent something of an anomaly, for they offer a display of sympathy with death which Hofmannsthal does not attempt to explain. Death remains an ambiguous symbol, since we can see only that it is the end of something; there is no interest in what happens after life. In a sense these two dramas herald Elektra, for throughout Hofmannsthal's work it can be seen that he was anxious never to

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(1) Erzählungen, p.229.

advocate a single solution to any problem. Thus although the prevailing impression given by considering his attitude to death, is that a delicate balance must be maintained between the weight given to life and that given to the knowledge of death, he always maintains a high regard for those whose extreme integrity, however eccentric, removes them from common censure. This is yet another form of Treue, fidelity to oneself; as the emperor says in Der Kaiser und die Hexe:

Wer sich selber  
furchtbar treu war, der ist jenseits  
der gemeinen Anfechtungen. (1)

The lyrical dramas already indicate a change in attitude, from the naive view of death as identical with life to a point where death is separate and yet still remains a part of man's consciousness, and to some extent a reminder of pre-existence. Since it is both a part of the self and yet 'the other' death can effect a reconciliation between the youth emerging painfully from pre-existence and the sense of order and harmony he has lost. But this reconciliation is also educative, for he arrives in and through death at a more mature understanding of the world than he had in pre-existence. Thus death has something of the function of a conscience, for it sharpens man's perception of short-comings in himself of which he had been only dimly aware. Yet it is difficult to maintain that death's function is therefore exclusively moral; for the standards by which these shortcomings are determined seem at first arbitrary. Claudio's guilt,

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(1) GLD, p.348.

Elis' fidelity to his goal are obscure by comparison with the guilt of Jedermann or the single-mindedness of Elektra, because their terms of reference are personal while the terms of reference of these later works are traditional. Jedermann's guilt, judgment and death occur within a well-known framework, so that the reader, familiar with the basic tenets of the Christian ethic, knows against what standards Jedermann is being measured and what, again according to these tenets, must befall him should he fail the test. He knows too where lies Jedermann's means of salvation, whereas in the immature works there is frequently no means of salvation at all. In the early works the terms of reference are unknown quantities except to the poet, and this may account for the feeling that judgment is sometimes too harsh. Against what is Claudio being measured? We understand some of his failure by inferring standards with which we are familiar - lack of charity, disregard for the sanctity of human life, failure to spend his life usefully - but this describes Jedermann equally and yet there is clearly a difference between them. Whence comes the standard which makes the artist manqué, the neurotic dilettante guilty of mortal sin? We can only answer that it is entirely subjective, that what troubles the poet is not only failure in personal behaviour, but also the possibility of failure as an artist. Yet the rigid application of what is so to speak an 'aesthetic morality' is not readily understandable, so that by objective standards the poet's condemnation of his characters appears exaggerated and unnecessarily violent.

To some extent this problem is symptomatic of the tension that exists

between the moral-didactic and the magical-mysterious elements of Hofmannsthal's work, a tension that is particularly obvious in his youth. The poem Manche freilich illustrating the differences between the privileged life and a life of slavery, shows how extreme was Hofmannsthal's view of the division between himself and other human beings, and how strong his sense of responsibility to counteract any tendency he might have to create a private, hermetic world. The moral-didactic element attempts to set limits to Hofmannsthal's aestheticism; it wars with his sense of magic and mystery to prevent this from becoming self-indulgent. It produces a kind of stoicism: this takes the form of severe self-criticism - in Gestern, Der Tor und der Tod, Der Tod des Tizian, Das Märchen der 672. Nacht, - or of resignation, - to death in Die Frau im Fenster and Die Hochzeit der Sobeide, to happiness through compromise in Der Abenteurer und die Sängerin, - or of concern for others before self which begins in Der weisse Fächer and Der Kaiser und die Hexe, - and develops into the preoccupation with das Soziale from which spring the mature comedies and whose crowning achievement is Die Frau ohne Schatten.

The fact that we can discern these two distinct tendencies in the treatment of any theme has some bearing on the possible effectiveness of death treated symbolically, either as a relative or as an absolute force. The two elements are linked by an overwhelming sense of the power of beauty and the ability to create beauty in poetry, but this link in the power of beauty complicates the treatment of death even further. We have already seen for instance that the beauty of the language of Das Märchen

der 672. Nacht disguises the ironical attitude of the narrator, so that he is commonly identified with his subject.

From the first part of this chapter it can be seen that three main critical problems arise from the treatment of the theme of death in the early works, and the possibility of resolving them will be discussed in the conclusion to the <sup>second</sup> chapter. The problems are the relationship between death and beauty, which frustrates the creation of an effective moral tone; the subjectivity of the criteria of guilt, so that the poet's judgment sometimes seems arbitrary and unnecessarily harsh; the warring elements of didacticism and mystery, which make individual works seem to contradict each other, so that the reader is left wondering which, if any statement about death is binding upon the poet.

The following chapter examines at length the two works which seem to represent most clearly the themes and tendencies of Hofmannsthal's early work, while at the same time pointing the way it was to develop. Both works have a sense of magic and mystery, both have a moral-didactic aspect and these affect the theme of death in different ways. Both treat the problems and ideals of pre-existence but look forward technically to Hofmannsthal's decision to write for the living theatre and to his adaptation of material drawn from many traditions. At the same time they have a complementary function, for Das Bergwerk zu Falun is in some ways the last expression of the overwhelming power of pre-existence which can end in the destruction of self and of those who, like Anna, are guilty of having loved 'not wisely but too well'. Alkestis likewise treats a

traditional legend, but shows how the triumph over self-interest may become a triumph over the force of death embracing not only self but also society.

CHAPTER TWO: DAS BERGWERK ZU FALUN AND ALKESTIS(i) Das Bergwerk zu Falun

After Der Tor und der Tod, Der weisse Fächer, Der Abenteurer und die Sängerin, which set limits to the aesthetic world view and enjoined awareness of social responsibility, Das Bergwerk zu Falun might come as a surprise. For here it is as if, having passed sentence of death on Claudio, Hofmannsthal condones his disregard for human life through the figure of Elis. It is more difficult for us to see the thread which links Elis to Sobeide, or looking forward to Elektra, Oedipus or Sigismund as one of the 'Gekrönten' of Hofmannsthal's poetry (1), as a man whose fidelity to his own self-imposed goal removes him from common censure. The difficulty arises because both Claudio and Elis have a resemblance to their creator which Sobeide or Elektra lacks, and this has produced the feeling that the fate of the one must necessarily have a bearing on that of the other, a feeling which when voiced is clearly critical nonsense. It is however supported by another objection based on sounder instinct, namely that Elis' fidelity to his goal involves a relationship with Anna which destroys her and rarely fails to create a division in the reader's sympathies. These difficulties mean that opinions of the work are sometimes confused and confusing, not least when they involve the evaluation of Elis' ultimate fate.

We assume, although we cannot prove it from the play, that the hero

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(1) Aufz., p.215.

dies. Certainly his fate conforms to the interpretation of death as the separation of body and soul, in order that the soul may fulfil its relationship with a world not confined to the limits of a single physical body (1). Elis abandons the life of the body in order to pursue the life of the spirit. Thus when he says that he is no longer subject to death, he must mean that he will continue to live as spirit, in a world not bound by physical laws, not that he does not die. In a sense Hofmannsthal's play supplies a spiritual explanation of a physical marvel, namely the perfectly preserved body of the miner which is the most important motif of the legend.

The evaluation of Elis' death is however bedevilled with misunderstanding and confusion if we do not remain constantly aware of the source of our knowledge of his death. For the central event of the legend is death seen from a completely different viewpoint (2). Its focal point is the discovery of the body of the miner perfectly preserved fifty years after his death, and reunion with the old woman who had been his youthful

(1) Cf. Karl Rahner, On the theology of death, translated by Charles H. Henkey from Zur Theologie des Todes, Freiburg/Edinburgh/London, 1961, p.24, p.40 and passim.

(2) Much research has been done into the legend and the use made of it by Hofmannsthal. A summary of much of this research, giving the origins and development of the legend, may be found in: Margaret Jacobs, HvH. Das Bergwerk zu Falun, in HvH. Studies in Commemoration, (London, 1963), pp.55-58.

The most significant change made by Hofmannsthal is the omission of the motif of the discovery of the body and the reunion with the former fiancée. Hofmannsthal simply states that the wedding will become a legend. Wagner is the only other person to omit this central motif.



bride. The legend is thus emphatically 'diesseitig'; we are surprised by the preservation of the body, the endurance of youth and beauty in defiance of the law of time and its ironic juxtaposition with our physical world which has taken its toll of the girl and made of her an old woman. In all this, death is brought into the physical world of the living, measured by the standards of this world which expects and finds that time produces decay. Fascinating as it is, knowledge of the legend confuses judgment of Hofmannsthal's play, in which living man enters the kingdom of the spirit and discovers a world from which physical law is totally absent. Knowledge of the legend, supported by knowledge of works such as Der Tor und der Tod and Das Märchen der 672. Nacht, produces the feeling that Elis' fate should be evaluated negatively (1), not as the attainment of the world of the spirit, but as a failure to measure up to the demands of 'normal life', - work, marriage, private and public responsibility for the lives of others.

Yet it must be said that the responsibility for this does not devolve solely on the reader who brings other knowledge to bear on his reading of the play. The poet himself shifts the emphasis of his play from one aspect to another. For the first act, published alone until after Hofmannsthal's death, is full of potentially fascinating themes, among

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(1) For instance Fiechtner, (ed.) Die Gestalt im Spiegel der Freunde (2. Aufl., 1964), p.29. 'Das Bergwerk zu Falun' (1899) zeigt den tragisch scheiternden Versuch, noch einmal in das Reich der Präexistenz zurückzuzugelen.

them the hero's sympathy with death and difficult relationship with the human world, and yet fails to fulfil its own promise as Hofmannsthal becomes involved in the technical exercise of writing a five-act play.

The first act rises through a series of uncanny events to Elis' invocation of the earth and the plea that it might consume him, and the appearance of Torbern. Man and the elements seem to conspire to produce a sense of impending crisis; the fisherman's son lies unconscious after a mysterious accident, until Elis needs his services:

Der tote Mann stand auf zu meinem Dienst, (1)

the wind takes an unheard-of direction, a star falls. Some mystery is attached to Elis' family and origins which causes him great anguish, and in the first place it is from this that his longing for death seems to stem. References are made to his origins which herald the atmosphere of the realm of the mountain queen, suggesting that he seeks in death to return whence he came:

Wo der her ist, scheint die Sonne nicht.  
Da füllt ein blasses Licht, dem Mond vergleichbar,  
Höhlichte Täler..... (2)

and to his father's second sight. His longing for death is connected with his almost total identification with his parents, and with the faint suggestion of the strange relationship between them:

Sein Vater  
War Steuermann und hatt ein zweit Gesicht....  
Und wanderte im Moor und Bergesklüften,

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(1) GLD, p.537 and p.447.

(2) GLD, p.404.

Indes sein Leib bei uns an Bord umherging.  
Nun kommt er heim und findet die Mutter tot. (1)

Is there a connection between his father's disembodied wanderings and his mother's death, anticipating in some way the theme of Elektra? Elis, like Elektra, suffers feelings of guilt which inform his own sense of identity:

Verstehst du...  
..... meines Vaters Sohn zu sein,  
Das war kein Kinderspiel. Er war nicht hart,  
Allein sein Wandeln war stille Verzweiflung.  
Tief war sein Sinn. Er lebte in der Furcht.  
Er hatte ein Gesicht, ehdem er starb,  
und wusste seinen Tod drei Tage vorher,  
Und ging so hin, der alte Mann, und schwieg... (2)

But in his grief for his father's death Elis identifies himself with his mother:

Gleich nachher kam die Sehnsucht über mich  
Nach ihm nicht, nach der Mutter! (3)

However by the time he has come home his mother too is dead, increasing his sense of guilt. This guilt is expressed through the image of the dog, which Hofmannsthal had used in the Terzinen über Vergänglichkeit to convey his precarious sense of the permanence of his own identity (4). Of his mother's death Elis says:

Es steht ein Ofen,  
Wo sonst ihr Bette stand; und wo ihr Leib  
Erkaltete im Tod, da wärmt ein Hund  
Den seinen. (5)

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- (1) GLD, p.404.  
(2) GLD, p.413.  
(3) GLD, p.413.  
(4) GLD, p.18.  
(5) GLD, p.407.

and in connection with his father's he tells of his amorous adventures with a Javanese girl:

Den selben Abend.....  
 .... ist mein Vater  
 Verbrannt. Allein der Hund blieb ganz gesund,  
 Der Schiffshund, ja. Er schlief mit ihm in einer  
 Kabine. Die Kabine brannte aus,  
 Mein Vater mit. Der Hund lief heil heraus,  
 Mein Vater schlief. Er hatte ein Gesicht  
 Drei Tage früher. (1)

Yet ultimately no explanation is offered for Elis' complete identification with his parents, nor for the feelings of guilt this causes him. Whereas the similar sufferings of Elektra, Oedipus and Sigismund have obvious sources, those of Elis begin as a fascinating mystery but fade into nothingness with the appearance of the figure of Torbern. Up to this point Elis seeks death as a means of reunion with his parents, perhaps too, as expiation of his unexplained feeling of guilt. But the language in which the desire is couched, heralds his descent into the mine and the world of the mountain queen (2). At the same time, together with his identification with his parents and in the light of psychoanalytical

(1) GLD, p.413.

(2) The following passage illustrates this point: (my italics throughout):  
 Elis tells how his father's death made him long for his mother:

's war ein Auftrag  
 Von ihm, drum kam's so plötzlich über mich:  
 Sie geben solchen Auftrag, die dort unten,  
 Mir fuhr das Schiff zu langsam: in den Adern  
Quoll mir das Blut wie schweres glühndes Erz  
Und drückte mich zur Nacht: da ward aus mir  
 Jedwede andre Sehnsucht ausgeglüht:  
 Dies einzige Verlangen frass die andern  
Im Finstern auf ..... etc. etc. ...

writings with which Hofmannsthal was familiar, it suggests Elis' sympathy with death might be a desire to return to the womb, that is, to pre-existence in its literal sense of life before birth:

Mir wär  
 Sehr wohl, könnt ich mich in die dunkle Erde  
 Einwühlen, ging es nur, mir sollt es schmecken,  
 Als kröch ich in den Mutterleib zurück. (1)

But at this point Elis' sympathy with death assumes a new and deeper significance which gradually overshadows its original one. His desire for reunion with his parents suddenly appears as envy of them because they are closer to the real world. Elis asks the earth to consume him and so reveal to him its true nature:

Du tiefes Haus, was streben wir von dir,  
 Wir sinnenblösst Wahnwitzigen aufs Meer,  
 Dem Lügensinn, dem Aug allein gehorchend,  
 Der uns vorspiegelt, was für uns  
 Verborgen sollte sein, die bunte Welt,  
 Die wir doch nie besitzen.  
 .....  
 Haus, tu dich auf! gib deine Schwelle her:  
 Ein Sohn pocht an! auf tu dich, tiefe Kammer,  
 Wo Hand in Hand und Haar versträhnt in Haar  
 Der Vater mit der Mutter schläft, ich komme! (2)

His psychologically based death-wish assumes a mystical character. He seeks through death the perfect world behind the imperfect image that is reflected in the physical human world. This desire, said to show Hofmannsthal's affinity with neo-Platonic thought, differs fundamentally from the neurotic dissatisfaction of Claudio or Andrea; for neither of these knows what possibilities life holds, whereas Elis experiences and

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(1) GLD, p.420.

(2) GLD, p.420-421.

discards human loyalties for the sake of his ideal.

Elis' actions continue to be explicable psychologically; he explains his invocation of the earth as the work of his subconscious mind: 'ich weiss nicht, was ich sprach', to which Torbern replies:

Doch sinds der Seele tiefgeheimste Wünsche,  
Die sich dem unbewussten Mund entringen. (1)

He asks Torbern: 'Womit bezwingst du mich?' and receives the answer: 'Mit deinem Willen.' Yet the atmosphere becomes increasingly mysterious, the events more uncanny. Elis undergoes a transformation not unlike those of Ariadne and the characters of Die Frau ohne Schatten. When his despair reaches its lowest point and he is 'zu Tod erstarrt', Torbern appears with the promise of new life. The promise of life in the world of the mountain queen gives Elis the knowledge that the law of death no longer has dominion over him:

Und was mir widerführ, nun sterb ich nicht,  
Denn dieser Welt Gesetz ist nicht auf mir. (2)

But the queen knows through the face of Agmahd, which reflects Elis' human desires and the ties he still has with the world of men, that the time is not ripe for him to become part of her realm. The period of apprenticeship becomes the subject of the rest of the play. The problems of Elis' mind fade gradually into the background as subsequent acts engage our sympathies for Anna and her family. From the rest of the play only one problem of interest appears, namely the relationship with Anna and the question of

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(1) GLD, p.424.

(2) GLD, p.447.

Elis' guilt.

It is difficult to reconcile the pursuit of Elis' ideal with his subsequent involvement with Anna. The first act shows his longing for death as an escape from life into union with the spiritual beloved. Despite an apparent similarity it would be misleading to compare this with the work of Novalis. For Hofmannsthal maintains greater distance from his subject; he knows and indicates the alternative to death in the possibility of earthly happiness. It is a different happiness with a different beloved, but it is nevertheless a possibility. Novalis on the other hand makes death and reunion a single possibility (1). Elis is therefore faced with a choice and thus with the possibility of incurring guilt. Our sympathy with Anna is however so great that we have difficulty in understanding the sacrifice of another, apparently innocent human being to a personal ideal.

This opinion is tempered by consideration of Anna's own guilt. For clearly she and her family regard Elis as the answer to their various needs and thus involve him in obligations of which he is at first unaware. He arrives on the day the son of the house leaves and Anna, mindful of the possibilities that may lie in wait for her brother, is suddenly moved to be hospitable to any traveller:

wär er hässlich auch  
Und rauh und gäb er uns kein freundlich Wort,

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(1) For instance in Hymnen an die Nacht, or in one version of Die Lehrlinge zu Sais, which tells of an apprentice in search of truth who finds his beloved at the end of his search.

Ich mein: wärs einer, der die Menschen hasst,  
 Vielleicht, weil sie ihm unrecht tun, verstehst du,  
 Solch ein Verfolgter..... (1)

They are reminded by the sight of the falling star of the uncanny way in which one of their forebears arrived, and because he was an expert miner, they are convinced the star must herald the arrival of the saviour of their mine. The family makes itself guilty by anticipating in Elis the man who will help them, each according to his needs. They see him only in relation to themselves; thus they endanger his personal freedom and are the more distressed by the violence with which he ultimately reasserts it.

The fact nonetheless remains that technically we have a work that moves in two directions at once, neither of which permits full exploration of the other. Consideration of Elis' spiritual realm is obscured by Hofmannsthal's engaging our interest in the relationship of Elis and Anna. Yet if we consider what the other world means the problems multiply. Is the mountain world intended to be pre-existence? Hofmannsthal describes the work in Ad me ipsum as an attempt to return to pre-existence (2), and it certainly has the features of the pre-existent world. Even supposing we accept that Hofmannsthal might advocate a return to pre-existence in one work and yet condemn it in another, and there is no artistic reason why he should not, what is meant by the fate of Torbern? If, as Elis says, entry into the mountain world removes the limitations of physical existence, including the universal law of death, what happens to Torbern

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(1) GLD, p.460.

(2) Aufz., p.215.



when he is rejected by the mountain queen and why? Further, if the mountain world is pre-existence, why is a period of apprenticeship necessary before it can be entered? These questions are never answered. It seems that Hofmannsthal was aware of the technical problems of the work, and it has been suggested that he was reluctant to publish it because he thought its content more epic than dramatic. Moreover it is possible that Hofmannsthal did not answer these questions because he had no answer to them. If we compare the unfinished novel Andreas oder die Vereinigten, we can see that it contains many insoluble questions because it moves, like Das Bergwerk zu Falun and like Novalis' fragment Heinrich von Ofterdingen, in a world about which it is possible to be consistent or specific only if we accept and use traditional mythological, metaphysical or theological terms. Thus Hofmannsthal is more specific and more consistent when he treats the fate of man after death in Christian terms, in Jedermann or Das Salzburger grosse Welttheater, than when he both depicts and simultaneously creates his own terms of reference. If these terms are worked out consistently they may be rejected by the reader as creating a personal metaphysics which he can not share. A certain degree of vagueness is vital to the creation of a magic, fantastic world, such as the realm of the mountain queen, but drama requires this vagueness to be one of poetic language or technical, created through the theatre's capacity to capture the imagination in scenery and atmosphere; it cannot be a vagueness that obscures the drama's construction.

Das Bergwerk zu Falun, despite its faults, remains unique among the

early dramas. It is the first work that does not stop at the event of death and leave us to imagine or ignore the possibility of a life after death. Elis alone of all the early heroes, is not merely seeking to escape from life; he seeks a different form of life after the death of the body. It is the first drama, including Alkestis, in which there is a true sense of the metaphysical and in which death has a significance other than the end of life.

Elis, like Elektra or Sigismund, is a character for whom pride is, so to speak, a deadly virtue, which drives him forward relentlessly to his own fulfilment, although this may be at the same time his destruction and that of others. That it is less readily apparent in his case may be attributed both to his relationship with Anna and, as I have suggested, to the work's personal terms of reference. For, although Elektra's or Sigismund's fidelity to an idea is self-evident, Elis' is not so; the subjectivity of Claudio's guilt informs Elis' longing for death. Elektra's pursuit of revenge stems from a universal human feeling, so that we know what she wants from her fidelity to a single idea and can understand, if we take enough trouble, how a basic human instinct has become exaggerated beyond normal human proportions. This is equally true of Sigismund, and perhaps more understandable since his aim is the more worthy. But Elis' blind belief in his destiny has its beginning, end and *raison d'être* in Elis himself. What he seeks has no connection with revenge or justice or the good of others; like Claudio he is locked inside his own personality. Elis and Claudio are laws unto themselves, and it is by these laws that

they live and die.

We need not be surprised, although critics, even among Hofmannsthal's friends and contemporaries, clearly have been, that these early works should keep their ethic and their logic hidden, while revealing their beauty, their music and magic. For they are the work of an exceptionally young poet, and youth frequently protects itself in obscurity. Clearly some of the problems worked out through such figures as Claudio are Hofmannsthal's own, although it is impossible to know where these end and pure fantasy begins, for he was not sufficiently mature to present them in a more universal form and too sensitive to present them undisguised.

(ii) Alkestis

The Freie Übersetzung der Alkestis des Euripides is Hofmannsthal's first adaptation of a Greek legend. In 1899 three fragments, written six years previously, were published in the Wiener Rundschau. These were the prologue, the death of the queen and the appearance of Herakles. The translation was completed in the summer of 1910. In 1923 it was recast and shortened, the chorus was re-instated and this second version was set to music by Egon Wellesz (1).

Hofmannsthal's is one of many versions, for the legend has been a

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(1) Alkestis, D I, pp.9-51 and pp.432-433.

popular source for works of art of every genre (1). Hofmannsthal's original interest in the work was its allegorical quality, and his remarks on this subject explain why he should have taken it up in his early youth, when he was not otherwise occupied with using the Greek legends for his own work:

Alkestis des Euripides

Allegorischer Sinn: junge Ideale schwinden uns aus dem Sinn wie Tote, dann bringt sie ein starker genialer Gott aus den Armen des Todes zurück und legt sie vor uns hin; wir sind bewegt, die Fremde scheint uns an eine geliebte Tote zu erinnern und wir können nicht fassen, dass sie es selbst ist. (2)

This is a mature, retrospective explanation of his interest, but youthful idealism and its tenuous connection with reality is one of the themes of his early poetry. The basic events of the legend provided themes that corresponded to his current interests. The Greek myths attracted him by

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(1) Accounts of the history of the legend are to be found in: Ernst Hladny, Hofmannsthals Griechenstücke I, (Leoben, 1909-10), p.17; Walter Ritzer, Hofmannsthals Bearbeitungen griechischer Dramen, (Wien, Phil. Diss., 1935), (unpublished), pp.5-9; Herbert Steinwender, Alkestis - Vom Altertum bis zur Gegenwart, (Wien, Phil. Diss., 1951), (unpublished).

Between them these works give accounts of the most important versions of the legend in French, English, German and Italian literature, as well as the origins of the legend. Steinwender is concerned with those versions written for the stage, beginning with Euripides and ending with the one-act play by Alexander Lernet-Holenia (1927). He includes accounts of a humanist drama by Spangenberg, Wielands Singspiel, a satire, a ballet, a Viennese folk parody, and an entirely new crop of twentieth-century versions. These represent a revival of interest, for the theme had lost popularity over the previous two centuries. The modern versions include Rilke's poem (1906), Robert Prechtl's tragedy (1908) and Hofmannsthal's free translation (1893-1910).

(2) Aufz., p.129, Aufzeichnungen und Tagebücher.

their 'hieroglyphic' quality. He was drawn to them, as later to the Christian allegories, by their facility for compressing a whole world of concepts, emotions and ideals into a simple chain of events and a small group of figures, often a single pair of figures; with his Lord Chandos he might say:

Ich wollte die Fabeln und mythischen Erzählungen, welche die Alten uns hinterlassen haben, und an denen die Maler und Bildhauer ein endloses und gedankenloses Gefallen finden, aufschliessen als die Hieroglyphen einer geheimen, unerschöpflichen Weisheit, deren Anhauch ich manchmal, wie hinter einer Schleier, zu spüren meinte. (1)

The Greek myths offered a way into a world that was unfamiliar and unlike the poet's own, and thus they offered progress. Alkestis takes up themes belonging to Hofmannsthal's early poetry, but points to a solution beyond those he had so far envisaged.

The human drama of Alkestis is preceded by a long history of divine intrigue. Hofmannsthal begins when Admet's death has been decreed, but Apollo has intervened to secure its modification, that is, Admet may be reprieved if a substitute can be found. It is important to note that in Hofmannsthal's version it must be both a willing and a comparable substitute. Alkestis, Admet's wife, offers herself, but is brought back to life and restored to her husband by the demi-god Herakles.

In the course of the centuries the legend of Alkestis has been treated in many different ways and has presented problems of every description - dramatic, ethical, even political. The dramatic and

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(1) P II, p.9-10.

technical problems correspond to a decline in a belief in fate and an increased tendency towards realism. They are problems of method and motivation: the realist seeks adequate motivation for Admet's death, such as illness or the expiation of guilt, a realistic death for Alkestis, such as suicide, and - a task which defeated most - a plausible account of her return from the dead. These efforts have often produced only further problems. Alkestis' suicide, although it became a commonplace in the history of the legend, incurred the censure of the church, and 'realistic' explanations of her resuscitation which insisted she had merely been buried alive, reduced the tale to banality.

Hofmannsthal was not interested in the demands of consistent realism and the transcendental quality of the legend attracted rather than confused him. He could accept communication between the living and the dead without logical explanation as he could accept sudden and dramatically unmotivated death. For they correspond to his early acceptance of death as it is expressed in such poems as Der Traum von grosser Magie or Lebenslied; these express, as does Alkestis, the mystery of life and death as one, a mystery which can be experienced at surface level, whose implications can be appreciated, but whose explanation is beyond human understanding. Thus although the point of departure in Alkestis is a death, Hofmannsthal describes its basis as 'das unsäglich Wundervolle des Lebens'.<sup>(1)</sup> Life asserts itself miraculously to triumph over the horror of death's finality and to turn loss and destruction into the mystery of rebirth.

(1) *Aufz.*, p. 106.

The force of life is strong in Alkestis; in the face of death her vitality asserts itself with new strength. She does not think of her own fate but of the life of her family when she is dead. She affirms the value of earthly existence by dressing in her finest clothes and preparing for death as for a feast. This Greek custom had become merely a sign of piety, but Hofmannsthal undoubtedly knew it would be interpreted by a modern audience in its original sense as a defiant gesture of life in the face of death. Thus Alkestis has nothing in common with Sobeide or Die Frau im Fenster; she chooses to die so that her husband may live; she dies for love and so that the country shall not sacrifice its first citizen; but she makes it clear that she is dying voluntarily and for a principle higher than self-preservation. At the same time she regrets all she will leave behind, so that the dichotomy of her reluctance and of her determination to die enhances and maintains the purity of her sacrifice.

But in this play the mystery of life and death is linked with the mystery of complete, self-forgetful love, which sacrifices its own existence for another, and in taking this fate upon itself is miraculously redeemed. Death is overcome by another power, in this case embodied in the person of the demi-god Herakles. Herakles belongs to Hofmannsthal's early magician figures; he knows no physical boundaries, he can communicate with gods and men, and is like Death in Der Tor und der Tod, 'aus des Dionysos, der Venus Sippe'. He too connects death with music and love; his belief that death may be a divine form of intoxication echoes the words of the early poems, while it is in the name of love that he acts to

free Alkestis from death. The union of these various attributes in one figure anticipates the person of Bacchus in Ariadne auf Naxos. Herakles represents the forces of life and love which are so strong in Alkestis, and opposes vigorously the god of death and darkness, whom Euripides calls Thanatos.

Euripides' Thanatos represents only the forces of destruction; Hofmannsthal produces a second view of death. The figure of death as portrayed in Hofmannsthal's version remains the terrifying and destructive force known to the Greeks, but the experience of Alkestis' death and the manner of her rebirth have a new quality. In the legend physical strength overcame the power of death, in the modern play death is overcome by a new force not so readily definable.

The figure of death is the most primitive representation of it in Hofmannsthal's work. He adopted it from Euripides although it does not entirely suit the mood of his play (1). Yet Euripides' Thanatos was not such a common figure. The Greeks were reluctant to mention or portray death as such. More commonly the individual attributes of death were ascribed to several figures - Hades, king of the underworld, largely confused by Euripides with Thanatos, Hermes the guide, Charon the ferryman etc.. Thanatos represents not so much the classical but the popular

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(1) Indeed William H. Rey maintains that this figure by its violence actually obscures 'der wahre Sinn des Schicksals wenigstens im ersten Teil des Dramas': see Rey, Weltentzweiung und Weltversöhnung in Hofmannsthals griechischen Dramen, p.45.



notion of death, much like the German Freund Hein. Euripides' Thanatos is therefore not only destructive but also burlesque. Hofmannsthal transfers the comic element to Herakles, but his Tod otherwise corresponds to that of Euripides (1). He retains too death's physical characteristics - the black cloak, the wings and sword. The sword was intended to be the instrument of symbolic death; in the Greek theatre a lock of hair was cut off to show that death had taken place since it was not customary to depict the event realistically. In Hofmannsthal's version the original symbolism is lost and Death's external appearance serves only to emphasise his evil nature. Euripides' Thanatos was a cowardly as well as a comic figure, but Hofmannsthal has concentrated on creating a cruel figure which is a foil for the attributes of Herakles and a powerful indication of the dimensions of the sacrifice offered by Alkestis.

In Der Todesgedanke in der deutschen Dichtung Walther Rehm says repeatedly that attitudes to death take two basic forms: death is seen either as an external force which as Beethoven's Heiligenstädter Testament says: 'könnte eintreten, ohne zu klopfen', or it is seen as a natural process in the development of the living organism. The two concepts are not mutually exclusive, and Hofmannsthal usually treats death as an event inherent in human life which can nonetheless have the power to surprise

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(1) Cf. Hermann Ubell, Vier Kapitel vom Thanatos, (Wien, 1903), especially p.62, where the two figures of death are compared and measured against the classical Greek concept of death.

its victim. As other works of this period show he makes the degree of surprise and fright a matter of ethical awareness, - albeit a personal ethic -, and the knowledge of mortality thus a guiding principle of human behaviour. But this figure of death in Alkestis knows nothing of ethics. The Greek gods are explained as projections of the human mind, of particular emotions and fears (1); in this work they retain this nature and consequently lack a dimension which the human and semi-divine characters possess. Rey describes them as 'schicksallos' (2), they have no choice but to be the functions they represent, they are rigid and inflexible. Thus they are not conceived as the wise, omniscient and all-providing gods of monotheistic religions, but the functional gods of myth. They war against each other and strength alone is the deciding factor in the outcome. Such gods combine ill with the depiction of sacrifice and rebirth which takes place in the main action of the play. It is Herakles who redeems the element of the divine, and who provides the link between the functional gods who know only force and the human beings who know good and bad, justice and injustice. Herakles as a demi-god shares divine powers but cannot be eliminated or negated by another function, as Apollo can be desecrated by the presence of Death.

The presence of two concepts of death induces a sense of imbalance.

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(1) See for instance G. Lowes Dickinson, The Greek View of Life, with whose works Hofmannsthal was familiar. (Cf. Hamburger, Hofmannsthals Bibliothek, Euphorion, 1961, 55).

(2) W.H. Rey, Weltentzweiung und Weltversöhnung in Hofmannsthals Dramen, (Philadelphia, 1962), p.47.

We are accustomed to thinking of death as an absolute, yet the figure and the mystery exist simultaneously and to some extent in apparent opposition. The figure may however be considered as a factor in the mystery of life and death which fulfils the same function as Schicksal or Tyche; Schicksal is conceived as the stummer Fels on which character is formed, Tyche as a daemonic force which tests human beings by illusion and trickery; Death is like the devil in Jedermann, and the figures of Vorwitz and Widersacher in Das Salzburger grosse Welttheater; he demonstrates the principle of negation, of destruction and nothingness - like the element of Nicht-Leben which threatens Claudio. But if Claudio in whom the force of life is weak, can be revived, however briefly, how much greater are the possibilities of revival for Alkestis. For her salvation is effected not alone but in the strength of partnership. Self is forgotten and self-fulfilment becomes a by-product of self-sacrifice. Sacrifice produces spiritual rebirth which starts a chain reaction. The image of the Reigen which characterises much of Hofmannsthal's work comes to mind. This is Hofmannsthal's contribution to the legend: Herakles is no longer the third figure standing apart from the unit Admet-Alkestis; the three form a group whose actions interpenetrate for their common benefit. Alkestis offers herself for her husband; he in turn, wanting to be worthy of her sacrifice, forces himself to conquer his natural feelings in order to welcome Herakles in royal manner; Alkestis dies for the king and Admet suddenly becomes aware of the dignity and obligations of his station. This realisation is marked by a small but significant change in the text: Admet suddenly appears

under the name of Der König (1). Herakles, having learnt of Admet's noble action, offers himself to bring Alkestis back from the dead. Admet is then called upon to make a second sacrifice of his natural feelings. Herakles brings him a strange woman for safe-keeping; again his fidelity is tested, for Admet must decide whether his personal grief outweighs his sense of duty. Fidelity triumphs, for Admet realises that to be faithful to Alkestis is to be faithful to the principle for which she died and this demands the conquest of personal feelings. Yet Hofmannsthal makes it plain that heroic self-sacrifice can become self-indulgence, as it threatens to do in Der weisse Fächer and is to some extent in Elektra. It can become the rigidity of self-inflicted martyrdom and then it is no longer a fruitful experience. In his loyalty to the ideal of Alkestis Admet must not lose sight of reality; if he cannot fit the image of Alkestis in his memory to the real Alkestis whom Herakles has brought back, he will lose her. The allegorical meaning of the work as Hofmannsthal defined it becomes clear at this moment of the play. Like Claudio Admet is endangered by absolute idealism. Anticipation robbed Claudio of the capacity to enjoy life as it occurred, because it divided irreconcilably reality and illusory ideal. Memory threatens Admet with the same fate. In Jedermann, in many ways the opposite of Alkestis, the same theme of reality and illusion is corrected by the intrusion of death. But whereas Jedermann learns through a difficult process of re-education

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(1) D I, p.29.

where reality is to be found, Admet received this knowledge through a small miracle, a precursor of the larger miracles of Ariadne auf Naxos, Die Frau ohne Schatten and Das Salzburger grosse Welttheater. Admet remains true to the force of life not to an illusion; he accepts the stranger and finds miraculously that she is Alkestis. The power of death, of destruction and of Nicht-Leben is finally overcome by 'das unsäglich Wundervolle des Lebens'.

Yet these achievements, the creation of a sense of the mystery of life and death, and the delicate portrayal of human relationships in a potentially tragic situation, presented the poet with problems. Marie Herzfeld describes his struggle with the material, with the modernisation of the classical form and language and concludes:

schon im Gegenstand liegt etwas womit sich unser Fühlen schwer versöhnt. Für Loris lag die Lockung der Alkestis wohl im Todesmotiv, auf dem sie beruht, und gerade das hat er wundervoll herausgebracht. (1)

The theme of death presented Hofmannsthal with the problem of the substitute and its implications for the characterisation of Admet. Hladny maintains that Hofmannsthal came to the material through this figure (2); Admet is another of the line: 'der in blühender Jugendfrische um seinen nahen Tod weiss.' What distinguishes him from the rest is his involvement

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(1) Marie Herzfeld, Loris - Blätter der Erinnerung, in Fiechtner, op.cit., p.34.

(2) Hladny, Griechenstücke I, p.18; his impression seems to be substantiated by Hofmannsthal's note on the allegorical meaning of the work, which seems to equate 'wir' with Admet, suggesting a personal interest in this figure. Writing in 1909 it is unlikely Hladny knew the poet's remark.

with other people. He can live at the expense of another human life. For Euripides the question of the substitute and its implications presented no moral problems. In the Greek play there is little interest in psychology or human motives. Moreover it is natural to Euripides' king that another should be sacrificed in his place and he accepts this sacrifice without question. Modern dramatists find substitute sacrifices a moral stumbling-block (1). Various techniques have been employed to overcome the problem of Admet's egoistic acceptance of his wife's sacrifice. Frequently Alkestis' vow to sacrifice herself has remained a secret from Admet; in other examples Admet was rescued from censure by psychological inability to accept the sacrifice, so that the pair made a suicide pact. This contradicts Hofmannsthal's idea of the meaning of sacrifice. If Admet were to die too there would be no process of rebirth and no mystery of death. Suicide is treated by Hofmannsthal as the last resort for those who prefer a noble death to an ignoble life. But if Admet were to die he would negate his wife's sacrifice. Hofmannsthal tries to portray Admet in such a way that we will not condemn him. Admet regrets his wish for a substitute as soon as it is spoken, and indeed lives to regret its consequences:

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(1) Ritzer, op.cit., p.6: Für die grossen harten Linien des Euripides konnte man kein Verständnis aufbringen. Vor allem erregte der Egoismus des Admet Anstoss. Er wurde beseitigt und vielfach durch gegenseitige Opferbereitschaft der Gatten ersetzt. Die gesamten Nachdichtungen anderer Nationen zeigen den gleichen Hang... Alle diese Dichter können sich nicht mit der Bereitwilligkeit Admets, das Opfer der Gattin anzunehmen, abfinden.

er floh den Tod, der aber warf  
 dem Fliehenden in den Rücken einen Dolch:  
 die Wunde schwärt ihm fort, solange er lebt! (1)

He is so overcome by sorrow that he sees his grief insulted by the Glanz of creation; he makes and keeps a promise to Alkestis that he will always be faithful to her memory. Above all he learns to be a better man and ruler so that he may become worthy of her sacrifice.

