

THE IMPORTANCE OF CHARACTER STUDY  
IN SELECTED COMEDIES OF  
HUGO VON HOFMANNSTHAL

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A Thesis  
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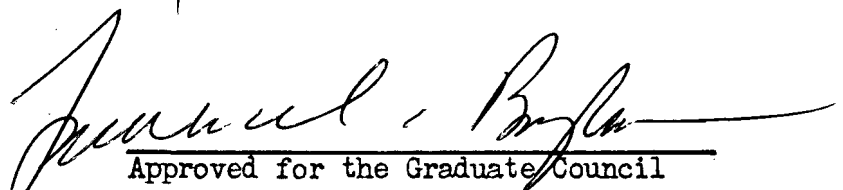
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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Hofmannsthal used the maturation theme within the genre of comedy to communicate his message to his audience. The over-riding motif in these works is that a person must undergo a change from purile or immature thought processes to adult or mature thought processes sometime during the normal course of his lifetime. This may be construed as the human being's usual transition from irresponsibility to responsibility, or as Hofmannsthal expressed it, from the state of "pre-existence" to the state of "existence."

Literature is thought to be a form of art, and if art may be defined as a reflection of life, then characters in literature represent human beings in nature. Necessarily then, studies or analyzations of some of the characters in Hofmannsthal's comedies are indicated in order to show that the author's message is, in fact, that mature persons are those who have become responsible and have thus committed themselves to society.

The various characters to be studied are seen in the following comedies of Hugo von Hofmannsthal: Der Rosenkavalier, Cristinas Heimreise, Der Schwierige, Der Unbestechliche, and Arabella. To establish the idea that the maturation theme is indeed ever-present in Hofmannsthal's writings and not just a one-time occurrence, two or three characters from each of the above-listed comedies are selected and focused upon rather than a few characters in just one comedy.

Hofmannsthal's complete works fill fifteen volumes which include poetry, drama (both tragedy and comedy), libretti, and prose, as well as lectures, essays, and diary entries. His writings are obviously too voluminous to analyze the characters in all works, or even in all genres. This study will deal exclusively with comedy, and for three reasons.

Comedy, as Hofmannsthal wrote it, is not merely a funny play. Certainly he created some truly comic figures (notably Pedro in Cristinas Heimreise and Baron von Ochs in Der Rosenkavalier), and there are times when the audience laughs aloud, but there is always a deeper significance apparent in his comedies. Thus, the first reason for restricting this study to comedy is that essentially Hofmannsthal's comedies offer humorous treatment of a serious condition.

The second reason for choosing comedy as the one genre in which to study Hofmannsthal's maturation theme is found in Alewyn's short essay about Der Unbestechliche.

Es ist nicht auszudenken, was aus den Deutschen hätte werden können, wenn ihre Bildung ihnen eine Komödie gestattet hätte, (aber erregend, darüber nachzudenken, was alles aus ihnen nicht hätte zu werden brauchen), wenn es im deutschen Publikum der Komödie vergönnt gewesen wäre, ihr Amt zu verrichten als Schule des Lachens und des Lebens.<sup>1</sup>

It seems certain that Hofmannsthal in his comedies intended to provide for his audiences a 'school of laughter and of life.' The deeper significance in his comedies is the moral--the lesson of how to live life.

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<sup>1</sup>Richard Alewyn, Über Hugo von Hofmannsthal (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1960), pp. 102-103.

A tragedy can, of course, also be didactic, and those written by Hofmannsthal are. In Der Tor und der Tod, for example, the tragic hero dwells in the state of immaturity, or "pre-existence." Only as he meets his death, does he realize that there is another spectrum of life--the state of maturity, or "existence." The tragedy of the play is that even though the hero does finally recognize mature life, it is too late and he must die without ever having lived. Because comedy, by definition, has a non-tragic outcome, Hofmannsthal had the opportunity to show (through his characters) the total transition from "pre-existence" to "existence." The result of achieving existence is, of course, true happiness. Thus, the third (and most important) reason for choosing comedy to develop the thesis is that comedy is best suited to a study of the complete change in an individual to a new Daseinsstufe--to Existenz.<sup>2</sup>

In his self-analytical notes, Ad me ipsum, which he wrote over a period of several years starting in 1916, Hofmannsthal reflected upon his experience as an artist in particular, and upon the moral development of the individual in general. He expressed this development as the transition from one point to another after passing through a kind of no-man's-land in between:

- 1) Praeexistenz--glorreicher aber gefährlicher Zustand.  
Ihre Qualitäten: frühe Weisheit. Sieht die Welt von oben.

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<sup>2</sup>The German terms, Praeexistenz, Existenz, Zwischenzustand, and Daseinsstufe, will be used throughout this study rather than their English translations, pre-existence, existence, "intermediate state," and "level of being" because the English translations do not convey the meaning exactly, and because the terms are explained in the Introduction either by the context in which they are used or by actual definition.

- <sup>1</sup>a) Ambivalenter Zustand zwischen Praeexistenz und Leben.
- 2) Verknüpfung mit dem Leben. Durchdringen aus der Praeexistenz zur Existenz. Durchdringen zum Sein. Das zu-sich-selber-kommen. Identität von Treue und Schicksal.<sup>3</sup>

At the level of Praeexistenz, one's knowledge or "wisdom" is intuitive rather than founded upon real experience. Moreover, because at this level the individual 'sees the world from above,' he lacks the maturity to recognize his responsibility to society. After passing through the ambivalent Zwischenzustand, the individual reaches the full humanity, the maturity, of Existenz. In his introduction to Der Schwierige, W. E. Yates writes:

...on this contrast is founded the constant central problem of Hofmannsthal's work, that of the winning-through from the immaturity of Praeexistenz and the establishment of a valid ethical commitment to life...This development Hofmannsthal presents as an existential necessity, and the theme of 'Weg zum Leben' or 'Weg zum höheren Selbst' became the principal connecting thread in his work.<sup>4</sup>

By analyzing the characters as they develop within the framework of the comedies themselves, this study will necessarily disprove the contention of Jethro Bithell that Hofmannsthal's comedies are experiments which fail because of their lack of clear-cut character drawing. That Hofmannsthal's characters are indeed clear-cut is especially apparent when one understands the reasons he drew them as he did. His reasons were (as is stated above and as will be further developed in the chapters that follow): (1) to give a clear portrayal of the conditions

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<sup>3</sup>Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Ad me ipsum, Gesammelte Werke, Herbert Steiner, comp. (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1959), v. 15, pp. 213-214.

<sup>4</sup>W. E. Yates (ed.), Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Der Schwierige (London: Cambridge University Press, 1966), p. 5.

of Praeexistenz, the ambivalent Zwischenzustand, and Existenz, and (2) to subtly teach the audience that the state of Existenz is the goal for which every human being should strive, because only there can one really live.

It seems appropriate at this point to digress about some of the scholarship on Hofmannsthal. Hofmannsthal's writings, especially his later works, became unpopular under the Nazi regime in Germany between 1933 and 1945, and in his native Austria after 1939. This, of course, halted most scholarship on his works during those years. Moreover, two of the comedies studied here (Arabella and Der Unbestechliche) were published posthumously, in 1933 and 1956 respectively. Because of these circumstances, and perhaps because there were so many post-war Germanic writers, most scholars did not find their way back to Hofmannsthal's writings until the late 1950's. Accordingly, the vast majority of sources used in this study have been published during the last fifteen years, with many going to press only in the last five years.

Before discussing the comedies themselves, it is necessary to view Hofmannsthal's life and literary development. Only by studying the comedies (and specifically the theme of maturation found in them) within the context of his life as an individual and as an artist, does their message ring true.



## CHAPTER II

### HUGO VON HOFMANNSTHAL'S LIFE

Hugo Laurenz August Hofmann, Edler von Hofmannsthal, son of a bank director, was born in Vienna on February 1, 1874. His father was of Jewish and Italian descent and his mother was from Austrian and Slavian peasant stock. The old adage that man is a product of his environment is certainly true in the case of Hugo von Hofmannsthal. He was reared in the world of the Viennese aristocracy in the late nineteenth century. This meant, of course, that he was free to witness any and all cultural activities with no material restrictions. The cultural activities in the Vienna of that day revolved to a great degree around the Roman Catholic, Austro-Hungarian monarchy of Franz Joseph. Hofmannsthal, therefore, grew up loving the monarchy, and could later not imagine life under any but the monarchical system of government. He was also reared in the Roman Catholic religion and became a devout follower of that faith. He could not, however, dispense with his Jewish heritage, a fact which seemed to trouble him throughout his life.