Yet there remains a sense of imbalance, for the acceptance of the sacrifice of Alkestis is made dependent partly on the nature of the figure of death. He will accept only a voluntary sacrifice and one which is Admet's equal in age and status. The quarrel between Admet and his parents has a sense of futility for the reader. Admet never learns that the caprice of the god excludes the possibility of any sacrifice other than Alkestis, and if he did her sacrifice would be negated. This slight structural imperfection in a very youthful work lies in the almost total adoption of Euripides' figure of death which is unsuited to the temper of Hofmannsthal's play. The inconsistency derives in part from the Greek play whose figure of death disturbs the harmony of Hofmannsthal's Alkestis through its primitive cruelty. Herakles finds his own appropriate place in the action and becomes bound indissolubly to the two main figures, but only the god of death stands out as an incongruous figure and prevents the perfect reconciliation of two of Hofmannsthal's favourite themes: these are the theme of sacrificing love, which finds its highest expression

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(1) D I, p.17.

in Die Frau ohne Schatten, and the theme of the parent who denies his child's right to live. This recurs in the Oedipus dramas and in Der Turm. Since the god of death cannot be placated by any sacrifice other than Alkestis both the sacrifice and the parental guilt are somewhat diminished.

The slightly defective motivation of the work is however rendered insignificant by its stylistic harmony and perfection, the quality of tone and speech, the creation of an atmosphere of mystery, poetry and beauty, and the portrayal of the human beings in their relationship to each other. The essentially mythical element is preserved in the interaction of gods and men in a struggle not determined in advance by divine omnipotence. The new elements lie in the psychological interest, the emphasis on human thought and emotion, the mysterious process of rebirth through the power of love.

It may be argued that Anna, Sobeide or Dianora loved, but what makes love effective in Alkestis is the unit Admet-Alkestis, who are committed to each other in a way Elis and Anna, for instance, are not. The mutual love of Admet and Alkestis is the source of the miracle wrought by and embodied in Herakles. Each derives strength from the knowledge of love and this is their triumph. Something similar is already present in other works of this period: the emperor in Der Kaiser und die Hexe derives his incentive to triumph over the witch from his love of his family and of his realm, and the principal characters of Der weisse Fächer are beginning at the end of that work to draw strength from their common grief and past affection for each other. But Alkestis and Admet are the first to realise



the power of their love to create an effective community (1). This idea reaches its highest expression in Der Schwierige, and just as in this play it is the possibility of death which gives Hans-Karl his insight into marriage, so in Alkestis introspective youth, incarcerated in its own personality and problems, is brought through an encounter with death to a knowledge of the rights and responsibilities of the 'Du' - the other person with whom his life is inextricably involved and in whom lies his salvation. Among the moribund youths of Hofmannsthal's early works Admet and Alkestis strike a new note: the encounter with death becomes a positive force in their development; it is as if the pair represents the force and perpetuity of life so much more obviously than one human being alone can do. In Alkestis death does not enlighten and condemn simultaneously: it educates but finally withholds its absolute power over human beings in order to give way to increase of life.

The fact of Alkestis' death belongs to legend; Hofmannsthal's interest in giving it and her miraculous return to life a modern dramatic appeal and an allegorical meaning demonstrates an interest in life itself that negates the accusations of decadence incurred by such works as Der Tod des Tizian and Der Tor und der Tod. In Alkestis whose conclusion

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(1) It may be pointed out as a corollary that the characters who commit suicide are conscious of the community only as something which has failed them or which they have failed. Sobeide and Dianora have been forced into marriage unwillingly but even these misalliances represent a recognised social unit which only death can dissolve. By embracing death they both abdicate their social obligations and show that social commitment without personal commitment is impotent and futile.

points forward to a better future, the poet shows conclusively that his interest is not in the depiction of the phenomenon of death for its own sake, but in its potential influence on the formation of human character. The new unit, the two who are committed to be one, points forward to the works in which tragedy is avoided, to Ariadne auf Naxos, to Die Frau ohne Schatten and to Der Schwierige, and this smallest social unit develops in the final works into the larger community, so that in Das Salzburger grosse Welttheater or in Der Turm it is the interaction and interdependence of the different members of the community which becomes the basis of salvation, whether that salvation is to take effect in life on earth or after death.

(iii) Summary and analysis of the meaning of death in the early works

The works considered in this chapter point to a great diversity in the treatment of the theme of death. The pattern which emerges corresponds to the spiral form generally discernible in Hofmannsthal's poetry: most important elements in the treatment of the theme are present from the beginning, each is spotlighted in turn, disappears again and reappears in new variations. This means that to speak of the 'development' of the theme is to use this phrase in a restricted sense which suggests not the introduction of new ideas, but the evolution of those present from the beginning.

The development of the theme proceeds from an initial belief in life

and death as indistinguishable and virtually synonymous, which is gradually dispelled by the discovery that there is a gap between them. The poetry shows the diversity of reactions to the realisation of this gap and the extent to which acceptance of it is an emotional matter, but one whose repercussions have widespread ethical and physical consequences. At one level a knowledge of mortality always acts as an incentive to live life to the full, appearing sometimes as an expression of vitality (the Abenteurer in Der Abenteurer und die Sangerin), sometimes simply as a matter of common sense and experience (the grandmother in Der weisse Facher). It corresponds to that level of the poet's consciousness which made him go on writing his poetry in spite of a nagging anxiety that words were hollow and silence might be near. At another level he is again and again tempted to explore his own anxiety, to be self-conscious, to risk falling into the abyss of silence by peering long and hard into it, and yet perhaps, if he is a true poet, to try and find a way of bridging it.

The discovery that death is separated from life by a barrier which prevents our seeing what is on the other side is made with surprise (Erlebnis), although this surprise may not be a hindrance to ready acceptance (Der Jungling in der Landschaft, Ein Knabe). Acceptance of death as a necessary precursor of growth is sometimes facilitated through a symbolic death; the death of a part is seen to contribute to the life of the whole. Perhaps strangely Hofmannsthal does not seem to have considered the dangers of this thesis, but always treated the sacrifice

of the part as a positive contribution to the life of the whole. Critics too have preferred to dwell for instance on Alkestis' sacrifice rather than to consider the implications of the suggestion made by Borchardt that the significance of her death is that she dies for the state and that its ruler might live (1).

The most interesting works as far as the theme of death is concerned, are those in which such acceptance of the necessity of change is difficult or impossible. It is here that death assumes its predominantly moral-didactic rôle and its function as the voice of conscience, pointing out the external claims of the world (2). Death's perfect embodiment is the demigod-like figure in Der Tor und der Tod, whose strength is both human and divine, who has moral awareness coupled with magical and mysterious power.

But ironically death who educates must also punish and destroy. Indeed irony characterises much of the portrayal of death; for not only does death educate in order to destroy, but those who refused to accept change as a necessary part of growth, since this means total abnegation of the basis of their lives, escape by embracing death, the ultimate sign

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(1) Rudolf Borchardt, Über Alkestis, in: *Gesammelte Werke, Prosa II*, (Stuttgart, o.J.), esp. p.250 ff.: Das Opfer der Alkestis gilt nicht... dem Geliebten, und keinem Manne als Gatten. Sie ist für den König gestorben und ist also dieses keine Familiengeschichte gewesen, und nicht der Liebesroman: 'Daphnis ich sterbe zuerst', sondern jene einmalige Hingebungsstat äusserster Selbstweihe an die Gemeinschaft....

(2) Cf. Aufz., p.228: La présence de l'univers: das Ich der Sterbenden ("Tor und Tod", "Frau im Fenster") sic! schon bevor sie tödlich bedroht ist.

of change (Die Hochzeit der Sobeide, Die Frau im Fenster).

Yet it seems as if finally Hofmannsthal works his way through to an acceptance of mortality which neither corresponds to the naive mysticism of pre-existence nor is based simply on common sense, but results from experiencing the power of death and overcoming its terror. This also is the triumphant conclusion of Alkestis, which offers a parallel to the psychological Todesproblematik by showing in allegorical form how the poet has dared his medium to die and by his courage to face the possibility of silence<sup>has</sup> given it new life. He has pushed his poetry as far as it will go towards subjectivity and aestheticism and in doing so has discovered where its future lies.

There emerges from the works a concept of guilt as sin against life, as clinging to what is dead or never had life, and a concept of salvation, whose means of redemption are living people, living relationships, a living purpose. Work and a sense of purpose emerge as signs both of life in oneself and of living relationships, marriage and family as the visible signs of the continuity of life, (Der Kaiser und die Hexe, Der Abenteurer und die Sangerin, Der weisse Facher, Alkestis). This is true in a more limited sense even of those characters whose very source of life ultimately destroys them. Elis is more visibly alive after Torbern has set him on the path to Falun than previously, Elektra lives only until the deed which was the mainspring of her existence is accomplished, Sobeide lives while she has an ideal, however misplaced, to which she can be faithful. Yet where the sense of purpose assumes exaggerated proportions it can destroy,

as all these are eventually destroyed, and in these cases it is impossible to say whether the poet intended death to be solely the consummation of desire or judgment and execution as well.

It seems therefore as if the poet is saying that life can exist as long as there is a purpose behind it. It is not clear whether he realises that this too is a potentially dangerous thesis. Perhaps he does and therefore shows Elis and Elektra eventually destroying themselves, since the goals to which they are faithful ultimately deny life; on the other hand they are portrayed with such sympathy that it is difficult to say that they are condemned, and by contrast easy to show that Claudio and his like, who have no goal, are severely censured.

Nonetheless the advocacy of a sense of purpose does not alone justify considering death as the servant of morality. The heroes of many of the early works seek a 'good life' whose criteria are never established, and are repeatedly punished by death for having failed to find it. Apart from advocating a sense of purpose death usually fails to make clear the criteria of the 'good life', and even this one message is not given consistently - 'Ich will die Treue lernen, die der Halt von allem Leben ist,' (my emphasis) says Claudio, but does not Der weisse Fächer suggest otherwise, Der Kaiser und die Hexe reassert Claudio's belief and so on, until we cannot know what to believe? It becomes clear that the ultimate purpose to which one must cling is something much greater than the small aims of any of these individual lives. Der weisse Fächer suggests, and Alkestis shows beyond reasonable doubt, that this greater purpose is life

itself, <sup>the</sup> ~~that~~ life <sup>that</sup> ~~which~~ outlasts the existence of the individual or the individual as he may be at any one time. This discovery is in some ways disappointingly vague, certainly too vague to make death its effective and absolute advocate, yet it gives a more accurate picture of the part the theme of death plays in the poet's preoccupations.

Although the frequent portrayal of death suggests that it is almost an obsession, it cannot be the poet's most important preoccupation. The ironies and paradoxes, the insubstantial moral basis, the failure to anticipate the full effect of his treatment of death, indicate that the theme is not meant to be self-sufficient. What really troubles him at this time is the possibility of life evading him. The cultured, sheltered, over-privileged world that allows the indulgence of pre-existence is dangerously attractive and he fears that affirmation of the life outside it, for good or evil, would make moral and spiritual demands which he might not have the resources to fulfil. At the same time he knows he cannot retreat forever into the artificial state of pre-existence, since this is stultifying and rigidity of any kind he sees as ultimately destructive. In fact death appears with such frequency because it embodies the realisation of his fears that life might pass him by. This realisation depends on the supposition of pre-existence that life and death are one, but not on the naive view that they are interchangeable, rather on the notion that as polar opposites they form a whole. Thus if life were to be taken away or never attained, some form of death or living death must obtain. He is forced by the possibility of losing life to consider death,

and death likewise forces him to contemplate embracing life in all its complexity and difficulty if he would evade the horror of dying. At this stage in Hofmannsthal's development death thus has a primarily metaphorical (1) function - it represents the alternative to life, to a greater degree than it stands as an independent entity. The poet is not asking himself as he does later in Jedermann or Das Salzburger grosse Welttheater: what is it like to be dead? but: what is it like not to be alive? This accounts for the fact that death appears frequently to be ambiguous; it may be actual physical death or some form of symbolic, spiritual death, but what is certain and of prime importance is that it represents the irrevocable passing of life.

In terms of the poetic rather than the purely psychological problem, - insofar as it is possible or desirable to distinguish between them - the struggle for life is a struggle between the moral-didactic elements and the magical-mysterious elements of Hofmannsthal's work. The struggle is won only in maturity with works such as Die Frau ohne Schatten, the comedies or the allegories, where truth and beauty are equated in the peculiar beauty of morality which lies in man's bending his will cheerfully to a pattern of perfection. In Hofmannsthal's youth such a notion of beauty is largely overshadowed by another effortless creation which tempts

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(1) I have used the expression 'metaphorical function' rather than 'symbolic function' because I have already used the latter in a restricted sense to indicate the formative effect of the death of another creature; see p. 18 f.



him to aestheticism as the mountain queen lures Elis or the witch tempts the emperor. The different reactions of these two to their respective temptresses point again to Hofmannsthal's fear of rigidity. He is aware that life is infinitely varied, that consistent aestheticism and consistent didacticism have the same logical conclusion of rigidity and inhibited growth. Thus there is always room for both in his work, for both are a part of life and it is the 'Wundervolle des Lebens' which he is at pains to capture.

The desire for perfect balance, for an all-inclusive and flexible poetry is the aesthetic equivalent of Hofmannsthal's 'ethic of integration' (1). Both are subject to much misunderstanding. The desire to avoid rigidity as fatal to artistic and personal development is seen, where it touches on moral problems such as death, as an unpardonable lack of consistency. Both the variety of its appearance and the fact that it works in the service of a 'good life' whose standards are largely subjective or even unknown, mean that the use of death as a symbol, as a determinant of human behaviour, must appear defective. Hofmannsthal's view of life may well be enriched by his desire for flexibility and universality, but death is impoverished, because infinite variety renders it relative while its strength as a symbol must lie in its being absolute, for the absolute experience is what the characters of the early poetry seek and need. How can death be all things to all men, as it seems to be in these works and

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(1) Hamburger, Selected Poems and Verse Plays, Introduction, p.lii.

at the same time retain its value as an absolute?

Moreover it is difficult to say what makes death all things to all men: whether this treatment of the theme is based on a principle which is aesthetic or metaphysical. The characters die: 'einen stilechten, einen ihrem Leben (und nur diesem) angemessenen und angepassten Tod' (1). It is, like Rilke's grosser Tod, a death suited to the life it ends. Nolte maintains that this 'stilechten Tod' is metaphysical because it has no connection with realism or naturalism but is a judgment imposed by the poet in loco dei. Hofmannsthal confirms that death corresponds to the life it ends:

Um das kann keiner herum; unaufhörlich zahlt jeder mit seinem Wesen und so kann keiner Höheres, als ihm ziemt, um billigeren Preis erkaufen. Und das geht bis in den Tod: die marmornen Stirnen zerschlägt das Schicksal mit einer diamantenen Keule, die irdenen einzuschlagen nimmt es einen dürren Ast. (2)

But it is an empty metaphysics which passes an almost entirely subjective judgment, has little or no sense of a life beyond and treats death as the handmaiden of the 'good life' without specifying what that life may be. Furthermore an aesthetic principle which reproduces complete stylistic harmony in its treatment of life and death cannot be distinguished from an ethical principle which rewards life with the death it has earned, unless we have some terms of reference for the 'good life' and its corresponding death.

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(1) Fritz Nolte, Der Todesbegriff bei Rainer Maria Rilke, Hugo von Hofmannsthal und Thomas Mann. (Diss. Heidelberg, 1934), p.65.

(2) Der weisse Fächer, GLD, p.317.

Misunderstandings of the poet's intentions has also resulted from the feeling, expressed in the first instance by contemporaries such as Schnitzler, that by objective standards death is too violent and arbitrary a solution to the problem of pre-existence. For with the exception of Alkestis and possibly of Das Bergwerk zu Falun the early works show death to be an assault on and an end to life, an end which is moreover imposed by the author without reference to realism or dramatic causality. Even in Das Bergwerk zu Falun the sacrifice of the innocent Anna might justifiably be regarded as an assault on life.

This severity and apparent lack of motivation may be explained at least partially as the subjectivity and extremeness of youth. It is strengthened by the atmosphere of the epoch, by Hofmannsthal's awareness of belonging to a dying civilisation (1); but the real source of objection is not just severity, it is the repetition of severity. Had Hofmannsthal created only one pre-existent hero, as there was only one Werther, no such objection might have arisen. Yet because there were constant re-examinations of the problems of pre-existence it seemed as if the poet enjoyed his dilemma enough to perpetuate it. It is thus that Hofmannsthal, to his

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(1) See for instance: Rudolf Kassner zum 80. Geburtstag. Gedenkbuch ed. Kensik et Bodmer, (1953), p.204: Es kennzeichnet die schöpferische Frühreife..., zu schnell auf den Tod zu kommen. Es charakterisiert aber auch die Epoche, die Zeit des sterbenden 19. Jahrhunderts und ihre überreifen, teilweise sehr ästhetischen, spielenden, oft mit schauerlichstem Ernst spielenden Menschen, zu schnell auf den Tod zu kommen. Ich denke an Swinburne, an Hofmannsthal, d'Annunzio, oder an Andrian (Garten der Erkenntnis), an Beer-Hofmann (Der Tod Georgs).

own surprise, comes to be accused of decadence (1).

This charge cannot be passed over lightly, although it may be refuted by reference to the strongly ethical character of the poet's work, which has however not always been apparent to his readers, or to his depiction of death. For the decadent Todeserotik, the deliberate, often gratuitous contemplation of death for its own sake, which both thrills and terrifies, is more obvious in the works of some of Hofmannsthal's less gifted contemporaries. The decadent depiction of death dwells on the physical manifestations of death in descriptions which are both sentimental and repulsive: for positive decadence is nothing if not a mixture of the fastidious and dandiacal, and the physically repellent. This aspect of death is largely foreign to Hofmannsthal: he ignores it even when it is part of his source, as in Das Bergwerk zu Falun, and when it threatens his own inspiration (2). Moreover such refined enjoyment of physical suffering as one may find in Beer-Hofmann's Der Tod Georgs or more obviously in the excesses of d'Annunzio, are symptomatic of an attitude that treats death at the level of trivial detail, whereas Hofmannsthal, while not denying that it is a physical fact of nature, attempts to treat it on a grander scale by occupying himself primarily with its implications, rather than with its processes.

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(1) Cf. Aufz., p.240: Ich staune, wie man es (dies Jugendoeuvre) hat ein Zeugnis des l'art pour l'art nennen können - wie man hat den Bekenntnischarakter, das furchtbar Autobiographische daran übersehen können.

(2) He rejected an earlier version of Die Hochzeit der Sobeide, D I, pp.434-9, in which the physical aspects of death were more obviously depicted.

At the same time there is an aspect of decadence which can exist without interest in what is physically attractive or repellent. Decadence marks the point in the increase of civilisation at which this becomes excessively self-conscious and the human <sup>m</sup>kind begins to tire of it; increased sensitivity to one's own thoughts and feelings increases intellectualisation and artificiality and diminishes spontaneity, originality and vitality. There may be an affirmation of decadence, as found in d'Annunzio or Byron, - a satanic craving for the most sophisticated sensation, a mixture of sadism and magic: precisely what Hofmannsthal criticised in essays on his contemporaries. In some poets however, decadence shows itself in a negative form, as melancholy, as nervous aloofness, as hypersensitivity to their own vulnerability and hence as remoteness from life and from human relationships. This is more obviously present in Hofmannsthal's work. Bahr says of the young Loris:

Er sieht auf das Leben und die Welt, als ob er sie von einem fernen Sterne aussähe; so sehen wir auf Pflanzen oder Steine. (1)

Alfred Kerr and later critics such as Jászai and Heidelberger also accuse him of remoteness from life. Bahr says: 'er erlebt nur mit den Nerven', and Hofmannsthal says himself that modern are 'alte Möbel und junge Nervositäten' (2), and that as a young man he did not think he had ever experienced real joy or real pain. Although this may constitute a form of

(1) Hermann Bahr, Studien zur Kritik der Moderne, (Frankfurt am Main, 1894), p.128.

(2) P I, p.173.

decadence it is now seen as part of Hofmannsthal's attempt to examine the problem of how he might come to experience and accept 'real life'. Both his formulation and solution of the problems of pre-existence are extreme, because to a young poet they undoubtedly seemed urgent and acute; but oddly enough neither Bahr nor Kerr tempered ~~his~~ judgment on account of the poet's youth, indeed Bahr expected the unknown Loris to be a mature if not elderly man.

Some misunderstanding of the poet's aims derives from his own imperfect understanding of the elements of his work. In his notes Hofmannsthal writes: 'Die Grundlage des Ästhetischen ist Sittlichkeit' (1). If his early works fail to substantiate this statement it is because he knew too little about either at this time, and more important, he knew too little about the relationship between them. It is for aesthetic reasons that his work tends to obscure its own sincerity, its own element of censure and self-criticism. For, regardless of religious belief and unbelief, attitudes to death are tempered by a certain reverence - it may be only fear of the unknown - which resists the association of death with humour or certain types of beauty; and judging by criticism made of Hofmannsthal's work it is clear that this reverence is expected to extend to poetic attitudes to death. Because Hofmannsthal possessed a precocious facility for creating beauty of a light and effortless kind, it seems to some as if he is treating solemn themes, among them the theme of death, in a

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(1) Aufz., p.101.

frivolous manner. But another poet, namely Thomas Mann, has seen the meaning of the relationship between death and beauty in Hofmannsthal's early works:

Er hat die Idee des Todes geliebt zusammen mit der der Schönheit, mit der der Vornehmheit - so war es wohl österreichisch. Der Tod ist gegenwärtig in all seiner Dichtung, auch in der heiteren, und schon der Jüngling, der geistesprinzliche Knabe, hat ihn im Vers 'einen grossen Gott der Seele' genannt. Jede melodische und anmutsvolle Wendung seiner Prosa, seines Dialogs, seiner Lyrik ist durchtränkt von Todesschönheit. Ja, der Tod ist Schönheit und Melodie, solange die Jugend bei ihm ist, die Lebenskraft.... (1)

Mann recognises that it is possible for the young Hofmannsthal to treat death in this way, because death is only a remote possibility. He goes on to show that this was not Hofmannsthal's last word on the subject, and looking back on the work as a whole is able to see this early link between death and beauty as a sign of extremely talented, but somewhat precocious youth. It is the beauty of the poetry, of the poetic expression that raises a barrier to the poet's portrayal of serious moral subjects being taken seriously by his critics. For the elegant musical verse of Hofmannsthal's early poetry is not the language of censure nor even of consideration of a serious moral problem, but the language of a highly talented lyric poet. Moreover the mature lyrical style deceives the reader into expecting mature thought, but Hofmannsthal's problems are those of youth. The confusing pattern of development and regression, the fear of death as a fear of not having lived, the disturbing discovery of life's inconsistency, all belong to adolescence. The child experiences

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(1) H.A. Fiechtner (ed.), Hofmannsthal. Die Gestalt im Spiegel der Freunde, 2. Auflage, 1964, p.287 In memoriam.

all life as an extension of himself and the growing adult realises with pain that other people have an independent existence. So the young poet, however talented, creates characters who all speak the same language as each other, which is his language, the language of his lyric poetry (1). The point is clearer when we consider how much Hofmannsthal's language develops and how clearly and widely it is differentiated, according to context, characterisation, atmosphere etc., in the works which follow: the savage beauty of Elektra's language contrasts with the warmer tones of her sister, and with the feverish speech of their mother; the solemnity of the language of Jedermann and the archaisms which indicate its long tradition differs again from that of Das Salzburger grosse Welttheater whose range extends from dialect to passages of almost Baroque poetry, and again from the apocalyptic, strangely majestic language of Der Turm.

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(1) Grete Schaeder, Hofmannsthal. Die Gestalten, p.88, says the people in the early works speak: die eine Sprache ihres Dichters, die gleiche lyrische, auf die feinsten Schwingungen des Seelischen abgestimmte, auch im Affekt von innerer Musik getragene Sprache.

Wolfram Mauser, in Hofmannsthal und Molière, (Innsbruck, 1964) (Vortrag) Innsbrucker Beiträge zur Kulturwissenschaft, Sonderheft 20, p.7 offers the following explanation for the language's tendency to obscure the poet's moral-didactic purpose in favour of magic and beauty: Hofmannsthals Jugenddichtung - Gedichte, lyrische Dramen und Prosa eines frühreifen sensiblen Mannes von seltener Sprachbegabung - faszinierte die Zeitgenossen. In Versen makelloser Schönheit, in einem Rhythmus, der weich und melodisch dahinfloss, und in prächtigen Bildern und Metaphern spiegelte sich in verdichteter Form ein Dasein wider, das sich ganz dem Genuss des Schönen ergeben hatte. Trauer, Schwermut und die Sehnsucht ein ungelebtes Leben für einen grossen Tod vertauschen zu können, war das einzige, was dieses Leben zuinnerst bewegte und in seinem Banne hielt... Die schönen Worte treffen nie das Wirkliche im Leben und in gar keinem Fall vermögen sie es zu ersetzen.



The uniformity of the language and tone of the early works, which is so much the language of their creator, emphasises and illuminates their subjectivity (1). For it is essential to bear in mind that the crisis they treat is not simply that of a man, but more acutely that of a poet. This is thrown into relief by Hofmannsthal's censure of failed artists and dilettantes and by his preoccupation with the evil effects of pursuing artificial beauty. He writes not only as a human being, but as a poet whose problem is that of marrying effective communication with perfectly appropriate form. The problem of pre-existence is often rightly interpreted as an account of the phases of his artistic as well as of his psychological development: in pre-existence the creation of beauty is unconscious and effortless, but it threatens to become all-consuming, hermetic and uncommunicative; the Chandos letter expresses a crisis which for the poet is virtually an encounter with death. As Chandos loses the ability to use concrete or abstract terms the world he knows ceases to have form or meaning. To give something a name is to banish fear, and because he cannot do this his world becomes a terrifying chaos. Like Claudio or the merchant's son he is lost in a meaningless, formless confusion, and it must remain so unless he can inform it with meaning and form through his own effort. Chandos is convinced he will not write again, but for Hofmannsthal the crisis, like his heroes' encounters with death,

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(1) This uniformity is emphasised by the poet's pleasure in self-quotation which occurs several times in the poems and early dramas.

has an illuminating effect: his horizons broadened and he began to create works deliberately less subjective, often based on traditional material and intended for the wider audience of the theatre. Although there can be no denying that his lyrical monologues anticipate the drama, and that some of his dramas have a static, lyrical quality, in principle the change from a personal lyric to writing for the living stage is a solution imposed as violently on himself as death is on Claudio.

The solution of the poetic problem in this manner marks also the resolution of the problem of death as a purely subjective matter. For at the same time as the poetic problem is solved, death disappears from his work in its personal form. It recurs of course in subsequent works, but as one of a number of aesthetic problems in the middle works, and in a wider context in the later works.

Hofmannsthal's Chandos is described as a 'Mystiker ohne Mystik' and Hofmannsthal seems to write about death in his youth as a metaphysician without metaphysics. To the young death means an assault on the life they might have expected and a denial of meaningful personality. It is this assault and denial that is the great significance of death for Hofmannsthal's young heroes, and therefore with time he must outgrow such fears. Death in these works therefore has little to do with the mystery of dying, that is, with the deprivation of physical being. It is a playing-at-death, because what the young man fears is not death but the elusiveness of life and what the poet feared was not death but helpless silence. The beauty of its expression affirms his belief in the splendour of life but neither

commits him to a metaphysical concept of death nor brings out forcefully the ethical element of his work.

This is by no means a dismissal of the early works nor of the treatment of death as depicted in them. It serves only to define the limits of their treatment of death. This treatment, except insofar as it borrows incidentally from traditional sources, is largely subjective: it is an expression of the fear of the very young that life might elude them, and of the poet that his gift might vanish. In a novel set in Vienna in Hofmannsthal's time a young man, like one of the pre-existent heroes in that he is unable to commit himself to whatever life might hold, suffers equally from this fear, but realises that knowledge survives and conquers fear:

Das Leben wird ihn nicht gleich nach der Erkenntnis und durch dieselbe niederrennen, sondern es wird ihm den Spielraum gönnen, die Lust der Erkenntnis zu geniessen. (1)

So it was with Hofmannsthal: the deaths of his early heroes are moments of illumination and realisation of what life involves, but their creator survived to reap the fruits of this realisation and to go on creating.

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(1) Heimito von Doderer, Die Strudelhofstiege, (München, 1966), p.678.

## CHAPTER THREE: THE MIDDLE YEARS

(i) Experiments in tragedy

The picture of death that emerges from the poetry of Hofmannsthal's middle period is much less uniform in content and mood than that offered by the early works. The portrayal of death in the early poetry had a focus in the problems of pre-existence, whereas the only focus for the middle period seems to be its deliberate concentration on experiment. It is difficult to estimate the extent to which Elektra, Das gerettete Venedig or the Oedipus dramas participate in an attitude to and portrayal of death that is truly Hofmannsthal's, and the extent to which they continue to reflect the traditional or personal views of their original models. Sometimes there is a sense that the original treatment of death does not harmonise perfectly with its modern treatment; sometimes the meaning and symbolism becomes lost or obscured, particularly in the Oedipus dramas. An examination of the treatment of death in this period must therefore have two aims: to define the significance of death in Hofmannsthal's versions of individual legends, and because of the disparity of appearances presented by the works as a group, to establish the degree of unity between them.

It is immediately clear that Hofmannsthal uses the economy and intensity of the dramatic medium to re-examine his early view that the value of existence is contained not in the nature but in the quality of man's existence. Now he tests this thesis against extreme situations in the lives of extraordinary individuals. He uses the material of legends

and of literary antecedents to provide new and broader contexts for the exploration of this thesis and of the part played by death in sharpening man's perception of the quality of life. Contemporary attitudes to death contribute to the mood of Hofmannsthal's experiments in drama. His works reflect a growing awareness of the irrational in many fields, - classical scholarship, history, the theatre, psychology, - (1), in the light of which death assumes a new importance. Hofmannsthal also suggests that death in drama is gradually acquiring a significance independent of its function as the fitting conclusion to certain types of dramatic action; that it is no longer regarded, even in drama, as being simply the end of life, but that in some sense its immanence in life contributes to the richness and intensity of man's existence (2). It is against such a climate of irrationality - dark, threatening, knowing nothing of the solace of religion, but only of the vulnerability of man to the effects of incomprehensible forces in and around himself, that Hofmannsthal treats the theme of death in this period.

The new picture of death offered by the middle works indicates not a break with the early poetry, but a development of the insights acquired through it. The poetic and psychological crisis of the early

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(1) This interest in the irrational with classical Greek drama as its centre of interest is described in: Hermann Ubell, Die griechische Tragödie, in Die Litteratur ed. Georg Brandes, Berlin 1905, pp.1-6.

(2) See Hofmannsthal's essay Schiller, P II, p.180, written in 1905.

years produces a degree of maturity discernible in the treatment of death. The punitive function of death disappears with the disappearance of the fear that life might pass the poet by. It is as if the death-god of wrath who belonged to pre-existence has become a god of love, albeit a god of love with several different faces. The criteria of death, the nature of guilt and of fate cannot be established unequivocally; the element of censure, already problematic in Das Bergwerk zu Falun, gradually recedes. Death's educative and illuminating function is also modified. Hofmannsthal treats death more and more as a dualism: as a potential and as an actual force in man's life. Hence the enlightening encounter with death is kept increasingly separate from the physical process of dying. For, whereas only a brutal assault by death could show Hofmannsthal's early heroes the meaning of life, the characters of the middle period can achieve self-knowledge and fulfilment through an encounter with death that is not always death itself. From the beginning of their lives they have been made more aware of living in the shadow of mortality, through events such as Oedipus' dreams, Elektra's recollection of her father's death, the prevalent morbidity of Venice.

Extraordinary actions and reactions result from the realisation of life's impermanence and of the potential violence of death. The fact of death becomes a testing experience: its importance lies in its depth, in its capacity for involving and affecting the 'whole man' to the root of his being, and, because of its depth, in the dynamic effect that the knowledge of death can have on the value man sets on life. Paradoxically

this is clearest in the comedies and libretti; for in them there is a point at which tragedy is possible, and it is through the glimpse of tragedy miraculously averted that the individual finds his way through to an increase and a new appreciation of life.

Knowledge of mortality and its effect on the value man sets on life means that death is often fulfilment, even if by fulfilment is meant simply the last resort. Jaffier in Das gerettete Venedig is an exception, for like the heroes of pre-existence he needs to learn that death is not to be trifled with, that it is both more and less than he had imagined. But following Elis who tried and rejected life's possibilities, Elektra cuts herself off from them, Oedipus exhausts them, Pierre is defeated by them, so that only a completely different and completely isolated form of existence remains; for all of them except Oedipus this form is death.

Thus death cannot be considered to be identical to life or in any way contained in the possibilities of life. Instead life and death are contrasted, but remain complementary. They exist within a framework of unified contrasts, by means of which Hofmannsthal explains the configuration of his middle works (1). Death is seen in terms of this configuration

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(1) Aufz. p.234: Als junger Mensch sah ich die Einheit der Welt, das Religiöse, in ihrer Schönheit; die vielfältige Schönheit aller Wesen ergriff mich, die Kontraste, und dass alle doch auf einander Bezug hatten. Später war es das Einzelne und die hinter der schönen Einheit wirksamen Kräfte, das ich darzustellen mich gedrungen fühlte, aber von dem Gefühl der Einheit liess ich nie ab. (Auch dort wo Kontraste dargestellt sind, in der mittleren Periode, wie die heroische Elektra und die nur weibliche Chrysothemis, oder der starke Pierre und der schwache Jaffier, kam es mir immer darauf an, dass sie mitsammen eine Einheit bildeten, recht eigentlich eins waren.)

as the last step in human progress, which is taken only when no more steps can be taken in life; it is therefore a much more active death than that of pre-existence: Elektra, Pierre, Oedipus and Jokaste are both instruments and victims of their own destruction, and this both at the most profound spiritual and at the most obvious technical level. The first part of this chapter shows how the final step into death becomes an inevitability, what it means for those who take it and for those who remain behind in life.

(ii) Zu-sich-selber-kommen

For the early heroes death opened the door from a dream-world into the real world; for the heroes of this period it opens one from an unbearably harsh reality into spiritual release. Reflecting on pre-existence Hofmannsthal's fictitious Lord Chandos says: 'geistige und körperliche Welt schien mir keinen Gegensatz zu bilden' (1). The dream-world of pre-existence ignored man's physical existence until death brought awareness of its frailty and of the moral obligations this frailty creates. These lessons provide a starting-point in the lives of the heroes of the middle period. They obey death's injunction to seek the 'good life', insofar as this means a life filled by a purpose with which they can identify themselves and so 'Zu-sich-selber-kommen' (2). They also set out from the

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(1) P I, p.11.

(2) Aufz., p.216.



injunction to seek the good life through Treue, but this proves to mean different things. In the comedies fulfilment is found through the form of fidelity that death enjoins in Der Tor und der Tod, namely through union with another human being. But in the tragedies self-fulfilment is hindered by those things that bind men together, so that it turns out to be a spiritual state realisable only in death.

The most obvious example of the process is Elektra. The death of her father establishes her pursuit of identity through revenge, but it is an end to which she finally sacrifices her own life. Hofmannsthal was clearly fascinated by this mentality, as his comment on the character of Kriemhild shows (1). Kriemhild and Elektra make the ideal of revenge the centre of their lives and hence make these lives a form of living death, which gives way at its climax, the achievement of vengeance, to death itself. In a sense they have reversed the processes of living and dying, as Elektra seems in her speech to reverse the relationships of father and daughter, assuming a maternal rôle towards the dead Agamemnon. Claudio's acclamation: 'da tot mein Leben war, sei du mein Leben, Tod!' (2) might be made by Elektra and Kriemhild, but their reversal of life and death serves a purpose, since it is made for the unlawful ending of another's life. But Elektra's vision of revenge is an empty fantasy. One reason for this is her inability to perform the deed that will liberate her. Fidelity to her own nature and to her father demands revenge, but

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(1) Aufz., p.157/8.

(2) GLD, p.291.

the act of revenge would create a resemblance with her treacherous mother. Because of this division of loyalties action becomes an insoluble problem to Elektra and cuts off, until the coming of Orest, her chosen way of establishing and fulfilling herself.

Likewise in Das gerettete Venedig Hofmannsthal emphasises the impossibility of self-fulfilment where there is a division of loyalties. Pessimistically it is Priuli, the man who represents the triumph of corruption, who is the only 'whole man' who 'moves at once', because in disposing of Jaffier he acts for himself and, as he sees it, for the common good. The other characters are forced to compromise, Jaffier between his wife and his friend, Pierre between his friend and his cause, Belvidera between her husband and her father and clearly the whole man cannot move in two directions at once.

Oedipus is also forced to make this discovery, which begins among Hofmannsthal's heroes with Elis in Das Bergwerk zu Falun, for every attempt to evade the fulfilment of the prophecy becomes a movement towards it. His identity as Oedipus is stronger than any individual act he might wish to execute; this is proven by his encounter with the sphinx: on recognising Oedipus the sphinx destroys itself. He conquers the sphinx not as he had hoped by a deed, the product of his own personality, but by his inherited identity as Oedipus. Since the sphinx is a symbol of Laios' guilt, Oedipus feels the ambivalence of his conquest as if this guilt now inhabited him together with the heritage of kingship. Indeed the sphinx's death symbolises the inevitability and the irony of Oedipus' fate, the

fact that he too must make himself guilty because he must also be king:

Ich bin ein König und ein Ungeheuer  
in einem Leib... (1)

From each of these examples we can see that the achievement of personality and its frustration are closely connected with the problem of the interdependence of parents and children. Elektra cannot act without creating a resemblance to her mother, Belvidera cannot suppress her relationship to Priuli, Oedipus feels the guilt of his father as if it were his own. Through the continuity of the generations and their interdependence in life and death, Hofmannsthal implies that life follows, or should follow, a pattern in its interaction with death, and that a flaw in one piece of the pattern disrupts the whole. In his earliest works he treats death as a denial of meaningful personality; the murder of Agamemnon - and it is important to note that Hofmannsthal makes nothing of the preceding episode of the sacrifice of Iphigenia which supplied the original motive -, the sacrifice of the infant Oedipus by his father, the exposure of Belvidera to the threats and torments of Jaffier's fellow conspirators, are such denials presented in acute form. Hofmannsthal shows how their consequences disrupt the natural progress of life towards death; although the individual's life has been denied and cannot be restored, the offence against life remains and life avenges itself by pouring chaos and confusion into the lives of the survivors. Jokaste tells Antiope how life has

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(1) D II, p.358.

punished Laios and herself for sacrificing the child:

dafür  
hat uns das Leben angeschaut, als wäre  
es über unsrer Tat erstarrt und müsste  
mit Blicken, unter denen unser Mark  
gefror, uns zahlen, dass wir ihm zu wild  
gedient. (1)

Oedipus shares with Elektra a triangular configuration, father, mother, child, and the same interaction between the characters: the parents who gave the child life, receive from it and from each other death:

der Vater  
die Mutter und das Kind, mit zuckenden,  
mit ewigen Ketten des Geschicks geschmiedet Leib an Leib. (2)

For Agamemnon's children the disruption means that the processes of living and dying are reversed: both Elektra and Chrysothemis speak of living and yet not living, for the signs of life's progress, - love, marriage, the creation of new life, - are denied them, for such signs would be an offence against the unnatural and untimely death of the king. In the Oedipus dramas the pattern of life is likewise disrupted - in this case according to a traditional tragic motif, namely the refusal of the old king to make way for the new - but when both kings have been punished for their crimes, Oedipus stresses that it is his children, themselves innocent, who will bear the burden of guilt. Thus from his earliest poetry and continuing into the middle period and later, in Der Turm, Hofmannsthal shows how the child, as a symbol of the continuity of life,

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(1) D II, p.358.