If Vienna was the capital of a dual-monarchy, it was also much more. It was situated at the very center, both geographically and culturally, of Europe. As a result, the city became a crossroads not only of the East and West but also of the North and South. Seen in this context, Vienna supersedes the national and becomes supra-national, or European. Hugo von Hofmannsthal's environment, thus, was one which taught him at an early age to revere not only the traditions of the

Hapsburg monarchy and of the Germanic world, but those of Greece and Rome, and of the Mediterranean and the West as well. He became truly cosmopolitan. Another aspect of his heritage concerns not the "where" of his environment, but the "when." It was his fate to live at a time when the city of Vienna was in decline. The influence of the Vienna in the last quarter of the nineteenth century was nothing like that of the Vienna of a century earlier. Yet the culture was much the same. The effect of this was that Hofmannsthal became a staunch proponent of European tradition at a time when it was growing less and less fashionable; but he remained completely cosmopolitan. With his heritage in mind (and with the added knowledge of his extraordinary intelligence), the course of Hofmannsthal's life, which seemed highly unusual to many of his contemporaries, seems to be not at all unusual, but to follow the rule of cause and effect.

Hofmannsthal's mind developed early. By the age of twelve he had read, and reportedly understood, the works of Goethe, Schiller, Kleist, and Grillparzer. Three years later he had extended his reading to include Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, Voltaire, Browning, and Byron. By the age of eighteen he added the writings of Plato and several Russian and Scandinavian works, as well as many works of his contemporaries to his list. During this time he had also attended college-preparatory schools. Upon entering the University of Vienna, he first studied jurisprudence, but because of his obvious love for literature, he soon changed to Romance Philology. He was awarded the Ph.D. in that field in 1899. The following year, Hofmannsthal applied for a position on the staff of the University of Vienna by submitting a paper on Victor Hugo, but he later

withdrew it, having evidently decided to devote his time completely to writing. In 1901, he married and moved to Rodaun, a village on the outskirts of Vienna, which was to be his home until his death on July 15, 1929.

While only sixteen years of age and still a student at the Gymnasium, Hugo von Hofmannsthal wrote and published his first poetry under the pseudonym of Loris. In this manner, although he undoubtedly did not know it at the time, his literary career was launched. His development as an artist can easily be divided into three periods. The first period, to which he later gave the name, Praeexistenz, extends from 1890 to 1899, or between the ages of sixteen and twenty-five. This period has frequently been referred to as his "lyrical period," because during it he wrote mostly poetry and short, lyrical dramas (the most famous of which are probably Der Tor und der Tod and Der Tod des Tizian). But even at that early age he was also writing essays and critical works in addition to fiction.

Upon the publication of his first verse, Hofmannsthal achieved instant popularity in the salons of Vienna. The factor contributing most to his popularity was his obvious talent for writing German verse. Some of his readers even ventured to say that they had not heard of such beautiful poetry since Goethe. At any rate, such contemporaries as Arthur Schnitzler, Hermann Bahr, and Stefan George, who were already established among literary circles, were deeply impressed by the young Hofmannsthal and welcomed him among their ranks. Also contributing to the young writer's popularity was the fact that he felt some of the same decadence which was lamented by several writers of that time, and which

was thus in vogue. A case in point is an excerpt from an essay he wrote at the age of nineteen: "Man hat manchmal die Empfindung, als hätten... unsere Väter...uns, den Spätgeborenen, nur zwei Dinge hinterlassen: hübsche Möbel und überfeine Nerven."<sup>5</sup>

Almost all the poems which the author cared to have published were written between the ages of seventeen and twenty-three, a period he was later to describe as the most lonely of his life. It was lonely because he held himself aloof and isolated from the rest of the world. His poetry remains as a lasting tribute to the aestheticism in which he immersed himself. Hofmannsthal's mystical frame of mind--his Præexistenz--is perhaps best described by Feise and Steinhauer:

It was a dreamy, idealistic, egocentric, purely contemplative state, akin to that of religious grace, remote from contact with everyday life, unhampered by the limitations imposed on men by the environment, by the problems of space and time, of change and decay, free from the restlessness and dissatisfaction that result from the interplay of personalities in a social existence. In this state, there was as yet no consciousness of individuality or responsibility.<sup>6</sup>

And yet, his "ivory tower" did not leave him satisfied. When he was creating, he viewed everything in its totality and thought himself to possess the world vicariously. But more and more he viewed the world of active men in the distance and wished to join them. His increasing regard for action brought with it a concomitant distrust in the power of language. This dichotomy between action and language brought to a close

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<sup>5</sup>Gerhard Fricke and Volker Klotz, Geschichte der deutschen Dichtung (Hamburg: Matthiesen Verlag, 1966), p. 336, citing an essay by Hugo von Hofmannsthal.

<sup>6</sup>Ernst Feise and Harry Steinhauer (ed.), German Literature Since Goethe (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1959), v. 2, p. 169.

his first literary period and helped cause a profound personal crisis which ushered in his second literary phase.

Hofmannsthal broke forcibly away from the lyric, and from what he recognized to be his years of literary apprenticeship, because of "the realization that art separated from life is the very symptom of the end of a civilization and the recognition of his own duty as an artist to keep it alive."<sup>7</sup> In his struggles both to commit himself to society and to create, he was totally misunderstood by his contemporaries, who if they ever were to step down out of their isolation had not yet done so. (In fact, some of them reportedly implied that it was a shame he had not died in 1900, for if he had, he would have been considered great.) Much of the knowledge of the extent to which Hofmannsthal felt he was hanging in limbo is gained from his short autobiographical work, "Der Brief des Lord Chandos." In it he tells of his abandonment of his early phase and of the search in his own soul for the proper avenue for his literary endeavors. Curiously enough, it seems that by stating his crisis, he overcame it, for in 1902, after three unproductive years, he started writing again.

The years between 1899 and 1902 were not unproductive in one respect, however; he married in 1901. Matrimony is an important event in any person's life, and thus to some degree exercises an influence over the rest of that person's life. But in Hofmannsthal's case, it appears that marriage had an unusually profound effect on him, and that

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<sup>7</sup>H. A. Hammelmann, Hugo von Hofmannsthal Erich Heller (ed.), Studies in Modern European Literature and Thought (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), p. 19.

matrimony was partially responsible for his future literary development.

Years later, he made the following comment about marriage:

Mir ist die Ehe etwas Hohes, wahrhaft das Sacrament--  
ich möchte das Leben ohne die Ehe nicht denken. (Es  
ist alles was ich davon denke in meinen Lustspielen  
gesagt...) <sup>8</sup>

His productivity in this, his second phase, was in the genre of drama rather than in that of poetry. He had accepted his commitment to the community and to tradition, and he, therefore, needed a larger audience that only the theater could provide. He revived Greek tragedy in his first attempts to gain the contemporary stage. Elektra (written in collaboration with Richard Strauss) and Oedipus are examples of this experimentation. These plays did not have the spontaneous effect on the audience that Hofmannsthal wished to create, and he thus moved on to adapting plays by Moliere and Calderon. He regarded his years of writing adaptations (since they were not immediately successful) as years of learning. Later Hofmannsthal was to speak of the first two periods in his development as an artist in terms of being born to real life late and with heavy labor.

In the author's third literary period (from 1910 until his death), he tried "to give the cue to others, to lead them to a clearer understanding and so enable them to face the conflicts within themselves."<sup>9</sup> This led him simultaneously in two directions: (1) to the social responsibility represented by his comedies for stage and opera, and (2) to the

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<sup>8</sup>Hugo von Hofmannsthal and Carl J. Burckhardt, Briefwechsel (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1956), letter of 10 Sept., 1926.

<sup>9</sup>Hammelman, op. cit., p. 29.

way of an active Christian life represented by his allegorical spectacles, Jedermann, Das grosse Salzburger Welttheater, and Der Turm.

After the collapse of the Austrian monarchy, he also saw himself as the preserver of the old European civilization. Accordingly, in 1920 he helped establish the Salzburg Festivals. But the Europe whose traditions he represented had ended in 1918, and many new theories, doctrines, and -isms were being concocted to fill the void left by World War One. As a result, Hofmannsthal enjoyed little following; he did not, however, abandon his efforts, and was still in the midst of his work when, at fifty-five, he died of a stroke only two days after his elder son had committed suicide.

The comedies which constitute the subject of this thesis were written between the years of 1910 and 1926, during Hofmannsthal's third literary phase. Indeed, this is the only period in which they could have been written because it was necessary for the author himself to experience the transition to Existenz before he could cause his characters to do so.

## CHAPTER III

### DER ROSENKAVALIER

Der Rosenkavalier (which is subtitled, eine Komödie für Musik) is a product of Hugo von Hofmannsthal's collaboration with the composer, Richard Strauss. Some critics consider this work to be Hofmannsthal's best libretto, and almost all critics deem it his best comedy libretto. Both Hofmannsthal and Strauss regarded Der Rosenkavalier as one whole, which happened to be the result of two men's efforts. They further maintained that if anyone chose only to listen to the music or to read the text, the full effect of the comedy would be missed. A close reading of the text, however, does offer a clear portrayal of the characters. The three characters from this work that have been chosen to be studied in depth are Octavian, the Baron von Ochs, and the Marschallin.

Before focusing upon the characters themselves, it seems appropriate first to present a short summary of the plot. Maria Theresa, the Marschallin, and her young lover, Octavian, are surprised by the unexpected visit of her cousin, the Baron von Ochs. Octavian, who has no time to escape, quickly dresses as a maiden, and as such becomes the object of the baron's attention and advances. Baron von Ochs has come to ask the Marschallin to select a young man to bear the silver rose, symbol of his love, to his fiancée, and by so doing announce his first ceremonial visit as her future husband. Octavian, who has been designated as the rose-bearer, falls in love with Sophie, the baron's betrothed, upon presenting the rose to her. Sophie finds Ochs revolting and will not



return his advances. Octavian is angered by Ochs' attempts to force his will upon Sophie, and wounds him in the arm with his sword. Much of the third act consists of a masquerade in which everyone collaborates with Octavian (who is again disguised as a maiden) to dishonor Ochs and thus free Sophie from her betrothal to him. Once this is accomplished, the Marschallin nobly steps aside so that Octavian is free to follow his heart. The comedy ends with a duet sung by the two young lovers. Even this brief view of the plot reveals that the comedy contains little action. Most of the action in Der Rosenkavalier (as in many comedies by Hofmannsthal) takes place within the characters, themselves. Hence, in order to know the comedy, it is necessary to know its major characters.

Hofmannsthal commonly used the terms, "intoxication" and "dream-world" to describe the pre-existential level in the development of an individual. As the comedy begins, the seventeen-year old Octavian seems to be both intoxicated and living in a dream-world. Thus, it can be said that he represents the very epitome of the state of Praeexistenz. Everything (and everybody) that Octavian sees, he regards as an undefinable and inseparable part of the totality of the world. For him, there are no individuals--only a totality. In his "love" for the Marschallin, he does not see her as an individual or as a partner; rather, he sees her as part of himself. He cannot distinguish between "I" and "you:"

Du, du--was heisst das "du?" Was "du und ich?" Hat  
denn das einen Sinn? Das sind Wörter, blosse Wörter...  
Aber dennoch: Es ist etwas in ihnen:...das Zudirwollen,

das bin ich, das will zu dir, aber das Ich vergeht  
in dem Du.<sup>10</sup>

It seems obvious that since Octavian does not know who the "Ich" is, he is incapable of having a true relationship with a "Du."

His role-playing at various times in the comedy serves as another example of his immaturity. This role-playing should not be seen as mere theatrics on the author's part, but as a further vehicle with which to establish Octavian's Praeexistenz. The most blatant role he plays is his disguise as a maiden in the first and third acts, when, incidentally, a soprano takes over his part. This playacting of a girl seems easy for Octavian, perhaps because in his pre-existential phase he is not even sure of the distinction between a man's and a woman's manner of behavior. His other, more subtle, roles throughout the comedy are announced by the various names he is given. Early in the comedy, he is often referred to as a "Bub." He is specifically the Marschallin's "Bub." This role, then, is that of a lover--a young lover. The second act finds him playing the role of the rose-bearer and he is appropriately named the "Rosenkavalier." He is given yet another name, "Quin-Quin," by both the Marschallin and Sophie. The role he is playing when this name is used seems to be that of a handsome young man who is more than a casual acquaintance to those who use that name, but less than a lover.

Yet another indication of Octavian's dream-like intoxication is that he has no conception of change which the passing of time inevitably

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<sup>10</sup>Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Der Rosenkavalier, Gesammelte Werke, Herbert Steiner, comp. (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1947), v. 7, p. 228. Henceforth when this comedy is quoted directly, the page numbers will be given in parenthesis immediately following the quotation.

brings. Because he thinks everything will always remain as it is, he recognizes neither the past nor the future tenses. As a result, when the pensive Marschallin voices her thoughts, "heut oder morgen geht Er hin und gibt mich auf, um einer andern willen, die schöner oder jünger ist als ich,..." (p. 334) Octavian neither believes nor understands her: "nicht heut, nicht morgen." (p. 334) For Octavian, there is only a "today."

In addition to his dream-world traits discussed above, Octavian also exhibits some of the more mundane characteristics of the immaturity of Praeexistenz, namely, arrogance and an uncontrolled temper. When, for example, he is in the Marschallin's room and she starts to speak of her husband, Octavian silences her by shouting, "Hier bin ich der Herr!" (p. 289) Later, after the Marschallin has just experienced some sad, introspective moments, Octavian bursts into her room. Upon finding her sitting there sadly, he immediately assumes that it was her fear for him during his disguise that has caused her sadness. Perhaps the best example of Octavian's temper is offered by his explosion in the second act when he, having lost control of himself completely, grasps a sword and wounds Baron von Ochs. It is just chance that he stabs Ochs in the arm rather than in the heart.

As Octavian gives the silver rose to Sophie, the Marschallin's prophecy that he would find someone younger and prettier than she comes true. Octavian "richtet sich wie betäubt auf und sieht auf ihren Mund." (p. 345) But his new feeling is again infatuation instead of true love. First he 'looks at her mouth,' and then he says, "Wie schön sie ist." (p. 348) Even in his turning from the Marschallin to Sophie he is still

in Praeexistenz because he is influenced by appearances and sensuality rather than by a human being.

When it becomes clear that Sophie is going to be forced to marry Ochs as planned, Octavian is forced to act, and it appears that he might accept responsibility. He contrives the masquerade which discredits Ochs, and thus frees Sophie. This playacting was relatively easy for him, however; now he must make the first real decision of his life if he is to free himself from his affair with the Marschallin. Hesitatingly, he asks the Marschallin, "soll ich nicht--die Jungfer--der Vater?" (p. 429) She seems to be forcing him to make a decision when she replies, "tu Er, was sein Herz Ihm sagt." (p. 429) With her next breath, however, she makes the decision for him: "geh Er hin." (p. 429) Thus, after having been perched precariously between immaturity and maturity for a few seconds, he falls back into immaturity. Because he did not have to make a decision, he did not have to accept any responsibility. Octavian is, therefore, at the same level of development at the end as he was at the beginning. Sophie and he sing:

Ist ein Traum, kann nicht wirklich sein,  
dass wir zwei beieinander sein,  
beieinander für all Zeit  
und Ewigkeit! (p. 436)

It is indeed a dream--the dream of Praeexistenz.

Because of his youth, it seems natural that Octavian should be immature. Because, however, Baron von Ochs is no longer a youth it seems unnatural, and "dangerous" that he, too, is immature.<sup>11</sup> The baron's

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<sup>11</sup>It should be recalled that Hofmannsthal spoke of Praeexistenz as being a "glorreicher aber gefährlicher Zustand." Cf. p. 3.

exact age is never stated but the impression is given that he is at least forty. If chronological age were the only criterion for maturity, he would thus have already reached this level. Age is obviously not the only criterion, but it does have an influence on the development of an individual. Even though Ochs is not yet mature, he has outgrown the dream-like quality of Praeexistenz; he has lost the naïveté of youth.