(2) D II, p.295.

participates in the guilt that all human lives incur. The child's guilt is like original sin, he is born into it and does not incur it personally. Hofmannsthal suggests however that the expiation of this guilt by the innocent suffering child can restore order throughout the disrupted community.

This chain reaction, taking up the examples of intercession and mutual education already present in a small way in Der weisse Fächer, Der Tor und der Tod and Der Kaiser und die Hexe and heralding the more obvious ones in the Christian allegories, takes place in Elektra through the urge of the heroine and of her brother to expiate the guilt of the family. Orest alone can commit the act of revenge, because he is both a member of the family and yet a stranger, neither contaminated nor enfeebled by the atmosphere of the house: 'Ein Fremder, aber freilich ist er vom Haus' (1). Orest resembles the figure of death in pre-existence inasmuch as he fulfils the rôle of the family's conscience: familiar and alien at the same time he brings death and restores justice and order. The effect on the community is less important in Elektra than in the Oedipus dramas or in Das gerettete Venedig, but it is not entirely forgotten, for Elektra retains her royalty and therefore her responsibility to the community - in Euripides's version or the modern one by Giraudoux for example, she loses it by her marriage to a peasant. It is a test of her royal blood that she is prepared, like Sigismund, to make the supreme sacrifice of her own life

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(1) D II, p.34.

in order to carry out the act of expiation, or, as actually happens, to enable Orest to do so.

Elektra's need to transfer the burden of action to Orest pinpoints a further problem that can be removed only by total isolation or by death, namely the problem of communication between people through speech. Words and deeds, anticipation and realisation prove unequal. The precision of a single act cannot encompass the diffuseness of Elektra's grotesque, fantastic visions of revenge and death. In the context of Hofmannsthal's whole work this problem has a greater relevance to Elektra's death, which removes it, than to the act of vengeance. For here it becomes clear that the relationship between action and speech is not only a psychological one for the heroine, but also a technical one for the poet. As the climax of the action, namely Elektra's death, is reached, the poet's stylistic range is more rapidly exhausted, so that finally speech fails and the more fluid and intense media of music and dance are enlisted to translate Elektra's feeling of triumph and fulfilment into external signs. This poetic problem is not purely a technical one, but arises also from the mystical nature of the heroine's experience. Elektra has already exhausted the possibilities of language in her anticipation of the mystical moment when she can feel at one with a world that no longer houses evil and corruption. Hence her only means of expressing her triumph is 'schweigen und tanzen' (1).

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(1) D II, p.75. Significantly Hofmannsthal says that where the individual is most himself, as in this example, he must be silent, Aufz., p.194: das

Because it lacks any metaphysical dimension Das gerettete Venedig offers a simpler variation on the same theme. As in Elektra there are many descriptions of death and vengeance, some fulfilled, some unfulfilled. The degree of fulfilment is consistent, for it is the wild, ecstatic, vengeful visions that do not come to pass, like those of Elektra. Pierre's vision of the death of Senator Priuli (1), Jaffier's anticipation of his own heroism in murdering the company of senators (2), and his revenge on Renault (3), Belvidera's description of the conspirators' death (4) all read alike, and are all equally unrealisable. For the words are so dangerously exciting in themselves that the achievement could never measure up to them. On the other hand those prophecies which are couched in few words, which are simple statements of a dull, grim feeling of an inexorable fate, are the ones that come true. Aquilina's mulatto servant describes the imaginary death of the Senator Dolfin in ecstatic tones, but it is Aquilina's contrasting insight, expressed simply and despairingly, which contains the seeds of truth:

Ach, mir ist, zuvor  
sterb ich, stirbt Pierre, stirbt diese ganze Welt. (5)

Similarly Jaffier's death is predicted several times, by himself and others,

(cont'd.) Individuum ist unaussprechlich. Was sich ausspricht, geht schon ins Allgemeine über, ist nicht mehr im strengen Sinne individuell. Sprache und Individuum heben sich gegenseitig auf.

- (1) D II, p.116/7.
- (2) D II, p.185.
- (3) D II, p.215 & 219.
- (4) D II, p.218.
- (5) D II, p.154.

as a gesture of heroism or as a means to fulfilment of his destiny, but it is a simple statement by one of the conspirators which demonstrates why he will eventually die, and that it will be the death of a traitor:

Der Bursche schweigt im Grabe oder nie!  
Ich hab unseren Tod auf seinen Lippen  
wie eine blaue Flamme sitzen sehen. (1)

Thus Hofmannsthal demonstrates again the gap between words and experience. Death proves to be both more and less than the ecstatic visions in which the characters, especially Jaffier, anticipated it: less, because it is not fulfilment and glory, but more, because it cannot be bent into the experience of their choosing as words could be bent into a magical delusion. The pattern is that of Das Märchen der 672. Nacht; the omnipotence of death is made apparent through the discrepancy between the hero's anticipation of it and the grim reality.

From these examples it can be seen that Zu-sich-selber-kommen through a deed, as each of the characters had anticipated it, is frustrated by those things which bind people together - by the intimacy of close relationships, by inheritance, by speech (2). Their inability to reconcile themselves to being bound to their fellow men eventually produces total isolation, in death for Elektra, Jaffier and Pierre, and in self-imposed banishment and blindness for Oedipus. Death dissolves the ties of human

(1) D II, p.180.

(2) Cf. Aufz., p.225: Alles geht auf Totalitäten,  
demgegenüber schwer zum Einzelnen durchzudringen.



relationships and removes physical contact through sight, sound or touch. Oedipus' blindness is in effect an imitation of death, which together with banishment removes him from contact with the community. Thus ironically death sets the seal on identity by isolating man from those things which bind him to other men. At the same time it is clear that this is only the subject's experience of death, for in these plays each death binds the living more closely together: mother and daughters are bound more closely by the death of Agamemnon, mother and son by the death of Laios, while in Das gerettete Venedig Priuli siezes the opportunity to bind his daughter to him by arranging the death of Jaffier. To some extent the treatment of death anticipates its treatment in the later works as an experience affecting the community, while continuing the earliest treatment of death as a purely subjective experience.

(iii) The function and meaning of death

In the early works death set the seal on identity by showing characters such as Claudio the inadequacy of their lives, and in the middle works we see that death continues to clarify our picture of the hero and give him his final worth. But whereas in the early works the character's 'worth' was a matter of morality and death showed him the way to the 'good life', however vague the poet's definition of 'good', in the middle works death has no consistent moral value or function. Death continues to evaluate life but to an increasing extent what is involved is the establishment of an aesthetic rather than a moral value, dependent on

the presence of an audience and of the special conditions of drama. Only art, but perhaps particularly drama, can sharpen man's perception of human mortality by revealing his future, by showing for instance that:

ein Mann, der mit fünfunddreissig stirbt, ist auf jedem Punkt seines Lebens ein Mann, der mit fünfunddreissig stirbt. (1)

Hofmannsthal puts a similar idea into deliberately aesthetic terms when he says of his characters:

Meinen Figuren stösst nichts zu, als dass sie sich ihrem Tod entgegen enthüllen. (2)

They reveal themselves in the course of the drama but what the revelation means is made clear only by death. Yet from both these statements it may be seen that the meaning of death can be two things: it can be the meaning for the man himself, and this exists only if he knows he must die at thirty-five, or if he will experience another form of existence in which he will see what his human life meant; or it can be a meaning which is only made plain to the spectator, and this has a primarily aesthetic effect; it is the tragic ending which rounds off the action and completes our picture of the man. In Claudio's death and later in the Christian allegories Hofmannsthal shows a moral evaluation made transparent to characters and audience alike, but in the middle works the nature of death's evaluation of the individual's life is more problematic.

(1) Aufz., p.15.

(2) Walther Brecht, Hugo von Hofmannsthals 'Ad me ipsum' und seine Bedeutung, (Jahrbuch des freien deutschen Hochstifts, 1930), p.342.

(iv) Elektra

Perhaps of all these dramas Elektra offers the most complex treatment of death and certainly the treatment that has been interpreted in the most ways and with the strongest feelings. Hofmannsthal's starting point for Elektra was the entirely original conception of an Elektra who, in order to be completely herself, must die; (1) but the theme of death goes back to the only part of the preliminary history that Hofmannsthal retains, namely the death of Agamemnon, which unites and governs the characters of Elektra. Considered in the light of Agamemnon's death the play offers a study in mourning and shows the recognised reactions of mourning - anger, grief and guilt. Thus although the fate of Elektra is its focal point, the play also indicates a development towards a treatment of death involving the whole community. Initially it is the small community of the family and the 'revelation of character towards death' is supported by imagery, atmosphere and visual presentation, through which Hofmannsthal conveys the intricacy of human relationships and emotions and a strong sense of irrational evil.

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(1) See Aufz., p.224: 17.vii. 'Elektra' - Der erste Einfall kam mir anfangs September 1901. Ich las damals um für die 'Pompilia' gewisses zu lernen, den Richard III und die Elektra von Sophokles. Sogleich verwandelte sich die Gestalt dieser Elektra in eine andere. Auch das Ende stand sogleich da: dass sie nicht mehr weiterleben kann, dass wenn der Streich gefallen ist, ihr Leben und ihr Eingeweide ihr entstürzen muss, wie die Drohne, wenn sie die Königin befruchtet hat, mit den befruchtenden Stachel zugleich Eingeweide und Leben entstürzen. Die Verwandtschaft und der Gegensatz zu Hamlet war mir auffallend. Als Stil schwebte mir vor, etwas Gegensätzliches zu 'Iphigenie' zu machen, etwas worauf das Wort nicht passe, 'dieses graecisierende Produkt erschien mir beim erneuten Lesen verteufelt human.'

The interdependence of the members of the family in life and death is brought out by the two dominant images, that of the house and that of blood. The house of Agamemnon has no visible signs of life (1). For Elektra the house is synonymous with Klytämnestra, whom she calls 'meines Vaters Grab' (2), but as the family home it represents the place and instrument not only of murder but also of revenge. Agamemnon, murdered by the treachery of his wife, will return to the house in triumph when avenged by his children. Klytämnestra has banished Orest and hopes, having heard a rumour of his death, to rid herself likewise of Elektra, for she too feels the inextricable involvement of house and crime and says. 'was kümmert mich, wer ausser Haus ist?' (3). For Chrysothemis the house is a

(1) See Hofmannsthal's instructions for stage and sets, P II, p.81.

(2) D II, p.26.

(3) The double significance of the image of the house is brought out most clearly in the comic exchange between the cook and the boy when the rumour of Orest's death is heard: D II, p.45:

der junge Bursch Orest  
 der Sohn vom Haus, der immer ausser Haus war  
 und drum so gut wie tot: kurz, dieser, der  
 schon eh und immer sozusagen tot war,  
 der ist nun sozusagen wirklich tot!

This scene has the tone and dramatic function of the gravediggers' scene in Hamlet. There are many Shakespearean echoes and similarities: like Hamlet, Elektra automatically associates every subsequent <sup>event</sup> with the murder. An echo of Lady Macbeth's insanity is found in her vision of Agamemnon's blood staining the floor as long as his murder goes unavenged. Above all for Elektra as for Hamlet, marriage and family life are tarnished, not only because they are signs of life's progress and therefore an insult to her murdered father, but also because her first knowledge of them was the desecration of her own family by her mother and Ägisth. Hamlet's 'let there be no more marriages' is echoed by Elektra's scornful and horrified reactions to her sister's craving for a 'Weiberschicksal' which aligns Chrysothemis with the murderers. Elektra has sacrificed her womanly feelings to the memory of her father:

prison and a reproof, to which a peasant's hovel with peace and affection would be preferable. She believes it is only Elektra's obstinacy that condemns her to the sterile 'nicht-leben' of the palace:

ich will nicht jede Nacht  
bis an den Tod hier schlafen! Eh ich sterbe,  
will ich auch leben!....  
Viel lieber tot  
als leben und nicht leben. Nein ich bin  
ein Weib und will ein Weiberschicksal. (1)

Elektra makes it clear that she has not contemplated such alternatives as Chrysothemis desires. Pylades does not accompany Orest and it is inconceivable that she should marry him if he did. She seems to exclude herself from those who will survive:

wer dann noch lebt,  
der jauchzt und kann sich seines Lebens freuen. (2)

because she knows that she is bound to mother as well as to father:

Du hast mir ausgespien, wie das Meer,  
ein Leben, einen Vater und Geschwister;  
und hast hinabgeschlungen, wie das Meer,  
ein Leben, einen Vater und Geschwister.  
Ich weiss nicht wie ich sterben sollte -  
als daran, dass du stürbest. (3)

(cont'd.)

Ich bin nicht Mutter.....lebe  
und lebe nicht, hab' langes Haar und fühle  
doch nichts von dem, was Weiber, heisst es, fühlen.

D II, p.55

The image of blood likewise suggests the murders between which the action moves, of Agamemnon, and later of Ägisth and Klytämnestra, but also kinship, the narrowness of the family and of evil turned in on itself and expiable only through its own strength.

(1) D II, p.18/19.

(2) D II, p.41.

(3) D II, p.27.

Elektra's indifference to the consequence of revenge for her own life is also brought out in her speeches to Orest and to Chrysothemis (1), and Orest's speech about himself foreshadows Elektra's death:

Er freute sich zu sehr  
an seinem Leben, und die Götter droben  
vertragen nicht den allzuhellen Laut  
der Lust... So musste er denn sterben. (2)

Elektra's death seems to be such an expression of excessive emotion, and as such is supported by the evidence of literature and psychology (3).

She confesses that such emotion is a burden:

Ich trag die Last  
des Glückes, und ich tanze vor euch her,  
Wer glücklich ist wie wir, dem ziemte nur eins:  
schweigen und tanzen! (4)

But it is not clear whether her death is also, as Orest's words imply, a judgment on her. It has been suggested that death is the price she pays for betrayal of her womanhood (5), as Freud says of Lady Macbeth, and this judgment implicitly lends approval to Chrysothemis. There is however support for the view that Elektra's death should be regarded as a high-point in the theme of Treue, like that of Elis in Das Bergwerk zu Falun

(1) See D II, p.49, p.531.

(2) D II, p.57.

(3) See Freud's Psychoanalytische Studien an Werken der Dichtung, in which he discusses characters who are destroyed by success; most are women, e.g. Rebekka in Rosmersholm, Lady Macbeth; it is suggested that Lady Macbeth's insanity and infertility are the price she pays for success, that she sacrifices her womanhood to an unnatural deed.

(4) D II, p.75.

(5) Naef, op. cit., p.117/118.

and of Sigismund in Der Turm, and indeed these characters are called by Hofmannsthal the 'Gekrönten' (1). This view tends however to dismiss Chrysothemis as inferior to her sister. Yet in the work there is no suggestion that approval of one necessarily involves condemnation of the other. Elektra is supremely idealistic, Chrysothemis more realistic; Elektra cannot forget or compromise, Chrysothemis believes there are things the human heart cannot bear to remember. The ultimate difference is that Elektra chooses death and Chrysothemis the imperfections of life:

Chrysothemis:  
Im Schlaf sie morden und dann weiterleben!

Elektra:  
Es handelt sich um ihn, und nicht um uns. (2)

But Hofmannsthal does not suggest one of these is the 'right' choice and one the wrong. Again he shows the variety of responses to the problems of human life, which are not to be united under a single ethic, but only in the single mystery of life itself. He suggests there is a unity which encompasses all possible responses, even the ultimate choice of life or death. But the contrasts between the pairs of characters, which recur throughout the middle period, have a particular significance for the treatment of death. What Hofmannsthal says of Oedipus and Kreon applies to Elektra and Chrysothemis:

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(1) Rey, William H., Weltentzweiung und Weltversöhnung in Hofmannsthals griechischen Dramen, (Studies in Germanic Languages and Literatures, Univ. of Pennsylvania, 1962) pp.66-73, and Aufz., p.215.

(2) D II, p.49.

Jede Trennung ist Allegorie. Auch das Gegeneinanderstellen von Ödipus and Kreon ist Allegorie. Der Tod ist mitten im Leben. (1)

Elektra's death shows one part of this allegory: it is her choice, a living response to the choice between life and death. But it is not a simple abdication, for her death proclaims both the sanctity and the fulfilment of life. Her death is first a sacrifice, made in the name of a life wrongfully destroyed, and because it is her father's life its destruction is implicitly an attack upon her own; second, death is also the consummation of her own life, which was dedicated to righting this wrong; for, as Hofmannsthal says, she has vowed herself to be completely Elektra and the paradoxical, though logical, conclusion of her vow is her own death. Thus implicitly death becomes the final seal on man's identity; man is not completely himself in this world. Chrysothemis is right when she says 'das Fürchterliche ist nicht für das Herz des Menschen', as Elektra is right when she renounces speech in the final moment of ecstasy: both suggest that extreme emotion belongs to another dimension of experience, for it destroys the things of this world. Thus the meaning of Elektra's death, contained in the verse: 'if my bark sinks, tis to another sea', is an undogmatic statement of the belief in death as a turning-point in man's existence, not as is sometimes suggested of the early works, a symbolic moral turning-point within life, but a pointer towards a completely different dimension. This means that death is not simply an evaluation of

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(1) Aufz., p.158.



Elektra's life, but also points to the limitations of physical life in general. Some people, like Elektra, feel these limitations more than others; their longing to be released is greater than that of others. Hence, whereas for the other characters the act of revenge is of domestic or political significance, for Elektra it is a mystical experience, which like her own dance of death will unite her with a higher order than the inadequate one of earthly life (1).

In his notes Hofmannsthal has anticipated Elektra's death when revenge is accomplished; this anticipation, including anticipation of the form of her death, is likewise present from the beginning of the play:

dann tanzen wir, dein Blut, rings um dein Grab:  
 und über Leichen hin werd ich das Knie  
 hochheben Schritt für Schritt, und die mich werden  
 so tanzen sehen, ja, die meinen Schatten  
 von weitem nur so werden tanzen sehn,  
 die werden sagen: einem grossen König  
 wird hier ein grosses Prunkfest angestellt  
 von seinem Fleisch und Blut, und glücklich ist,

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(1) The strongest verbal indication that Elektra's death is a mystical experience is contained in one of the additional verses of the libretto, which uses the imagery of religious sacrament and echoes the words of the Persian mystic Dschellaledin Rumi, quoted elsewhere by Hofmannsthal: D II, p.553:

Chrysothemis:  
 Nun ist der Bruder da und Liebe  
 fliesst über uns wie Öl und Myrrhen, Liebe  
 ist Alles! Wer kann leben ohne Liebe?

Elektra:  
 Ai! Liebe tötet! aber keiner fährt dahin  
 und hat die Liebe nicht gekannt!

cf. Sebastian Melmoth, P II, p.138 (1905)  
 Wundervolles Wort des Dschellaledin Rumi, tiefer als alles: 'Wer die Gewalt des Reigens kennt, fürchtet nicht den Tod. Denn er weiss, das Liebe tötet.'

wer Kinder hat, die um sein hohes Grab  
so königliche Siegestänze tanzen. (1)

Elektra's dance is a peculiarly Greek manifestation of the mystical experience, although similar dances are known throughout Europe particularly in the Middle Ages - as for instance the legends surrounding the disease known as St. Vitus' Dance. Such dances were first known in Phrygia and Thrace and are described in detail in Rohde's Psyche (2). Elektra's final scene resembles Rohde's descriptions, in which her visions, hallucinations, the music she believes comes from inside herself, her crazy self-destroying dance are all enumerated. But these are external signs of a cult whose purpose has a much closer connection with Hofmannsthal's treatment of death as a mystical experience, both in Elektra and elsewhere. The purpose of the dancers was purification

(1) D II, p.15.

(2) Erwin Rohde, Psyche, Seelencult und Unsterblichkeitsglauben der Griechen, (Freiburg i. B., 1894):

Die Theilnehmer an diesen Tanzfeiern versetzten sich selbst in eine Art von Manie, eine ungeheure Überspannung ihres Wesens; eine Art Verzückung ergriff sie, in der sie 'rasend besessen', sich und Anderen erschienen. Diese Überreizung der Empfindung bis zu visionären Zuständen bewirkten, bei hiefür Empfänglichen, der rasende Tanzwirbel, die Musik, das Dunkel, alle die Veranstaltungen dieses Aufregungscultes. Diese äusserste Erregung war der Zweck, den man erreichen wollte. Einen religiösen Sinn hatte die gewaltsam herbeigeführte Steigerung des Gefühls darin, dass nur durch solche Überspannung und Ausweitung seines Wesens der Mensch in Verbindung und Berührung treten zu können schien, mit Wesen einer Höheren Ordnung, mit dem Gott und seinen Geisterscharen.

It is interesting to compare this description with Hofmannsthal's essay Furcht, P II, p.358 ff. and Über die Pantomime, p.46 ff. In the latter the language of the dance is compared with speech and again it is stressed that speech is a link between people and the dancehighly individual, although the opposite is thought to be true:

Die Sprache der Worte ist scheinbar individuell, in Wahrheit generisch, die des Körpers scheinbar allgemein, in Wahrheit höchst persönlich. Auch redet nicht der Körper zum Körper, sondern das menschliche Ganze zum Ganzen. (p.50)

through communion with the god in a moment of ecstasy (1). If we disregard the worship of the god and the dance as an act of communal religious fervour, an element remains which is shared by Hofmannsthal's work. In death he sees the bursting of the bonds of the human condition; he likewise speaks of death as the moment of Steigerung, meaning not only the intensification of feeling but also the attainment of union with a higher order. Death is the messenger of the 'höchste Welt' (2), and Elektra's death is the achievement of union with the higher order in joy and triumph. It is a release from the kind of individuality which is possible in earthly life, in which man has to maintain relationships with other men, into complete individuality:

Meine antiken Stücke haben es alle drei mit der Auflösung des Individualbegriffes zu tun. In der 'Elektra' wird das Individuum in der empirischen Weise aufgelöst, indem eben der Inhalt seines Lebens es von innen her zersprengt, wie das sich zu Eis umbildende Wasser einen irdenen Krug. Elektra ist nicht mehr Elektra, weil sie eben ganz und gar Elektra zu sein sich weihte. (3)

Elektra's 'Auflösung' has two dimensions; it has a meaning for her, of which she is fully conscious and at which she has indeed aimed; it also has a meaning for the spectator, clarifying and rounding off his picture of Elektra - we can test this by positing another ending to the play, such as the failure of Orest's revenge, or Elektra's marriage to Pylades or simply her continued but now empty existence. Such an Elektra would make a lesser impression on our minds than the powerful one made by a

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(1) Ibid., p.302.  
 (2) Aufz., p.223.  
 (3) Aufz., p.201.

person who sacrifices everything including her own life to a single purpose, whatever we may think of that purpose.

(v) Das gerettete Venedig

When we speak of death giving the heroes of Das gerettete Venedig their final value, we mean something different. In Das gerettete Venedig the absence of a spiritual order means that death is by definition the end. That extra dimension by virtue of which Elektra's death could become a bursting of the bonds of physical existence, does not exist here. In the absence of a sense of the supernatural we are also bound to place a different interpretation on the visions of death and vengeance, similar to Elektra's, which abound in the work. Whereas Elektra's wild, orgiastic visions of death could point to her eventual release through the power of her emotions from the chains of human personality into some other form of existence, similar visions in Das gerettete Venedig cannot and do not point to any such fulfilment and release. Thus death's evaluation of the characters cannot have an eschatological significance, but at the most an aesthetic significance. It clarifies our picture of Jaffier and of Pierre, but adds little to their understanding of their own lives or of each others. Thus death has little moral function as we have seen this at work in the early works, in which audience and participants alike are taught a lesson about life.

From the beginning Jaffier's sympathy with death is contrasted with Pierre's refusal to countenance death as long as action is possible; their

exchange of views anticipates Jaffier's ignominious death and Pierre's more dignified suicide:

Pierre:  
Hör. Solang ich Blut hab  
und Atem, solls den Deinigen und dir  
an Hilf nicht mangeln. Über dies mein Herz  
gebiete, denn du bist der Herr davon.

Jaffier:  
Lass! es liegt ein geheimer Stolz darin,  
sich su verkriechen und zugrund zu gehn  
ganz im Verborgnen.

Pierre:  
Ratten kriechen so  
in Löcher, um zu sterben, Hunde schäumen  
und werden toll, doch Männer wissen, mein ich,  
ein bessres Mittel gegen ihren Jammer,  
und mit den Göttern haben sies gemein:  
Vergeltung ist sein Name.

Jaffier:  
Wüsst ich Flüche,  
die töten!

Pierre:  
Dolche töten! Dolche! Dolche! (1)

For Pierre, the adventurer and man of action, death is a spur to the enjoyment of life and comes into its own only when all hope of life is gone. Life and death have for him a reciprocal relationship, so that they inform each other with meaning; and because death enriches his enjoyment of life, so the experience offered by life gives death its importance. He says for example, that he would not like to have died without knowing that such women as Belvidera exist. Yet Pierre's strength is undermined by

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(1) D II, p.112.

Jaffier's weakness. Pierre contrasts himself throughout the play with his friend, calling himself 'ein gemeiner Mensch', recognising that Jaffier's sensitivity is potentially a virtue, even if this virtue is hardly realised. There comes a point however when Pierre's awareness of the difference between himself and Jaffier influences him so far that he too shows sympathy with death. This sympathy takes the form of a denial of the life he has lived in favour of another way of life (1). Aquilina senses that the acknowledgement of the possibility of 'das andere Leben' will undermine Pierre's individuality and become debilitating:

Ich fürchte mich, ich fürchte mich vor etwas,  
was ich nicht sagen kann. Ich hab dich nie  
so sprechen hören, wie du diese Worte  
gesprochen hast.....  
..... mir ist, als wärst du nicht mehr. (2)

- (1) Cf. Heut hab ich eine so ganz andre Stimme  
gehört, die ging auch tief in mich...  
... Kann sein, das ists, was man Verhängnis nennt,  
Kann sein, das sind die Stimmen der zwei Engel,  
von denen man als Kind mir was erzählt hat.  
Der eine, das ist der, dem er gefolgt ist...  
Wie, oder warens nicht zwei Engel, war  
der eine nur ein Engel, der gerade,  
den er in seiner Todesstunde erst  
zum ersten Male sah? Er setzte sich,  
der Engel, wie ein Vogel über ihn  
auf einen Baum, und seine Stimme sang  
und in den Händen hielt er ein weisses  
geheimnisvolles Kleid das andre Leben,  
das der da unterm Baum nicht hatte leben wollen.  
Wie? oder dürfen? Das verwirrt sich schon. D II, p.250/1
- The image of the angel holding the white garment of the other life recalls the allotting of the rôles in Das Salzburger grosse Welttheater.
- (2) D II, p.251.

Whereas Pierre's sympathy with death is a sign that his personality is being weakened, Jaffier's death-wish may be rooted, like that of Andrea in Gestern, in the belief that death can give him fulfilment and a sense of destiny. In a sense Pierre's desire for 'das andere Leben' is the other half of Andrea's problem, namely his reluctance to choose. Jaffier's visions of revenge on Renault for his behaviour towards Jaffier's wife is for this reason virtually indistinguishable from his vision of the murder of the corrupt politicians of Venice, for the deeds are nothing in themselves but a means to prove his manliness, to himself as well as to others. Jaffier's sympathy with death is remarked upon by Belvidera:

sein Aug hat einen Blick  
gelernt, als wünscht er sich den Tod herbei! (1)

and perhaps because it is an implicit denial of his life, it has the effect of making life reassert itself more strongly in her, so that she goes to her father to try and save the lives of her family and of Pierre.

In the event death is defeat for Pierre and for Jaffier, but there is a contrast between the manner of their deaths. Jaffier's is the ignominious death of a traitor no longer needed by those whom his treachery has served, Pierre's is a dignified suicide. Jaffier and Pierre illustrate the Rilkean kleiner Tod and grosser Tod. Jaffier's death is the anonymous, impersonal death belonging to treachery. In terms of Hofmannsthal's whole work it is seen as the insignificant death of a

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(1) D II, p.202.

man who has undervalued life, exhausted experience through anticipation and through the delusion of words, instead of accepting immediate experience and exhausting life in activity. When death claims Jaffier, it is not as he had thought, the most vital experience of life, but ignominious, devoid of spectacle, heroism, preparation or leavetaking, as hasty and ill-considered as his life. Pierre on the other hand dies his own death by his own hand, and suicide, as we may see from Die kleinen Dramen, is considered by Hofmannsthal to be one of the most dignified deaths. Pierre is given time to forgive Jaffier, although the latter will never know it, and to make his peace with Aquilina. Hofmannsthal shows that it is the good use he has made of his life that brings him the more noble end. For the young officer who grants him the dignity of suicide does so because he has been impressed by Pierre's courage and integrity in the past.

Although Pierre's death is more noble and more dignified than Jaffier's, ultimately both deaths are senseless. For neither dies willingly, neither is fulfilled by death; no sense of order, domestic, political or divine is restored, only corruption triumphs. No sense of fate exists against which the characters have pitted themselves, so death is not a glorious failure justified by the reckless pursuit of personal destiny preceeding it. Death as a result of corruption and intrigue has become so to speak, part of the Venetian way of life, to such an extent that it is taken for granted, although feelings of disgust are still possible:



Mich ekelt dies Venedig, die Spelunke!  
 ohn Licht und Luft, von faulen Fischen stinkend!  
 Dies Mörderloch, wo hinter jedem Vorhang  
 Spione hocken, wo sie jeden Brief  
 erbrechen, jeden Atemzug erhorchen!  
 Ich will nicht mehr auf diesem Wasser fahren,  
 aus dem die starren Augen der Ertränkten  
 mich ansehen, dass der Atem in der Kehle  
 mir steckenbleibt..... (1)

This description recalls the stifling sense of evil of Elektra, but it conveys only one aspect of death as it is depicted in Das gerettete Venedig: a bestial, indiscriminate, collective death, by which innocent and guilty, young and old are alike consumed; Venice is the 'hundertköpfige Bestie':

Die, fahl und feig und alt, doch so viel Kraft  
 zu morden hat, und Knebel in den Mund  
 Unglücklicher zu stopfen, und mit Eisen  
 lebendige, junge, mutige, schöne Leiber  
 an feuchte Gräber anzuschmieden.... (2)

It has something of Rilke's vision of death in the stifling atmosphere of the big city; it is the impersonal death of the city, the death that belongs to the disease a man has, and this vision suggests it is the death that belongs to the disease of Venice's corruption.

The glimpse of corruption and the attempt to remove it provide our only knowledge of the play's larger framework. There is no sense of destiny and no spiritual hierarchy; our sole awareness of order is in the disorder of the political system. This means that the effectiveness of the tragedy is very limited. We cannot even say it is a satisfactory

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(1) D II, p.158.

(2) D II, p.158/9.

tragedy of character, for tragedy demands characters bigger in stature than those of Pierre or Jaffier. Initially the character of Pierre, which has the potential force of an erhabener Verbrecher, is played down as attention is focussed on Jaffier. But Jaffier is much like the hero of Hauptmann's Einsame Menschen, a man beloved of everyone but the reader, said by his family and friends to be kind and intelligent but appearing to the spectator only ineffectual and irascible. Such men do not make effective tragic heroes. Yet if we consider Hofmannsthal's plans for this work, we cannot avoid the feeling that he has not used the material to greatest advantage. His first sketch promises more than the finished play (1). His original idea was to use the material for a Novelle which would allude to the early relationship between Jaffier and Belvidera and shows more clearly the sense of destiny which binds them together. Such a sense of destiny, involving an act of heroism on the part of Jaffier, would also have created a spiritual framework, against which the human tragedy might have been silhouetted more clearly. In the absence of such

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(1) See Aufz., p.132/3:

... sie (die Novelle) sollte enthalten: die Jugendgeschichte von Jaffier und Belvidera (wie er halb als Pflegesohn, als der Sohn einer entfernt Verwandten im Haus des Priuli aufwuchs; wie sich zwischen den beiden eine unschuldige Jugendliebe entspannt und sie anfangen, sich zu küssen. Wie Belvidera nach dem Tod ihrer Mutter das bereute und schwor, lieber sollte eine giftige Schlange sie berühren als seine Lippen. Wie den Tag nach diesem Schwur, im Garten der Villa am Brentakanal, eine Schlange unter der Steinbank hervorschießt und ihren Zahn in Belvideras herabhängende linke Hand drückt. Wie Jaffier dazukommt, sich über die Hand stürzt und die Wunde aus-saugt, Belvidera darin den Wink des Himmels sieht, sie dürfe, ja sie müsse ihm ganz gehören).

a framework, the play seems not a tragedy but merely a catastrophe, as Einsame Menschen is called a catastrophe. The death of the hero is ignoble in execution and arbitrary in motivation: Jaffier is a traitor and would have been killed sooner or later, but where and by whom is a matter of chance. This is the only sense in which his death is inevitable. His death thus evokes little of the response due to tragedy, for it is unseen and unsung, and there is no sense that the world is poorer by it (1). In order to achieve any sense of tragedy Hofmannsthal is obliged at the end to minimise the fate of Jaffier, until now his hero, and incorporate his fate into the mechanics of Pierre's death. Pierre's death has some of the dignity and sense of ritual belonging to tragedy - Aquilina is asked to close his eyes, there are protracted leavetakings, illumination and relief at the knowledge of his friend's death release a spirit of compassion, finally the guard calls for a display of respect for one who knows how to die. The tragic response is nevertheless imperfect for the tragedy is redeemed at the expense of shifting attention from the original hero, and because ultimately little or no aesthetic pleasure is derived from the wasteful deaths of both men. Pierre's more dignified death is no

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(1) Cf. the following passage on the death of Lerch in the Reitergeschichte: '... death strikes a man down quickly when his mind is elsewhere, when, in spite of omens, he is totally unaware of its nearness. The force of the conclusion ... owes something to the effective shock caused by the sudden advent of death from an unexpected quarter.' Margaret Jacobs, Four Tales, (Oxford, 1968), Introduction, p.33. The effect of the ending is more forceful in the narrative form, because the dramatic form requires a slightly more protracted rounding off.

less senseless, since it represents the ultimate triumph of the corruption he sought to destroy. Hence while death confirms our opinion of Jaffier, Pierre's worth is recognised by too few of his fellows to remove a feeling of prevailing injustice.

(vi) Ödipus und die Sphinx and König Ödipus

In the Oedipus dramas the theme of death is not easily characterised, for it is not central in the sense of being concentrated on a single figure or pair of figures. Instead we are offered something approaching allegory, of a quality which falls between the 'Wundervolle des Lebens' of Alkestis and the allegorical quality of the Christian dramas, which might be called the 'Wundervolle des Todes'. The allegorical quality of Ödipus und die Sphinx is ambivalent: Oedipus shares the pattern of his destiny with the Christ-like figure of Sigismund, his initial reluctance to play the rôle allotted to him with the beggar, and his subsequent Opferbereitschaft with Alkestis; but there is a greater sense of the urgency of life than in the Christian plays and a greater sense of death's power than in Alkestis. The allegorical quality of Ödipus is perhaps best characterised by Jokaste's description of the events as 'das Fest des Todes' (1).

Death is festive not only in the Greek manner, as a proud and defiant gesture testifying to the great love of life and regret at its passing,

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(1) D II, p.366.

but also in the style of the Baroque theatrum mundi, in the sense in which this description is applied to works such as Shakespeare's Tempest. The theatrum mundi reflects a whole range of variations on a situation: in the Salzburger grosse Welttheater and its forerunners are reflected a whole range of social attitudes and degrees of social standing from beggar to king; the Tempest offers an anthropological theatrum mundi in that it shows a full range of human dispositions from near animal to pure spirit; similarly Hofmannsthal's Oedipus dramas might be considered as an eschatological theatrum mundi, since they offer a complete range of responses to the knowledge of life and death, from that of Antiope who belongs partly to the living and partly to the dead to Laios who tries to cheat the gods of his life by sacrificing his child. In this range of responses the dramas recall the Kleines Welttheater, take up those aspects of Elektra and Das gerettete Venedig which point to death as an act of the community, and anticipate the Christian allegories.

The range of responses is the more interesting because it can be related to archetypal tragic events and figures as well as to recurring patterns in Hofmannsthal's work.

The strongest impression of a great cycle of life from which the individual life proceeds and to which it returns is created by the figures of the two women. Antiope, the Earth-Mother figure, related in Hofmannsthal's poetry to the grandmothers of Fortunio and of Anna, feels the strength of communion with the world of the living and of the dead, for she has a share in both worlds:

Ich lebe halb im Leben, halb im Tod,  
Die ich geboren habe, sind dahin. (1)

But although those who drew life from her are dead, her sense of the force of life is so great that she greets the prospect of Jokaste's union with the hero Oedipus not as an insult to the memory of her dead son Laios, but in anticipation of its fruits. Through her argument with Jokaste Hofmannsthal touches again on the subject of the limits of the personality. Antiope accuses Jokaste of being unwilling to participate in the ritual of life, of causing Laios death by her unfruitfulness, and tells her the individual is not preserved by refusing to give anything of himself, but perpetuates himself by giving life to other human beings:

Königen sind ihre Frauen gegeben,  
damit das, was königlich war an ihnen,  
an ihren Seelen und an ihren Mienen,  
ihre Königsgedanken und Königsgebärden  
unter den Völkern weiterlebe -  
wo ist das Ebenbild, geprägt in deinem Schoss,  
darin ich königlich und gross  
meinen Sohn wiedersehe? (2)

As in the lyrical dramas Hofmannsthal brings much irony to bear on their attitudes to the perpetuation of life and to the point at which such attitudes become rigid and therefore culpable. It is Jokaste's fruitfulness that has cost Laios his life, but only because he himself was so lacking in 'Königsgedanken und Königsgebärden' that he could not bear to risk his life.

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(1) D II, p.350.

(2) D II, p.347.

For Jokaste it is the willingness of Antiope and Laios to sacrifice individual lives that is the sin against life. Life has avenged itself against Laios and, as Jokaste believes, with the life of their child, so she can see no alternative for herself but death. So completely is she vowed to death that even its signs and ceremonies are meaningless, for these exist as consolation and warning to the living and Jokaste has already passed beyond such human tokens. Only the sight of Oedipus can kindle a spark of life in her, ironically, for as her son he is essentially an external sign of her life. He perpetuates her life, both in Antiope's sense because he is Jokaste's son, and more urgently by bringing her back from the threshold of death. Like Ariadne Jokaste passes through despair to new life kindled by love, and this passage transforms not only the rescued but also the rescuer. Through Ariadne Bacchus becomes a god, through Jokaste Oedipus becomes a king. Between Jokaste and Oedipus there exists a pattern of mutual creation and recreation which reflects clearly Hofmannsthal's attitude to the situation of the poet and his muse (1). The muse is mother, priestess and beloved; the poet owes his existence as poet

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(1) On the relationship of the figures queen and muse see also: Erken, op.cit., p.202: 'Das Bergwerk zu Falun deutet Hofmannsthal in Ad me ipsum als 'Analyse der dichterischen Existenz' (A 223) und erläutert dies noch 1927, indem er das Reich der Bergkönigin als das überzeitliche 'Reich der Worte' bezeichnet (A 241). Das ist keine nachträgliche Allegorese, sondern lag bereits in der Konzeption, denn in Jupiter und Semele erwägt Hofmannsthal, als Geliebte des Dichters die Muse einzuführen, eine Gestalt ähnlich der geheimnisvollen Königin in 'Idyll of the White Lotus' von Mabel Collins (D II, p.504), die auch manche Züge zur Bergkönigin des Bergwerkes hergegeben hat.'

to her and yet must woo her in order to create poetry. Together they create a new, independent being; Oedipus tells Jokaste that they are:

nur Rauch, daraus sich funkelnd  
gebären will ein Neues, Heiliges,  
Lebendiges (1)

and Jokaste exclaims that they are thus beyond the power of the gods and of death:

wir sind mehr als die Götter, wir,  
Priester und Opfer sind wir, unsere Hände  
heiligen alles, wir sind ganz allein  
die Welt! (2)

Oedipus and Jokaste are redeemed by their readiness to sacrifice themselves for the purpose of creating something greater and better, which outlasts their individual lives. In doing so they embrace the terrible fate foretold for them and become not only sacrificing priests but also sacrificial offerings. Like Elektra, Oedipus and Jokaste are given a moral obligation to embrace the terrible fate of self-destruction in order that they may become completely themselves. Like Elektra they do so in ecstasy, but unaware of the implications of their triumph.

The guilt of Laios completes the range of responses to life and death in the denial of a greater force of life in order to preserve the ephemeral life of the individual. The innocent child, whom Hofmannsthal repeatedly treats as a symbol of the continuity of life, is to be sacrificed for the sake of the man, who thus makes himself guilty.

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(1) D II, p.415.

(2) D II, p.416.



The dilemma of Laios has never been presented as anything but a choice between his own death and that of his son, but Hofmannsthal's world view admits a further solution. For he creates elsewhere characters whose willingness to sacrifice themselves redeems them. Oedipus and Jokaste are guilty, but helpless, for they are the victims of a cruel fate and their attempts to escape it only bring it closer, but Laios is the man who utterly condemns himself. Hofmannsthal attempts to remove all censure from Oedipus and Jokaste by showing them sacrificing themselves for the creation of 'ein Neues', whereas Laios will always be guilty because, like the parents of Admet or the father of Sigismund, he will not risk his own life. The willingness to risk death is also, according to Hofmannsthal, one of the attributes of Kingship - Admet and the emperors in Der Kaiser und die Hexe and Die Frau ohne Schatten are examples. In contrast to them those unworthy of their crowns, Laios and Basilius in Der Turm, remain pitifully human and no less mortal for all their efforts to cheat death.

This idea may be derived from the ancient concept of a priest-king, who has attributes of the divine, but, to show he is worthy of them, must be prepared to shed his humanity. The sacrificial death of the priest-king is part of the ritual of nature's cyclic pattern: the old king must make way for the new, but in the prime of life, not in the feebleness of old age (1). The death of Laios may be interpreted in this way: Laios

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(1) Cf. T.R. Henn, The Harvest of Tragedy, London, 1966, ch. 21, Death in Tragedy, p.258. Henn explains that tragedy and, more fundamentally, anthropology imputed to the death of the king: 'a ritual significance,

denies his worthiness to be king because he refuses to recognise that he is a symbol of nature's cycle and must, in the course of time, give back his individual life to the dynamic force of life from which it was derived. But for Hofmannsthal the sacrificial death of the king is also related to the origins and function of poetry. The poet is, like the father and king, a custodian of the source of life, who may feel, as Hofmannsthal himself felt, that he is sometimes called upon to sacrifice something of his humanity for the sake of his vocation. The king who wants to kill the child who may usurp him is thus like the poet who stifles his poetic gift from fear that it may overwhelm him. By contrast with Laios, Oedipus confirms his kingship by risking death at Kreon's hand.

Kreon's inability to slay Oedipus is a psychological problem, for next to Laios Kreon is weakest in his response to life; like the heroes of pre-existence he has exhausted his capacity for present action through his anticipation of future kingship. He relies on the fulfilment of the prophecy to the extent that his own will has ceased to function. The play shows that the struggle to achieve equilibrium in human life is partly a constant readjustment of remembrance of the past and of anticipation of the future to the possibilities of the present. This constant readjustment demonstrates the working of man's free will - the man who is not a

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(cont'd.) conscious or unconscious, with two main aspects or values. He dies because there is concentrated on him, as symbol, the necessities of the Birth and Resurrection cycle of the year. He dies, often in his prime, because his virtues (courage, strength and so forth) must not be impaired by old age....'

slave to the past or to the future is able to act as if he were the master of his own fate, although at the back of his mind is the knowledge of the limitations imposed by his human condition, this means in the last analysis by the knowledge of mortality.

Throughout this account Oedipus has been described as the man who knows that he must die; but, the reader may quibble, Oedipus does not die. The quibble serves to bring to light one aspect of what the play has lost over the centuries. For Oedipus' blindness has a direct connection with death which is lost in the modern play. For the Greeks death meant translation to another place where human shades lived on in varying degrees of comfort and happiness much as they had on earth or in proportion to their deserts, but not in the Christian sense as pure spirit. When at the end of the legend Oedipus puts out his eyes, he does so because in such death he would have met his murdered father and could not have faced him. The same image is found in Elektra and used by Hofmannsthal to denote betrayal of identity - Klytämnestra had to throw a cloth over her husband's head before she could murder him. For a modern poet and for his audience Oedipus' blindness cannot have its original significance, for this involves an attitude to death totally unlike any current idea of death or resurrection. Oedipus' blindness has no meaning beyond his physical life, either physically or symbolically, like the old Faust's, because it coincides with the moment of enlightenment.

The impact of the original legend is further diminished by the change in attitude to the deaths of political leaders. Borchardt's insistence

that Alkestis dies for the king, not for a mortal man, finds little sympathy in an age when the deaths of political leaders are mourned for the loss of a great human being, not for the sudden vulnerability of a state (1).

From the range of different attitudes to mortality there emerge paradoxes that Hofmannsthal does not cease to ponder. In Oedipus's reaction to the shadow cast over his life by the prophecy, Hofmannsthal shows that death must always be borne in mind, but not allowed to obliterate the challenges offered by life.<sup>(2)</sup> Through the responses of Antiope, Laios and Jokaste to the call to sacrifice the child, he shows that individual life must be seen to be part of a cycle of life, but that the cycle must not undermine the right of the individual soul to its own existence. Hofmannsthal seems to imply a moral obligation in all these matters, but clearly it is not part of a moral code comprehensible to all; for the differences between the immoral and the moral actions are not obvious, but a matter of sensitivity on the part of the individual. Laios and to a lesser degree Antiope are less moral, not necessarily because of any specific action, but because they unhesitatingly offer the innocent life to save the state as embodied in the person of the king, whereas

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(1) See Henn, op.cit., ch.8, p.80ff. on the significance of the hero-king-father for the Greek city state, and ch.20, pp.246-247, Tragedy and the State on the diminished effect of the death of the political leader, its inability to alter the course of government, the inability of any single individual to embody the collective responsibility of the political state, as compared with the consequences of earlier assassinations, such as that of Caesar.

(2) Cf. Aufz., p.143: 8.VI.06. Für das Leben und für den Tod kann man sich die Lenden gürtet, Aber das ist das Unfassbare, dass sie beide zugleich da sind.

Jokaste, although she does not prevent Laios from saving himself, knows instinctively that he is wrong to do so. Oedipus likewise is horrified by the prospect of killing his father, although in the event he does so with considerable anger. But these paradoxes have a mystical as well as a moral function, for they show like the epigrams of mystical poetry how vast and imponderable are their subjects, by presenting the elements of the paradox in juxtaposition. In the last analysis the poet cannot say what life means, or what death may mean, he cannot explain suffering or fate, but he can show how some of their apparently contradictory aspects can co-exist.

In an analysis of the theme of death it is difficult to avoid conveying the impression that the subject is treated in an ascetic, moralising fashion. In fact Ödipus und die Sphinx has an atmosphere of ritual and festivity which remains true to the Greek view of death as hateful and violent. This view produces defiance such as that of Oedipus and Jokaste, who challenge death and the gods in the celebration of their love; the exuberance, at times approaching frenzy, with which the hero Oedipus is greeted, the almost speechless ecstasy of recognition which takes place between him and the queen, her return from the threshold of death to new life express a joy in and celebration of life which means that, in spite of the play's moral content, it is much more than just an undogmatic statement of the Christian plays. Yet we have seen before, in Das Bergwerk zu Falun, that there are problems in treating the theme of death in an ethical or metaphysical context that is itself unspecified or self-defining. Ödipus und die Sphinx, and to a greater extent König Ödipus,

contain the vestiges of a Greek view of death, but <sup>they</sup> ~~it~~ also contain~~s~~ an implicit Christian sense of moral purpose and a personal, poetic myth. Its atmosphere is neither entirely celebratory nor ascetic; the attitudes of the characters to death are full of ironies and paradoxes. What carries the play over these disparities so forcefully that only close analysis can bring them to light, is the power of the poetry. The characters speak and act purposefully as if they believe the events of life must make sense, even if it is not human sense, comprehensible here and now, and their purposefulness is convincing. The 'here and now' is filled with such a sense of purpose in Ödipus und die Sphinx that in König Ödipus the fruits of their actions have overtaken the principle figures almost before they know it. But there is no question of judgment and punishment in their fate, rather a sense that their faith in the rightness of their action and indeed their readiness to act are their salvation.

The legend of Oedipus is implicitly deterministic - the hero lives with the knowledge of an inexorable fate, and unless the legend were radically altered by the poet, this element cannot be avoided. Hofmannsthal brings to Oedipus' fate a sense of moral purpose which must have its origins in a Christian rather than a Greek world view, although the Christian idea of suffering and temptation as formative is implicit in the words of Hölderlin with which Hofmannsthal prefaced his Oedipus dramas:

Des Herzens Woge schäumte nicht so schön empor  
und würde Geist, wenn nicht der alte stumme Fels,  
das Schicksal, ihr entgegenstände. (1)

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(1) D II, p.271.

It is a poetic view of the belief that 'trials and temptations test what progress a man has made; it is there that merit is found, and virtue better revealed' (1). By progress the Christian writer means of course progress towards a Christian death and rebirth as spirit. Oedipus is like the beggar in Das Salzburger grosse Welttheater, who, shown the content of his rôle, refuses to play it, but is told by the angel that what happens to him is unimportant, and what matters is how he bears it. Reduced to its simplest terms Hofmannsthal's thesis, as demonstrated by these two figures, would seem to be that all human life involves guilt, suffering and finally death, but that it must be lived to the full, because of, not in spite of recognition and acknowledgement of these conditions. Life is diminished in significance by refusal to meet it face to face and avenges itself brutally on those who refuse, such as Kreon or Claudio. Of course the drama's ability to reveal the future sharpens man's perception of his own mortality in a more acute manner than everyday life can do, but Hofmannsthal is doubtless trying through the special conditions of drama to say something that holds good for human beings and the human condition in general. The message is simpler in the Christian allegories, but because of its specific context more limited in appeal.

The revival of Greek legends among modern French writers of the Existentialist school is explained as the desire to create a 'theatre of situation', by exploring 'all the situations that are common to human

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(1) Thomas à Kempis, On Temptation.

experience, those which occur at least once in the majority of lives' (1). Hofmannsthal creates a sense of the 'theatre of situation', although his purpose is not that of the Existentialists, by depicting an inherent feature of the human situation in an intensified dramatic context; but he gives it an optimism and a sense of purpose by postulating, implicitly in the Greek dramas or explicitly in the Christian allegories, a life beyond the life of the body, when man can shed his mortality and become pure spirit. In Ödipus und die Sphinx Hofmannsthal also offers an allegory of the creative processes of poetry: the poet becomes pure spirit in his poetry which lives on after his human life. But his creation is worthwhile only if it comes from a knowledge of life and what life involves: there can be no pure spirit of poetry if the poet avoids contact with the stummer Fels of fate.

(vii) Conclusions

In the works discussed in this chapter the treatment of death is clearly much more varied than in the early works: in Elektra death is consummation, fulfilment of the single-minded pursuit of revenge and liberation into a new form of existence; in Das gerettete Venedig it is almost death by default, a crude accident which indicates the measure of Jaffier's failure in life, and is hardly less futile for Pierre, although

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(1) Quoted by Henn, op.cit., p.235, from an essay by Jean Paul Sartre, Theatre Arts, June 1946, pp.325-6.



dignity and respect redeem him; in Ödipus und die Sphinx the knowledge of death is emphasised, and the characters respond in proportion to their rootedness in life; the celebration of the fullness of life turns truly into the Fest des Todes when the prophecy is fulfilled in König Ödipus.

The basic differences between the works may be attributed in part to their derivation from other, unrelated works of literature and literary traditions. The degree of dependence varies and clearly there is some similarity between the legends of Elektra and Oedipus which is lacking in Das gerettete Venedig. Faults occur at times because of incompatibility with the original author or his times; changes in religious, emotional or political attitudes to death mean that something is inevitably lost from the treatment of death in the originals, as for instance from the ritual dance, the meaning of Oedipus' blindness or the death of the political leader.

It is also clear that these works are not, as the earliest works were, explorations of a personal problem. Yet they have some basic similarities and these are what they also share with Hofmannsthal's early poetry, rather than with their own literary antecedents. Hofmannsthal still shows himself to be preoccupied with man's efforts to come to terms, physically and spiritually with the human condition, to find his individual place in the world and to maintain it against diverse internal and external pressures. The ultimate test of his capacity to do so is the encounter with death, or, as it more frequently appears in these plays, the call to sacrifice. Thus Hofmannsthal takes up the theme of the

sacrificial death, which played only a minor rôle in his early poetry, and uses it to correlate attitudes to life and their realisation or refutation in death.

The heroes of the middle period already understand what the earlier heroes learned only through death: that life is Zu-sich-selber-kommen (1) and the bogey of Tyche is best overcome by being met half-way; what is best in man is released when he pits himself against fate instead of waiting for it to crush him. These heroes explore the limits of their own personalities, although to be fully themselves they may have to die. Elektra dies in order to become fully Elektra, Oedipus believes he is escaping his identity when in fact every action brings him closer to the implications of being Oedipus, Pierre dies for the rebels' cause although in vain. Through the link between death and the pursuit of identity Hofmannsthal uses the fact of the known course of events to advantage; he explores the implications of being Elektra or Oedipus, bound by a known destiny and yet seemingly free to make decisions and choices, as an allegory of the human condition bound by the knowledge of death. Moreover, although these heroes are more firmly rooted in life than the early ones, their readiness to embrace death comes from a feeling that death is preferable to the cruel life which is its alternative, that life's possibilities have been exhausted or tried and found wanting: <sup>Oedipus</sup> ~~Alkestis~~ chooses death at the crossroads, although his choice is rejected by fate,

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(1) Aufz., p.216.

rather than go on living and risk fulfilling the prophecy; Elektra chooses idealism which ends in death, rather than compromise with an imperfect reality. Death thus becomes a necessity and hence in some degree tragic. But the tragedy is mitigated where death is seen to be the beginning of a new existence, as the bursting of the human personality and release into a different form of experience, and where the characters are ready to meet death because they have accustomed themselves to the idea of their own mortality.

The pursuit of identity is therefore not only a Zu-sich-selber-kommen in life, but often a Zu-sich-selber-kommen in death, if the possibilities of life are exhausted or rejected. In the treatment of death as ultimate self-realisation there is a sense of the fusion of man's striving after perfect wholeness with some external concept of wholeness. This is especially clear where the external concept of wholeness is represented by a specific prophecy. At the same time we can see from the prophecy of the Oedipus dramas, with its consequence of chaos and disaster, that the concept of wholeness applies only to the individual. Oedipus' reaction to his fate has a moral function, but the fate itself is his alone, it is not a universal fate.

However, because death can be seen to set the seal on man's identity we can conclude that Hofmannsthal maintains his view of life and death as complementary, indeed he says their complementary function is essential to the myth:

Im Mythischen ist jedes Ding durch seinen Doppelsinn, der sein

Gegensinn ist, getragen: Tod=Leben.... Darum ist im Mythischen alles im Gleichgewicht.... (1)

The myth has its full force and meaning when its disparate elements are added together; so we only understand these plays when we add the personalities of Elektra and Chrysothemis, Pierre and Jaffier, Oedipus and Kreon, and consider the sum of their responses to the events of their lives.

The conciliatory aspects of death inherent in the concept of a complementary relationship with life are further emphasised through the importance attached to sacrifice. Sacrificial death plays a minor part in the educative function of death in Hofmannsthal's early works, but it is vicarious sacrifice, through the death of an animal or of another creature. Personal sacrifice achieves importance in Alkestis, in which it is ultimately refused. In the middle period it receives a new meaning. Its original meaning as a part of the Greek legends is largely lost to a modern audience. Hofmannsthal replaces the caprice of the gods with a personal need to embrace destiny, a need endowed by him with moral overtones. The moral overtones suggest belief in a suprahuman reality but without adherence to specific dogma. Thus Hofmannsthal creates a world view, which without conforming to any specific metaphysical system acknowledges the usefulness of sacrifice. There are however times when, considering the terms of tragedy and the aesthetic pleasure to be derived

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(1) Buch der Freunde, Aufz., p.35.

from it, we may feel that the treatment of death against such a vague metaphysical background is inadequate. If it is true that tragedy has the 'ability to imply the existence of orders' (1) then we have to admit that Hofmannsthal's orders are sometimes confused or vague. We have seen in Ödipus und die Sphinx the co-existence of various orders that do not always harmonise. In the context of these different orders death means different things. Sacrifice is thus endowed with a moral function that is<sup>as</sup> indefinable as the 'good life' preached by death in the early works. In the middle works Hofmannsthal depicts and appears to commend those who willingly embrace a terrible destiny, but equally he depicts and does not condemn others who prudently reject this choice. The only moral value to which this seemingly universal approval points is the value of self-knowledge and self-fulfilment. By making self-realisation a moral goal Hofmannsthal seems to be pushing the moral function of death further towards death's mystical quality, until dogmatically they will become united in the Christian allegories. Indeed by coupling morality with mystery in a sense he insures himself against the necessity of making a wholly intelligible moral statement about death.

The fact that there seems to be a moral value, however vague and undogmatic, points forward to the Christian plays, especially to Das Salzburger grosse Welttheater, where the community is united in death, and to the redeeming sacrifice of Sigismund in Der Turm. Sacrificial death as

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(1) Henn, op.cit., ch.8 Myth, Ritual and Release, p.91.

an act of the community, or made by an individual on behalf of the community, also shows the progress made from the self-centredness of Claudio etc., and at the same time complements the comedies as the dramatic form which celebrates the integration of the individual into the community.

Yet in spite of the vagueness of death's moral function, it remains easier for the critic to attempt to analyse the fragmentary moral statement than to appraise the treatment of death as a mystery, both because it is a mystery and therefore inscrutable, and because it is couched in a poetic language which cannot be reduced to a prose statement or whose prose sense reduces the poetic statement to banality. Ultimately we can only point to the inscrutability of the mystery and suggest what it may mean. Hofmannsthal's insistence that death always presents unanswerable questions (1) suggests his awareness of a gap between the possible implications, philosophical, spiritual or emotional, of death and the experience of dying and of being dead; death's implications, as he depicts them, are a determinant of morality for the living, but dying is a mystery, because no mortal can imagine himself freed from his physical being, and because death obeys hidden laws in its choice of victim, place and time. The unanswered questions in Hofmannsthal's treatment of death suggest that the increasingly mystical tendency is not programmatic - it

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(1) For example, the questions asked by the characters in the Oedipus dramas about the prophecy: 'Warum zog Laios in den Tod?' (D II, p.342), 'Wer meidet seinen Tod?' (D II, p.348).

is not a deliberate avoidance of dogmatic moral pronouncements - but inherent in the fabric of his poetry.

This explains why the function of sacrifice can be shown to be a more satisfactory poetic statement than it is a moral statement. Sacrifice is a source of communication between the human and the divine, to which Hofmannsthal adds a dimension by treating it also as the source of poetry. The purpose of sacrifice is the restoration of harmony - Oedipus offers himself to restore order to Thebes, the deaths of Ägisth and Klytämnestra restore domestic and political order through the sacrifice of Elektra - as the poet's purpose is the creation of an intelligible harmony through the medium of his poetry. Sacrifice becomes for Hofmannsthal the basic act in the creation of poetry, because it depends like poetry on total empathy (1). Through his vision of the origins of poetry in sacrifice and through the celebration of such sacrifice in his poetry, he approaches the resolution of his own poetic dilemma. Empathy belongs especially to the drama - as he says in the Gespräch über Gedichte, appreciation of Hamlet depends on the feeling of being Hamlet - and so he attempts to escape the dangers of aestheticism through drama; at the same time because his drama celebrates the mystery of sacrifice it is not purely a 'social' form. He celebrates in the depiction of sacrifice the moment of artistic creation and thus avoids negating the value of poetry for its own sake.

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(1) This is explained most fully by the Gespräch über Gedichte, P II, pp.94-112, esp. p.103.

Hofmannsthal's treatment of the theme of death in the middle period of his poetry shows him at a point of equilibrium; he has passed beyond the fear that death is a threat to life and poetry but not yet reached the Christian view that certain ways of life might become a threat to death. The dramas of the middle period, the comedies and libretti even more than the tragedies, celebrate love and fulfilment, human happiness and achievement, and carry this celebration to the point of a challenge to death. Death is greeted defiantly in the fullness of life as if to test its power to be the only true consummation of life. This sense of equilibrium and relative objectivity - and of course it is relative only to the extremes of pre-existence and the Christian allegories - is reinforced by the criteria of death in these middle works. In the early and in the final works death comes as judgment, in the early works as self-criticism, in the final works as eternal judgment on the individual but also present judgment on contemporary society; in the middle works the element of judgment disappears. Death is a function of fate and fate is derived from the sense of destiny that belonged to the original works. Hofmannsthal does not question this, he merely endows fate with undogmatic moral overtones. Man's worth lies in what he can make out of the raw material of fate. The goal of self-realisation, set in the first place by death in Der Tor und der Tod, is full of moral ambiguities, but it shares with the goal of mystical experience a belief in the quality of experience. The moment of Steigerung, of self-fulfilment and complete awareness, is the supreme moment of the mystical as of the moral experience.



It is also the essence of the poetic experience, for poetry is born of the deepest possible experience, represented for Hofmannsthal by the concept of the symbol.

The lack of clarity in the moral statement may derive in part from the poet's lack of concern with making a personally or socially applicable statement, for he has survived the personal crisis of his early years and is not yet troubled by the shadow of events which threatened his society with extinction. While this relative objectivity lasts he creates works of vigour and vitality in which the celebration of life matches the power of death and makes death its worthy successor: death is the next step in the human condition. Because death is in this way allotted an appropriate rôle in human progress, it must appear a positive and not a negative state. It is not the Greeks' pale shadow of life, nor complementary in the Rilkean sense of the side of life - and possibly the better side - turned away from us; but when the possibilities of life are exhausted, death succeeds them as the only possibility of further existence.

The importance Hofmannsthal attaches to death is dramatically significant. For, while it is not difficult to point to highly original treatment of death in lyric or narrative writing, death in drama tends to become all too easily a matter of theatrical convention. The complaint is made especially against the Naturalists that the suicides and sudden demises of their heroes may be true to life but their sole function in the drama is that of a signal to the audience that the evening's entertainment is at an end. Death merely underlines the argument of the play, it is not an

intrinsic and inevitable consequence. Although the perception of ritual is slight and largely without immediate significance in the lives of modern audiences, although the religious and political archetypes of tragedy have little impact and although modern attitudes to death are often hurried, embarrassed or unceremonial, there remains a deep-rooted feeling that death in tragedy should be the only and inevitable consequence of the dramatic action. Since death is frequently the means of restoring order, be it domestic, political or spiritual, this demand for causality seems to be the last vestige of the original meaning of death in tragedy, namely the accomplishment of salvation through the ritual sacrifice of the god. The audience has often no idea that it is demanding the enactment of the religious, ritual slaughter, but still demands that the death of the hero be an intrinsic part of the action it has witnessed. Writing in the wake of Naturalism Hofmannsthal offers a restoration of spiritual attitudes to death in drama, and indeed in his essay on Schiller he suggests that death is gradually assuming a new importance in the dramatic action. A new vision of inspiration and truth separates modern man irrevocably from his forebears (1); man has lost the old spiritual values to a great extent, but is gradually rediscovering new ones. Man now looks inwards to the depths of himself and of his world, where previously he

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(1) P II, p.180, Schiller: '... zwischen beiden Welten liegt grosses Geheimnis, liegt Schopenhauer, liegt ein Hereinlassen des Todes in die Welt, ein Nacktwerden und Grosswerden der Seele, liegt jene Trunkenheit, um derentwillen die Romantiker ihr Selbst und ihre Kunst wie Perlen im Wein des Lebens zergehen liessen.'

looked outwards and upwards to a higher world; and this has come about because man has been jolted into awareness of himself as an irrational being in a universe he cannot explain completely, either in metaphysical or in scientific terms. Yet the new vision contributes to the richness and intensity of man's experience, so that spiritual attitudes are not centred on death alone, but on a renewed perception of death in life. In making the moment of death an ecstatic moment of fulfilment Hofmannsthal shows man peering into the depths of his being until he bursts through into union with the world. Behind this new vision are both the Greek celebration of life and the Christian celebration of death. Their meeting eliminates to some extent the negative aspects of each culture, the Greek fear of extinction and the Christian tendency to asceticism, which both impoverish man's spirit. The unity of life and death is thus a unity of contrasts, in which there are no negatives as such, but only different co-existent positives. This characteristic points also to the other works of this period, to the comedies and libretti, for they offer an alternative to death through the power of love.

Owing to an error in pagination there is no page 155.

## CHAPTER FOUR: COMEDIES AND LIBRETTI

(i) Comedies and libretti

The moral concept that emerges fragmentarily from Hofmannsthal's early and middle works is fundamentally empirical. What is involved is a constant readjustment of inner psychological reality to the external reality of physical existence. Broch, in an essay on Hofmannsthal's prose writings, calls it the reconciliation of Ich and Non-Ich (1). This means the reconciliation of different areas of experience - life, death and dreams, past, present and future, emotion, intellect and instinct.

In pre-existence these areas were not clearly differentiated, nor was this necessary since all aspects of being were apprehended only as inner reality. After the loss of pre-existence the empirical exercise consists of the adjustment of an unknown future to the real present. Death points out to Claudio that the future is born of a present full of purpose and incident, while a barren present like Claudio's bears only the fruit of early death. In Die kleinen Dramen the present is dominated by an impossible dream; the impossibility of realising the dream denies any sense of the future, and implicitly of the educative function of death, so that death can be only release. In Das gerettete Venedig and in the Oedipus dramas the present is overshadowed by an irreversible past, and the tragedy springs from the compulsion of the principal characters to

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(1) Hermann Broch, Hofmannsthals Prosawerke, (Neue Rundschau, 62, 1951), p.7.

play out the consequences of a past they did not create. In Das Bergwerk zu Falun and in Elektra external reality is totally obscured by the inner vision; but here death becomes truly release and fulfilment because it removes the dimension of external experience and hence the need for adjustment, and releases the spirit into the pure realm of its inner reality. Death's rôle as a source of fulfilment begins therefore the work of redemption which finds full expression in the comedies and libretti. The tragedies of this middle period pointed to the value of sacrifice and the comedies and libretti complement them; for the work of sacrifice is continued in the redemptive process of Verwandlung, the miraculous change that encompasses first the individual in a moment of ecstasy, and then society. The comedies and libretti draw together the threads of the future from the events of the past and weave them into a pattern. This pattern shows the processes by which the future becomes the visible present; the future may be realised through an arduous, gradual process of growth, or by the process that Hofmannsthal calls Verwandlung, a sudden, unique and miraculous change by which life that seems to have become rigid and stultified is revived to even greater vitality than before.

Analysis of the pattern of Verwandlung sheds light on the relationship between love and death, for the basis of the miracle is rebirth through a power as great as death, or before which death withholds its absolute power. The moment of Verwandlung is a mystical moment of ecstasy in which there is no division between inner vision and external reality,

between reason and emotion, even between life and death, for death was anticipated and life is given. This moment of ecstasy is therefore identical to the ecstatic moment of death in which the bonds of human personality are burst and harmony is re-established, and to the ecstatic moment of poetic creation. In a sense each is a moment of creation, each shows man on the threshold of a future in which he will be not only himself but also 'ein Neues, Lebendiges'. Elektra's death means she will become fully Elektra but in another realm of experience that removes the barriers erected by human experience; Ariadne becomes herself transfigured by Bacchus, but also part of the new unit Ariadne/Bacchus, Helena and Menelas become 'das ewige Paar' (1); the poet becomes truly himself only by creating poetry, but it is as his own poetry that he lives on.

Like the theme of death the theme of change appears in Hofmannsthal's work under two aspects: a predominantly moral aspect belonging primarily to the world of realism; this form of change is natural growth and its goal is the achievement of maturity; and a predominantly magical or mystical aspect belonging to the world of myth and fairy-tale. In Ad me ipsum Hofmannsthal seems to use the word Verwandlung for radical changes which belong to realism as well as for those that are mysteries, but from his essay on Ariadne auf Naxos a definition emerges which applies not to natural growth and development, but only to mysterious, miraculous transformation. It is the latter that is meant here when the term

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(1) D IV, p.303.

Verwandlung is used (1). However, the two aspects of change are never completely separate. Even the most mysterious Verwandlungen have a moral function, and even the most realistic development has an element of mystery, because the nature of change and the process by which it is accomplished are not completely transparent:

Verwandlung ist Leben des Lebens, das eigentliche Mysterium der schöpfenden Natur. (2)

For the most part one aspect dominates in any one work, although they are most obviously united in the religious conversion of the beggar in Das Salzburger grosse Welttheater a mysterious process whose moral function, the aversion of murder, is immediately apparent. Both forms of change derive something of their power from love and their impulse from the imminence, real or imaginary, of death. All forms of change signify, as may be seen in the earliest treatment of symbolic death, the death of previous forms of existence - and this is what makes them so incredibly difficult for human beings to tolerate (3). The apparently imminent deaths of Ariadne or of the emperor in Die Frau ohne Schatten or of Helena have something of this symbolic function; for when they are roused by love it is as different people who have cast off their former selves.

(1) Aufz., p.217 ff., P III, p.138 ff.

(2) P III, p.138.

(3) Hofmannsthal apparently found even the necessity of accustoming himself to different places extremely difficult: Die Pflanze in uns ists, die mit unsäglichem Grauen und Staunen das Mysterium der Ortsveränderung macht wie einen Tod. Aufz., p.85.

(ii) Development of the theme of change

The idea of radical transformation belongs to Hofmannsthal's poetry before he names and attempts to define Verwandlung. In the early poetry moral realistic change, an indication of growth, exists side by side with mysterious, magical change, a sign of grace. Transformations are instituted, although not always accomplished (1) as part of the self-critical function of the early poetry; hence change is dominated by the idea of moral reform. These transformations provide the 'ironical' solution to the problems of pre-existence; they also correspond to the commonsense approach to the crisis of expression, for they show situations in which life survives a crisis and finds a way of going on, although perhaps not the intended way. These transformations are often effected, as in Der weisse Fächer for instance, through an encounter with mortality which leads to a reappraisal of life.

Hofmannsthal confessed himself fascinated by the proverbes of Musset (2) which end in the reversal of their original hypothesis, and adopted such a technique for his earliest dramas. Andrea in Gestern proclaims a doctrine of eternal change, but is disillusioned by the infidelity of his mistress. Death itself effects the transformation of Claudio and of Titian's disciples, and these transformations are thus half moral-realistic and half magical-mysterious, because death is itself

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(1) Hofmannsthal calls the transformation of Claudio 'klar projiziert', Aufz., p.175.

(2) Briefe 1890-1901, Berlin, 1935, p.62.



a mystery. The counterpart of Der Tor und der Tod, the 'ironical' version of the 'tragic' fate of Claudio, is Der weisse Fächer, in which we are led to believe that the realisation of mortality, brought about in part through the deaths of their partners, teaches Fortunio and Miranda their obligations to life. This change is an aspect of the educative function of death, 'ironical' because the characters do not have to die in order to discover the meaning of death, because they learn to reverse the process of growth, to become aware of life through death, to seek the pleasures and privileges of youth after those of precocious maturity. They prefigure the young Octavian of Der Rosenkavalier.

Among the early works Der Abenteurer und die Sangerin shows most clearly the difficult processes of development worked at over a period of time. 'Der Abenteurer verwandelt Vittoria' (1), but ironically, as Hofmannsthal adds, for he changes her in such a way that she cannot belong to him. Vittoria has faced and conquered the bitter experience of loving a man unaware and unworthy of her love. Her triumph is the conversion of sorrow through courage, through work and through a new life, into happiness, although not that happiness which was her original goal. The return of the Abenteurer, the actual subject of the play, shows her it is a better goal. For the reappearance of the Abenteurer after a number of years also effects a lightning change in that it convinces the

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(1) Aufz., p.222.

heroine that she has outgrown their early relationship. This instant recognition of the gulf between people once bound to each other completes the laborious process of weaning herself away from her memory of the past. Vittoria, like Jedermann, is forced to recognise that her first idea of paradise would not have fulfilled her. Thus the work shows an imperfect, more human and laborious, less mysterious and magical process than the transformations of Die Frau ohne Schatten, of Ariadne auf Naxos or of Die ägyptische Helena. For while these end in perfect joy, Der Abenteurer und die Sängerin cannot avoid a degree of compromise with physical reality. Vittoria protects her husband with the lie that her child is her brother; the figure of the senile musician, creator of so much beauty, draws another shadow across the scene of happiness to remind Vittoria again of the transience and inevitable imperfection of human life. But Vittoria accepts compromise and imperfection, knowing that first love and then music created her present world, although the lover and the musician now have nothing to contribute to it:

alles ist von dir, dein Ding, dein Abglanz.  
 Denn wie ein Element sein Tier erschafft,  
 so wie das Meer die Muschel, wie die Luft  
 den Schmetterling, schuf deine Liebe dies. (1)

The same type of realistic change occurs in Christinas Heimreise and in Silvia im Stern, and in another variation in Arabella. The heroines of Christinas Heimreise and of Silvia im Stern come to see the worth of

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(1) D I, p.209.

people not immediately attractive against the frivolity of the first lover; Arabella is herself transformed from apparent frivolity when she finds the man she had always believed must exist, one who by his seriousness could give her a sense of purpose. Yet none of these comes to resent or despise the first love, because they recognise that love was a Zu-sich-selber-kommen; it is a power to educate and to transform, as death is for others.

The agents and the subjects of these transformations and the manner in which they are effected belong to a world of realism; the agents and subjects are involved in plausible human relationships which condition the pattern of their individual growth. Change is learning and development, not a mysterious act of grace, nor a miraculous conversion. The subjects are transformed by their lovers or through the wisdom of older people, or by the extreme intervention of death itself. The patterns of growth are generally similar: the destruction of innocence brings despair and then new, worthier love; youth is shaken out of its naive view of happiness and sorrow by a glimpse of mortality, or by betrayal or infidelity, which in themselves signify the death of friendship or allegiance. The unfinished novel Andreas oder die Vereinigten might have proven to be the most extreme vision of such change, for the narrative form allows the length and breadth necessary to portray the laborious processes of emotional growth. A vision of the modern terror of disintegrating reality is incorporated into the traditional form of the Erziehungsroman in such a way that the chaotic surroundings appear to be the externalisation of

the hero's own spiritual condition, and the whole work a spiritual journey through innocence and through its loss into complete disorientation and beyond to maturity. In the finished fragment of the work we see only the beginnings of the journey: Andreas' awakening to love, his betrayal by the servant and his arrival in Venice. At this point the background of the real world assumes a dreamlike quality, half magical and half real. Andreas sees mystery all around him although he still believes himself to be part of the real world. The mysteries that surround him belong to a surreal world in that they seem to be physically possible and even logical, but prove impossible and illogical when he tries to investigate them (1). Yet the notes for the work's completion suggest that the surrealist visions of Andreas' experience in Venice never disintegrate into total chaos, so that it is eventually possible for him to re-establish his integrated, real world and thus to achieve the maturity necessary for him to reclaim Romana. The highest form of realistic change is that of

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(1) A good example is Andreas' vision of the strange face: 'es blickte in Manneshöhe über Andreas' Kopf ein menschliches Gesicht herein. Schwarze Augen, an denen das Weisse blitzend hervortrat, starrten von oben in seinen erschrockenen Blick, ein Mund, halboffen vor Anstrengung, Erregung, - dunkle Locken drangen zu einer Seite zwischen den Trauben herab. Das ganze blasse Gesicht drückte eine wilde Gespanntheit aus und eine augenblickliche, fast kindisch unverhohlene Befriedigung....' Andreas tries to find out whose face it is: 'Ihm war zumute wie kaum je im Leben, zum erstenmal bezog sich ein Unerklärliches aus jeder Ordnung heraustretend auf ihn, er fühlte, er werde sich nie über dieses Geheimnis beruhigen können...' but he is neither able to locate the person nor to convey what he has seen: 'Andreas begriff nichts. Die Lokalität verwirrte sich ihm, er erzählte und sah, dass er nichts erzählen konnte, dass er das Entscheidende von dem, was er erlebt hatte, nicht zu erzählen verstand.' Erzählungen, pp.181-182.

Der Schwierige; for although the patterns of intrigue and misunderstanding and the somewhat frivolous social scene belong to comedy, Der Schwierige shares in the seriousness of a work like Jedermann. Hans-Karl's glimpse of destruction in war, like the announcement of impending death to Jedermann, puts his world into new perspectives, and these are to a high degree, like Jedermann's, the perspectives of eternity. Hans-Karl returns to his old life filled with his vision of the essence of life and of people, the aspect of life that is of enduring worth, against the triviality of the appearance. The glimpse of destruction enables Hans-Karl to see love where there was only philandering, to see people as human beings, not as the actors of the social scene. But unlike Jedermann's his vision is a private one and, because he distrusts speech and knows it is inadequate to convey the depth of his experience, it can never be anything but a source of misunderstanding between himself and society. Although the change is wrought in Hans-Karl by a physical experience belonging to the real world, it is for him a mystical experience. It is a vision of death that makes the parts of life fall into place, so that Hans-Karl sees the future, his marriage to Helena, as if it had already happened and recognises that it was, or in terms of the life outside the vision, will be, the right thing to do. The vision puts an end for a moment to natural time sequences by showing Hans-Karl the pattern of wholeness appropriate for his life. Here as in the prophecy made for and realised by Oedipus there is a sense of the fusion of the vision with reality, of

the Platonic Abbild and Urbild (1), and the achievement of this fusion becomes the action of the play. Armed with the vision that his glimpse of destruction gave him, Hans-Karl returns to a world ignorant of the differences between essence and appearance. But his hesitance and society's reluctance to change lead only to misunderstanding. Tragedy is averted because Helene, the subject of Hans-Karl's vision, sacrifices her own feelings and asserts herself to save Hans-Karl and herself from the consequences of his 'difficult' nature. Hans-Karl, like Admet when Alkestis is brought back to him, fits his vision of Helene to the real Helene offering herself to him and accepts her.