"Die Inkongruenz zwischen seinem Alter und seiner Daseinsweise ist hier ein Indiz für jene Lebenssituation,...den ambivalenten Zustand zwischen Praeexistenz und Leben."<sup>12</sup> That Ochs is in the no-man's-land between Praeexistenz and Existenz would be normal if he were trying to go forward. But Ochs, while avoiding all ties and responsibilities, is trying to recapture his lost youth. He wants to go backward. This may be construed as dangerous, and almost devilish when compared with the angel-like quality of the legitimate Praeexistenz of the very young.

The stumbling block to the baron's continued development seems to be his extreme egotism. This is perhaps best seen in his relationships with women. It is clear at his first entrance that he is interested in literally anyone wearing a skirt. Ochs is "äusserst okkupiert von der Anwesenheit der hübschen Kammerzofe." (p. 299) What he does not know is that this maid is actually Octavian. This scene is hilarious, but it is also more; it is the vehicle whereby Hofmannsthal casts Ochs in an unfavorable light, starting with his first step upon the stage. Ochs is incapable of entering into a true relationship with one woman; rather, he busies himself with a whole kaleidoscope of women. He thinks of this

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<sup>12</sup>Ewald Rösch, Komödien Hofmannsthals (Marburg: N. G. Elwert Verlag, 1968), p. 43.

not as a weakness (as Hofmannsthal evidently does), but as an accomplishment. Since the other characters admonish him rather than praise him for his "accomplishments," he feels he must praise himself:

Marschallin: Aber wo Er doch ein Bräutigam ist?

Der Baron : Macht das einen lahmen Esel aus mir? Bin ich da nicht wie ein guter Hund auf einer guten Fährte? Und doppelt scharf auf jedes Wild nach links, nach rechts!

Marschallin: Ich seh, Euer Liebden betreiben es als Profession.

Der Baron : Das will ich meinen...Soviel Zeiten das Jahr, soviel Stunden der Tag...Das Frauenzimmer hat gar vielerlei Arten... Da kenn ich mich aus. (pp. 309-312)

The baron's egotism is seen not only in his relationships with women and in his boasting, but also in his utter lack of consideration for other people. He has deeply distressed Sophie (his fiancée!) by his advances, but he goes "eifrig zu ihr, ohne zu ahnen, was in ihr vorgeht." (p. 359) His name, Baron von Ochs, fits him well, because he is indeed an ignorant, uncouth ox! Yet more proof of his thoughtlessness and of his egotism is the fact that because Sophie does not want him, she thus becomes more desirable.

"Ehe wäre der Weg zur Gestalt, zum geformten Selbst;"<sup>13</sup> but even though he is engaged, it is obvious that he is not capable of marriage. Marriage in Hofmannsthal's comedies seems to symbolize the achievement of the state of Existenz. Since Ochs does not enter into marriage in the comedy, it seems that he never grows out of his ambivalent stage in which he tries to recapture his youth. The question the Marschallin asks

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 49.

him after the masquerade near the end of the comedy makes it clear that this is, in fact, the case: "Versteht Er nicht, wenn eine Sach ein End hat?" (p. 426) Ochs does not reply, but the answer is, of course, that he does not understand when he has reached the end.

At first the Marschallin is also at the pre-existential level. She, like Ochs, is trying to recapture her youth. Accordingly, she tries to live in a dream with her "Bub," Octavian. But again like Ochs, she cannot recapture her lost naïveté. Hence, she dreams about her husband even while Octavian is occupying her bed, and seemingly without cause she has thoughts such as, "Jedes Ding hat seine Zeit." (p. 290)

Still early in the play, the Marschallin becomes even more conscious of her age and of the aging process in general. Two almost simultaneous incidents cause this painful awareness. Her hairdresser, after finishing her coiffure for the day, hands her a mirror in order for her to approve his work. Upon looking into the mirror, the Marschallin sees, "heut haben Sie ein altes Weib aus mir gemacht!" (p. 325) Her coiffure is changed immediately, but she remains sad. The second incident, the pending ceremony of the silver rose, shocks the Marschallin even more. The silver rose thus becomes even more symbolic because it reminds her of her age and of her own youth:

Kann mich auch an ein Mädel erinnern, die frisch aus  
dem Kloster in den heiligen Ehestand kommandiert war...  
Wie kann das wirklich sein, dass ich die kleine Resi  
war und dass ich auch die alte Frau sein werd! (p. 330)

She has become aware of time and of her own mortality. This realization is painful, but she is not overcome by pain; instead, she overcomes the pain by changing inwardly. She resigns herself to her fate and makes a belated ethical commitment to her marriage--she reaches Existenz.

Because of this change, she emerges as the strongest character in the comedy. She can now save herself and Octavian and Ochs as well. The Marschallin has been true to herself; her resignation, therefore, is not a defeat but a victory.



## CHAPTER IV

### CRISTINAS HEIMREISE

Hofmannsthal had originally intended Cristinas Heimreise (like Der Rosenkavalier) to be the text for a Richard Strauss opera. The two men's collaboration was not as successful with this work, however; the text seemed to develop beyond the music. As a result, Cristinas Heimreise is performed as a dramatic work without music. Indeed, one cannot imagine how music could have made any contribution to the comedy.

If there was little action in Der Rosenkavalier, there is even less in Cristinas Heimreise. Cristina, a young girl who has inherited an inn from her deceased parents, has come to visit relatives in Venice with the express purpose of finding a man to be her husband and the master of her inn. But, alas, her three-week stay has been unsuccessful, and she arranges to start the two-day journey back to the mountains still single. During the last twelve hours before her departure, she meets the two men who will determine the course of her life--the captain and Florindo. The captain, after having spent many years in Asia, is passing through Venice on his way to the mountains, where he hopes to marry and live the rest of his life. Florindo is a Casanova-type, young man who lives in Venice. He notices Cristina as she is about to leave, cannot resist the temptation, and decides to take a journey to the mountains himself. The second act finds everyone spending the night at an inn in Ceneda, the halfway point between Venice and the mountains. Florindo seduces Cristina, and then decides to go back to Venice to "finish business" before joining

Cristina at her home. Since the captain is going her way, he accompanies Cristina during the last half of her journey. As the third act begins, sixty-four days have passed, the captain is still staying at Cristina's inn, Florindo has not come to marry Cristina, and everyone knows that he never will. When the play draws to a close, it is clear that Cristina and the captain will marry.

What the comedy might seem to lack in plot, is more than compensated for in character development. The three characters who most enrich the comedy, Cristinas Heimreise, of course are: Florindo, the captain, and Cristina.

Florindo seems to be Casanova reincarnated. He is in every respect the Venetian adventurer. True to form, his adventures revolve around women. The captain's servant aptly characterizes Florindo even before he appears: "Florindo und ein Stück Frau jede Nacht, das ist eine Wenigkeit. Vielleicht zwei Stück Frau jede Nacht."<sup>14</sup> The 'woman every night' remains anonymous, and thus becomes a nameless tool of Florindo's pleasures. That each woman is a type rather than a person also characterizes Florindo--he is in Praeexistenz.

Typical of his pre-existential level, he tries to ignore time. Everything must remain limitless; he cannot bind himself to anyone or to any time. He, therefore, treats the past as if it were the present: "Sie muss jetzt das sein, was die damalige war--ewige entzückende

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<sup>14</sup>Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Cristinas Heimreise, Gesammelte Werke, Herbert Steiner, comp. (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1947), v. 7, p. 89. Henceforth when this comedy is quoted directly, the page numbers will be given in parenthesis immediately following the quotation.

Überraschungen." (p. 110) But the significant fact about Florindo is not that he tries to ignore time as a connection but that he succeeds. As a result, he does not take anything from one experience along to the next experience. Thus, unlike Ochs in the preceding chapter, Florindo has not lost his youth; on the contrary, he always retains the same original naïveté. This seems to be the reason for his unbelievable "success," because with each girl, Florindo is in love for the first time. This is also the reason that he has no possibility of fidelity. Since he cannot be loyal to one person, then he cannot be blamed for his infidelity. He actually means it when he says, "Ich habe fünf Minuten vor mir. Grenzenlos." (p. 138) Later when he has just one last hour with Cristina, he is again sincere when he says: "Sechzig Abgründe unsagbarer Seligkeit." (p. 206)

Florindo is also very good with words. Hofmannsthal spoke of a "Wortmagie" that was characteristic of the pre-existential phase in an individual's development. This then, is a further indication that Florindo is in Praeexistenz. When Florindo (during a long conversation with the captain at the inn in Ceneda) speaks of true happiness and of marriage, he gives the impression of being a precocious school-child who has an extensive vocabulary, but who has not lived long enough to really know the meanings of the words he so proudly uses.

While Florindo does not understand such phrases as "true love," he most certainly does understand the words, "pretty," "beautiful," and "good-looking." He is completely captured by aestheticism. This is, of course, yet another index of his Praeexistenz. Upon hearing Cristina speaking with her maid on the street the morning of her departure from

Venice, Florindo is totally overcome by the beauty of her voice and cannot resist rushing out to make her acquaintance. Later at Ceneda, he sets about to seduce Cristina with all the aesthetic tools of the dream-world--music, candle-light, and wine. The captain, who suspects what the night has in store, looks with disdain on Florindo's aesthetic values: "Der ist ein Vieh, der nur bis an die Haut sieht und nicht weiter." (p. 113)

Florindo, however, is not the 'animal' that the captain thinks, because when he loves, he is truly in love. Hence, what had been planned as a frivolous seduction becomes a serious experience--the meeting of two young lovers. And while it is true that after his night of love, Florindo makes no decision for marriage, neither does he make a decision against marriage. As a result, when (as he goes off in search of the unknown) he tells the captain, "Ein Engel ist das Mädchen, und das bin ich nicht wert,..." (p. 230) the audience believes in his sincerity.

Only the "good," dream-like qualities of Praeexistenz are portrayed by Florindo. Hence, when his last words, "Wie schön sie ist," (p. 281) underscore the fact that he has not changed and that he never will, he does not become unpopular. Even though the audience feels a bit of pity for Florindo that he will never know the joys and disappointments of growing up, he nevertheless remains a favorite character.

Tomaso, the captain, presents a contrast to Florindo in almost every respect. Tomaso is presumed to be at least fifty years old, since he has spent the last thirty-five years as the captain of a ship in Asia. Tomaso, however, does not fit the stereotype of the rough and

ready sea captain. In fact, as his character unfolds throughout the comedy, it is difficult to imagine him as having captained a ship at all! In spite of the fact that he has lived among "savages," he is a kind and gentle man. He characterizes himself early in the comedy: "Ich bin nicht zum Vieh geworden...Ich habe eine Sorte von Seele im Leib bewahrt." (pp. 112-113) One wonders why the captain is now returning to Europe since he was evidently happy on the seas. It soon becomes apparent that he, too, had been the "happy adventurer." His adventures stopped suddenly when he was taken prisoner by pirates. He spent fifty days as their prisoner during which time he thought his death to be imminent. As a result of his brush with death and of his concomitant reflection upon his life thus far, he realized that he was about to die without ever having lived. This glimpse of Existenz caused him to see simultaneously his own eventual death and his possible legacy to posterity--children. He thus decided to go back home to the mountains of Italy where he could take a wife and have a family.

The captain must pass through Venice on his way home. He seems to know that Venice can only be a stop-over. The city becomes here a symbol expressing his ambivalent Zwischenzustand. As is characteristic of this intermediate stage, the captain falls back into Praeexistenz momentarily when he decides to have one last Venetian night. When the object of his erotic advances remains unimpressed, however, the captain does not consider forcing himself upon her. Instead, he realizes that the time has come to remove himself from the Zwischenzustand. He tells his servant, "Wir gehen heim...hab nichts zu suchen da droben. Wir reisen morgen." (pp. 126-127)

After having decided to leave Venice, he encounters Cristina. When he first sees Cristina, the captain does not think of her beauty. Rather, he is reminded of his mother, who, having been from the mountains, had dressed the same as Cristina dresses. This fact serves as an example both of the captain's existential Daseinsstufe and of the contrast between Florindo and him. The image of Cristina has reinforced his desire to go home and to marry. The captain can no longer see a person as a function or a tool; he can now only see a person as a human being. The only relationship, therefore, that would be satisfactory to him is that of man and wife. He again expresses these feelings to his servant, who acts as a sounding board for him throughout the comedy:

Das Mädchen vergesse ich nicht, und wenn ich sie bis  
an mein Totenbett nicht wiedersehe...Ich will heim  
und ein unbescholtenes Frauenzimmer ehelichen. Es  
wäre keine besser als die Figur da. (p. 125)

It seems noteworthy that Hofmannsthal has here chosen marriage as the most important expression of Existenz.

The captain, however, has not yet given expression to his new Daseinsstufe. He has been a guest at Cristina's inn for two months and she has gradually come to represent not just the kind of girl he wants to marry, but the girl he wants. But whereas Florindo in his Praeexistenz easily voices many things he does not mean, the captain in his Existenz has great difficulty finding the words to express what he feels so deeply. He loves Cristina, and he knows that his marriage to her would be 'the way to his higher self,' but he cannot bring himself to tell her. Ironically, Florindo provides the impetus for the captain's proposal to Cristina. Florindo, in a letter, refers to Cristina and the captain as "you both." The captain is overjoyed: "Auf einem Fetzen Papier sind das

Mädchen und ich ein Paar." (p. 248) With much hesitancy, he finally asks Cristina to become his wife. The captain has thus also come home--home to himself.

Early in the comedy, Cristina is aptly referred to with the phrase, "like a child." She is also portrayed as a type rather than as an individual: "Sie trägt die Tracht eines reichen Bauernmädchens..." (p. 121) As is typical of a child, she is naïve. She is so terribly naïve, in fact, that she speaks to a stranger (the captain) on a semi-lighted street in Venice! Her goal to have "eine ordentliche Trauung in der Kirche, mit Zeugen und allem, wie es sich schickt." (p. 148) is an indication of her propriety. It is also, however, further proof of her naïveté, because she is thinking in terms of a festive wedding ceremony instead of the uniting of two people.

By definition, a child is in the pre-existential Daseinsstufe. Cristina's reaction to Florindo, then, may be considered normal. She is completely mesmerized by him. During the dinner at Ceneda prior to her seduction, she is intoxicated even without the wine; "Cristina wie aus dem Traum: 'Was soll mir noch Wein tun oder nicht tun?'" (p. 172)

The next morning, it is clear that Cristina's possibilities as a woman have been awakened. She already regards herself as Florindo's wife, perhaps because only within the bonds of marriage will she not be "lost." She tries to convey her new-found feelings to her maid: "Ich hätte nicht im Mädchenstand sterben mögen...Und gehöre mit Leib und Seele einem, den ich liebe, und weiss, wofür ich auf der Welt bin." (p. 213)

Two months later, Cristina still considers marriage to be a noble institution, even though at that time, she does not think that she will

ever want to marry. During the long, awkward conversation in which the captain professes his love for her, however, Cristina brings herself to admit to him the result of her night with Florindo: "...jetzt weiss ich, was ein Mann ist und auch was eine Frau ist." (p. 263) In that Florindo seduced Cristina, he only made her capable of marriage and thus receptive to the captain. Therein lies the extreme irony--that Florindo is not able to follow Cristina along the path to Existenz for which his seduction prepared her! Cristina has indeed reached Existenz. She is no longer a child; she is a woman. She accepts the captain's proposal of marriage once she is convinced that it is sincere. When, on the heels of this conversation with the captain, Florindo stops at the inn for a pause in his travels, the only effect he has on Cristina is to strengthen her commitment to the captain: "Der hat mir nichts weggenommen. Wie gut, dass ich ihn gesehen habe." (p. 282) Cristina does, indeed, have a homecoming. She finds herself through a new sense of her Dasein which she sought in Florindo's love, but which she found in the captain's love.