(iii) Verwandlung and death.

In the middle period there are still, as we find in Christinas Heimreise or Der Schwierige, realistic transformations brought about by events and encounters belonging to real life, but the emphasis shifts from growth through education to maturity, to miraculous, unpredictable and unexpected change. The metamorphosis of Hofmannsthal's characters can be seen to develop quantitatively and qualitatively. He comes to mean by Verwandlung the least realistic form of change. There is a quantitative development as the sphere of influence of the change widens from personal to social and universal. The qualitative difference between

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(1) Cf. Aufz., p.214: 'Er, der Liebhaber der höchsten Schönheit, hielt was er schon gesehen hatte nur für ein Abbild dessen, was er noch nicht gesehen hatte und begehrte dieses selbst, das Urbild zu geniessen.'

Verwandlung and the more realistic form of change is a difference between the experience and purpose of conversion and those of gradual growth to maturity.

Among the early works Alkestis and Der Kaiser und die Hexe anticipate the process of Verwandlung most obviously. In the shadow of death, physical death in Alkestis and spiritual death in Der Kaiser und die Hexe a miracle is wrought by the power of love: the empress in the latter unwittingly contributes to her husband's salvation, while in Alkestis a complex process of reclamation is brought about through the guiding power of Herakles and rewards the love and faith of the partners. This work most nearly anticipates the miraculous transformations of Ariadne auf Naxos, Die Frau ohne Schatten and Die ägyptische Helena. Alkestis passes through death and because of her selfless love is reborn, as Ariadne, the empress and Helena offer themselves in self-forgetfulness to death because of their love for their partners, and through love are miraculously redeemed into new life.

Verwandlung is a form of change belonging to the processes of myth because it works in the service of life as a dynamic force; it releases man miraculously from rigidity, which is the negative aspect of fidelity. Thus Verwandlung is the counterpart of Treue, but it must not be imagined that the equivalence of these values is programmatic or is a facile equation, since they remain for Hofmannsthal a lifelong problem (1). They

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(1) P III, p.138: 'Wer leben will, der muss über sich selbst hinweg-

remain a problem because the sole criterion for judging which of them is right in any circumstance is sensitivity. The quality of delicate poise and sensitivity learnt first by Admet through the sacrifice of Alkestis must inform any decision to remain steadfast or to let oneself be changed. The two courses of action meet in the demand for sacrifice that belongs to each. Verwandlung becomes a rebirth through spiritual death into life. The progress of the individual towards Verwandlung parallels his progress towards death. Hofmannsthal compares the Verwandlung of Ariadne with the death of Elektra:

Auch Ariadne wähnt sich an den Tod dahinzugeben; da 'sinkt ihr Kahn und sinkt zu neuen Meeren'. Dies ist Verwandlung, das Wunder aller Wunder, das eigentliche Mysterium der Liebe. (1)

Like death Verwandlung obliterates all sense of temporal confinement and unites all experience and all time through its depth:

Die unermessbaren Tiefen der eignen Natur, das Band von uns zu einem Unnennbaren, Ewigdauernden hin, das unseren Kinderzeiten, ja den Zeiten des Ungeborenen in uns nahe war, können sich von innen her zu einer bleibenden, peinlichen Starrnis verschliessen: kurz vor dem Tod, ahnen wir, würden sie sich auftun: etwas der Art, das sich kaum sagen lässt, kündigt sich in den Minuten an, die dem Tod der Elektra vorangehen. Aber in einem vom Schicksal nicht so gezeichneten Dasein wird auch eine sanftere Gewalt als der Tod diese Tiefen aufschliessen.... (2)

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(cont'd.) kommen, muss sich verwandeln: er muss vergessen. Und dennoch ist ans Nichtvergessen, an die Treue alle menschliche Würde geknüpft. Dies ist einer von den abgrundtiefen Widersprüchen, über denen das Dasein aufgebaut ist, wie der delphische Tempel über seinem bodenlosen Erdspalt. Man hat mir nachgewiesen, dass ich mein ganzes Leben lang über das ewige Geheimnis dieses Widerspruchs zu erstaunen nicht aufhöre.

(1) P III, p.139.

(2) P III, p.139.



This power is love, which like death makes self-realisation possible, but the possibilities are different for those who have not cut themselves off from this world. Love encourages self-realisation by establishing the meaning and rôle of those factors by which human beings are linked to each other. In the tragedies these factors hindered self-realisation, because they had become distorted or misused, until death removed them. In the comedies and libretti love allots them an appropriate place and allows the fulfilment of the individual through his commitment to the community - das erreichte Soziale (1). In the tragedies the continuity of the generations was disrupted by murder and the consequences of murder hindered self-fulfilment except insofar as this coincided with the restoration of social harmony; in Die ägyptische Helena there is something of the same problem. Menelas threatens to kill Helena because she seems to him to be an unworthy mother for their child; the continuity of the generations is established in Die Frau ohne Schatten through the coming of the children to the emperor and empress and this is also their personal fulfilment.

Verwandlung is thus a process of redemption that begins with self but spreads out to include all humanity. But like death Verwandlung is also a process of purification that washes away the old life before there can be a new one (2). The true self is found at the lowest point of the old life in a state of despair bordering on death. The perspectives of the

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(1) Aufz., p.226.

(2) Aufz., p.221: sich läutern = sich verwandeln.

work narrow to a point of potential tragedy, for Verwandlung is unmotivated. Ariadne lies in her hollow 'wie eine Tote' (1), aware only that 'ein Schönes war, hiess Theseus/Ariadne' (2) and this is now dead. The framework provided by the combination of opera seria and opera buffa and the foil of Zerbinetta with her insistence that Ariadne needs not death but another lover, suggests that perhaps after all Ariadne will not die; but this belief in her survival in no way anticipates the magnitude of the solution, the rebirth of Ariadne and the apotheosis of Bacchus. The element of potential tragedy is greater in Die Frau ohne Schatten because there is no such framework. The emperor petrifies before the horrified gaze of the empress, who cannot bring herself to sacrifice the unborn children of Barak in order to release him, and it is only retrospectively that we understand that this temptation to accept the shadow of the other woman was the final test of the empress's humanity. Menelas believes he has killed Helena and cannot reconcile memory of her with the Traumgebild who is his companion, but Helena risks death by making him relive the past in order to understand the present. Here again there is a magical framework provided by the benevolence of Poseidon and Aithra, but Helena places herself defiantly outside their benevolence when she insists Menelas should be allowed to remember the past, and hence exposes herself to possible tragedy.

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(1) L III, p.37.

(2) L III, p.37.

Each time a miracle occurs that brings both physical release from suffering, and also spiritual release into a new vision of reality, a vision that affirms instead of denying life. Ariadne is reborn through Bacchus into a new experience of love, the empress is reborn as a human being and released from the precariousness of the fairy world, Menelas is released from memory of a dead past. Because Verwandlung is effected through love it is a self-perpetuating means of redemption: it takes in first the partner and then others (1). The realisation of self through selflessness generates further Verwandlungen, so that the emperor also comes to understand the meaning of love for the first time and Bacchus becomes a god;

Ich bin ein anderer, als ich war!  
 Der Sinn des Gottes ist in mir,  
 Dein herrlich Wesen ganz zu fassen. (2)

The dyer and his wife are fulfilled through the empress's sacrifice; Menelas and Helena, reunited with their child, become through Helena's readiness to offer herself 'das ewige Paar' (3).

This secondary release is effected through love and its purpose is the attainment of a worthier state in which the partner who showed the initial Opferbereitschaft can be appreciated as an equal: as Bacchus suggests that he must develop the 'Sinn des Gottes' to remain worthy of

(1) Aufz., p.222: Hinzutretendes Hauptmotiv: (mit welchem die Auflösung erfolgt) mit dem Sich-Verwandeln das Verwandeln eines Andern.

(2) L III, p.64.

(3) D IV, p.303.

Ariadne. There is no systematic explanation of what effects the original Verwandlung. Hofmannsthal marshals the forces of Tyche, the Weltdämon, the element of chance and coincidence, the negative principle, temptation - these are the characteristics embodied in figures like the Hexe, the Efrit, to some extent in Aithra since she offers an easy answer which avoids the true problem. Against these he sets up human values and characters who must choose between the two sets of values. But the result is not a straightforward moral conflict; the arguments are not presented as rational, but as the effort of a human being to achieve a degree of balance by overcoming certain instincts in favour of others. Hofmannsthal shows himself interested in situations bordering on the two extremes of complete success and complete failure. There is no sense of there being another chance for any of these characters if they do not grasp the present one. The presentation of the conflict in these absolute terms and the description of the characters as 'Wahnsinnige - wenn sie nicht recht hätten' (1) make the source of the drama tenuous and momentary. The drama builds up to dramatic, mystical moments, that can be followed only by festive celebration.' To some extent the tableaux at the end of Ariadne auf Naxos, Die ägyptische Helena, Die Frau ohne Schatten, even the final duets of Der Rosenkavalier and Arabella are mere operatic conventions, but thematically they are the only means of following the moment of Verwandlung. For since Verwandlung is a process not completely

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(1) P III, p.142.

explicable as cause and effect there can be no final scene of explanation and discovery. It does not behove us to submit the miracle of sacrificing love to the crude analytical tools of language. Hofmannsthal insists to Strauss that the miracle of Verwandlung at the end of Ariadne auf Naxos should become for the spectator the only reality. All those involved in presenting it must do their utmost:

um ein wahrhaftiges Geheimnis - nicht zu offenbaren, aber zu verherrlichen; hier muss die kleine Bühne ins Unbegrenzte wachsen, mit dem Eintritt des Bacchus müssen die puppenhaften Kulissen verschwunden sein, die Decke von Jourdain's Saal schwebt auf, Nacht muss um Bacchus und Ariadne sein, in die von oben Sterne hinein-funkeln, nichts darf vom 'Spiel im Spiel' mehr zu ahnen sein  
.... (1)

Hofmannsthal was anxious to emphasise the miraculous qualities of Verwandlung in Ariadne auf Naxos and in Die Frau ohne Schatten, but he suggests elsewhere that it is partly an active process as well as an inexplicable act of grace. Even the pure miracle passes unnoticed unless someone believes in it. So to some extent Verwandlung depends on the possession of willingness to be changed and of self-forgetfulness, although remembrance and fidelity are the essence of human dignity. The most tangible example of the conflict between these two forces is Die ägyptische Helena, for memory and forgetfulness are given to Helena as magic potions. She realises that the potion of forgetfulness has made Menelas lose touch with reality, for he no longer knows her as his wife, and to save him she sacrifices herself by giving him the potion of remem-

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(1) P III, p.142.

brance. By reliving the experience he fears, he is purified of his belief that he has killed the real Helena, but ironically his recognition of her is the moment when he might in fact kill her.

The knowledge of when to forget and be changed demands sensitivity to the dynamic quality of life, the sensitivity to recognise when a chosen attitude becomes rigid and so threatens life. This sensitivity is also, like the sensitivity of the poet, vulnerability - hence those who possess it in high degree believe themselves wounded to the point of death. They continue to live because it is also sensitivity to the needs of others and this need comes alive in them at a moment of crisis. Hence Helena ceases to be the seductive temptress who enjoys the admiration of all men and becomes aware only of Menelas' need to know that she loves only him and so to banish the crime he most fears by re-living its cause. It is by being aware of human needs that the empress can become human herself, as in Der Sohn des Geisterkönigs, the king of the spirits likewise a visitor from the fairy world to the human world has failed to do:

ein jeder wird in das verwandelt, was er begreift: soll heissen:  
wenn ich hätte kapieren können, was ein Mensch ist, wär ich  
selber einer geworden... (1)

The empress is given the power of constant transformation by her father, but also the 'Trieb übermächtig zu Menschen hin' (2) by her mother. She loves a human being and wants therefore to make one final transformation into human form. The humanity that effects her unique and final trans-

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(1) L III, p.167.

(2) D III, p.150.

formation is shown in her concern for Barak and his wife:

Stimme von Oben

So trink, du Liebende, von diesem Wasser!  
Trink und der Schatten, der des Weibes war,  
wird deiner sein und du wirst sein wie sie. (1)

Die Kaiserin

Jedoch was wird aus ihr!

The purpose of Verwandlung is the same as the purpose of sacrifice, the purpose of poetry, as these emerge from the tragedies considered in the last chapter, namely the creation of 'ein Neues, Lebendiges' (2). Under the rubric of das erreichte Soziale this new existence is commitment to the life of the community through the 'Verknüpfung zweier Individuen' (3). It is embodied in the figure of the child - the 'Ungeborenen' of Die Frau ohne Schatten, Hermione the child of Helena and Menelas in Die ägyptische Helena, Eduard, the child of the Geisterkönig. In this last work the brief span of human life is said to inform 'die fade Ewigkeit' with meaning (4). The son left on earth by the king of the spirits is the meaning of his father's life:

Mein Spiegelbild - geprägt in menschlicher Gestalt,  
bewegt sich reizend auf mich zu und soll ich dann  
mich selbst begreifend mich mit ihm vereinen?  
Ist das der grosse Sinn von meiner Erdenfahrt? (5)

The parents in Die Frau ohne Schatten are depicted as the bridge between past and future:

Ihr seid die Brücke, überm Abgrund ausgespannt,  
auf der die Toten wiederum ins Leben gehen! (6)

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(1) D III, p.233.  
(2) D II, p.415.  
(3) Aufz., p.222.

(4) L III, p.170  
(5) L III, p.180.  
(6) D III, p.180.

and yet in a sense the children are continually present because the bridge between past and future is the present and they belong to both:

Wäre denn je ein Fest,  
 Wären nicht insgeheim  
 Wir die Geladenen,  
 Wir auch die Wirte. (1)

The function of the child in the comedies and libretti complements its function in the tragedies. The tragedies presented a picture of distortion in the proper progress of the generations as the guilt of the parents was visited on the children. Order could be re-established only through the sacrifice of the children. The libretti show the perpetuation of life through sacrificing love, which has the power to transform self and others. The tableaux at the end of Die Frau ohne Schatten and of Ariadne auf Naxos offer a visual realisation of the timelessness achieved through this perpetuity, which paradoxically can itself be realised only in time. Both final scenes are entitled Verwandlung and offer a vision of a timeless state of happiness, a vision so to speak of heaven.

The similarity between the processes and functions of Verwandlung and of death extends to a similarity between the agents of Verwandlung and the figures of death. Verwandlung is a product of complex relationships between a number of figures, one of whom corresponds to the magical aspect and one to the moral aspect of death. The juxtaposition of these figures, who usually play the rôles of the adventurer or the daemon and of the partner, effects a change in the figure who stands between them.

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(1) D III, p.242.



In the more realistic changes the adventurer usually represents the magical trend and the marriage partner the moral trend. Between these two the heroine's character is formed; she reacts first to the adventurer who, like death, voices the claims of a world totally foreign to her, a world of eroticism and intrigue. But like death the adventurer is also a destructive force, who can destroy relationships without being destroyed himself. Thus the heroine reacts against him and towards the moral force of the eventual partner, whose integrity becomes a resort from frivolity and uncertainty. Ultimately the two trends are shown as aspects of the same person: Hans-Karl the adventurer is himself changed by a vision of death and becomes the man of integrity.

The agents of magical Verwandlungen are more extreme figures. The partner continues to exist as a figure through whose love and for love of whom change is effected, but the agent of this change is a daemonic figure, a manifestation of chance and of the principle of negation. Thus in Der Kaiser und die Hexe the witch is a demonic power who appears to the emperor as a contrast to his wife: the witch attracts him as a magical force and repels him as a moral negative, hence she impels him towards the moral positive, his wife. In Die Frau ohne Schatten the pattern occurs several times - the Amme and the creature she summons, the Efrit, try to entice the Kaiserin and the Färberin away from human virtue by offering them magical experience without moral purpose or effect; their ability to resist comes from moral commitment to their partners. But this does not mean that Hofmannsthal treats magic as a negative force, and prefers a straitlaced morality. In Bacchus, the supreme agent of

Verwandlung, the moral and mystical or magical trends are united. The Verwandlung of Ariadne is also that of Bacchus, because Bacchus unites the forces that effect transformation. He resembles the figure of death, so that Ariadne gives herself to him in the belief that he is Hermes, but Ariadne's fate is not death but love, which Bacchus also embodies:

In Bacchus ist das einzig Liebenswerte, Liebewirkende der  
höheren Stufe verdichtet: Schicksal. (1)

He represents the power of love that moves further and further away from self-interest and yet in serving others serves and fulfils self.

The implications of the process of Verwandlung for the treatment of death are complex. Death has a constant relationship to love as a spur to the renewal of life, but death has no consistent identity. For Ariadne, disappointed by her first love, death means the release of a tormented spirit into peace: like Sobeide she feels sullied by infidelity and expects purification through death:

Es gibt ein Reich, wo alles rein ist:  
Es hat auch einen Namen: Totenreich. (2)

She sees the process of purification through Hermes as her own self-realisation:

Du wirst mich befreien,  
Mir selber mich geben,  
Dies lastende Leben,  
Du nimmst es von mir.  
An dich werd ich mich ganz verlieren,  
Bei dir wird Ariadne sein. (3)

(1) P III, p.141.

(2) L III, p.39.

(3) L III, p.40.

For the fairy empress the alternative to life is not death but eternal change, but she has to consider the prospect of her husband's death as a sign of their unfruitfulness and risks the emptiness of eternal existence in her father's realm for the emperor's sake. For Helena death threatens to be simply a punishment for her crime, but she is willing to accept it if it releases Menelas from his fear.

Death and Verwandlung are presented as alternatives for those who have the qualities and disposition to choose between them. But it seems as if death is intended to be the greater transformation and Verwandlung, 'eine sanftere Gewalt' (1), the lesser transformation that mirrors death. Yet their formal parallelism makes them appear as equal alternatives. This removes one critical problem but puts others in its place. We have seen that both within individual works, through the juxtaposition of contrasting figures, and in the wider context of his dramatic poetry, through the juxtaposition of tragedy and comedy, Hofmannsthal examines a situation from different angles and offers different reactions to it. All sense of inconsistency is removed from this exercise if we can see that the experience Elektra and Ariadne, for example, have in common is as fundamental as what distinguishes them from each other. Both choose death but Ariadne suffers the milder fate of transformation through love. Both works concentrate on the passage through despair to a new form of life, and what they share is the depth and intensity of an experience involving

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(1) P III, p.139.

the whole personality in a complete transformation. Despair is changed through ecstasy into triumph, for Elektra the triumphant consummation of death, for Ariadne the triumph of a new and overwhelming love which transforms and fulfils both self and the beloved. Measurements of human worth are inapplicable, for Ariadne is no more noble than Elektra because she is allowed to live, nor Elektra more noble because she sacrifices her life. Both make the same offering; there is no difference in the quality of their sacrifice, only in the nature of their redemption. In their willingness to die Elektra and Ariadne meet; in the acceptance on the one hand and the refusal on the other of the proffered sacrifice their paths are divided. The coming-together in sacrifice is followed by division in the nature of redemption.

The difference lies in the point at which sacrifice effects redemption, whether it is in this life or whether through release into another world. Sacrifice and redemption go hand in hand and it is from the perception of personal redemption - personal in that it seems to be suited to the individual's need and to his capacity for emotional experience - that the distinctive trends towards tragedy and comedy emerge. Both tragedy and comedy meet at a point beyond a narrow interpretation of the genres by showing the hero or heroine at the end of the work on the threshold of a new life. Das gerettete Venedig is an exception and, significantly, the least successful of Hofmannsthal's dramas. The new life takes different forms, but it means the new life of the hero in another realm of experience, not the Shakespearean tragic ending of the promise of new life for those

who survive. Thus Hofmannsthal's tragedy as well as his comedy has a dynamic form, pointing to the future in death, not to the end of existence. In the comedies redemption is effected in earthly life, not because of moral superiority or inferiority, but because, although willing to die, the heroes of the comedies have not been cut off from the possibilities of earthly life.

Yet it is difficult to say that Hofmannsthal has not fallen victim to the hazards of poetic language in his equation of love and death. For by making them appear so similar he denies his vision of death its moral and eschatological function as an absolute. He limits its significance to its poetic context. For in these works, in which he is so conscious of the perils of using language, it is important to see that the connection between death and love exists through language alone. It is a poetic statement that cannot be tested against phenomenal reality. Hofmannsthal uses the same language to describe love and death, creating parallels between their processes, function, agents and subjects, although he is aware that the properties of language make things appear similar when they are not. Indeed he illustrates the problematic equation of experiences through the misunderstanding between Ariadne and Zerbinetta. Their experience of love corresponds only to the extent that they use the same language to describe it. Zerbinetta says of Ariadne that they seem at first to speak different languages and 'Es ist die Frage, ob sie nicht schliesslich lernt, sich in der meinigen auszudrücken' (1), and of course

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(1) L III, p.46.

it seems to Zerbinetta that she does. Ariadne's attempt to express her transformation by Bacchus and his transformation into a god sounds exactly like Zerbinetta's description of every experience of love she has known: 'Als ein Gott kam jeder gegangen, / Jeder wandelte mich um' (1). We infer an unbridgeable gap between their experiences, and yet it is bridged by the great misunderstanding made possible by the levelling quality of language. So indeed love and death may or may not be alike, and we have no means of knowing, but to describe the mystery of each we draw upon the one power of speech.

This is a negative evaluation of the properties of language, but a positive one is possible. Hofmannsthal demonstrates that words are at worst a lie, but at best poetry. Indeed the equation of love and death, although it limits the possible interpretations of death, is a poetic creation; it is 'Beschreibung des Unmöglichen...wahrhaftige Schöpfung durch das Wort' (2) and so what it offers is not a reflection of the real world in poetic form, but a celebration of itself, that is a celebration of poetry. Hofmannsthal creates a context in which love and death are seen to be alternatives, regardless of what experience may suggest, and the power of this equation lies in the fact that experience of death is an unknown quantity. It is said that all ideas and all expressions of ideas exist in a context, but some poetic contexts simulate experience of

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(1) L III, p.45.

(2) Aufz., p.183.

reality and some exclude it. Hofmannsthal's poetry remains hermetic to the extent that his equation of love and death is exclusive. The dramatic form of the work of his middle years makes any individual work seem more accessible, but this apparent accessibility does not extend to consideration of the period as a whole, for when all the works are taken together the supremacy of the poetic context is clear. Thus his poetry remains at one level highly subjective.

This places it beyond the understanding of many people, but Hofmannsthal suggests that the good reader is the one who possesses another sense, like the 'Sinn des Gottes' developed by Bacchus, with which to appreciate the miracle of poetry. Several of Hofmannsthal's essays - Das Gespräch über Gedichte, Der Dichter und die Zeit, Unterhaltungen über ein neues Buch, Unterhaltung über Tasso - contain passages depicting such complete appreciation of literature through an ecstatic moment of complete empathy. Das Gespräch über Gedichte especially advances in theoretical conversations the view of poetry celebrated by the dramas. One of the participants, Gabriel, recites Goethe's 'Sagt es niemand, nur dem Weisen', and describes the miracle of creating such a poem: the life of thousands of past moments flows together in one moment of extreme intensity and creates the living miracle of the poem, not simply a collection of words, but a new creation breathing life:

Ein Augenblick kommt und drückt aus tausenden und tausenden seinesgleichen den Saft heraus, in die Höhle der Vergangenheit dringt er ein und den tausenden von dunklen erstarrten Augenblicken, aus denen sie aufgebaut ist, entquillt ihr ganzes Licht: was niemals da war, nie sich gab, jetzt ist es da, jetzt gibt es sich, ist

Gegenwart.... Und diese Augenblicke sind die Geburten der vollkommenen Gedichte.. (1)

But our appreciation of this new creation depends on the development of a sense more receptive than our other senses:

... ist es nicht ein Wunder? Dass es Zusammenstellungen von Worten gibt, aus welchen, wie der Funke aus dem geschlagenen dunklen Stein, die Landschaften der Seele hervorbrechen, die unermesslich sind wie der gestirnte Himmel, Landschaften, die sich ausdehnen im Raum und in der Zeit, und deren Anblick abzuweiden in uns ein Sinn lebendig wird, der über alle Sinne ist. (2)

It is only by realising how firmly the celebration of poetry is built into the fabric of these works that we can begin to appreciate them. The poetic equation of love and death is borne out to its aesthetic conclusion in a vision of poetry where comedy and tragedy are complementary, not opposed. Harmony is achieved in comedy through the integration of the hero into society and the perpetuation of society through him, and in tragedy through the restoration of disrupted order by the hero's sacrifice. They meet however not only in their creative function, but primarily in the process it involves, for they share the ecstatic, mystical moment in which harmony is created or restored. Both tragedy and comedy celebrate the creation of order out of chaos, which Hofmannsthal sees as the poet's task and privilege, for the poet has the 'Sinn des Gottes' that enables him to perceive harmony in apparently disparate aspects of man's condition. The beauty and order behind the multiplicity

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(1) P II, p.111.

(2) P II, p.112.



of human experience is apparent to him - Hofmannsthal found his belief in this gift reflected in Whitman's Leaves of Grass, in which he underlined the passage:

I pass death with the dying, and birth with the new-washed  
babe, and am not contained between my hat and boots;  
And peruse manifold objects, no two alike, and every one  
good.... (1)

- and hence his mission lies in celebrating this beauty and order and in showing it to others.

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(1) From: I celebrate myself...., quoted in Hamburger, Hofmannsthals Bibliothek, (Euphorion, 55, 1961), p.51).

## CHAPTER FIVE: DRAMAS IN THE CHRISTIAN TRADITION

(i) Jedermann and Das Salzburger grosse Welttheater

The treatment of death in poetry invariably has philosophical implications. If these implications are strong, and especially if they belong to an established system rather than to a private axiology, the reader may sometimes feel that his capacity to evaluate the whole poetry is impaired. For the poet addresses himself to personal convictions as much as to aesthetic standards. Now, although personal convictions and aesthetic standards may ultimately be interdependent, the reader is not aware of their interdependence in every critical judgement he makes. Indeed he is often aware of lending aesthetic approval to works whose philosophy, if it were pure philosophy and not poetry, he does not accept. But the more committed the poet, the more the reader feels himself provoked to take a stand, and the less he is able to keep the two aspects of his criticism, the aesthetic and the philosophical, apart. Clearly this inability occurs only in extreme cases, many of which are not entitled to be called literature. But even in less extreme cases the acceptance of alien philosophies depends on their presentation. The differences between propaganda and commitment, or between commitment and mere acceptance, are differences of tone and form, rather than of theme.

Certain forms are naturally less provocative than others; so, for instance, the death mystique of Rilke's lyric poetry is hermetic to a degree that denies tendentiousness. The reader recognises that it is an effort to compensate man's feeling of inadequacy in the face of death, not

a dogmatic belief to which the poet intends us to subscribe. Dialectics are foreign to the lyric in its pure form, for it is the utterance of a single voice. Whatever the form chosen as a vehicle for the poet's beliefs, the reader finds the reflection or implication of philosophy less disturbing than its explicit advocacy, for it allows him to keep his own beliefs intact. Both Christian and non-Christian prefer Dante to a medieval morality, for Dante's Christianity exists side by side with theology while the morality makes itself theology's mouthpiece.

Even if we can come to terms with personal involvement, we must also be aware of the influence of the work's historical context on our judgment of it; that is, of the tension between the author and the philosophical and religious climate of his own time. The reader may bring different feelings to bear on the writer whose attitudes are in harmony with those of the writer's time, or indeed of the reader's time, and of the writer who moves against the tide of his own time. For instance he may have different opinions about Dante and about Claudel, although their religious beliefs agree. For the work of the Christian poet writing in a predominantly non-Christian era is primarily a denial of contemporary values. His answers to the questions 'why are we here?', 'where are we going?', are different from the answers of his contemporaries. But in many ways he is nonetheless committed to his own time, so that his advocacy of simple spirituality is more protest than affirmation. This means that he is constantly torn between his emotional and psychological link with his own time and his intellectual and spiritual commitment to

values not shared by this time, and his writing bears the stamp of this tension. The Christian poet who speaks in and for a Christian society experiences no such division of feeling, because his work reflects the security of his position in accepting the values of the society to which he belongs. Criticism of committed writing is therefore subject to the tensions created by the relationship between the beliefs of critic and poet, the poet and his age, the poet's and the critic's societies.

If commitment seems to present many problems, it offers at least the fixed point of the poet's belief. This means that the poetic wholeness of his work reflects a philosophical wholeness. However it is difficult to judge the extent to which this can be said of writers whose commitment is half-hearted. We have to concentrate on their poetic wholeness, on the works as 'fortlaufende Emanationen einer Persönlichkeit' (1), because their philosophical wholeness is apparent only to the poet and remains inaccessible as philosophy to the reader. The reader perceives most clearly the points at which the personal philosophy meets and departs from traditional beliefs.

This is the case with Hofmannsthal. It is possible to distinguish aspects of his moral view that coincide with the morality of Christianity and to be aware that, having said this, we have not said enough. This led us to supply the idea of an 'aesthetic morality' in the early poetry, and to the opinion that the poetry of the middle period was its own reality,

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(1) Aufz., p.139.

whose philosophical or moral implications were merely incidental to the celebration of harmony in life and in poetry. But when we come to consider Hofmannsthal's final works we are faced with a peculiar problem; for although he is keenly aware of the cultural influence of Christianity, he is not committed, and yet he suddenly begins to use traditionally Christian forms and to express orthodox views. Much that is fundamental to Christianity seems to be at odds with the empirical ethic discerned in his poetry. Much of his poetry is concerned with man's adjustment to life, while Christianity attaches more importance to death. What makes Hofmannsthal exchange his preoccupation with life for the Christian preoccupation with death?

We can begin to understand his reasons by returning to the relationship between the poet and his historical context. Hofmannsthal's Christian dramas must be seen in the light of the historical context that produced them and of the questions he intended them to answer. Hofmannsthal could not commit himself to the increasingly materialistic values of his own age, and so he set himself to restore and reassert the intellectual and spiritual values of other ages, and to offer them to his own society as a reminder of its past and a source of hope for its future. But they are also a denial of the other possibilities asserted by his own society. His medievalism is not medieval, but nostalgic. He looks for spiritual purity and overlooks the degree of materialism in every age, confusing perhaps materialism with material progress.

The plays in the Christian tradition, Jedermann, Das Salzburger

grosse Welttheater and Der Turm, share a perspective that gives material life relative value, showing it as an impermanent form of existence that prepares man for permanent existence in death. Each play is constructed around a simple traditional metaphor that conveys this sense of impermanence, Jedermann around a journey, Das Salzburger grosse Welttheater around a play, Der Turm around a dream, and death brings each to an end.

Death is no longer evaluated in terms of an ethic created by the work itself. It is neither an end in itself, nor a refuge from physical, moral or emotional restrictions, nor sacrifice and fulfilment in the sense of the middle works. Death is a turning-point and now finally we see what lies beyond. The small world of the individual, removed from the sphere in which man directs and controls his destiny, opens up to the perspectives of eternity. Man becomes aware of his citizenship of a greater, all-embracing world order, of whose hierarchy he is not the highest member. The miraculous change that comes over him through this knowledge has a precedent in the theme of Verwandlung. The element of judgment is re-introduced, a more elementary and universal judgment than the poet's highly subjective judgment on Claudio. The two forces of conversion and judgment become correctives to the delusions of a man-made and man-orientated world view, and in this we see that Hofmannsthal maintains as well as extends his earlier preoccupations. For he is still concerned with man coming to terms with his world, not with piety or asceticism or any form of other-worldliness for its own sake, but he wants man to realise that this world has another dimension apart from its

physical, material one. Thus each of these works stresses not Christian opinions about death, but the reconciliation of man to aspects of his life through the knowledge and finally through the experience of death - this within a Christian context. The various conditions of man are subjected to the light of eternity - man as an individual in Jedermann, man in society in Das Salzburger grosse Welttheater, man in his political and historical situation in Der Turm. The area of human life portrayed in each succeeding work widens and at the same time becomes more specific as Hofmannsthal's anxiety and compassion for his own afflicted society grows. For the works are both a reflection and an anticipation and in this lies their importance for the poet. He turned to drama first to save his own humanity from the Sackgasse des Aesthetizismus (1) by putting it to the service of others, and the Christian dramas are one of the final expressions of this wish. The logical conclusions of his aim - his poetic monuments to a dying civilisation through opera (Der Rosenkavalier, Arabella) and comedy (Der Schwierige, Der Unbestechliche), his essays full of plans for the preservation of European culture, his Christian dramas - are all extreme. But of these the Christian dramas are the most extreme, for they take the most alien message and present it in the most unequivocal manner. It seemed to Hofmannsthal, as it had seemed when he abandoned the lyric for the drama, that the urgency of the situation justified and even demanded an extreme measure if the tide of

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(1) Briefe I, p.206.

materialism were to be stemmed, and it is bearing this intention in mind that the Christian dramas must be approached, for this intention called them into being.

Hofmannsthal said of Jedermann that he was giving to the German stage not something new, but something it had lost. His renewal of the work is intended to convey the spirit and essence of the original

Everyman to an age which needed this spirit:

sein eigentlicher Kern offenbarte sich immer mehr als menschlich absolut, keiner bestimmten Zeit angehörig, nicht einmal mit dem christlichen Dogma unlöslich verbunden: nur dass dem Menschen ein unbedingtes Streben nach dem Höheren, Höchsten dann entscheidend zu Hilfe kommen muss, wenn sich alle irdischen Treu- und Besitzverhältnisse als scheinhaft und löslich erweisen, ist hier in allegorisch-dramatische Form gebracht, und was gäbe es Näheres für uns? (1)

However the conception of what is 'menschlich absolut' and the methods of portraying it vary from one age and place to another. To the author of Everyman Christianity was fundamental and he could refer to its teachings without fear of hostility or misunderstanding. Hofmannsthal's task differed from that of the original author, or of any author through whose hands the work had since passed, for his potential audience had no uniform attitude to Christianity. On the other hand Hofmannsthal takes psychologically accurate representation for granted, so that his characters are representative human figures, not the cardboard figures of the originals; they have hopes and fears, thoughts and desires; they are not the means

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(1) P III, p.115.



of upholding a particular doctrine. Thus whatever Hofmannsthal's professed intentions, the shift in emphasis from dogma to the universally human, becomes to some extent a process of modernisation. Doctrinal references are minimised; the framework, which like that of *Faust* begins with God's intervention and ends with man's salvation, is shortened; the intervening scenes bring alive the moralising speeches of the English morality by showing first Jedermann's way of life and then its gradual overshadowing by death. Again Hofmannsthal uses his favourite technique of establishing the situation which the events of the play will reverse. In this case he shows the power of Jedermann which is founded entirely on his wealth; in the face of death this power reveals itself to be a demon in possession of Jedermann instead of possessed by him. But his attack on wealth is meant only to show its temporary and relative worth. This attack belongs to the basic theme of his Christian dramas, the distinction between essence and appearance, the recognition of a reality higher than that created by man for himself. Mammon's revelation of its true nature brings something of this recognition. The subject of money serves to illustrate the modern conception of sin in relation to the average person, who, it is now recognised, has neither the desire nor the opportunity to commit large crimes of a wilfully malicious nature. Whereas the models for Jedermann portray the seven deadly sins in their most extreme form, Hofmannsthal maintains his early portrayal of the smaller sins of omission and default, tempered though not excused by the circumstances that provoked them. Jedermann is apathetic about the needs of those who have

no personal claim on him; he harms no one directly, but his selfishness leads to suffering. His justification lies always in the demands of his social status: he is obliged to have debtors imprisoned, for this is justice, but like the justice upheld by the devil in a later scene, this is not the justice of the higher reality that Hofmannsthal calls the 'Höheren, Höchsten'. He says that the audience at the first performance of Jedermann clearly identified with the main character, recognising in his their own ambitions and their own small, but significant misdeeds.

For this modern illustration is balanced by a modern conception of paradise. Jedermann plans to achieve his heaven on earth; his garden becomes the symbol of his and of modern man's idea of paradise. This is confirmed by his description of the garden, in which ecclesiastical features are enumerated - the altar with stone pillars, the statues and the spring; this gives way to a description of a new Garden of Eden, a cool place of peace, and finally the garden becomes a reflection of human love and of his beloved. This garden is Jedermann's heaven where he can be alone with those he loves and enjoy undisturbed tranquillity. But like the gardens of Hofmannsthal's pre-existent heroes, it is enclosed and cut off from the rest of the world. This heaven, like pre-existence, is to be achieved only at the expense of other people. But under the Christian ethos, with its sense of community, not only does the individual suffer as the pre-existent hero suffered, but the innocent are seen to be the real victims. Whereas the lives of those who suffer on Claudio's account are shown to have been worthwhile, the suffering of the innocent in

Jedermann cannot be justified to them. In his heart Jedermann is aware that his garden is only an escapist's substitute for paradise and is bought too dearly with the ill-use of other people; when his conscience is pricked by the sight of suffering, he quickly loses interest and pleasure in the project of his garden.

Fundamental human relationships replace many of the devices of allegory. Hofmannsthal uses again the simple configuration of Der Tor und der Tod. The figure of the mother is his invention, and has been compared with the mother in Kafka's Prozess (1). Jedermann's mother, like Claudio's, is concerned for the son whose life is mis-spent; she tries to persuade him to turn to God before it is too late, but Jedermann replies with trivial prevarications; his mother's answer to his words: 'Auch morgen ist halt noch ein Tag', - 'Wer weiss, wer den noch sehen mag' is not only an anticipatory mechanism in the structure of the play, but an equally apt expression of the precariousness of human, particularly of modern life.

Psychological reactions and emotional suffering replace the purely physical reactions of the original models. Jedermann feels, instead of physical pain, mental anguish, delusions and hallucinations.

Jedermann has ceased to be a dramatised sermon and become a work that is meant to appeal to the senses as well as to the intellect. Moralising monologues have become dramatic episodes, the banquet scene with its music

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(1) Helen Adolf, From Everyman and Elckerlije to Hofmannsthal and Kafka, ~~p. 211~~ *Comparative Literature* IX (Oregon 1957), p. 211.

and dancing has become a piece of pageantry, with which the solemn scenes of death and repentance form a contrast. It is a work for a theatre which no longer regards itself as the servant of the church or of any other group, but as a place of entertainment.