## CHAPTER V

### DER SCHWIERIGE

The third comedy to be discussed in this thesis, Der Schwierige, was written in 1918. If one remembers that the period in which Hofmannsthal wrote comedies stretched in time from 1910 to 1926, this work, appearing exactly in the middle of that period as it does, might be thought of as representing the peak of his endeavors within the genre of comedy. When one looks beyond the chronological aspects, this suspicion grows stronger. Der Schwierige is entirely Hofmannsthal's own. Although the collaboration with Richard Strauss had been valuable, this phase was over, and Hofmannsthal was never to write another comedy for music. Moreover, the material for this comedy was neither drawn from existing ideas, as was Cristinas Heimreise, nor put in the framework of past history, as was Der Rosenkavalier. The setting of Der Schwierige is Austria in late 1917, a time when most people knew that World War I was drawing to a close. This comedy then, grew out of the poet's concern with his own time. The figures in it seem to be sketched from models which probably moved in the Vienna of that day. It pictures the aristocratic society of post-war Austria.

Der Schwierige seems to be the peak of Hofmannsthal's achievement in comedy thus far in another respect also. Hofmannsthal's primary concern has been with the interwoven relationships of the characters, rather than with their actions. This can be seen progressively in his comedies: there was little exterior action in Der Rosenkavalier, even

less in Cristinas Heimreise, and now almost none in Der Schwierige. This fact recalls to mind a statement made in the introduction to this study-- that the over-riding motif in Hofmannsthal's comedies is to show the change in a human being from immaturity (Praeexistenz) to the establishment of a valid ethical commitment to life (Existenz). Hofmannsthal's didacticism is clear in Der Schwierige. Since there is no action, the reader's attention must be focused upon the development of the characters themselves. Moreover, the didacticism in this work can be seen on two levels. Hofmannsthal presents a 'lesson of life' in general, but he seems to be teaching the Austrians in particular that they must go on, that they have not lost everything in World War I.

As is mentioned above, the plot as far as exterior action is concerned, is so simple that it is practically non-existent. Hans Karl Bühl, a bachelor of thirty-nine and a veteran of W. W. I who lives with his widowed sister, Crescence, and his nephew, Stani, goes to an evening party at the house of the Altenwyls. He talks there with several people, and the evening ends with his engagement to the Altenwyl daughter, Helene. To say that there is almost no exterior action is correct, but it is also misleading. There is a great deal of action, but it takes place in and through the conversation of the characters. It is from this "inner action" that the comedy receives its substance. It is also where one's attention must be directed to discover the characters of Hans Karl Bühl and Helene.

Hans Karl Bühl is the title figure, "The Difficult One," of the play. He seems "difficult" to the other characters because he cannot, or will not, fit into their society. He is a nobleman; yet, he does not

like to go to parties, and he refuses to play bridge. The people find this strange, but they are even more perplexed by the fact that he has never said a word in Parliament like the other noblemen, and by the fact that at the age of thirty-nine, he is still a bachelor. Not only does society find him "difficult," he also finds himself difficult, precisely because he cannot be comfortable in social situations. Hans Karl thus remains an outsider.

Hans Karl's "double difficulty" is continually referred to with the term, "fixieren." The word, in fact, becomes a leitmotif. On the one hand, he cannot make up his own mind. He always feels compelled to consider, and reconsider, everything--even whether to attend a routine party or not: "Ich binde mich so ungern...ich hätt mirs gern noch überlegt."<sup>15</sup> In other words, he cannot commit himself to anything, however slight. On the other hand, neither can anyone else get him to commit himself. As much as they would like to and as much as they try, the other characters cannot "catch" him, either for a bridge party or for a longer and deeper relationship. Hans Karl's sister, Crescence, probably expresses this best: "...nichts Eleganteres als die Art, wie du die Menschen behandelst, die grosse air, die distanz..." (p. 152)

If Hans Karl were to act (to commit himself), he would not know when to do it because he also has a difficulty in relation to time. This problem goes hand in hand with that discussed in the preceding paragraph.

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<sup>15</sup>Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Der Schwierige, Gesammelte Werke, Herbert Steiner, comp. (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1954), v. 8, pp. 151-152. Henceforth when this comedy is quoted directly the page numbers will be given in parenthesis immediately following the quotation.

Perhaps he cannot make up his mind to do something because of his instinctive aversion to time. At any rate, he refuses to recognize either time or its passing. If he were to recognize time, he would be limiting himself, and he must remain unlimited in every respect. Only in this way, can he be at ease. Thus he says, "...ich hab manchmal die Idee, dass gar nichts Neues auf der Welt passiert." (p. 211) Somewhat later, he again expresses his lack of understanding of time: "...in jedem Anfang liegt die Ewigkeit." (p. 242) And yet Hans Karl is aware of his age, and often scolds himself for having such loose ends at the age of thirty-nine. This problem is typical; he is a difficult figure, indeed.

Hans Karl's same basic unwillingness to limit himself applies to his difficulty of expressing himself in words. During the comedy, he is often described with the words, "Hans Karl schweigt" or "Hans Karl raucht," because much of the time, he just sits and lets the other characters talk. They pause, but he does not speak, so they must continue. And when he does speak, there are so many nuances to what he says that his true meaning is left in question. Stani is correct when he says, "Bei dir darf man nichts wörtlich nehmen." (p. 188) Thus, even when he speaks, Hans Karl does not limit himself. He readily admits that he does not like long conversations. As a result, when he has a long discussion with Stani and later with Antoinette, and speaks of marriage, philosophy, and Zufall, it comes as a surprise to the audience. It raises the question; does he really know what he is talking about?

Because there are so many ambiguities about Hans Karl, one wonders on which of Hofmannsthal's three arbitrary levels in the development of

the individual--Praeexistenz, Zwischenzustand, or Existenz--the author would place this character. But precisely because there are so many ambiguities about him, it becomes apparent that Hans Karl is in the ambivalent Zwischenzustand. He is not an irresponsible youth, and he is not an adventurer in search of his lost youth, but neither has he committed himself to a "complete" life within the structure of society.

Hans Karl is an ambiguous character indeed. Nobody (with the possible exception of Helene) understands him, and he does not understand himself. Hence, it is both enlightening and ironic when he unwittingly characterizes himself as he is describing Furlani, his favorite clown:

...er ist der, der alle begreifen, der allen helfen möchte und dabei alles in die grösste Konfusion bringt...  
 Er bringt alles durcheinander; wo er hinget, geht alles drunter und drüber...Er aber tut scheinbar nichts mit Absicht--er geht immer auf die Absicht der andern ein.  
 Er möchte alles mittun, was die andern tun, soviel guten willen hat er... (pp. 220-221)

Hans Karl's 'good will' is manifest in his decision to go to the party at the Altenwyl home. He, like Furlani, is not going with any intentions of his own, but to help the intentions of others be realized. For the first time in his life, Hans Karl has a plan--a two-fold plan: (1) to reconcile Antoinette with her husband, and (2) to convince Helene that she should marry his nephew, Stani. The question remains, however: will Hans Karl's helpfulness, like Furlani's, also cause confusion?

Hans Karl, who up to this point in the drama has been silent a good deal of the time, now becomes the main speaker. He does not play bridge, so it is natural to find him in conversation. He has promised his good friend, Hechingen, to try to mediate the strained relationship between him and his wife, Antoinette. Hans Karl thinks of both the man

and his wife as friends. Antoinette, however, loves Hans Karl. He knows this, and thinks that perhaps because she will listen to him, he can indeed be of help to Hechingen. Hans Karl, therefore, tells her his conception of marriage: "...es gibt halt auch eine Notwendigkeit zwischen Männern und Frauen...da ist ein Zueinandermüssen und Verzeihung und Versöhnung und Beieinanderbleiben." (p. 245) By speaking of the need a man and a wife have for each other, Hans Karl is attempting to influence Antoinette to accept her responsibility to her husband. That he fails is obvious by Antoinette's reply: "Alles was du redst, das heisst ja gar nichts anderes, als dass du...die Helene heiraten wirst." (p. 246) Hans Karl denies this, of course, because at the moment his major concern is that Hechingen and Antoinette be happy together, and because he honestly does not know that five minutes later he will tell Helene of his love for her. The conversation with Antoinette may thus be seen as a necessary prelude to Hans Karl's conversation with Helene-- a prelude to the climax of the play.

Hans Karl is to speak with Helene in order to prepare the way for Stani's proposal to her. Seemingly everyone except Hans Karl knows that Helene is in love with him. This fact lends the right measure of anticipation to this scene. When he tells her, "...an Ihnen ist nicht die Schönheit das Entscheidende...in Ihnen liegt das Notwendige..." (p. 260) the audience suspects that Stani will lose and that Hans Karl will be the one to propose to Helene. He goes further and tells her about his experience on the front when he was buried alive:

...dreissig Sekunden sollen es gewesen sein, aber nach innen hat das ein anderes Mass. Für mich wars eine ganze Lebenszeit, und in diesem Stück Leben, da waren Sie meine Frau. (p. 263)

Hans Karl, in this indirect manner, has told Helene of his love for her. She understands him, and because of this, she knows the significance of what he has just said. The audience expects that Hans Karl will now go the last step and not just tell her he loves her, but actually commit himself to her. But he does not! He recommends, instead, that she marry Stan! The conversation ends, and Hans Karl leaves the party.

The third act finds Hans Karl coming back to the party. He meets Helene, who was on the verge of going after him, at the door. They again have a long discussion; it ends with their engagement. Hans Karl is now at peace with himself: "Du machst einen so ruhig in einem selber." (p. 301) Finally, Hans Karl Bühl has reached Existenz; he has achieved the "Verknüpfung mit der Welt" through the commitment of two individuals. By making a decision to marry Helene, he has thus built a bridge, not only to another person, but to society as well. He will no longer be an outsider:

Der Triumph dieses Lustspiels besteht darin, dass es eine gefährdete Gestalt wie die des Hans Karl, eine Gestalt radikaler menschlicher Krise und 'Asozialität,' in die freundlichen Bezirke des Lebens zurückzuführen vermocht hat.<sup>16</sup>

Hofmannsthal has used, and very effectively, the three major ways open to him as a writer to indicate the character of Helene to the audience: (1) by what the other characters say about her, (2) by what she says herself, and (3) by what she does. Her character develops throughout the comedy in exactly that progression.

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<sup>16</sup>Benno von Wiese, Das Deutsche Drama (Düsseldorf: August Bagel Verlag, 1969), v. 2, p. 247.

First, by what the other characters say about her, the audience learns that even at the age of twenty-one, Helene is in every respect the gracious, well-disciplined, aristocratic lady. In addition to being gracious and tactful, she is also compassionate. Helene is seemingly happy, and she fulfills her function in society well. Since she is a mature person, according to Hofmannsthal's own criteria, she must be categorized as already being at the level of Existenz. That Helene is already on the existential level is especially apparent if one compares her with the other characters in the comedy. It is perhaps noteworthy that even a quick comparison of Helene and Stani shows that the two are exact opposites. Stani is tactless, egotistic, and impulsive; it is thus most ironic that their marriage was considered.

That Helene loves Hans Karl ceases to be rumor and becomes fact when she says to Neuhoff, "Ich bin schon da für ihn, irgendwie bin ich schon da." (p. 255) The real insight into Helene's character, however, is gained from two scenes in which she appears with Hans Karl, and from her actions between the scenes. In the first of these, in the second act, she speaks about herself to Hans Karl. But for the most part, the content of her speech is both a reflection of what he has just said about her, and an invitation for him to say more. In this way, and it is so subtle that it can easily be missed, Helene forces Hans Karl to confess his feelings for her.

When Hans Karl leaves, Helene weeps at first, but then she acts. She writes a letter to her father in which she bids farewell to her life as it has been, and fetches her coat in order to go out into the street after Hans Karl. She is ready to leave the existing society and give up



everything, if need be, for him. She is no longer content to live a life of "ruhiges Benehmen;" she wants to be Hans Karl's wife. Since Hans Karl comes back, it is not necessary for her to "disgrace" herself by going after him. But she still must take the initiative if they are ever to become man and wife. Hans Karl does not know why he returned, so she tells him: "Ihre tiefere Willen haben Sie eben hierher zurückgeführt." (p. 297) Hans Karl's 'deeper will' is his love for Helene, and they both know it. When he is nevertheless hesitant, she again takes command and commits him to her by leaving him no recourse: "...ich bin in dich verliebt, und ich will...von deinem Leben, von deiner Seele, von allem--mein Teil." (p. 299) Helene was a complete person before, but only through Hans Karl can she have true fulfillment. Helene, as her character is portrayed, embodies an ideal: she is gracious, tactful, but utterly resolute in a crisis. Hofmannsthal's didacticism is again evident. He is saying to his Austrian countrymen that it is wonderful to be gracious and refined, but that they must also be resolute in the crises of the post-war years and build a new life for themselves. The author further seems to be saying that the holocaust of the Great War has left one of the oldest and most sacred institutions--marriage--unscathed.

## CHAPTER VI

### DER UNBESTECHLICHE

Hofmannsthal wrote the comedy following Der Schwierige, Der Unbestechliche, during a three-month period in the early 1920's. Because Der Unbestechliche is Hofmannsthal's only five-act comedy and because it contains much more exterior action than any of his previous comedies, most critics consider this comedy to be a departure from his earlier works in this genre. Many critics, moreover, seem to think that Der Unbestechliche is not as good a work as Hofmannsthal's earlier comedies. As a result, one finds that in most secondary literature about Hofmannsthal Der Unbestechliche is either not mentioned at all or is treated only in comparison with his other comedies. When one looks closely, however, it is seen that the main theme of Der Unbestechliche is again the maturation theme. This work then, does not represent a departure from Hofmannsthal's earlier endeavors. Rather, it represents a variation on a theme.

Theodor, the chief servant, is the title figure, "The Incorruptible One." He is the tool through which everything happens; he holds the plot together and at the same time furnishes the impetus for all the action of the play. The comedy finds Jaromir, his wife, Anna, and their two small children living with his widowed mother, the baroness, in her palatial home. As the curtain opens, it is learned that Jaromir has invited two of his "former" lovers, Marie and Melanie, to spend a week with him and his family. Just as they are arriving, Theodor, who is utterly repulsed

by Jaromir and his actions, persuades the baroness to give him a free hand to "take care" of the situation. Theodor, having served Jaromir for seventeen years, knows both him and his two visitors quite well. Accordingly, the second act finds Theodor laying the foundation for his intrigue, which he hopes will cause Marie and Melanie to decide to cut their visit short. His intrigue, which unfolds in the course of the third and fourth acts, is successful. The two girls decide to leave on the next train. Their departure has prepared the way for the reconciliation between Jaromir and Anna. It is seen that the action in Der Unbestechliche, unlike that in classical drama, builds during the first four acts up to the denouement in the last act. The action and the other characters thus seem to have just one function--to enable Jaromir and Anna to experience their Wandlung to Existenz. Although Jaromir and Anna (the figures to be focused upon in this chapter) are off the stage a good deal of the time, they nevertheless become the two main characters of the comedy.

At the beginning of the comedy, Anna seems to be naïveté personified. She does not see through her husband's maneuvers at all! Jaromir cannot be bothered with her, but she accepts this because: "...es ist seine Arbeit, die braucht ein solches Mass von Vertiefung, dass er für alle anderen Sachen zerstreut ist."<sup>17</sup> That Jaromir knows how completely "harmless" Anna is and that he capitalizes on this is seen in his characterization of her: "Sie ist nicht imstande, irgend etwas, das von mir

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<sup>17</sup>Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Der Unbestechliche, Gesammelte Werke, Herbert Steiner, comp. (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1956), v. 10, p. 303. Henceforth when this comedy is quoted directly, the page numbers will be given in parenthesis immediately following the quotation.

ausgeht, in dem hässlichen Licht zu sehen." (p. 331) She is indeed not capable of "seeing him in a bad light." She tells the baroness not to worry that Melanie's guest room on the top floor of their mansion is rather isolated, because Jaromir's room is so close he could easily hear her call. It is difficult to imagine that Anna can be that naïve. One can only conclude that in spite of her marriage and her motherhood she is still in the naïveté of Praeexistenz.

Anna, however, does not remain in that condition. When she appears in the second act, she is described as "blass und verändert." (p. 340) She is fighting against seeing the real Jaromir, but she is already having doubts. Anna appears only once in the third act, and she does not speak at all. Her son, der kleine Jaromir, asks her a question, but she only "nickt zerstreut vor sich hin." (p. 348) She is going through the agonizing process of change. Anna's Wandlung is that she must recognize Jaromir for what he really is. She must leave her dream-world; she must grow up.