In Das Salzburger grosse Welttheater Hofmannsthal's development of the allegory to fit contemporary needs is both more radical and more deliberate. He takes only the basic metaphor of the world as a stage, changes its emphasis from religious to social and minimises the didactic, ecclesiastical atmosphere. The greatest difference between his characters and Calderon's is the acknowledgement of a divine purpose in human life, which Calderon's characters possess, but which is first introduced into Hofmannsthal's Welttheater by Weisheit and then by death. Calderon's characters express the characteristically Baroque attitudes to death that are summarised in the tags - memento mori and carpe diem -; they are all aware of their own mortality, either as an incentive to live a good life or as an excuse to live in gaiety and pleasure while there is time. Hofmannsthal's characters start at a spiritual disadvantage, for although they know the play must end, they prefer to ignore death. As in Jedermann he modernises the concept of evil and makes it into an essentially social element. It reflects first man's behaviour towards his fellows and second his own chance of salvation. Evil is represented by Widersacher, the principle of negation like the devil in Jedermann, and like him, forever unable to move beyond the boundaries of a man-made world order. His is the voice that calls for equality of the social order on the grounds of

the natural equality of men, and so causes discontent and social upheaval. The combination of the principle of evil and of the comic element is found in the devil in Jedermann and in Vorwitz in Das Salzburger grosse Welttheater. They follow in the tradition which Hofmannsthal says is linked to Leporello: 'Ihr Gemeinsames heisst Hans Wurst; und Hans Wurst ist wieder ein geborener Salzburger' (1). The advocacy by these two figures, Widersacher and Vorwitz, of an order of social equality which opposes the natural order of life and invalidates the divine notion of equality, corresponds to the image of Jedermann's garden. But here again the emphasis is social; paradise in this work is not personal happiness but the ideal community.

The social theme is responsible for Hofmannsthal's most significant shift of emphasis from the religious to the socially significant figure. The religious figure becomes the source of a conciliatory element that contrasts with the stern didacticism of the Spanish poet (2). Through this figure and through her intercession for the beggar, which represents the charity and love of one's neighbour that Hofmannsthal felt lacking in modern society, the element of grace comes into force. But in this social drama it does not end with the metamorphosis of a single individual, the beggar, but enables him in turn to help the rich man and so to become a

(1) P III, Festspiele in Salzburg, p.449.

(2) Grete Schaefer suggests she is meant to be the personification of the Christian caritas and a sister figure to Werke and Glaube, Die Gestalten, p.176.

link in the social chain.

The beggar is Hofmannsthal's most original contribution to the work. Through the figure of the beggar Hofmannsthal examines questions of equality, of freedom, of suffering and of action. The beggar's rôle offers the least worldly happiness, yet he has 'der höchsten Freiheit einen Funken' (1). This Freiheit must be understood as freedom in the orthodox Christian sense of the term, the freedom to accept or reject the possibilities and the limitations of the human condition. The beggar knows from his first glimpse of his rôle what these possibilities and limitations are going to be and at first refuses the rôle, until the angel points out that the end of the rôle is really only a beginning. A condition of this freedom is of course belief in a higher order, in which human beings are seen as part of the whole creation. The emphasis placed on society does not mean emphasis on human beings, but on the relationship between the behaviour of human beings to each other and their place in eternity. We are not invited to consider a different social order, only a different attitude to the order that exists. This is demonstrated by the rôle of the peasant, who is next to the beggar in social standing, but with his insistence on rights and possessions as remote from him in experience as the king or the rich man. This is not so in Calderon's work, where it is the working man - Eichendorff calls him Der Landmann in his translation - who refuses his rôle as too difficult and contrary to his natural inclina-

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(1) D III, p.260.

tion to sloth. Calderon's beggar is a submissive character who accepts his lot in the knowledge that, if he bears it well, he will be rewarded with eternal happiness. This contrasts with Hofmannsthal's Welttheater in which the difference between the characters of peasant and beggar points to a social rather than to religious implications for the work. Yet twentieth-century social drama does not usually make such pronounced distinction between the proletariat and the fourth estate, rather does it seek their union. Hofmannsthal's starting-point is the assumption that equality does not exist; one plays one's appointed rôle well or badly. It is an idea that runs through Hofmannsthal's work, from Die Frau im Fenster to the final works. The Marschallin says:

Das alles ist geheim, so viel geheim  
 Und man ist dazu da, dass mans erträgt.  
 Und in dem 'Wie' da liegt der ganze Unterschied. (1)

It is also found to a greater extent in the work of his contemporary, Paul Claudel (2). In Das Salzburger grosse Welttheater it represents an ethical answer to a social question. It is not however fatalism. Judaism

(1) L I, p.331.

(2) Die Frau im Fenster, D I, p.69: '... es ist alles unentrinnbar, und das ist das grosse Glück, zu erkennen, dass alles unentrinnbar ist. Und das ist das Gute, ein anderes Gutes gibt es nicht. Die Sonne muss glühen, der Stein muss auf der stummen Erde liegen, aus jeder lebendigen Kreatur geht ihre Stimme heraus, sie kann nichts dafür, sie kann nichts dawider, sie muss.'

Cf. Claudel: L'annonce faite à Marie, using the same image of the stone: 'Ce n'est pas à la pierre de choisir sa place, mais au Maître de l'Oeuvre.' and: 'La sainteté n'est pas aller se faire lapider chez les Turcs ou de baiser un lépreux sur la bouche, / Mais de faire le commandement de Dieu aussitôt qu'il soit / De rester à notre place, ou de monter plus haut.'

maintains that evil in relation to man is shown in his taking semblance for substance, Christianity defines suffering as a wrong relation to reality - Hofmannsthal shared in both these traditions, and both are represented in Jedermann and in the Welttheater by the theme of Schein and Sein. The beggar and Jedermann learn that the acceptance of reality demands the cure of man's profoundest disease, the over-assertion of self. Like Jedermann the beggar does not achieve this goal unaided; it requires the intercession of Weisheit and the gift of divine grace. This combination enables the beggar to see suddenly the meaning of his rôle and his relation to the world and makes him drop the axe raised against the peasant:

Ich bin bei Gott, in aller Dinge Mitt!  
Doch in dem Spiel bin ich der Bettler halt,  
Von dem ich Wesen anhab und Gestalt.  
Was soll ich denn von denen wollen?  
Ich kann doch nicht hinein in ihre Rollen,  
Noch deren Sprüch und Sprüngherein in meine reißen!  
Da müsstest du ein Geck und Stümper heissen! (1)

(ii) The function of death

Jedermann deals with the problems of the individual facing death. During the history of the allegory the main character has changed from 'every man', the average man, to the rich man. Das Salzburger grosse Welttheater shows us the other half of the picture in the death of the beggar. The function of death in both works is that of a corrective; the lives of all the characters are put into a new, and from a Christian standpoint,

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(1) D III, p.313.



'true' perspective, which shows that deeds not possessions survive earthly existence to be of permanent value. Thus death makes the characters reconsider their previous lives before going on to a higher life. The function of death comes half-way between its function in the original allegories and in Hofmannsthal's earlier works. In the original allegories death looked forward; it urged the sinner to repent and become reconciled to God. Death in Hofmannsthal's previous works was frequently retrospective; it was judgment or fulfilment or enlightenment and sometimes posited a life to come, but it was more concerned with rounding off life on earth and assessing its value than with making the assessment the basis of life to come. It was thus more ars vivendi than ars moriendi. In Jedermann and Das Salzburger grosse Welttheater death retains many of these attributes. Hofmannsthal maintains his advocacy of the 'good life', but the meaning of good is not defined only by the context of the work, but coincides with the Christian concept of goodness. Moreover the need to live rightly is coloured by the knowledge of punishment or reward, not an unknown punishment nor a reward chosen from infinite possibilities to suit the individual, but a known and universal judgment, and one that man, preoccupied with the claims of a material world, has forgotten.

Death is therefore not destructive; he is a messenger and guide leading human beings from one form of existence to another. Whereas the Totentänze and morality plays scared human beings into fear of death by painting a terrifying picture of its destructiveness, Hofmannsthal shows death as not less a source of enlightenment than of obliteration. Here he

remains true to his earliest portrayal of death. Death brings the hour of decision and enlightenment not because it is, as it was for Claudio, the end of all that is trivial and relative, but because it heralds this end and a new beginning. Death gives Jedermann a period of grace in which he discovers for himself what is worthwhile and what is futile in life. During this time his life is transformed and purified of the burden of guilt he has incurred, so that when death comes, like Claudio he has shed all illusions and grasps only what is of permanent value. But it is significant for the perspectives of Jedermann and of Das Salzburger grosse Welttheater that the change in the main characters is effected through an act of grace, not through their voluntarily embracing death. Unlike Claudio Jedermann does not recognise in death something that fulfils a need in himself. For Claudio retained from pre-existence a certain familiarity with death and had life barely in his grasp - contrast his 'Du bist der Tod' with Jedermann's 'wer bist? was solls?.... Auch kenn ich dich nit, was bist du für ein Bot?' Jedermann is aware only of human life, in which he is so absorbed that he has forgotten everything else. He knows nothing of Claudio's languid yearnings for a deeper, richer existence, that death is able to satisfy. Yet he shares Claudio's ignorance of the value of life. The values of the two works are not identical, but both have an ethical basis that condemns wasted opportunity. Death comes to Claudio and to Jedermann to show each that his life is unsatisfactory. Claudio knows this without being able to correct it, but Jedermann is largely unaware of it. Only the occasional

stirrings of his conscience, which prompt him to charitable action and disturb his man-made paradise, serve to show him that his life is incomplete. The coming of death magnifies and exemplifies these stirrings of conscience as it did Claudio's dissatisfaction in order to correct Jedermann's distorted view of himself and of the world.

From its basic function as destroyer of illusion death derives its other functions. Death is also the leveller; the notion of death as leveller is essentially Christian and inherent in the Totentänze; death is usually depicted in these as a guide leading a group of people drawn from all social strata, but made equal by the common fate of death. This is the picture seen in Das Salzburger grosse Welttheater. But the Totentänze and Artes Moriendi with their terrifying portrayal of destruction often give the impression that for the Christian belief level means destroy. The balance created by Jedermann's fate and that of the beggar corrects this view, for death has the same function for each. It asks not 'what did I have?' but 'what did I do?'. That the one man is poor and the other rich is inconsequential in death, for nothing of the earthly life of each remains but his deeds, his charity and his faith. Man has therefore to exercise his freedom bearing this in mind. Jedermann's warning of death gives him a new chance to exercise this freedom. Death acts as a catalyst, forcing Jedermann to weigh against the life he has left the possibility of damnation or redemption. The possibility of damnation is albeit unstressed in Hofmannsthal's version, as, typically, he wishes to give the work a conciliatory not a threatening tone. This tone is set by the shortened summons given by God to Death to bring

Jedermann to Him. The implication is that Jedermann, who has simply forgotten about God, is to be restored to recognition of the 'Höheren, Höchsten', but the form of his restoration is determined by the life he has led.

Jedermann's progress towards death has been described as the allegory of the Sacrament of Penance.<sup>(1)</sup> Penance consists of repentance and heavenly grace, for while sorrow for sin enables the sinner to be transformed, the transforming power comes from outside. It is as if man's eyes are opened but there must be light outside if he is to see clearly. Jedermann is transformed, not as Claudio was, through the simple sincerity of his regret, but through the machinery of the Church.

The structure and figures of this 'allegory of the Sacrament of Penance' are already present in secular forms in Hofmannsthal's works before they are redefined in their Christian context in Jedermann. Jedermann's conversion is a specifically Christian change of heart, not wholly a Verwandlung in Hofmannsthal's sense of the word, for it is not entirely miraculous but shares some of the arduousness of the Sängerin's development. The figures involved in the allegory have changed during the history of the work and Hofmannsthal's figures Werke and Glaube represent a mixture of the Catholic and Protestant conditions of redemption. Werke remains the more important for she accompanies Jedermann to his grave whereas Glaube can only look on. It is impossible to say whether it is by accident or by design that Hofmannsthal remains faithful to the beliefs of the original Everyman by making Werke the more important, but

(1) Helen Adolf, *op. cit.*, p. 211.

it is possible to show that both concepts belong to his whole poetry and that the concept represented in Christian terms by Werke is the more important (1).

The idea of creative activity as a source of life is present throughout Hofmannsthal's work, either, as it was for the heroes of pre-existence, a rich, intense life of self-expression, or as for Elektra the reason and end of her existence, or as for Jedermann the Christian life of the spirit. It is however always tempered by a belief, however vague and however divorced from conventional religion, that there is an ideal life which it is the task of every individual to attain. Ad me ipsum contains references to the theme of action as a means of escaping from pre-existence into life. Early essays, such as the essay on d'Annunzio's Le vergini delle rocche, criticise the lack of action and therefore the lifelessness of literary characters. Of the many notes in Ad me ipsum on the problem of action the words 'Tun ist sich aufgeben' (2) is most applicable to Jedermann. Sich aufgeben is impossible for Jedermann, who is so bound by his selfishness that his good deeds, as represented by Werke, are paralysed. Werke regains her strength only when he gives up his self-centredness and begins to see himself in relation to the world around, beneath and above him. In Elektra action is a psychological problem, in Der Turm it becomes a political problem, in Jedermann and Das Salzburger grosse Welttheater

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(1) A work devoted to the subject of deeds has recently appeared: Wolfgang Nehring, Die Tat bei Hofmannsthal, (Stuttgart, 1966).

(2) Aufz., p.217.

a religious, specifically Christian problem. Again the works are complementary - Jedermann's works are his actual deeds, the beggar's most important action is the action he never commits. The particular effect of their deeds is expressed in an essay comparing action and poetry:

... ein Geheimnis zwischen den Taten und der Poesie steht mir vor der Seele. Sie beide sind lügenlos, sie beide reden die Wahrheit. Die Taten werden richtbar sein, wenn es Abend wird, und die Poesie enthält die Wahrheit der Dinge und das Gericht über die Dinge. (1)

The evening of life brings reckoning for Jedermann's and for the beggar's deeds; they are lügenlos, in that they cannot be denied and stand or fall for all eternity.

The theme of Glaube is not discussed clearly in Hofmannsthal's poetry although there are several references to it. It is not a problem of his creative work in the same way as die Tat. In the early works and again in Der Turm belief is connected with will-power. However the poet shows a consistent interest in magical belief, which has the power to call something into being (2). In the Christian dramas belief is required from the characters and from the audience. The belief is the same for each: each is required to see man in a divinely created not a man-made world: 'Zum Festspiel: Wer glaubt, dem wird die Welt anders' (3). The allegory exists only if the characters achieve the ability to understand

(1) P III, p.343 Österreich im Spiegel seiner Dichtung, (1916).

(2) Cf. Alles Geglaubte besteht, und nur dieses. Aufz., p.37. Durch Glauben wird Leben erst zum Leben. Aufz., p.49. Ohne Glauben an die Ewigkeit ist kein wahrhaftes Leben möglich. Aufz., p.228.

(3) Aufz., p.173.

their relative position in eternity and if the audience can believe in their experience (1).

Creative activity and belief are the sources of 'life' in the poet's previous works as much as they are the source of the life of the spirit in the Christian dramas. These two forces come to Jedermann only when he faces imminent death (2). Together with grace they give Jedermann enlightenment, so that he can see himself, his life and his place in creation. Their effectiveness is proven through the encounter with the devil. The devil cannot conceive of a world in which his notion of justice is invalidated; he is sure Jedermann's soul belongs to him:

wird solch ein wohlbeständig Ding  
In einem Augenzwinkern neu?  
Schmeisst ihr das um mit einem Wink? (3)

and Glaube replies that through Jedermann's repentance and God's grace it is indeed possible:

(1) Hofmannsthal to Bodenhausen, 26.II.12., says the allegory has two dimensions, the third is supplied by the creed of the public. Briefe der Freundschaft, 1897-1919, p.138.

(2) Cf. Glaube: "Im tiefsten Gewölbe schläft die Einheit der wirkenden Kräfte: sie schafft den Kronjuwelen Kraft, sie darf sie enthüllen; ihr Wesen, nur in Krisen hervorzutreten. Ihre Göttlichkeit: unmittelbare Sendung vom höchsten Thron; ...", Aufz., p.173. Earlier in the same section Hofmannsthal says: 'Kraft ist Glaube. Das allmähliche Hervortreten des Glaubens im Individuum, unbewusster Glaube. - Die Gräber ihre letzten Häuser. - An den Gräbern stehend: die Stärkung des Geistigen in der Welt.' The two passages suggest he thinks that belief is released at the moment of death and this coincides with his earlier treatment of death as a moment of enlightenment, but it means he is treating Jedermann's sudden belief as if its suddenness were inevitable, whereas the Christian allegory in fact condemns the suddenness and regrets that belief had not informed Everyman's whole life.

(3) D III, p.89.

Ja, solches wirkt die tiefe Reu,  
 Die hat eine lohende Feuerkraft,  
 Da hat sie von Grund die Seele umschafft. (1)

Jedermann's eyes have been opened to his distorted view of what is valuable and what is worthless. His anguish is like the anguish of Oedipus when revelation of his true identity and the crimes he had committed against it, made him want to put out his eyes. But what Jedermann anticipates as the end is only a beginning; recognition of a higher reality is the first step towards belonging to it: as Glaube tells the devil, trivial, man-made instruments of justice and power have no dominion in the higher reality:

Vor dem Gericht, vor das er tritt,  
 Bestehen deine Rechte nit,  
 Die sind auf Schein und Trug gestellt,  
 Auf Hie und Nun und diese Welt,  
 Die ist gefangen in der Zeit  
 Und bleibt in solchen Schranken stocken,  
 Wo aber tönet diese Glocken,  
 (Man hört von innen das Sterbeglöcklein, Glaube und Werke fallen  
 auf die Knie.)  
 Hat angehoben Ewigkeit. (2)

Death's function in Das Salzburger grosse Welttheater is basically the same as in Jedermann. It is Christian death with its moral basis in Christian eschatology. The life that has been dominated by the demands and limitations of the physical body gives way to the life of the immortal spirit. The nature of the life led on earth determines the form of the subsequent life of the spirit, and the knowledge of mortality and of divine justice should therefore be a guiding principle in human behaviour.

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(1) D III, p.90.  
 (2) D III, p.90.



Calderon's characters are aware of this fact and their play is described as the allegory of the four last things. Hofmannsthal's characters live in another world where the knowledge of divine purpose in human life has been forgotten. Calderon's Frau Welt is the handmaid of the Meister, ready to fulfil his commands:

Meine Tat ist dein Gedanke,  
Mein das Werke zwar, dein das Wunder (1)

Hofmannsthal's is a Heidenweib (2), a reflection and judgment of his own age, who scorns her creatures and believes they should be content with living and dying, rather than striving after superhuman achievements. The Meister condemns her values and tells her she cannot understand the essential quality of men:

In dem, worin du sie nicht fassst, ist ihr Grosses: dann wisse,  
nach meinem Ebenbilde habe ich sie geschaffen, Du aber bist da,  
damit du der Menschen Füsse tragest. Das ist das Herrlichste,  
das wird von dir gesagt werden. (3)

'Fassen' means not only understanding but also holding or binding and the Meister points out to the World that man is capable of devoting himself to the things of the spirit as well as to material things. The denigration of the values of the world goes hand in hand with a strong sense of the transience of life that borders on impatience for its end, so that things will appear at last in their true perspectives. Then the world and human

(1) Don Pedro Calderon. Eine Auswahl Deutscher Übertragungen, I. Band, (Wien, 1924), p.13; the translation is by Eichendorff.

(2) D III, p.258.

(3) D III, p.257/258.

beings will see themselves as they really are:

Gut oder schlecht wird nicht die Rolle heissen, sondern das Spiel dann, wenn die Dinge an ihr Ende kommen sind; und nicht um seiner Rolle willen ... sondern um dessentwillen, was er aus ihr gemacht hat, werden eine etliche an des Meisters Tisch gerufen werden. (1)

This end is intended, as in Jedermann, to have a retrospective function, to reconcile man to inequality in life on earth, not to suggest that life has no meaning. When the beggar has grasped that eternal life will justify and reward his sufferings on earth he is ready to bear them as a preparation for the future. The end, when Death summons the characters from the stage, informs the beggar's life with purpose and meaning. It is the moment when his physical sufferings are about to be justified and placed in a new perspective.

But Das Salzburger grosse Welttheater is concerned not with the fate of the individual, but with society. The theme of death is brought into the service of the social aim of the work and so the chief function of death is to bring men to knowledge of their equality before God. Death allots to each according to the life he has lived a place in heaven or in hell. None is immune to his power and the characters come to see that material things are destroyed by time and do not help them in death. The king's power was only lent, Schönheit's beauty fades, the rich man's possessions are useless in the realm of the spirit, the peasant sees that time is a gift not to be spent only in the service of self. Only Weisheit

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(1) D III, p.263.

possesses qualities that survive physical being. Death must also be enlightenment, bringing the realisation that attitudes to God and men are of more lasting value than the transient delights of the world. In a time of peace and plenty such a message passes unheeded, but it must constantly be borne in mind that Hofmannsthal was not writing in such a time; in a time of strife and physical need the message of the work sounds like the voice of consolation not the voice of doom.

Death shows how goodness and wisdom can be spread by one person through society. Weisheit is conscious from the beginning of the dubious pleasure to be derived from the things that are purely of this world, and of the need for charity, understanding and love. Through her intercession the beggar receives this knowledge in the course of the play, and when death comes he is able to help the rich man. Typically Hofmannsthal does not allow any character to be damned, as the rich man is damned in El gran teatro del mundi; through intercession one after another is saved. The action of Weisheit starts a chain reaction, so that the initial structure of the Totentanz ends as a Christian re-definition of the Reigen.

Where the theme of death has no social function it is ignored. Thus for instance the stillborn child in Calderon's play is omitted, for apart from the unpleasantness of the subject, Hofmannsthal's interest is not in Christian eschatology for its own sake, and the fate of the unbaptised is of no social significance. Hofmannsthal's interest is not in theological speculation, but in the implications of death for human behaviour. He treats this theme against a Christian background with its prospect of

judgment, punishment or reward and its absolute standards of virtue. The perspectives of eternity reduce material values and give dignity and justification to poverty and deprivation.

(iii) The depiction of death

In the depiction of Jedermann's death Hofmannsthal's work remains close to the English Everyman but appeals to the senses rather than to the intellect. The construction is more dramatic than narrative, with exposition, climax and dénouement, each tied to one of Death's appearances. At each appearance the attitude of Death to men becomes milder. In the first scene he is the stern overlord who punishes:

... Gross und Klein,  
Die Gotts Gesetze nit erkennen,  
Und unter das Vieh gefallen sein... (1)

In spite of this power he is not a force in his own right, as death is in Der Tor und der Tod or in Alkestis. In Jedermann and Das Salzburger grosse Welttheater death is bound both to God and to the world of men. Death's second appearance is informed with grotesque irony, for here the shadow of death falls on a scene showing life at its gayest and most luxurious. This recalls the premonitions of the merchant's son in Das Märchen der 672. Nacht to whom thoughts of death often come in such surroundings. The motif of death as the unexpected guest occurs also in the fifth of Novalis' Hymnen an die Nacht as an example of the Greek horror of death: 'Ein

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(1) D III, p.11.

entsetzliches Traumbild, / Das furchtbar zu den frohen Tischen trat', and in Don Giovanni, with whom as a man of mature years Jedermann has a greater affinity than with languid, morbid youth, and who appears in Hofmannsthal's work as the adventurer-figure (1). The scene in Jedermann is enhanced by music and singing and dancing, and by the pleasures of physical comfort and well-being. This provides the background against which we see the increasing power of death over Jedermann; its richness is also a contrast to his poverty of spirit, as his confusion and fear increase. He has lost interest in his plans for the garden after the threefold warning that he must die. He speaks to Buhlschaft of old age and death. Her horrified reaction contrasts sharply with the ready acquiescence of his mother, and we know she will desert him when death comes:

Der Tod ist wie die böse Schlang,  
Die unter Blumen liegt verdeckt,  
Darf niemals werden aufgeweckt. (2)

She too uses the imagery of the Old Testament, as Jedermann did in describing his paradise garden, for death is the serpent in his garden. Yet ironically like the original 'böse Schlange' death brings knowledge. In Hans Sachs' Comedie des reichen sterbenden Mann the premonition of death is expressed through physical pain; the dying man feels 'etwas gar von weitten geschossen in die lincken seitten'; Jedermann's anguish is

(1) Hofmannsthal writes of Jedermann and Don Giovanni, P III, p.449, 'Verwandt sind sie beide durch und durch'.

(2) D III, p.35.

expressed through psychological reactions. He refers to the banquet as 'die letzte Ehr', his guests appear to be wearing shrouds, the lights grow dim and he hears his name called. The intrusion of death coincides in the Salzburg Festival production with the falling of the first shadow of the cathedral over the scene.

Death's appearance at the banquet becomes the climax, followed by the traditional dialogue of the Totentänze between death and his unwilling victim. Death scorns Jedermann, calling him Du Narr, as he called Claudio Du Tor, because Jedermann is surprised to discover the injustice of death. Jedermann needs experience not mere words to show him where he has gone wrong. Death's warning not to waste the 'Redens und Ratens ein Stündlein Zeit' begins the parable of the three friends, of whom Werke alone remains faithful, and Jedermann's confession of faith and repentance. Jedermann is refused help by all in turn, even by the demon of his wealth, whom he also greets with the words: 'Wer bist du denn', not recognising it for what it is. Mammon teaches him that he is the master and Jedermann the servant.

But at this point a second turn is taken towards the climax of the morality. The delusions that have already been destroyed were all negative, things that Jedermann put his trust in, but which have failed him. Werke dispels his remaining illusions but offers him something positive. In their exchange it is interesting to note the number of times the image of sight occurs, echoing the words of God and Death in the prologue: God says of His creatures:

Des geistlichen Auges sind sie erblindt, (1)

and Death promises to smite man so: 'dass seine Augen brechen'. Jedermann now greets Werke:

Wie du mich sehnlich sihest an,  
Ist mir, als hätt in meinem Leben  
Nit Freund noch Liebste, nit Weib noch Mann  
Mir keinen solchen Blick gegeben! (2)

and he realises that if he could see as she does he would have lived a better life:

Mir ist, könnt deiner Augen Schein  
Durch meine Augen dringen ein,  
Ein grosses Heil und Segen dann  
Geschäh an einem armen Mann. (3)

In Jedermann's newly acquired vision of the impermanence of earthly things lies the value of the allegory for Hofmannsthal's time:

... wir überschauen vieles, durchblicken manches, und doch ist die eigentliche Seelenkraft des Blickens schwach in uns; vieles ist uns zu Gebote, aber wir sind keine Gebieter; was wir besitzen sollen, das besitzt uns.... (4)

Jedermann's vision is the beginning of redemption, completed by his formal confession of faith and repentance. The original morality play, for which Jedermann's repentance was the climax, dwelt tediously on these scenes. Even Hofmannsthal's shortened version demanded greater credulity than some readers could give, so that the following scene with the devil became a source of comic relief (5).

(1) D III, p.10/11.

(2) D III, p.75

(5) Correspondence with Bodenhausen 10.II.12 and 26.II.12, Briefe der Freundschaft, p.137.

(3) D III, p.76.

(4) P III, p.115.

At this point Death's mission of education is complete and he disappears to be replaced by the event of the journey to the grave. The development from figure to event is less terrifying and more realistic. In some versions death and the devil join forces to gain possession of Jedermann, but this entirely contradicts Hofmannsthal's conciliatory tone and his treatment of death as a messenger of the higher order. The devil here represents the principle of eternal delusion and negation. He can never transcend the limits of rational thought and is bound by the laws of cause and effect, so that he will always judge things by their appearance and never penetrate their inner meaning. On a lower level he represents the more immediate evils of materialism, which brings about a decline in spirituality and contributes to the decay of society, and of unassailable Diesseitigkeit. Hofmannsthal's death-figure can therefore have nothing in common with him, for Death is God's messenger and servant, sent from a sphere of which the devil can have no understanding. He is the mechanical force behind the mystical process of learning to look through and beyond phenomenal reality. Indeed it has been suggested that, given the unreal proposition that Jedermann should be allowed to live on, he would become a contemplative mystic (1). For Death so enlightens him that he begins to see, like the pre-existent hero, in totalities. He sees his place in the whole of creation. The suggestion of survival is found repeatedly, and although meaningless from an aesthetic point of

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(1) Helen Adolf, op. cit., p.211.



view, it points to the fact that critics feel the enlightenment brought by death might well be put to the service of human life, and this seems to be a measure of Hofmannsthal's success in throwing into relief the obligations of life and the value of fulfilling them. Just as in pre-existence understanding of life was achieved through willingness to incur guilt and suffering, in the tragedies through willing acceptance of fate, so Jedermann comes to terms with life through Christianity. As so often in Hofmannsthal's poetry coming to terms with life means coming to terms with death, and so Hofmannsthal combines the theme of the responsibility of the individual to live his life as best he can, with the Platonic, and by derivation Christian, notion of all life as a contemplation of death - prima philosophiae definitio meditatio mortis. Jedermann is rooted in this belief that death should have a retrospective function, determining the course of life on earth, but not as in the Middle Ages through fear, but through charity and love.

The writings of St. Paul and of St. Augustine formed the Christian teaching on death which was binding for the ages that saw the development of the morality plays and the Totentanz. For them death was divisible into various categories, basically mors corporalis, the death of the body, and mors aeterna, the death of the soul. So the alliance of the devil and Death in the models for Jedermann is aimed at the death of the spirit, which Christ's death made impossible. For modern man however the great fear is the death of the body and what may or may not come after this. The possible death of the soul is an unreal proposition to an age

that barely acknowledges that the soul may have a life. Hence when Hofmannsthal introduces into his Salzburger grosses Welttheater a figure of death who does not appear at all in Calderon's play, and makes him God's Bühnenmeister and a follower of Frau Welt, he does so in order to emphasise the necessity of dying a physical death which is the inevitable consequence of physical life.

The middle section of Hofmannsthal's Welttheater is devoted to the question of social equality and the possibility of a new world order. The work comes to a climax when the beggar turns on the other characters to point out the irreducible distance between the 'have's' and the 'have not's'. This of course is Hofmannsthal's major contribution to the work, but it is not truly a political attack, for instead of social revolution we see personal conversion. The condition of this conversion is the transience of life and so for the first time almost Hofmannsthal treats transience as a positive quality of human life. There is a slight sense of its positive quality in the Kleinen Dramen, whose heroines' link with life is weak, but they do not long for the passing of life as such, only for release from impossible circumstances. Transience is only positive for the beggar, whose sufferings will be justified by eternal life; the passing of the world is mourned by Frau Welt, who finds herself the servant of time, where previously she believed herself its mistress. The four sinners, the king, the peasant, the rich man and Schönheit, feel something of the same confusion as Jedermann when they are called from the stage. The wind thunders in their ears, a drum beats, and they move

about the stage talking to themselves, heedless of each other. Suddenly they are made aware of a force greater than they, which orders their lives. Only Weisheit - the beggar is not present - understands what is happening and prays for mercy. The end of the 'play' is not just death, it is the end of the known world. Death this time allows no opportunity for deliberation or regret. His speech is brisk and he wavers only in speaking to the beggar. It contrasts with the elaborate justifications and evasions of his victims. But in this work the individual does not stand or fall entirely on his own merits, so that death allows Weisheit to comfort Schönheit, and the beggar to accompany the rich man. As Weisheit and Schönheit give away the symbols of their earthly being, Weisheit says:

Nimm hin, in jenen Reichen  
Strahlt Wesenheit, dort brauchts kein Zeichen (1)

echoing the Platonic idea of the relationship between the Abbild and the Urbild. The characters of the Welttheater are about to come face to face with reality in death, so they reject the images, true and false, that they have made of reality.

The social drama would be nothing if the characters were not completely distinct from each other, and finally Hofmannsthal succeeds in making them so. This is brought out by the stylistic range of the final scene. The attitudes of the different characters to the end of life and of their

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(1) D III, p.324.

world are brought out by their speech. Weisheit utters a prayer, for which there is no precedent in Calderon's play, but which nonetheless represents the essence of the Baroque mystical tradition. It shows the typical use of paradox, the juxtaposition of the insignificant ich, the human being, and the great Du, the Godhead. It is worship through humility, half plea, half praise, and makes use of the limited but doubly significant images of Himmel, Nacht, Sonne etc.:

O du des Namen ich vor Zittern jetzt nicht nenne,  
 Gib ohne Grenzen mir, damit ich dich erkenne.  
 Ich bin das Nichts und hab an allem Not,  
 Du, der du Alles bist, gib diesem Nichts  
 Von deinem All in seinen armen Tod.  
 Du hast ja nicht gezeigt, als du der Sterne Glast  
 An Himmel warfst, die Nacht mit Sonnen überschienst,  
 In denen tausend Sonnen widerschiene:  
 Der du auch mich aus Nacht geschaffen hast,  
 Verklär mich ohne jegliches Verdienst,  
 Ich habe nicht vermocht, mir zu verdienen. (1)

This elaborate rhetoric throws sharply into relief the complete change of atmosphere and tone as death approaches the peasant. Death maintains his sharp, clear tone, the peasant by contrast replies in dialect with the same trivial prevarications used by Jedermann - 'I hab no z'tuan', 'Hab ka Zeit.' He pretends to think death is looking for the beggar, but when he sees he is the victim he says, as Jedermann said, that he had hoped for time to put his spiritual affairs in order; there is both a comic and a sad element in his discovery that death brooks no delay:

Du lasst an ja ka Zeit,

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(1) D III, p.325.

Jetzt tuats mi g'reun, dass mi so wenig g'reut!  
 Gschafft hab i viel, bet hab i net recht viel,  
 Nimm halt der Meister vorlieb mit dem G'spiel! (1)

The atmosphere changes again from strictness to respect and admiration as death summons the beggar from the stage. The beggar recognising him as belonging to life makes the same gesture of acceptance as Claudio or Die Frau im Fenster: 'Er breitet die Arme aus!' (2). He embraces death, however, not as one for whom life has no meaning, but as one who has come to appreciate its relative significance. Death who had said of Claudio: 'Wie wundervoll sind diese Wesen!' again wavers to admire the beggar's fearlessness and asks what he means by kissing the ground. The beggar explains that death means peaceful sleep before going on to a new life. It is also an affirmation of the belief that life and death, heaven and earth constantly re-define each other. The beggar turns to his Todesbruder, the rich man, who by contrast is trembling and hesitant, and speaks to him as to a child: 'Es geht sterben' - their original positions have at last been reversed and they leave the stage together.

The final part of the framework of Das Salzburger grosse Welttheater fulfils the promise of the Christian dramas as the final scene of Jedermann fails to do. Both works treat death as a turning-point from physical life to eternal life, but Jedermann offers only a visual representation of the narrowing of life's perspectives in anticipation of death.

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(1) D III, p.328.  
 (2) D III, p.234.

Physical existence and all the things pertaining to it shrink to the proportions of the grave - the final scene shows Jedermann stepping alone into the minimum space that will contain his mortal remains. We have to believe that he will have another life, the life of the spirit for which he has so hastily prepared. In Das Salzburger grosse Welttheater we have a vision of heaven, as we have visions of heaven at the end of Die Frau ohne Schatten and Ariadne auf Naxos, but now in Christian terms. The narrowing to death opens out into the perspectives of eternity as new lives are allotted which qualify and justify the old ones. The beggar and Weisheit follow the angel into the palace of heaven, Schönheit, the king and the peasant kneel beside its entrance, with the rich man some distance away in darkness. The work ends with an opening-up of the artistic perspectives too as the final tableau is accompanied by music and singing.

(iv) Conclusions

The Christian framework of these two works obviously distinguishes them in many ways from Hofmannsthal's other poetry. At the same time the use of themes and images that are familiar from the earlier poetry and now re-defined within the Christian framework, provides a link with the other poetry. This is particularly clear in the treatment of death. But the ability to discern similarities and dissimilarities is not enough to give a complete picture of their place in and value for Hofmannsthal's whole poetry. Their framework of canonical myth, where previously the

poet had treated only apocryphal myth, and the historical context discussed at the beginning of this chapter, mean that the two works are usually viewed against a broad philosophical and cultural background and that attitudes to them are often more partisan than to Hofmannsthal's other works. To some extent a parallel might be drawn between attitudes to these works and to Hofmannsthal's earliest poetry: attitudes are extreme because the works themselves are uncompromising, especially in the arbitrary creation and destruction of the characters. But attitudes to the allegories also involve the acceptance or rejection of a metaphysical and moral system that belongs not to a single literary context but to the history of civilisation, and the reader tends to affirm or reject this system in a way that affects his view of these works, but would be meaningless for the lyrical dramas or for the tragedies and comedies of the middle period. Hence critical attitudes to the Christian allegories range from the extreme view of the Christian critic that the allegories are the high-point of Hofmannsthal's poetry and the treatment of death its supreme treatment, to the hostility of others who believe the works to be misjudged and alien to the spirit of the whole poetry.

Indeed Hofmannsthal explains to Bodenhausen, one of his more hostile critics of these works, that although they are something of a side-step, they are nonetheless an integral part of his work (1). A clear relation-

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(1) Writing about Ariadne auf Naxos Hofmannsthal says: '... freilich liegt ja diese Arbeit viel mehr auf der Hauptlinie meiner Produktion, die auch noch den "Rosencavalier" näher berührt als "Jedermann" - an dem ... ich trotzdem sehr hänge.' Briefe der Freundschaft, 26.II.12., p.138.

ship with the treatment of death in earlier works can be shown, which proves the poet's contention. The patterns of the Christian dramas are re-definitions of the secular forms discernible in his earlier treatment of death. The theme of die Tat crystallises in the figure of Werke, the Christian good deeds; the magical process of Verwandlung, miraculous transformation through grace and through willingness to believe and to reform, is translated into the repentance of Jedermann and the miraculous conversion of the beggar; love reappears in its earliest guise, as the Christian caritas, not the eros of the middle period, represented by the mother in Der Tor und der Tod, and now again in Jedermann, and by Weisheit, the nun in Das Salzburger grosse Welttheater; each intercedes for the ignorant man who must die and is unaware of what life and death involve. The functions of death are also re-interpretations of death's function in earlier works: death is a judgment on life, it is a moment of enlightenment and a moment of union with another dimension of experience. But because the secular patterns and processes are re-interpreted in Christian terms the dimension of experience that succeeds life assumes supreme importance. It also assumes another form, <sup>since</sup> ~~for~~ eternity, although timeless, can only be described in human terms as time without end, whereas the union of Elektra with another dimension of experience seems to be a single ecstatic moment. The new dimension in Christian death is not just a refuge or the last possibility of existence, it is a new life, the only permanent form of existence. The plays are an unequivocal statement of mortality and when death sets the seal on life, it is so that



death can become the life of the soul released from physical being, and the soul will play out the rôle created for it by the whole physical and spiritual man. The works are therefore much more jenseitig than any previous work, but in pointing out to men the existence of a world other than the human one, Hofmannsthal tries to offer both a warning and a consolation.

All this does not however justify the view that the works are a supreme Christian treatment of death, for, although Christian critics tend to seize gratefully anything betraying belief, there are aspects of the works that are not a satisfactory portrayal of Christian belief. Jedermann especially tends to portray belief as a form of insurance against damnation. The work stresses a puritanical morality at the expense of an exhilarating mystery. There is too much stress on living the 'good life' for fear of death rather than for love of God. Now the latter would be of course even more extreme and even more likely to seem absurd to non-believers, but if there are to be Christian allegories there is no virtue in their being diluted versions of Christian belief. In this respect Das Salzburger grosse Welttheater is more successful. The beggar's conversion is a mystery that culminates in his statement of mystical union; the uncompromising belief of Weisheit, whose vindication has no sense of personal triumph, is truly religious because it demands the conquest of self-assertion. This is what the beggar has achieved when he claims to be 'bei Gott in aller Dinge Mitt' (1). Above all the consummation and

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fulfilment of the promise of heaven to suffering humanity, achieved in the final scene when death opens up into eternal life, is more satisfying than Jedermann's disappearance into a solitary grave. The allegory of death depends perhaps too much on belief if we do not have some visual representation of the fulfilment of the Christian promise.

To Hofmannsthal however Christianity is not so much a system of beliefs as a source of culture. He refers to Christian tradition as the possession of western civilisation and maintains that the use of traditional forms is not the prerogative of committed writers, but that such forms are universal. He describes Jedermann as a 'Märchen in christlichem Gewand' (1), but in essence not necessarily Christian. Allegory attracted him for its own sake (2) and he was drawn to the material of Jedermann and Das Salzburger grosse Welttheater as an allegorical expression of man's striving after the highest forms of reality of which he can conceive. Hofmannsthal's critics, consciously or unconsciously, have reacted to his tendency to blur the distinctions between canonical and apocryphal myth with a certain degree of mistrust or discomfiture. There is no quarrel with the veracity of works that Hofmannsthal based on the Arabian Nights or on Greek myths, for these are traditions with which we are involved only through aesthetic interest, and which do not affect our own metaphysical and moral attitudes. But it is impossible to have the same attitude

(1) P III, p.64.

(2) Aufz., p.22: Allegorie ist ein grosses Vehikel, das man nicht verachten soll. Was zwei Freunde einander wirklich sind, ist eher an einem getauschten Zauberring und Zaubernhorn klar zu machen als durch Psychologie. Buch der Freunde.

to a traditional, if now neglected part of one's own civilisation as to one that is entirely foreign or fantastic. There is a strong feeling that the Christian poem or drama or novel belongs to the committed poet and that Hofmannsthal is untrue to himself in pretending orthodox belief.

Certainly if the works are not accepted as self-evident and self-sufficient, but are considered as the product of a particular human mind, this question of belief may be a central problem. For it is suggested that Hofmannsthal's religious beliefs amounted to a tacit acceptance of Christianity, derived from his membership of a nominally and formally Christian society in which religion was not a subject of great dispute (1). But tacit acceptance is not easily translated into poetry, and certainly not into the poetry of the Christian allegories, without a degree of exaggeration or distortion. Christian elements are discernible in the early works but to read these therefore as Christian documents would suggest a degree of enthusiasm not really present. The resulting picture of the work and of Christianity would remain incomplete. The matter is further complicated by attitudes in some works that are barely reconcilable with orthodox belief, for instance Hofmannsthal's seeming admiration for suicide as a dignified death. Now such degrees of exaggeration or digression are not present in Jedermann or Das Salzburger grosse Welttheater or Der Turm. Indeed Hofmannsthal stresses in his essay on the

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(1) Alexander Lernet-Holenia, Religion, Kirche, Gesellschaft, in Fiechtner, op. cit., p.274.

Welttheater the responsibility he felt because the work was to be performed in a church, and it is perhaps this very public place of performance and the dramatic form of the theatrum mundi that produce complete orthodoxy as much as Hofmannsthal's personal beliefs. It is true that Hofmannsthal frequently took material from other mythological sources without regard for their original ethos, and it therefore seems unlikely that he would adopt a belief foreign to his own thought. But that he should adopt it so completely and so publicly as in the Christian allegories is explained better by their purpose than by the assumption of a sudden conversion. The more significant matter is not whether Hofmannsthal felt bound by Christian beliefs and ethics but whether his audience would do so. For in their purpose and in the manner of their performance at festivals such as that in Salzburg, the Christian allegories are a sort of universal Chandos-Brief. Just as the famous letter was meant to call a halt to the poet's aestheticism, which he felt threatened his poetry and his humanity, so the Christian allegories are an attempt to call a halt to abject materialism, which threatened civilisation in its cultural and in its physical being. The Chandos-Brief was published in a daily newspaper, and so it paraded in public a private crisis (1). The Christian

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(1) Richard Exner, Zur Essayistik Hugo von Hofmannsthals, (Schweizer Monatshefte, XLII, 2, 1962), p.189. Exner writes interestingly of the publication of the Chandos-Brief and of Th. Mann's Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen in newspapers. He believes this form of publication belongs essentially to the spirit of the documents - they involve private crises, and to some extent struggles with individuals, but their authors believe that the shock of exposing these crises to the public gaze is a vital, if extreme measure belonging to the cure of their ills.

allegories paraded in public the evils of the age for all the world to see; they are an out-going vision, and an attempt to achieve das Soziale on a universal scale. So they offer to civilisation a picture of the best and a warning of the worst in itself. However they depend on the acceptance of their audience of the scale of values which decrees what is best or worst, and, <sup>even</sup> if Hofmannsthal could cure his own aestheticism in such a drastic manner as the exposure of a private crisis to public scrutiny, it must be admitted that nothing was changed by Jedermann and Das Salzburger grosse Welttheater. They were and still are received enthusiastically, and the poet was particularly delighted by the appreciation of ordinary people at their earliest performance, but inevitably they preach to the converted. Allegory demands, as Hofmannsthal himself says, belief, without which it is ineffectual, even as parts of Jedermann were for Bodenhausen positively alienating. It is perhaps paradoxical that Hofmannsthal knew this, and knew too that 'es führt kein direkter Weg von der Poesie ins Leben' (1), but felt himself compelled to try and build such a way.

Thus Hofmannsthal comes back to the problems of 'integration', of reconciling man to aspects of human existence that he would prefer to ignore. Hofmannsthal's contemporaries did not want to be warned or consoled by the prospect of eternal life: Kurt Hiller says: 'wir wollen

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(1) Aufz., p. 139.

bei lebendigem Leib ins Paradies' (1). But if the allegories do not offer an acceptable solution, they at least predict the evils that were to come. Indeed their most modern aspect is their portrayal of evil as total indifference and ultimately wilful disregard for the material and spiritual needs of man. This aspect assumes even greater importance in Hofmannsthal's final tragedy, Der Turm.

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(1) Kurt Hiller, Gegen Lyrik, in: Die Weisheit der Langenweile, (Leipzig, 1913), p.118.

## CHAPTER SIX: DER TURM

Der Turm is not a play 'about' death in the same sense as Jedermann or Das Salzburger grosse Welttheater. In each of these works man discovers the meaning of his mortal life and its contribution to his immortal life. Der Turm treats the subject of the death or survival of a civilisation and the part that can be played in this by the sacrifice of an individual. Der Turm, particularly the starkly pessimistic Bühnenfassung, comes therefore as something of a shock, for it seems to sweep away many of the answers to death that the earlier works had so carefully established, but especially the answers of the Christian allegories. Hofmannsthal's treatment of death to this point shows a clear linear development: the solution of the problem of death in pre-existence becomes the starting-point for a sacrificial, and in Hofmannsthal's sense, a social treatment of death; in the Christian allegories Hofmannsthal attempts to translate the same forms and functions of death into Christian, universal terms. But their universality is not accepted. They are too late to warn as well as entertain. In Der Turm Hofmannsthal has faced the implications of this fact and interrupted the linear development of the theme of death to consider the possibility that the civilisation in which his previous answers to death were rooted, might itself be dying. This does not mean that Der Turm is a break with his earlier work; indeed it contains references to his previous solutions to the problem of death, but now he examines their validity against the death of the civilisation that created them. The shock effect of Der Turm is salutary in as much as it

dispels the notion that death ceases to be a real problem after the experience of pre-existence. Indeed Hofmannsthal constantly rediscovered the problem of death and its intrusion upon life seemed at each rediscovery to be an assault on his consciousness. The greatest shock of this kind was undoubtedly the experience of war and this was also the impulse behind the completion of Der Turm. The war forced Hofmannsthal to contemplate the disintegration of das Soziale, the ethical perfection towards which his heroes had constantly striven. All his work is concerned with the assimilation of the knowledge of mortality, but this became more urgent in the light of the war as Hofmannsthal realised that his society faced possible destruction and inevitable re-organisation. The values of a Christian society, in the historical rather than in the theological sense, provided the basis of his work, but when these values disappeared he set out to create new ones out of the only certainties that were left, the poles of suffering and love (1).

The suffering, as it is expressed in Der Turm, has been analysed as

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(1) Cf. P III, p.498: 1914 Mein Lieber, wir wollen uns eines schwören. Die neue Zeit, wenn sie noch eine Zeit für uns sein wird, soll uns als bessere Menschen treffen, als wahrhaftigere, brüderlichere, reinere Geschöpfe. Wir wollen nie mehr blind in den Tag hineinschlendern, nachdem wir nun aufs deutlichste erfahren haben, dass das, was wir Verderben und Tod nennen, nicht an irgend einem Zielpunkt des Lebens steht, sondern auf jedem Punkt unsere Existenz in konzentrischem Ring umgibt, und dass jedes Einzelwesen der ungeheuren Welt dies Schicksal mit uns teilt, und dass nur die selbstvergessenste Liebe eine schwache, schwache Brücke über dies von Anfang an Feindselige, von Anfang an Hoffnungslose zu schlagen vermag.



a conflict between Geist and Macht (1). This basic analysis may be viewed in a number of contexts, each of which involves an individual concept of death. The established contexts of the basic conflict, 'diese dreifache Tiefenschichtung, eines besonderen, eines zeitlosallgemeinen und eines geschichtstypischen Bedeutungsinhaltes' (2), show that the play treats the death of an individual, who is also a symbol of mankind and a representative of a particular, but recurring historical situation. It is the death of a tragic hero, of a contemporary and an historical figure, whose death stands for the death of many.

Each individual treatment of death also refers to an earlier period or aspect of Hofmannsthal's creative life. The states of being familiar from his earlier work, pre-existence, life, non-life, death - and within the latter the separate but often co-existent categories of death as event, as symbol or as metaphor, - are re-examined in conjunctions that both recall earlier phases of Hofmannsthal's treatment of death and ultimately create a view of death that is different from any of these. So in this single work death can be interpreted in terms of pre-existence, or of the more rigid self-fulfilment of the middle period, of the political and dramatic necessity hinted at in earlier works for the theatre, of Christian ideals or of the poet's attack on contemporary values. The re-examination of these interpretations of death in the

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(1) H.H. Schaefer, Bemerkungen zu Hofmannsthals Turm, (N.R. VII, 1928), p.87.

(2) Naef, op.cit., p.241.

context of a dying civilisation gives them more urgency and a tragic irony. The treatment of death in Der Turm is therefore both new and independent, and at the same time a synthesis of earlier interpretations of the theme.

Death's most important rôle in Der Turm is in the conflict between Geist and Macht. These two forces are alike in their ability to create or influence man's environment, but they are opposed in the nature of the environment that each promotes. For the first time in Hofmannsthal's work no authority guarantees the supremacy of the spirit; no human power or divine grace intervenes in the course of events. Thus we see that spirit and power are equal in the struggle and that death threatens each in the form of the other.

The force of power, which means in Der Turm political power, often corrupt, working for mean ends and with vicious methods, threatens the life of the spirit in two ways. It threatens the immortal life of the spirit through its ability to corrupt. In the final act of the Buchfassung the vision of Basilius, Olivier and Julian suffering in hell (1), may be interpreted as the triumph of corrupting power that leads to damnation. Sigismund withstands the attempts of these three characters to draw him into their world of corruption and reaches a state of mystical retreat into an existence as pure spirit (2). His survival is made possible because of the strength he has gained through suffering. He is not blinded

(1) D IV, p.185 ff.

(2) D IV, p.436: Sigismund: ... das bin ich, Herr und König auf immer in diesem festen Turm. (Er schlägt sich auf die Brust.)

by power and possessions, as Julian, Basilius and Olivier are, because his prolonged deprivation has made him conscious that man comes into the world with nothing. This knowledge makes him capable of facing death for his belief, because he is not afraid of being deprived by death.

Corrupt political power also threatens the life of the spirit in a way that more closely affects Hofmannsthal's preoccupation with man's social existence. For power also threatens that aspect of the spirit's life which is co-extensive with the physical life of the body: the spirit as it affects other lives, creates an environment, is distilled in a cultural tradition and is therefore mortal as all these are mortal. This is the aspect of the spirit's life that seemed to Hofmannsthal to be dying and which, in his allegories, in his Österreichische Bibliothek and in many of his essays, he fought to keep alive. Sigismund, Julian and Olivier in Der Turm recognise that this function of the spirit is as frail as the body that houses it. To Olivier the frailty is a weapon, for, if he can destroy physical life, he can also destroy the essence of a civilisation (1); to Julian it is a cause of fear, for his thirst for power is a desire to influence civilisation and thereby to become immortal (2);

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(1) D IV, p.459: Olivier to the doctor: Ich habe gemeint, der Herr ist ein Doktor, aber ich sehe, er ist ein Pfaff. Die Begriffe, mit denen der Herr operiert, sind abgetan und liegen auf dem Schindanger ... so bist du schuldig, das ist dir eingezeichnet von der Fatalität, und am Leibe wirst du gestraft werden, denn wir haben nichts, dich zu fassen, als den Leib.

(2) D IV, p.133: Angst wandelt mich an, zu sterben und nichts hinter mir zu lassen.

Sigismund's final plea to the doctor is likewise a warning not to let his physical existence and ultimately his martyrdom pass unheeded (1).

The two versions of the play differ most in the nature and source of the threat to the forces of power. In the Buchfassung the forces of power, represented by the régimes of Basilius, Sigismund and Olivier threaten each other, but ultimately even the best of these is superseded by a pure, spiritual force, embodied in the Kinderkönig and his followers. In this version Sigismund cannot be the perfect representative of the power of the spirit, because he adopts some of the methods of his enemies in order to defeat them. His death is thus the sacrifice of a political martyr and his grave becomes sacred to the society that he makes possible. But by taking up arms to oppose force with greater force, whatever his ultimate goal, he creates a measure of guilt which is expiated only through his death. His death becomes a tragic necessity that prevents him from establishing or participating in the Golden Age. However the Buchfassung remains optimistic, if in a highly idealised manner, for the spirit triumphs unequivocally through the Kinderkönig and the society he is about to establish, and corrupt political power, in the persons of Basilius, Julian and Olivier, has been destroyed. It is suggested (2) that this ending shows that Hofmannsthal has not really faced up to the problem he set himself, but has resorted to a Utopian solution that has no

(1) D IV, p.207 and p.463: Gebet Zeugnis, ich war da, wemgleich mich niemand gekannt hat.

(2) William H. Rey, Hofmannsthals Turm, (Euphorion, XLVII, 1953), p.168.

relevance to the political situation that the play was meant to reflect. The opposite view (1) suggests that this Utopian ending was Hofmannsthal's answer, however unrealistic it might seem, to a real situation viewed in the perspectives of an abiding, eternal world order. This version of the play clearly owes more to the Christian allegories than the Bühnenfassung from which any suggestion of a permanent solution disappears.

In the Bühnenfassung of Der Turm the forces of power conquer each other in succession: Julian's personal ambition succeeds Basilius' decadent, pleasure-seeking tyranny, and is itself followed by anarchic terror instigated and led by Olivier. Sigismund remains apart from the struggle for political power, for now he recognises that action would create a likeness with those who he opposes. The tests to which he is put therefore only contribute to the purity of his spirit and finally to the purity of the sacrifice he makes through his death. The Sigismund of this version risks his life by being utterly passive, but his passivity is a testimony to the incorruptibility and supremacy of the spirit.

The first version offers a vision of a promised land, the second kindles the hope that civilisation might survive because one individual proves to be incorruptible. This hope is slight because the end of the play is ambiguous. In the first version the threat to man's spirit as it is embodied in the civilisation that he creates is clearly averted, for

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(1) Brian Coghlan, Hofmannsthal's Festival Dramas, (Cambridge, 1964), A disputed last testament, pp.295-297.

out of the threat there emerges a better civilisation. The second version depends on the witness of the doctor and of Anton to Sigismund's sacrifice if this sacrifice is to have any effect on humanity (1). The conclusion that can be drawn from a comparison of the two versions is pessimistic. In the Buchfassung the spirit triumphs but not without becoming tainted by the corruption of political power, in the Bühnenfassung purity withstands all efforts to corrupt it but there is no guarantee that this purity will be recognised.

Sigismund's death fulfils a social, political and historical function, but Hofmannsthal treats it throughout the play as a personal experience of death. In this way he also creates the references to the treatment of death in his earlier works. He draws attention to the link between Sigismund's life and death and the pattern of pre-existence (2). The pattern of life and death belonging to pre-existence consists of emergence from ignorance of life, through the intervention of a powerful force, often death, into self-awareness, which is followed by physical destruction.

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(1) Cf. Rey, op. cit., p.171, who clearly prefers the second version: Denn das ist die Mission Sigismunds und der Sinn seiner Opfertat: die Fackel des Geistes hochzuhalten, selbst über den Tod hinaus, und damit die Welt zu bewahren vor dem Versinken in totaler Finsternis. Cf. Aufz., p.234, probably 1923: Wenn unsere Epoche eine des Untergangs sein soll ... wie vieles ist doch noch da, in ursprünglicher Reinheit. Es muss gedacht werden, dass auch das untergehende Rom voll solcher intakter Lebenskeime war - und dass es ein Schicksal gibt, ein von aussen Herantretendes. - Mit diesem Gedanken sind wir schon dort, wo man sich über alles erheben kann.

(2) Aufz., p.242: "Der Turm". Darzustellen das eigentlich Erbarmungslose unserer Wirklichkeit, in welche die Seele, aus einem dunklen mythischen Bereich, hineingerät. Anzuknüpfen: jener Begriff der Präexistenz.

The spirit attains a state of indestructibility like Sigismund's incorruptibility. This pattern is presented in the lyrical dramas as a predominantly psychological or social imprisonment into which death brings moral awareness. In Der Turm this psychological imprisonment is translated into utter distortion and degradation of the physical and mental conditions necessary for the development of the individual. Sigismund's prison is not only his mind, as Claudio's was, but also a squalid cage and a tower. The self-inflicted incarceration of the mind is presented as a brutal denial by Sigismund's father of his right to exist. This offends against the 'whole man', mind and body. The other problems of pre-existence are interpreted as forms of mental illness; this is how the doctor sees Sigismund's uncertainty about his identity, his inability to distinguish between self and non-self, his powers of speech and his capacity to form relationships with other human beings. Sigismund does not know who he is; he asks 'bin ich jetzt in der Welt? wo ist die Welt?' (1) and the doctor explains that a degree of inner security is necessary before man can safely explore the external world, but in Sigismund:

die Grenze ist verwirrt zwischen innen und aussen.... Die ganze Welt ist gerade genug, unser Gemüt auszufüllen, wenn wir sie aus sichrem Haus durchs kleine Guckfenster ansehen! Aber wehe, wenn die Scheidewand zusammenfällt. (2)

Sigismund's attempts to establish contact with other creatures erupt into violence, culminating in his attack on his father. Some of Hofmannsthal's

(1) D IV, p.25.

(2) D IV, p.25/26.

earlier characters established their identity through a symbolic death, by killing or maiming animals, and Sigismund, who knows the ways of animals better than those of human beings, accepts and copies their behaviour. The isolation from human beings created for Sigismund by his father becomes a weapon against Basilius, when Sigismund attacks him, telling him:

Ich habe schon einmal einen alten Fuchs mit Händen  
erwürgen müssen! Er hat gerochen wie du! (1)

Sigismund's isolation is also reflected in his fluctuating powers of speech. Anton tells him: 'mit Reden kommen die Leut zusammen' (2), but Sigismund is incapable of approaching his father through speech or of being approached - Basilius recognises immediately that Sigismund is: 'gegen jedes Zunahetreten gewappnet' (3). Sigismund's ability to use language shows most clearly his oscillation between the Ariel-like and Caliban-like aspects of pre-existence:

Kann Latein und wird mit einem dicken Buch fertig  
wie wemns eine Speckseiten wäre. Aber manchmal  
krampft sich ihms Wort im Mund, und er bringts  
nicht heraus. (4)

He can be morose or violent, but he also has the inherent qualities of power, royalty and wisdom that belong to pre-existence. The doctor describes him as 'eine fürstliche Kreatur' (5), and his bearing at court

(1) D IV, p.123.

(2) D IV, p.24.

(3) D IV, p.113.

(4) D IV, p.22.

(5) D IV, p.28.



believes the indignity of his upbringing and betrays his royal birth.

Sigismund's experience at court is intended by those who contrive it to be a 'kurzer Traum mitten dumpfem Schlaf' (1) but it becomes a form of rebirth (2). Through his glimpse of the life owing to him Sigismund awakens as if from the dead and discovers his own royalty and his need to be a leader, although not the type of leader that his father had had in mind when summoning him. The dream breaks the spell of pre-existence, as it does for example in Das kleine Welttheater for the young lord, and enables Sigismund to distinguish between different states of being. Julian and Basilius, who toyed with Sigismund's fate, believing they could force him back into his previous ignorance, discover that there is no going back. Sigismund denies both the father who created his physical being and the teacher who had tried to form his mind, as they had denied him a meaningful existence.

Imminent death brings self-awareness to the pre-existent hero, sometimes in the person of a figure of death who speaks to and for the hero's better self. To some extent this function is fulfilled in Der Turm by the figure of the doctor. He is a source of enlightenment - even Julian recognises this and seeks to use him: 'Gewaltiger Mann, wie dein Sehstern leuchtet! Bleibe bei mir, ich werde dich verehren wie einen Engel' (3), -

(1) D IV, p.131.

(2) It is a rebirth rather like Verwandlung in its portrayal. There is the same belief that Sigismund is about to die when he drinks the sleeping-draught and the same resignation to death.

(3) D IV, p.131.

but he sees himself as a messenger from another, higher world, whose function is to release what is best in human beings. The doctor is not a figure of death, for this would be ridiculously ironic, but he shares in death's healing quality:

Die Kräfte freizumachen ist unser Amt, über dem  
 Ende waltet ein Höherer.... (1)

He is a source of enlightenment, a catalyst in the action of the play, and in these qualities he resembles both the figure of death in the lyrical dramas and in the allegories, and the figure of the adventurer or the agent of Verwandlung; but, by definition, he does not possess the destructive nature of any of these.

In the pattern of life and death belonging to pre-existence awareness of life is swiftly followed by death. This occurs also in Der Turm, but for different reasons. But Sigismund's enlightenment takes a form which, like that of some of Hofmannsthal's earlier heroes and heroines, has no practical application in the eyes of the world. He acquires through it the same aura of commitment to death that surrounds Sobeide or Elis. He speaks of having won 'ein wenig Geist' (2) and of 'die einzige Wahrheit', a truth that seems to take away the reality attached to things:

Wir wissen von keinem Ding wie es ist, und nichts  
 ist, von dem wir sagen könnten, dass es anderer  
 Natur sei als unsere Träume.... (3)

- (1) D IV, p.134.  
 (2) D IV, p.201.  
 (3) D IV, p.154.

Thus even in the first version of the play, but much more obviously in the second, it seems to the reader that Sigismund approaches practical life in his assumption of power and leadership, yet simultaneously moves further away from it in his mind. This is interpreted by the crude minds of the soldiers as insanity resulting from ill-treatment; but, as Sigismund withdraws from the world of phenomenal reality, he prepares himself for union with the dimension of the purely spiritual in death. Sigismund's commitment to death with one part of his being, while with another he shares the future of the human world, may be explained in part by Hofmannsthal's desire to write a work that would make sense of suffering and of the events of the war. Hofmannsthal was committed in his mind to Sigismund's death, because at least part of his aim was concerned with the past and with deaths that had already taken place. He projects this commitment into the character of Sigismund in order to show recognition of the necessity of suffering.

The same qualities of withdrawal into spirituality in anticipation of death, and the explanation of this withdrawal as necessity, recall Hofmannsthal's Oedipus dramas. Sigismund's death also ends a similar pattern of life, bound by a similar prophecy. The pattern consists of the fusion of the life created by their own efforts with the fate foretold for them. Sigismund says he has won his 'wenig Geist':

aus dem Mark unserer Knochen und der Vermählung  
unseres Innern mit der Notwendigkeit. (1)

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(1) D IV, p.201.

Although Oedipus' sacrifice is made in order that Thebes may be rescued from ruin by the sphinx, its social value is largely implicit; much more is made of the effect of the prophecy on the community in Der Turm. In this sacrifice for the community tragic necessity is inseparable from the Christian and the contemporary aspects of the work. Hofmannsthal shows the impending destruction of a community that has much in common with his own, but the language and motifs in which it is expressed suggest the Christian account of the end of the world.

Hofmannsthal's attack on and warnings to contemporary society are here much more violent, immediate and realistic, in the sense that he pinpoints the specific troubles of his age and of the decades that followed, than in Jedermann or Das Salzburger grosse Welttheater. He refers to strikes (1), to inflation(2), to anti-Semitism (3), and to the growth of militarism (4). Beneath this specific attack is a more fundamental one that belongs to the spirit of the Christian allegories, and diagnoses society's chief ill as greed for power and possessions. (5)

(1) D IV, p.37: Die Bergleut fahren nicht mehr in die Berg, die Bäcker backen nicht mehr; der Arzt läuft von Krankenbett, der Student von der Schul, der Soldat von der Fahn. Dem König sein Zutrauen ist dahin. Dann ist in der ganzen Welt nix geheuer.

(2) D IV, p.36: Wo ist ein lötiger Taler? Hat einer an lötigen Taler gesehen, hat er gemusst machen ä grosse Reis.

(3) D IV, p.61/62: Die Juden ... haben dem Land das Mark aus den Knochen geschlürft. Sie haben aus dem Geld das Silber herausgesogen, und in unseren Händen das rote stinkende Kupfer gelassen....

(4) D IV, p.63: der Bauer, der vom Pflug läuft und seine Sense umnagelt zur blutigen Pike.

(5) D IV, p.197: Wisset ihr nichts, als zu sitzen im Besitz und zu trachten nach Vorrang!

Two figures embody the evils of this society, and although their characterisation is infinitely more subtle and complex than the thumbnail portraits of the Welttheater, they recall the rough, greedy peasant and the calculating rich man. The counterpart of the peasant is the coarse, violent, brutal, but often ludicrous Olivier, whose aim is destruction, and who hopes to use Sigismund as a focus for the attention of the masses, a folk-hero who will ultimately become a folk-sacrifice. The other figure is the sophisticated, calculating Julian, who embodies the evil of total obedience, although he may not believe in its cause, and hopes through this obedience for his own glory. Julian is also a pathetic figure whose thirst for glory is a recognition of helplessness in the face of death.

Against this background Sigismund's destiny assumes the character of a Messianic mission. He is summoned by his father, tutored by Julian and hailed by the poor as a saviour; he emerges from obscurity and rides to victory at his father's court, where he is hailed as a future ruler; he rejects the temporal power that he is later offered by Julian and Olivier, but accepts the tribute of the poor; in the first version of Der Turm he dies unrecognised, but only after having made way for the birth of a new community that is to be hallowed by his grave, and whose leader recognises that Sigismund's stature is great by the standard of eternity, though unrecognised in time; in the second version there is only the sacrifice and the hope of recognition; there is no vision of heaven or hallowed grave.

These motifs are obviously open to interpretation in Christian terms, in which Sigismund repeats the Christian sacrifice and dies for the salvation of men. The difference in mood between the two versions is the difference between the moods of Easter and of Good Friday, although, pessimistically, their order is reversed. The Christian interpretation is attractive, partly of course because Sigismund is an attractive figure; but it suggests a more coherent Christianity than the play really justifies. It ignores those specific circumstances in Sigismund's story that have nothing to do with the Christian myth, such as Sigismund's attack on Basilius or the cause of Sigismund's death, which is not presented in either version as a ritual sacrifice, but rather as the result of an injury received in sordid, not glorious, circumstances. The value of this interpretation, although it cannot be applied consistently, lies in the implication that Sigismund's death fulfils a sacrificial function in the preparation of a better world for future generations.

Against its contemporary background this sacrificial death raises a problem that has become acute in the treatment of the theme of death during the twentieth century. The ancient resistance to the association of death and beauty reappears in this century as a resistance to the creation of myth out of contemporary history and its presentation in artistic form. Mere proximity and personal involvement constitute only part of the resistance; the scale of the slaughter - and this is heralded in Der Turm, particularly in the final act of the second version - is another important factor. It is a peculiarity of this century that the

individual death but not the collective death can be accepted as myth. Sigismund's death may be seen therefore as a justifiable and traditional tragic ending, or as a re-enactment of the Christian story, as far as it is also seen to be a personal death; but to the extent that it is shown to be one death among many, and this occurs in the final part of the second version of the play, it becomes a crude simplification, and in so far as it is presented in a pleasing form, it appears to justify the contemporary history that it reflects.

Hofmannsthal was not aware of the association of death and beauty as a problem, and when he wrote Der Turm it had barely reappeared as such. Indeed much of his work suggests that he believed that man's assimilation of death into his consciousness was vital and that it was to be served by art as much as by experience of life. By the same token he believed in the necessity of creating myth out of the events of the war. His problem was the achievement of this aim without the consistent, external, ethical basis of his allegories and comedies. He needed a self-evident pattern of values that was neither purely personal, as the values of pre-existence had been, nor based on a system that could be accepted or dismissed for its own sake without consideration for his work.

In his treatment of death in Der Turm Hofmannsthal achieves the quality of myth through encounter and action, and through the juxtaposition of personalities, so that an internal, autonomous pattern of values emerges. The pattern is enriched by its repetition of motifs of death that are familiar from Hofmannsthal's other works, yet remains autonomous

because none of these can provide an adequate interpretation of Der Turm by itself. The basic quality of myth is achieved within and, at the same time, beyond the synthesis of familiar references, through the distribution of attitudes to and functions of death throughout representative figures and through their juxtaposition as 'kontrapunktische Notwendigkeiten' (1). These encounters and configurations occur at two levels. The states of being, pre-existence, life, non-life and death, are juxtaposed through the encounters of the different figures. Second, the functions and qualities of death that previously resided in one or two figures, - conscience, healer, comforter, teacher, executioner and judge - are re-distributed among several different figures. The interaction of all the figures, considered at all levels, produces an overall pattern of references and connotations that implies the supremacy of certain values. Thus, for instance, Basilius is contrasted both with Sigismund and with the Grossalmosenier in scenes that show him as their inferior for different reasons. His non-life is contrasted with Sigismund's awakening to life, his desire for power and possession with Sigismund's desire to create a better state: thus a passive-negative state of being is contrasted with a positive-active one. But Hofmannsthal does not suggest that the positive mode of being is the prerogative of youth, for in contrasting Basilius with the Grossalmosenier he juxtaposes a negative-active state<sup>with a positive-passive state</sup> as depicted in the stern quietude of the Grossalmosenier who sleeps in his

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(1) PII, p.44.



own coffin and has rejected the material values of the world (1). Both comparisons show men who are not afraid to face death, as death has no power to frighten or to deprive them, contrasted with a man who understands only the pleasure of physical existence and fears above all its disintegration (2). In the destiny of Basilius, Sigismund and the Grossalmosenier share the functions of death: the Grossalmosenier speaks to him as his conscience, Sigismund judges and destroys him (3).

Similarly the attributes of death are distributed among the figures around Sigismund. Julian is his teacher, whom he ultimately rejects, Anton and the doctor are healers and comforters and Sigismund appoints them to be messengers to the world and to spread the knowledge of his life and death. The destructive aspect of death is embodied in the figure of Olivier, for even in the first version it is the hand of Olivier that reaches out from beyond the grave and through the gypsy wounds Sigismund mortally. Hofmannsthal has no answer to Olivier in so far as he represents the destructive power of death, for indeed there is no answer in physical terms. He opposes Olivier's power with the triumph of the spirit as

(1) This encounter is described and analysed brilliantly in Coghlan, Hofmannsthal's Festival Dramas, p.212 ff.

(2) His fear is suggested in the images of physical disintegration that he uses in describing the decline of his power as king; D IV, p.61: Wir wollen dahin und dorthin, und Unsere Gewalt befestigen, und es ist wie wenn der Boden weich würde und unsere marmornen Schenkel ins Leere sänken. Die Mauern wanken von den Grundfesten aus, und unser Weg ist ins Nicht-mehr-gangbare geraten.

(3) D IV, p.75: Ein Etwas spricht mit meinem Mund, aber wie aus dir selbst heraus, auf dich selber zielend... etc.

embodied in the Kinderkönig, and in the Bühnenfassung with the incorruptibility of Sigismund. He thus creates, but without alluding to these, experiences of death that are similar to those depicted in Jedermann and Das Salzburger grosse Welttheater, in which the indestructibility of the spirit is upheld even while the body is destroyed. But in Der Turm this indestructibility comes from within the spirit itself not through divine grace.

Hofmannsthal's pattern of references produces a scale of moral values by which the lives and deaths of individuals can be measured in relation to each other. It also shows the extent to which each faces up to the insuperable reality of physical death and this is therefore the one absolute motif in the pattern. In Sigismund we see the commitment to sacrifice, which gives his death a moral function, and the commitment to a reality beyond physical existence, which gives it a mystical quality. Hence in Der Turm the respective spheres of reference of moral and mystery are more clearly defined than before. In consequence the earlier sense that moral and mystery are at variance with each other, or that one is created at the expense of the other, disappears. Death is seen to have a moral implication for the living, but to be a mystery that draws the dying out of this life into a fuller one. Hofmannsthal achieves this separation of moral and mystery by eliminating a previously essential function of death, namely enlightenment. Death does not enlighten Sigismund as it did earlier heroes, nor is this necessary (1), and so it

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(1) Sigismund attributes the wisdom he already possesses to his long



not included in the particular form of life with which it was juxtaposed.

In Sigismund Hofmannsthal asks not what life is about, but what makes a 'good death', and answers: 'a good life'. The precise definition of a 'good life' varies from one work to another and from one period of Hofmannsthal's poetry to another, but its essence is contained in what he calls: 'ein herrliches Wort von Poussin; am Ende seines Lebens: 'Je n'ai rien négligé' (1). This shows a pre-occupation with completeness, not in the sense of having lived out a full human span, but with moral completeness, with the depth of experience and the quality of life. This pre-occupation with the depth and quality of experience makes Sigismund ready for the 'Wahrheit, die da ist hinter allem Scheine' (2), and which he had perceived only dimly in his life. In ecstatic exclamations he suggests the irony of death and rebirth into light and glory, wishing that he could take all humanity with him into a new life, but also suggesting that humanity might be moving forward into a new life in time (3).

With this last word on death Hofmannsthal solves the problem of combining moral and mystery that began when moral awareness disrupted his youthful vision of cosmic unity. He does so by allotting to each element an appropriate and specific function, combining the rights and responsibilities of the living and the dying. Both moral and mystery share a

(1) Aufz., p.81.

(2) D IV, p.71.

(3) D IV, p.202: Alle zu mir! Mit dem Schwert brechen wir die Tür in die Zeit auf! Her! Her! - Ich reisse euch alle mit mir hinein - in das - in die Sonne - Gift und Licht - und - dennoch! dennoch!

forward-looking quality; both the living, in the first version more than in the second, and the dying Sigismund look forward to a new life. There is a strong feeling that the work is on the edge of a precipice, and this feeling indicates both the achievement of an autonomous pattern of values, but a multi-referential and therefore a very delicate, even precarious one, and a linguistic achievement. The extraordinary mixture of dramatic exchange, idyllic recollection, grotesque comedy and mystical vision is a daring extension of Hofmannsthal's stylistic range. It is the feeling of being on the edge of the unknown that has led critics to write about Der Turm as if the poet knew and intended it to be his last work in tragic vein (1). Indeed it seems to sum up and round off his treatment of death, recalling its treatment in many earlier works, but also solving its besetting problems - the tension between moral and mystery disappears, the mellifluous language that precludes moral seriousness develops in breadth and range, and nostalgia for the life that might have been become contemplation of the life that must come to be.

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(1) This feeling may not be entirely groundless and we shall be better able to judge this when Hofmannsthal's Nachlass is finally published. Professor Richard Exner, who is working at the present time on Hofmannsthal's use of tragedy, disclosed in a lecture on this subject at the Germanic Institute, University of London, in June 1968, that after Der Turm Hofmannsthal wrote to Pannwitz: Wenn ich überhaupt noch schreibe, dann nur noch Komödie.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

The study of individual works and groups of related works shows the diversity of the appearances of death. Links and relationships between them have been noted in passing, but finally it is necessary to consider whether these links and relationships form a unifying pattern and what the pattern suggests about Hofmannsthal's interest in the subject of death. The unity of the theme must be considered both in terms of a pattern of development that can be traced through Hofmannsthal's creative life, and in terms of a constant preoccupation.

The development of the theme will be considered from several points of view: as a subjective experience; as an influence on social behaviour; as a formal-technical development. The development of death as a subjective experience remains the most important of these. It is also necessary to examine the simultaneous development of the criteria by which the poet deems death to be appropriate. For these criteria are an important clue to his interest in the theme at any time. The theme of death as a constant preoccupation demands some discussion of Hofmannsthal's interest in it as well as an attempt to see it as part of a cultural tradition.

Hofmannsthal is most concerned with death as a subjective experience, that is, with man's need and ability first to assimilate the knowledge of mortality into his consciousness and then to show his understanding of it in his behaviour. From the moment when he learns to distinguish between different areas of human experience and to call these life and death,

Hofmannsthal's chief task is their reconciliation, not in order to make them indistinguishable, as they had once been for him, but to provide a fluid scheme for their co-existence.

Hofmannsthal sets out from the mystical or magical vision of pre-existence in which there is no division between life and death. It may be argued that, in order to be able to describe this, he must already have put it behind him. Indeed in a poem such as Lebenslied, which depicts pre-existence, he implicitly acknowledges a division by naming the two modes of being life and death. However this earliest vision of unity is not thus invalidated or made incredible, for his poems and lyrical dramas continue to give glimpses of pre-existence, but at the same time show the arduous process of growing away from it.

The lyrical dramas portray the growth away from pre-existence most clearly. They point to the poet's increasing unease about the value of his own way of life, which disrupts the beautiful illusion of pre-existence, and produces the first concept of separated modes of existence, one of which he calls death. He expresses his unease and the sense of guilt that is an important ingredient of it, as a division; sometimes he acknowledges that it is a division between different lives, as in Manche freilich..., Der weisse Fächer or Der Kaiser und die Hexe, but often he expresses it more decisively as a division between life and death. What does this use of the word death really mean? Hofmannsthal makes characters like Claudio face the event of death; that is to say, they endure the loss of physical consciousness and of emotional and spiritual consciousness as they have

known it hitherto. But Hofmannsthal is not himself contemplating the event of death. He is weighing a life-that-is against a life-that-might-be. He imagines himself deprived through folly or ignorance of the life-that-might-be, and calls this deprivation death. This means that Hofmannsthal has created a symbolic treatment of death and some critics have been content to take the matter no further, but to say that, because death is only a symbol, a character like Claudio does not die. However, Hofmannsthal is more insistent on the deaths of his heroes than this interpretation suggests. For he does not lose sight of the commonsense meaning of death, namely the cessation of physical existence, but makes it the force behind his use of death as metaphor or symbol. Hence the deprivation of an unknown future, the process to which he gives the name of death, ironically implies deprivation of the known present.

The imaginative process by which the two meanings of death have fused into one pinpoints a metaphysical and a linguistic dilemma in Hofmannsthal's treatment of the theme. At the beginning of this study it was said that death is depicted both as an event in time and as a motif evoking various alternative modes of existence other than life. It may now be seen that Hofmannsthal creates a delicate and problematic relationship between event and motif, for the former provides for the reality and viability of the latter. It is a problematic union of concepts, formed between a poetic creation and an unpalatable physical fact, and linguistically, between a symbolic expression that also has a single, unequivocal commonsense meaning. However, our understanding of the theme, particularly



in the early works, depends on our acceptance of the union of these various ideas, for the fact of mortality is an inevitable and essential quality of the motif of death. In the first chapter we saw that death was meaningless unless it could be seen to be an absolute as well as a sign of growth and change; its viability as an absolute depends on the event being evident in the motif. In the course of Hofmannsthal's creative life the implicit event becomes a more obvious reality. This may be explained psychologically, simply as the inevitability of increased contact with death as one grows older, and historically, by the dissolution of his own society. However, the basic relationship between event and motif must be accepted from the beginning if Hofmannsthal's interest in death is to be accepted as anything more than a morbid, even decadent fascination.

Although Hofmannsthal comes to accept that life and death may be different modes of being, he never loses sight of links between them: he recognises the moral implications of man's mortality and, conversely, that man's life is not complete until death, hence no single part of it is complete, for the parts cannot be related to the whole. This means that he sets out to reconcile life and death in anticipation of the event of death that will bridge them. He attempts to show the relevance of each state for the other by treating death as a force that is immanent in life. He shows that all life is a preparation for death and that death shows what life meant. This is done in different ways in the various works and groups of works of his poetry. In some of his early works he tries to

bridge the division between life and death with a single act. Symbolic death, depending on the capacity to conjure up a moment of total empathy with another dying creature, is one means of spanning the gap, but essentially a temporary one. The event of death is not essential to this use of death as a symbol, since Hofmannsthal is simply trying to indicate a fundamental change or development that has no absolute validity. To use the image of dying is merely a means of creating an emphasis. Symbolic death, as shown in Dämmerung und nächtliches Gewitter or as described in the Gespräch über Gedichte is, however, essentially a temporary solution to the problem of pre-existence, because it is purely mystical. It cannot therefore be transmitted or summoned at will. Further, Hofmannsthal's preoccupation with healing the breach between life and death stems from both a mystical, nostalgic desire for wholeness and from a striving after moral perfection that is not satisfied by mystical experiences. Thus, although mystical moments recur, the decisive step is taken when the poet realises that life and death, mystery and morality, beauty and ugliness must be reconciled in a manner that allows each an appropriate place in human existence.

Death now assumes its own rôle as a complement to life. Its nature is determined by what life lacks, and so in a sense it remains a motif implying the desirability of another form of existence. Thus, to the ignorant death comes as a teacher (Der Tor und der Tod, Der Tod des Tizian, Der Kaiser und die Hexe, Der weisse Fächer); to the mystic as fulfilment and release into a spiritual state of being (Elektra, Das Berg-

werk zu Falun, Der Turm); to the disappointed idealist as a refuge (Die Hochzeit der Sobeide, Die Frau im Fenster, Pierre in Das gerettete Venedig); to the deprived as a consolation (Das Salzburger grosse Welttheater); and to the materialist as a warning and a corrective (Jedermann).

In the middle period death finds an appropriate place as the logical successor to a life that has exhausted all other possibilities. This conditional causality becomes in the allegories the Christian recognition that ultimately all physical life is imperfect. The moment of death is treated throughout Hofmannsthal's poetry as a moment of union with another dimension of experience, the moment at which the division between life and death is removed. The more clearly Hofmannsthal faces the reality of death as an event, moreover as an event that may be not only the end of one life but also the beginning of another, the more clearly this moment assumes the appearance of a turning-point, in the image of a reckoning in Jedermann, of the end of a play in Das Salzburger grosse Welttheater, of the awakening from a dream in Der Turm.

One of the fundamental ironies of the early work is the treatment of death as a motif implying and enjoining other modes of living, and as an event that appears to destroy and end life. Hofmannsthal's treatment of the life that may lie beyond death is always fragmentary and problematic, but in the works before Das Bergwerk zu Falun it barely exists at all. This may be explained as Hofmannsthal's obsession with negating one way of life, which at the time is more important to him than considering the reality of another life. Das Bergwerk zu Falun and Elektra take the

question further by positing another dimension of experience in which the heroes could find fulfilment, while at the same time denying absolutely the possibility of their being happy in this world. An after-life becomes explicit only in the allegories, and then, surprisingly, to a degree that suggests that it has usurped life as the true form of existence. In fact this uncharacteristic other-worldliness represents a consolation and a warning to the living, and must be seen against the poet's anxiety for the dwindling spirituality of his society. If the allegories were the last word on death, we might retain the final impression that it had at last superseded life in Hofmannsthal's interest. However, Der Turm counteracts this feeling and confirms the opinion that Hofmannsthal was basically more interested in life than in death, and that, despite his sustained portrayal of death in many variations and over a long time, his interest in death is confined to its influence on life. Sigismund, his last hero, derives his wisdom from having been already dead, as the character himself puts it; that is, from experience of a death-like state in which he was deprived of all the pleasures and privileges of life. But he puts his wisdom to the service of the living and the last words of the second version of Der Turm: Gebet Zeugnis, ich war da... (1), show that even as Sigismund dies, his thoughts are directed towards life.

The subjective experience of death remains the most important single aspect of the theme, so that even in the most 'social' of his dramas, Das

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(1) DTIV, p. 463.

Salzburger grosse Welttheater, and in the most 'political', Der Turm, the attitudes and experience of a single individual are the focus for the treatment of death. The impression lingers that the poet wears only one mask at a time and that he is unable to contemplate death from the standpoint of more than one character, although he sometimes introduces brief glimpses of other attitudes in order to throw the single, central experience of death into relief more sharply. This air of exclusive concentration, which makes it difficult to regard any of Hofmannsthal's works as social or political dramas in the wider view, is surely the hallmark of the lyric poet. Indeed when he begins to make the transition from poems to dramas it is difficult to distinguish between the attitudes of the lyrisches Ich and the heroes of his lyrical dramas, so that the reader scarcely notices the assumption of a fictive identity. Now this presents a source of confusion in the interpretation of the function of death in the early dramas. The different fates of the heroes are correlated in a way that the poet probably did not intend, because these heroes appear to find themselves in similar situations. For example, because Claudio is punished for neglecting those who loved him, it is thought that Elis in Das Bergwerk zu Falun must also be punished for his treatment of Anna. This kind of correlation assumes a degree of dramatic manipulation that does not exist in Hofmannsthal's work. Instead it should be seen that the treatment of death in each work is essentially a personal experience, that this is the only similarity between them, for each personal experience is pursued to the point of differentiation from other

personal experiences.

Paradoxically the treatment of death as a social theme develops from this subjective view of death. For when death has been assimilated into man's consciousness as an inevitable and necessary fact, he sees that it has implications for his social behaviour. Death thus creates moral obligations towards self and society. Now, if these obligations are to be recognised, the self must be aware of being simultaneously both a separate entity and a part of society. In Hofmannsthal's early works death has scarcely attained its social rôle, for the pre-existent hero apprehends the world only as self. The eruption of death into pre-existence must bring him the knowledge of the difference between self and world and of the area of overlap in which they may influence each other, for this knowledge is a pre-requisite of death's social function. This process is clearly death's function in Der Tor und der Tod and Der Tod des Tizian, but it is equally implicit in Die kleinen Dramen, where it serves a different end. In these death is the only refuge, for only death dissolves the terrible union between world and self: Sobeide's suicide is for her implicitly the killing of the world that would not allow her to be free. The same idea is taken further in Das Bergwerk zu Falun, for in this work Hofmannsthal gives a more detailed picture of what freedom from the world would mean. In these works the social function of death is negative; it is an indication of mutual failure: society fails Sobeide, Dianora, the heroine of Die Frau im Fenster, and Elis, because it does not give them room to develop every aspect of their personalities, 'the whole man', and

they in turn fail other human beings. Death is their only means of breaking the chain of failure.

The essential difference between the deaths depicted in the lyrical dramas and the sacrificial deaths of the middle period is the sense of continuity in time possessed by the later heroes. For example, Elektra sacrifices her own life willingly and makes of it a personal, mystical experience. But it is also the means of restoring order and peace to her family and to the state. This is possible only because Elektra, and of course the poet, is willing to acknowledge that when the self dies, the world survives. Elektra understands this because she knows that, when her father was murdered, a part of her own being died and yet she lived on. The redemptive sacrifice is thus made possible through the recognition of a time sequence in the pattern of life and death, and so Elektra's death becomes a mystery with domestic and political repercussions.

The area of social significance widens in the final works. In the figures of the beggar and of Sigismund Hofmannsthal depicts characters whose readiness to accept their own mortality is the source of their power to redeem others. However, the concept of the sacrifice is less important because, although these deaths are undoubtedly redemptive, they are less extravagantly emotional and ritualistic than those of Elektra or Jokaste, or than the mutilation of Oedipus. Indeed Hofmannsthal demands that tact and delicacy be an intrinsic part of the individual's acceptance of death, if this is to have a social purpose; in the second of the Briefe des Zurückgekehrten he says:

Ich verlange nicht, dass einer die Geheimnisse seines Lebens auf der Zunge trägt und mit mir Gespräche führt über Leben und Sterben und die vier letzten Dinge, aber ohne Worte soll er mir sagen, sein Ton soll mir sagen, sein Dastehn, sein Gesicht, sein Tun und Treiben. (1)

In a sense Hofmannsthal makes even of sacrifice a subjective experience, for he punishes the would-be redeemers of society in Das gerettete Venedig for the noisy extravagance with which they set about their self-imposed task. He suggests that it is not a personal sacrifice if its chief end is self-glorification, hence he ensures that it ends ingloriously.

The extension of a basically subjective treatment of death to imply social obligations is reflected in other aspects of the subject. The different functions of death at each stage of Hofmannsthal's development are most clearly reflected in the criteria of death, of guilt, of redemption and of fate.

Fate has a different meaning at each stage in Hofmannsthal's poetry. In the early period fate is seen as a moral obligation to assume a purpose and a goal, but the purpose and goal are not defined more closely. The moral obligation continues into the middle period, but fate itself is an external and uniquely individual determinant of the course of man's life. The moral obligation lies in man's freedom to accept or reject his fate, which is visualised as a potentially positive force: man develops his character against the immovability of the 'stummer Fels'. In the final works the 'stummer Fels' is interpreted as the universal

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(1) P II, p.335.



fate of death that belongs to all physical life.

The early treatment of death is highly subjective, often beyond the point where its justification can be shared by the reader. Hofmannsthal's arbitrary severity in judging his heroes is much misunderstood and mistaken for a decadent pleasure in the contemplation of death. The cathartic function of his severity must be recognised, for his destruction of the aesthetes and dilettantes of his early work is also an attempt to rid himself of their faults. His apparently morbid interest in death is a fear, of the man that life might pass him by, of the poet that his work might be form without substance or might cease to exist at all. The chief criterion of death is fatelessness, lack of direction and irresponsibility. With the decision to take upon himself the burdens and pleasures of adult life the early hero is redeemed, although he may still have to die, as Claudio does, because the young poet has not yet found a means of letting him survive that is not a compromise or a denial of his insight into the meaning of maturity. When the poet finds such a means, it is through a power comparable to that of death, namely love - as in Der Kaiser und die Hexe, Alkestis, Ariadne auf Naxos, Die Frau ohne Schatten and Die ägyptische Helena.

For Hofmannsthal the poet, the step into life meant an effort to overcome the dangers of aestheticism by writing for a wider public, namely for the theatre. In consequence the criteria of death in the middle works appear relatively objective by comparison with the early works. This means, in practice, that their cause and effect can be determined in terms

of dramatic necessity, not simply of the poet's psychology. The rigid judgments of the early period recede to some extent as the poet grows more aware of the external world and of its variety. The recognition of the multiplicity of human life nonetheless contains a sense of unity, and this may be a vestige of the all-embracing vision of pre-existence or a step towards a new mysticism that is realised in the final vision of eternal order in Das Salzburger grosse Welttheater.

In the later works death is accepted as the inevitable consequence of physical life; interest shifts from the criteria of death to those of redemption. The poet adopts a basically Christian view of death, not necessarily - as far as may be judged - from personal conviction, but from a desire to create a sense of universality. Hofmannsthal thought the universal purpose of his works could best be achieved through orthodoxy. It is ironical that by the time he came to make use of it, such orthodoxy had lost much of its intellectual appeal except to a minority. It is also ironical that few others can accept the allegorical and cultural cogency of Christianity without its metaphysical content, so that Jedermann and Das Salzburger grosse Welttheater necessarily seem to them to be orthodox Christian documents written by a man who may not have been an orthodox believer and was by no means a committed Christian writer. In one sense, therefore, Der Turm, because it starts again without this ethical basis and establishes a similar scale of values by independent means, is reassuring: it shows us the extent to which Hofmannsthal was prepared to accept or reject any ready-made view of death until he could

examine it by his own criteria. Ultimately Sigismund's death upholds the same values as the deaths of Jedermann and the beggar, but Hofmannsthal abandons the framework of divine intervention and human intercession and Sigismund triumphs in a world presided over by an absent deity.

The growth of the poet's purpose as it is reflected in the changing criteria of death, necessitates the development of his medium. The subjective lyric becomes the lyrical drama, then drama, opera and finally allegory. Of course it is clear that by any objective or comparative standard Hofmannsthal's range never extends to the truly social or political subjects, but within his own range there is an obvious expansion of his interests. The poet's self-imposed extraversion leads him to work not only in the dramatic medium, but also in journalism, in films and ballet. His medium is made to extend its linguistic as well as its formal range. It has been pointed out in the course of this study that Hofmannsthal gradually moulds his language to his growing sense of social purpose. At first it flows all too mellifluously to convey ethical awareness or censure, and this contributes to the accusations of decadence. In his dramas Hofmannsthal gradually differentiates between characters, persuading them to speak in tones that are distinct from each other, reflecting their own aims, backgrounds etc. He borrows more and more from outside, - from historical models of his own themes, from dialect, from regional idiosyncrasies, from other literary and cultural sources. In Der Turm he puts these developments to their greatest test, for in this work he depends on an internal system of values by which to judge Sigismund's death, and

this system clearly hinges on the effective portrayal of different characters and their attitudes.

These concluding pages have indicated the highly problematic relationship between a subjective and an objective treatment of the theme of death on several levels. Two specific aspects of the theme show more clearly how the subjective and objective views hold each other in check; these aspects are the relationship between death and poetry and the relationship between death and love.

To a poet poetry is obviously not simply a medium but a way of life, and hence an important poetic subject. When we say that Hofmannsthal's treatment of death involves the examination of the relationship of death to life, we mean primarily the life of a poet. The poet is seen by Hofmannsthal as a man who has special problems and privileges. He is more perceptive than other men, hence more fearful of life: 'er fürchtet den Tod nicht, eher das Leben' (1). The relationship between life, death and artistic creation reaches an early point of crisis in Der Tod des Tizian. As in Der Tor und der Tod death is Hofmannsthal's judgment not on creative art, but on the uncreative life of the aesthete. Art is life to Titian and because he is a creative artist he has the poet's approval; but to those who merely observe and dabble, art is a substitute for life, and these, in Der Tod des Tizian the artist's disciples, earn the poet's censure. Death therefore brings Titian's disciples life before it destroys

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(1) Aufz., p.235.

them. To the irony that Titian, in the face of death, should find life illuminated, is added the greater irony that the first taste of life given to his disciples should coincide with their destruction. The concluding plan for a Todesorgie is therefore not only an expression of their decadence, but also a judgment on it. As a corollary Hofmannsthal shows through the figure of Titian that the artist's life is a fulfilment that informs his death with meaning and enables him to face it with equanimity. The crisis that produces the arbitrary severity of death in the early works is also a poetic crisis. The fear of not having lived is a fear of silence or of producing works betraying lack of contact with life (1), Julian's fear 'zu sterben und nichts hinter mir zu lassen' (2).

Hofmannsthal's solution to his poetic dilemma lay in challenging his medium to die. It did not do so, but led him in the middle works to examine the nature of poetic creation in different ways; it gave him, but not in any calculated or schematic sense, a programme that sustained all his subsequent writing, - he assumed the task of creating art for people, of giving back lost poetry through his adaptations, of rescuing the works of others in the Österreichische Bibliothek and through his essays. It also led him to examine more minutely the problems of language, to plumb its depths by showing how easily language becomes misunderstanding or betrayal, and to celebrate its heights in the miracu-

(1) Cf. Hofmannsthal's essays on D'Annunzio, in which he criticises the Italian poet for the lack of involvement with life portrayed in his characters.

(2) D IV, p.133.

lous creation of poetry in moments of ecstasy like the ecstasy of love or death.

Hofmannsthal finds a mystical and a moral function for poetry. Poetry is created through a mysterious act and Hofmannsthal endows the figure of the poet with the qualities of the priest, the king and the father, which combine the functions of creator and custodian of life and of order. This places the figure of the poet, especially in the middle works, in the midst of the pattern of life and death, although he appears in one of his other guises, as a king in the Oedipus dramas, as a quasi-priestess in Elektra. Hofmannsthal creates through the link that he makes between death and poetry a moral-cultural function for poetry, which is clear in his own later works and in his desire to preserve past literary monuments.

The existence of a special relationship between death and poetry might lead to an artistic hermeticism that would prevent Hofmannsthal's work being readily accessible as entertainment. This is checked to some extent by the creation of a special relationship between the themes of love and death. Except in Die kleinen Dramen, the works that might most accurately be charged with decadence, because love is the cause of death, the relationship between love and death is the source of human salvation. This does not mean that love has a single form any more than death has. Love in the early works is a mixture of erotic, platonic, maternal and Christian. Love of Claudio causes the deaths of the mother, the girl and the friend in Der Tor und der Tod, but love survives death in their

intercession for him. Love redeems and revives against the threat of death in Der weisse Fächer and Alkestis, and against the threat of spiritual death in Der Kaiser und die Hexe. This revival through love crystallises as the dominant pattern of the comedies and libretti, and becomes a mysterious process of mutual creation and re-creation, generally within the framework of marriage and family. Finally the influence of love as a redemptive force loses its erotic quality and takes on the Christian form of caritas; it redeems first the individual (Jedermann), then spreads through the chain reaction begun by Weisheit in Das Salzburger grosse Welttheater, and through the Christ-like sacrifice of Sigismund in Der Turm to include all mankind. The relationship between love and death exists also on a wider scale as a relationship between tragedy and comedy. These meet at a point of potential death and open out into rebirth, either into a true experience of love, or into a different dimension of experience in death.

If the relationship between death and love is compared with that between death and poetry, it is clear that the former gives the treatment of death its humane and entertaining qualities, while the latter remains essentially hermetic and subjective. Because they are both part of Hofmannsthal's preoccupation with death, they create a tension that prevents either of them from entirely superseding the other. It is true that the relationship between death and poetry as a theme for individual works reaches an early crisis in Das Bergwerk zu Falun, and that obviously the fear of silence and of 'nichts hinter mir zu lassen' must lessen with

every work that the poet writes, but a preoccupation with the poet's function in society and with the capacity of language to create and destroy ideas and relationships is always present.

It can now be seen that the study of the treatment of death in Hofmannsthal's poetry is primarily a study of the relationship and implications of death for man's spiritual and social existence. This relationship follows chronologically the spiral pattern characteristic of Hofmannsthal's poetry. This means that he treats various themes, images and aspects belonging to the subject according to a recurring pattern. Their periodic recurrence is not simply repetition but often involves translation into a new form against a new background, as, for instance, figures and themes developed during the early and middle works are translated into Christian figures and themes in the allegories. We can record the growth and development of the theme of death at personal, social, metaphysical and technical levels, distinguishing changing attitudes and new achievements. But equally we can observe abiding interest in certain aspects, such as the relationships between death and love and death and poetry. The developing spiral returns repeatedly to a mystical experience of death in which the different aspects of death are resolved: the mystical experience assumes a new form each time, beginning with the naive, intuitive, magical apprehension of the world as self, proceeding to the ecstatic moments of the middle period, that have both religious and erotic overtones, and resolving into a problematic Christianity in the final works. This development is balanced by the gradual turning outwards, away from personal



experience, to consider responsibilities towards other human beings. Thus the total picture is that of a theme of death that has two faces, a private face and a public face. In turning now from consideration of the development of the theme to its meaning as a constant preoccupation we shall be concerned primarily with the reconciliation of this double appearance.

The consideration of death as a constant preoccupation requires both the reconciliation of the disparate appearances of death and discussion of Hofmannsthal's almost obsessive interest in the subject. It is outside the scope of this study to provide either a full historical or a full psychological explanation of Hofmannsthal's attraction to this subject, but brief indications of historical and psychological influences are useful.

In the first chapter reference was made to the remark of Rudolf Kassner that the literary scene at the end of the nineteenth century offered many examples of young poets who came 'zu früh auf den Tod'. He named Swinburne, d'Annunzio, Andrian, Beer-Hofmann and Hofmannsthal as examples of 'überreifen, teilweise sehr ästhetischen, spielenden, oft mit schauerlichstem Ernst spielenden Menschen', who belonged to the dying century and who approached the subject of death in their earliest works. It is clear from Hofmannsthal's early work, from the abrupt break with poetry by Andrian, after killing off his hero and with him his own youthful problems in Der Garten der Erkenntnis, from d'Annunzio's later preoccupation with politics, that what they called death in their youth

was not really the event of death that each of them would eventually suffer, but a glamorous, idealised picture. Clearly it was beautiful and exciting because it was not real. In Hofmannsthal's work death becomes less beautiful as it becomes more real, in both an historical and a psychological sense, that is to say, with the coming of war and of middle age. The picture of death given in Jedermann and Der Schwierige is less idealistic than that given in the early poetry, but death at the time when these were written is a more present reality in Hofmannsthal's life and society.

Hofmannsthal's obsession with death, both as a poetic theme and more generally - as indicated by the numerous anecdotes about strange and unexplained deaths and by notes made in his Aufzeichnungen, Buch der Freunde and Ad me ipsum - needs a more extensive psychological examination than is possible here. There is a discrepancy between the treatment of death in his poetic works, in which there is scarcely a single character who does not die reconciled to the thought of death, and the many notes that suggest that death remained a problem for him as a man. The reconciliation with death that takes place in each of his works does not seem to have taken place in his own mind, or if it has, death retains its capacity to shock him every time he encounters it. He describes death as 'die reinste Region' (1) and as a place of peace and light, but he nonetheless feels pity for the dead and considers them less fortunate than the

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(1) Aufz., p.200.

living (1). It is not possible to determine whether he attempts to reconcile man to his death in defiance of the many stories of strange and inexplicable deaths that he has heard and read (2), or whether these stories have been collected in his notes because their defiance of an explanation of death moves and excites him. Clearly he took an aesthetic pleasure in the strange and diverse appearances of death and honesty compelled him not to ignore even the most bizarre; but it is not clear whether he wished that they might be explained in terms of cause and effect, or guilt and expiation or any other logical terms, although he seems to seek in general, and certainly claimed that he sought, a law under which all individual differences would be resolved.

As a literary study the present one is concerned with the explanation of death in aesthetic and philosophical terms. In these terms the diversity of Hofmannsthal's poetry may be reconciled with his self-professed 'Suchen eines Gesetzes, einer Bahn über dem Persönlichen und ausserhalb des Persönlichen' within the framework of a freely interpreted Platonism (3). The neo-Platonic movement is equally significant as a philosophical and theological influence and as an aesthetic influence, and this double function is appropriate to the duality that is encountered at all levels. It explains the impression of dealing with a quasi-

(1) P II, p.284, Der Dichter und diese Zeit.

(2) Examples may be found in Aufzeichnungen, pp.46, 115, 153, 163-164, 167-168 etc.

(3) P III, p.354.

religious treatment of death that, on examination, reveals no consistent eschatology, and is sometimes determined by aesthetic criteria of perfection. The Platonic framework explains some of the recurring patterns that make up the aesthetic criteria of guilt, redemption, sacrifice, expiation etc., without doing violence to the individuality of the works. This framework, in which life appears as a poor reflection of and a striving towards a perfect existence, explains several aspects of Hofmannsthal's work that have not so far been elucidated. It explains the glimpses Hofmannsthal gives, although they are few and fleeting, of his picture of the state of death. Death is seen as perfection and as a state in which physical beings and burdens have disappeared. In Der Sohn des Geisterkönigs a new arrival among the dead says: 'So leicht ist einem hier heroben' (1); Elis' longings for pure spirituality, his envy of his parents for being closer to the 'real' world that is death, the desire of Sobeide, of Die Frau im Fenster and of Ariadne and Helena, are informed by the same desire for purity and for peace: 'Es gibt ein Reich, wo alles rein ist' (2). It explains too the temporal relationships of the parts of the drama, and the drama's dependence on this relationship for its effectiveness. This relationship is repeatedly expressed in terms of the Frist, a span of time

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(1) L III, p.184. This lightness also suggests in the German original the idea of easiness; the same word is used in discussing death as a problem outside poetic contexts, e.g. in a letter to Georg von Franckenstein, Briefe 1900-1909, April 2nd, 1904, p.140, in which he asks: Ist wirklich der Tod etwas Leichteres als man denkt? and in the following letter to Hermann Bahr, pp.140-141.

(2) L III, p.39.

whose end is known, or in variations of this such as the prophecy, the journey or the trial. The Frist is an allotted span between birth into physical life, the poor reflection of truth, and death, that is, re-birth into perfect reality; Hofmannsthal calls this state 'die höchste Welt, deren Bote der Tod' (1). The use of this span of time is clearest in the Christian allegories, presumably because the Christian concept of death is derived directly from the Platonic idea (2), but it also explains death's claim to appropriateness in Der Tor und der Tod; Hofmannsthal's delight in the proverbe form, which stands an initial idea or situation on its head; the sudden decision of Elektra to take action, when she is unexpectedly threatened with incarceration and so forced to execute her desire for revenge before time runs out. It is clear in many other works: the empress in Die Frau ohne Schatten and the Geisterkönig are given a span of one year in which to make meaningful human lives for themselves; the Marschallin's relationship with Oktavian is conducted in defiance and yet also in recognition of the transience of her youthfulness and beauty, and of his inevitable growth into maturity and search for another, more appropriate source of love; Elis' final words are of 'die Frist, die ich mich unstat hier verweilte' (3).

The tension caused by awareness of a given span is heightened in the

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(1) Aufz., p.223.

(2) The Christian concept of death is of Pauline/Augustine origin. Augustine, before his conversion to Christianity, was much influenced by Plotinus, the neo-Platonic philosopher.

(3) GLD, p.539.

prophecy, as in Der Turm, in the Oedipus dramas, in the Christian allegories or even in Arabella, because the end towards which the individual proceeds is known, and because in some cases it is known to be a terrible end. Hofmannsthal makes acceptance of this end and readiness to live the best and fullest life in spite of it or because of it, a moral obligation. But he offers always, even in Oedipus, the promise of peace. The prophecy is not a test of endurance and of suffering for their own sakes, but as a means of arriving at the truth of the 'höchste Welt'. It often involves a trial - this also in many works that do not end in death, such as Alkestis, Ariadne auf Naxos, Die ägyptische Helena, or a journey, as in Das Märchen der 672. Nacht, Andreas oder die Vereinigten, Cristinas Heimreise, Silvia im Stern, or even through the home-coming of Hans-Karl, Der Schwierige.

The span between birth into the poor human world and union with the higher reality becomes the knowledge that the only certainty is death and that all life is a contemplation of it. This also informs Hofmannsthal's aesthetics, so that his dramatic art becomes, as he puts it, a revelation towards death. It is sealed by death in relation to the presence or absence of a spiritual hierarchy in each individual work. But for the most part the living are only dimly aware of death, for paradoxically it is a mystery in that no one knows where or when he will die - and this is true even of death that has been prophesied, for time and place are not conditions of the prophecy, which depends entirely on attitude and behaviour. Through the use of such images as prophecy, trial or journey

however, our perception of the immanence of death in life is sharpened. It is also sharpened through the personification of death, not as a frightening or gloomy figure - the figure is often associated in Hofmannsthal's work with music, dancing and love - but as a figure that speaks both for the higher world whose messenger he is, and for the freedom and possibilities of the living.

The Platonic view of love also involves a pattern in which two separate beings find each other after a long search, and this accounts to some extent for the similarity in the patterns of death and Verwandlung. They share their meeting in the 'höchste Welt': Elektra's death and that of Elis are a bursting of the physical bonds of life, Jedermann's recognition of a divine order, Claudio's perception of the obligations of adult life are mirrored in the recognition of the pairs of lovers in the comedies that they are reborn through each other into a new life. Thus all the works point beyond the coincidences of life and death to a wider reality in which the trivial fates of individuals have their meaning. This means that although Hofmannsthal repeatedly endows his heroes with moral obligations, the underlying purpose of his morality seems to be mystical. It demonstrates a preoccupation with the quality of experience - hence there is room in his work for the terrible, the beautiful, the ecstatic, the excessive, the eccentric, as well as for the idyllic, the elegiac, the comic and the purely spiritual, and hence his celebration of mystical moments, the moments of death and creation, although they account for so little time in so few lives. On the other hand most of the

experiences he portrays are not eccentric, but belong in a less intense form to much of human life, so that there is a level at which his poetry can be and is intended to be entertaining. He does not approach the spiritual recklessness of Rilke's:

Lass dir alles geschehen Schönheit und Schrecken,  
Kein Gefühl ist das fernste.... (1)

and his caution is a moral check. Hofmannsthal's 'fernstes Gefühl' exists within the tension created by the magical-mysterious and moral-didactic aspects of his work.

There can be no pretence that the fine balance between these two trends is not the source of almost all problems that arise in the study of the theme of death. For not only is the balance between them delicately poised, but their combined relationship to contemporary attitudes to death makes them a problem. Hofmannsthal walks an aesthetic and metaphysical tightrope. His moral-didacticism is extremely finely balanced, because its criteria are fine feelings, minute distinctions of appropriateness, sensitivity, a sort of spiritual good taste - Thomas Mann is probably correct to call it Vornehmheit (2), all of which is close to being a mystery. It is certainly not a form of morality that can be taught or publicly adopted, and yet, paradoxically Hofmannsthal chose in the drama a 'public' medium.

(1) R.M. Rilke, Das Stundenbuch, Das Buch vom mönchischen Leben, Sämtliche Werke, Bd. I, (Wiesbaden, 1955), p.294.

(2) Fiechtner, op.cit., p.287.



This tension between morality and mystery brings us back to the problem of an abiding dualism in Hofmannsthal's treatment of death. This dualism, as we have seen, takes a number of forms, such as a tension between mystery and morality, between a subjective and an objective view of death, between the event and the motif of death. These have a profound link with Platonism, for it is possible to interpret them as particular and personal manifestations of a dualism inherited from Christian eschatology, which in turn developed in the Platonic tradition (1). This is a formal-thematic explanation, not a philosophical one implying orthodox Christian belief. Medieval Christianity acknowledges that what we call death is not a single entity; it distinguishes clearly between mors corporalis, physical death, and mors aeterna, the death of the soul through sin, and indeed divides these concepts further. The evidence of modern literature suggests a reluctance to accept such simple, numerical distinctions, because modern man has a greater sense of his physical and emotional lives as dependent on each other, and of course religious belief has generally declined. But modern literature nevertheless shows a dualism in the treatment of death that takes individual aesthetic, secular forms. Generally speaking, the modern version of this dualism shows both awareness of physical death and a preoccupation with something in man that is not physical but spiritual or emotional, and which could die or be killed.

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(1) Cf. Rehm, op. cit., Kapitel II, Die Grundlagen des christlichen Todesgedankens, p.20 ff.

Such a dualism is implicit in every form of Liebestod, for the death of the emotional life precipitates the death of the body (1). It is also implicit in the highly subjective, confessional deaths of characters whose creators really seek to kill some emotional or spiritual fault in themselves, such as the death of Werther, of Keller's Grüner Heinrich (in the first version of the novel) and of Hofmannsthal's Claudio. It is even more obvious in the writings of Christian poets, where it retains its original forms of death through sin and physical death, as Elisabeth Stopp shows in her study of death in Eichendorff's poetry (2).

Now the Christian dualism is not an abiding one; it is of course resolved in the concept of an after-life of a more or less specific character. This resolution poses two questions about the modern equivalent of the Christian dualism in death: how are its various tensions resolved and does it necessarily presuppose belief in an after-life of any kind? We can say unequivocally that any modern dualism in the treatment of death does not imply an after-life of a definite, uniform character, but does it imply one at all? This is clearly the question on which the whole treatment of death in Hofmannsthal's work depends. He gives very few glimpses of a world beyond death, but many of his works suggest

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(1) There are some very clear explicit examples, such as Otilie, who, contemplating the death of the old priest at the baptism of Charlotte's child, does so 'mit einer Art von Neid! Das Leben ihrer Seele war getötet, warum sollte der Körper noch erhalten werden?' J.W. v. Goethe, Die Wahlverwandtschaften, Gedenkausgabe der Werke, Briefe u. Gespräche, (Zürich, 1949), Vol. 9, p.202.

(2) Elisabeth Stopp, op. cit., p.70.

that death is a release into another form of existence. Up to a certain point the question is irrelevant, for it is not necessary to believe in another life for Claudio or Elis or Elektra, for the vital battle is won with the salvation of the spiritual life in them and the preservation of their personal integrity from the assault of corrupting forces. But when we recall the commonsense meaning of death as physical destruction, we are obliged to consider the terrible possibility that they have been saved for no purpose. We must choose to posit Hofmannsthal's belief in an unspecified life after death or consider the view that the spirit's life is commensurate with the body's, so that all these spirits have been saved merely in order to be destroyed. The second view means that Hofmannsthal's treatment of death is based on a fundamental irony. Our view of the subject ultimately depends on how we choose to resolve this problem.

This is by no means simple, for it is always difficult to draw a dividing line between the Platonic and by derivation Christian view of life as a contemplation of death and a decadent pleasure in the subject. This is made more difficult by Hofmannsthal's aesthetic morality, his problematic Christianity and often hermetic poetry. In some works we know from other sources that Hofmannsthal's intention is one of service and hence far removed from introverted decadent pleasure, but this is not clear in every work. The difficulty of drawing such a fine distinction is aggravated by contemporary attitudes to the subject of death. The twentieth century has an ambivalent attitude to it, and although Hofmannsthal experienced only a small part of this century, its spiritual

attitudes are apparent in criticism of his poetry. The vast scale of war has increased man's awareness of death, but dulled his senses to the individual's death. A strong feeling of guilt and incomprehension informs literature that treats death as it has resulted from war in this epoch. There is also a feeling, like that of Sigismund, that having survived wars is like the experience of having been dead. This feeling shows itself also as a desire to turn one's back on the contemplation of death, so that private attitudes are hurried, embarrassed and fearful. These attitudes have created a climate in which it seems inappropriate to treat death, unlike other poetic themes, except within certain well-defined contexts - such as the context of a veracious Christianity, like Eliot's or Claudel's, or the physical context that betrays no sign of pleasure, such as war poetry, poetry treating the decline of civilisation such as Trakl's, poetry with a clinical objectivity such as that of the young Benn. A treatment that is spiritual, quasi-religious but not perceptibly orthodox attracts the criticism of decadence. Hofmannsthal makes himself vulnerable to this charge because his treatment of death lacks the ultimate commitment, which would give a clearer picture of the life after death, if indeed he believes that there is such a life. He offers only hints, for in general he is much more concerned with the obligations created by the fact of death.

Yet, even allowing that Hofmannsthal's chief preoccupation is the obligations of life, the description 'quasi-religious' may still assume a positive colouring, particularly against contemporary diffidence towards

the subject of death. For all his indecisiveness about where life leads, he remains convinced that it must and should lead somewhere. The realisation 'dass wir ein Leben bedürfen, um zu lernen, wie wir leben müssten' (1) seems to him natural and inevitable. He does not ask in despair, 'kann Gott von solchen Wesen Verantwortlichkeit fordern?' (2), but suggests that life's brevity is precisely what makes it necessary for man to recognise and assume moral responsibility. Unlike his contemporary Kafka and others since, he is at pains to show that the ancient symbols of the journey, the play, the trial etc., those symbols which reflect life's impermanence, are still meaningful and even beautiful expressions of the human condition. Thus he takes up the old ideas about death and the ancient poetic symbols traditionally associated with them and tries to make these relevant in a way that takes account of contemporary ideas and developments. His success varies, as we have seen, with his varying ability and willingness to comply with public reactions and tastes.

The main conclusion of this study must therefore be, that Hofmannsthal's treatment of death is essentially affirmative. Although his terms of reference remain fluid, in a manner that permits but does not enjoin traditional, orthodox interpretations, his commitment to a positive interpretation of death is apparent. But this affirmation of death is not made at the expense of life, and this must be fully understood if the

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(1) Heinrich von Kleist, letter to Wilhelmine von Zenge, August 15th, 1801, Werke ed. Erich Schmidt, (Leipzig u. Wien, 5. Band, Briefe, p.249.

(2) Ibid.

continuity of the theme in his work is to be perceived. It is essential to see the treatment of death in the early works not as an expression of morbid fascination, but as culminating in the reassertion of life. The treatment of death in the subsequent works thus falls into place as a development from this reassertion of life.

Finally, Hofmannsthal's treatment of death is positive in that he does not find it necessary to exclude any of the single aspects traditionally ascribed to death. It is clear that he establishes no independent concept of his theme; he does not create a death-mystique in order to banish death by the power of the imagination; he does not dwell on an erotic or otherwise physical view of death. For, although such elements may be found in individual works, they are balanced by others expressing a predominantly moral or ascetic interest in death. Death remains, like life, a mystery, certain but an unknown quantity, individual but universal, personal, but because of its moral implications, a source of interest to the community. Of these paradoxical elements Hofmannsthal makes a powerful motif that derives its potency chiefly from the fact that death is inevitable. In an apparently inexhaustible range of combinations and patterns Hofmannsthal reproduces many traditional attributes of death - its sense of finality for the living, its power to destroy and to level, to establish distinctions between the permanent and the passing, the significant and the trivial, its accompanying sense of alienation and loss, the desire to overcome it, the attendant notions of judgment, punishment, reward, salvation and, above all, ecstatic release. These

attributes serve Hofmannsthal in his treatment of death as the ultimate determinant of human behaviour; the knowledge of mortality is treated as the one force that makes man stop and ask himself what life is about.

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