Anna does not appear in the fourth act at all, but she has continued and completed her process of change. When she enters the stage in the fifth act, she is a changed person. She is self-assertive for the first time in her life. She implores her husband, "Ich bitte dich, hab einen Moment Zeit für mich, ...Ich muss dir etwas sagen." (p. 391) Jaromir is so shocked, he does just that; he stands there, and she talks to him. She tells him that for the first time she has experienced the emotion of jealousy. She has also recognized a deeper feeling within herself, and she explains this to her husband:

Da hab ich einen Augenblick geglaubt, dass ich es auch ertragen könnte, wenn es sein müsste--und auch ohne dich

leben könnte...Und da ist etwas über mich gekommen...so  
wie wenn gar nichts mehr in der Welt zu mir gehören würde,  
auch meine Hände nicht, meine Füße nicht, und mein  
Gesicht nicht! (p. 393)

She has seen that Jaromir has faults, but more importantly, she has realized that her "deeper self" is inseparably bound to him. She needs him in order to be something herself! Only now since Anna has recognized both that Jaromir is a fallible human being and that she has a need for him, is she in a position to really live. She has reached Existenz.

At the beginning of the play, Jaromir is also at the level of Praeexistenz. He is completely immersed in aestheticism, and can only see the totality of things. This is especially seen in his relationships with women. His aesthetic glimpse does not reach deep enough to see the person in his wife. Because he cannot see the totality of one person, he continues his "bachelor-life" even after he is married and a father. He thinks he can have a meaningful experience only if he disperses himself among a plurality of women, each one of which is just like the other.

His Praeexistenz is further indicated by his attempts at writing. Jaromir has already published one novel and is at work on his second. His novels are autobiographical sketches of his experiences with women. His efforts at writing thus seem in reality to be an attempt to transpose the responsibility of a love affair into the aesthetic realm where no commitment is required. Jaromir is Schicksallos; he will not allow anything to happen to himself.

Jaromir is certainly not the typical father. It, therefore, seems even more significant that his four-year old son, der kleine Jaromir, is his namesake. Der kleine Jaromir, who appears on the stage

for a short time at several intervals throughout the comedy, seems to be symbolic of Jaromir's "deeper self." This is most apparent in his cries, "Theodor, wo ist der Papi? Wo ist der Papi? Ich kann ihn nicht finden..." (p. 383) Of course, he cannot find his father, because his father refuses to accept fatherhood.

Jaromir remains completely unchanged throughout the first four acts of the play. This is indicated by his reaction, late in the fourth act, to the news that Melanie also plans to leave yet that evening. Jaromir, "...völlig verstört und zu laut, ja mit einem Aufstampfen des Fusses: 'Das ist ungeheuerlich!'" (p. 371)

The fifth act, however, brings the possibility of a Wandlung. The two other women in his life have departed, and he is alone with his wife. It is because of Anna's strength, however, that Jaromir's possibility of a transition is realized. She definitely emerges as the stronger of the two characters. Jaromir decides to discontinue his writing, which he describes as "...ein abscheuliches Überbleibsel aus meiner zu langen Junggesellenzeit." (p. 396) He also admits to Anna that since she has just shared her feelings with him, he now sees her for the first time: "Du bist lieb! Du bist mein einziges, süßes Liebstes auf der Welt!...Du bist das alles, du, nur du!" (p. 395) Not only does Anna come to recognize Jaromir for what he is, but he also realizes what he has been. Having come to this realization, he changes. He finds himself by abandoning his hypocrisy and devoting himself entirely to one woman--his wife. The fifth act may be thought of as containing a reconciliation between Jaromir and Anna, but in a larger sense, it depicts the beginning of their marriage--the beginning of their life together in Existenz.

## CHAPTER VII

### ARABELLA

Arabella, which he completed in 1926, just three years before his death, was to be Hofmannsthal's last comedy. Occupying only one hundred pages in his complete works as it does, it is also his shortest comedy. Similar to Der Rosenkavalier before it, Arabella is set in an earlier century (the nineteenth) and it also contains a masquerade. Arabella is also somewhat similar to Der Unbestechliche in that there is a great deal of exterior action. In spite of these noted similarities to other works, however, Hofmannsthal's last comedy is again a unique work of art. The major theme of this comedy is still the development of the characters to Existenz, and the achievement of this level is again expressed by marriage. The comedy, however, presents this theme in an entirely different manner. In Arabella, the characters do not develop through conversation as they do in the other comedies (even in Der Unbestechliche); rather, their development is a direct result of the action in the comedy. Thus it is seen that in his last comedy, Hofmannsthal combined the action and the character development to such an extent that neither could exist without the other.

The plot of the comedy revolves around Arabella and her family (father, Waldner; mother, Adelaide; and sister Zdenka). The family is living in a hotel in Vienna, but they are on the verge of being evicted. Waldner, a former army officer, is a compulsive gambler, and as a result, can pay neither his rent nor the steady stream of creditors knocking at

his door. The state of the family finances has totally shaped the lives of the two daughters. Arabella, the elder, is treated like a prize poodle. The parents hope to solve their economic crisis by her "successful" marriage to a wealthy man. Accordingly, Waldner has written several of his friends from army days enclosing a photograph of the beautiful Arabella. The fourteen-year old Zdenka has been forced to live her life masquerading as a boy because her parents cannot afford to present two girls to Viennese society. As the play begins, Waldner is continuing his gambling because he feels lucky, and he thinks he might win. Meanwhile his wife, Adelaide, has turned to the occult; she has engaged a gypsy to prophesy the family's future. The gypsy (who supplies the Vordeutung for the play) prophesies the following: an officer, having been "called" by a letter, comes from afar to marry Arabella. A second daughter, however, comes between the officer and Arabella. A conflict results, swords are drawn, and the officer leaves without marrying Arabella. The audience knows that since this is a comedy, it cannot end quite like that. A great deal of interest and anticipation has thus been created, and the rest of the play moves quite rapidly.

Four young suitors are seeking Arabella's hand in marriage, but she is not really interested in any of them. Zdenka, however, loves one of them, Matteo. Out of her concern for Matteo, Zdenka (who as Zdenko is his best friend) writes him love letters to which she signs Arabella's name. Meanwhile, Mandryka has received a letter from Waldner, and comes from his home in Hungary to take Arabella back with him as his wife. He proposes at the Faschingsball that night; Arabella accepts, and they all



celebrate with great festivity. Mandryka's merrymaking stops abruptly, however, as he overhears Zdenka giving Matteo the key to Arabella's room. It is actually Zdenka who will be awaiting Matteo there, but neither he nor Mandryka know that. Mandryka, therefore, draws the wrong conclusion when Arabella excuses herself to go home and retire early. Mandryka angrily escorts the parents back to the hotel. They find Matteo and Arabella speaking with each other in the lobby. That Arabella is surprised and annoyed to find Matteo there after she has just made love to him (he thinks) causes him to wonder if he is losing his sanity, and Matteo remains silent. Arabella, of course, denies Mandryka's allegations, but in vain. Just as Mandryka and Waldner are prepared to engage in a duel, Zdenka appears at the top of the stairs dressed in a negligee. Everyone realizes that it has all been a monumental misunderstanding. Eventually, everything is resolved, and Waldner and Adelaide find themselves making plans for not one wedding, but for two weddings. While the maturation theme could be applied to all of the above-mentioned characters, it is best expressed through the figures of Mandryka and Arabella. As a result, this chapter focuses upon these two characters.

At his entrance onto the stage, Mandryka is described as a "...grosser, sehr kräftiger eleganter Mann von höchstens fünfunddreissig Jahren,...etwas undefinierbar Ländliches in der Erscheinung."<sup>18</sup> Because he is described as a type instead of as an individual, it is suspected

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<sup>18</sup>Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Arabella, Gesammelte Werke, Herbert Steiner, comp. (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1956), v. 10, p. 36. The page numbers will be given in parenthesis immediately following subsequent direct quotations from this comedy.

that he is on the pre-existential Daseinsstufe. This suspicion grows as a result of his actions and of his speech. In the first place, he feels drawn to Arabella, and has made the decision to marry her on the basis of a photograph! This fact, in addition to his continual reference to her beauty, shows that he is obviously tremendously influenced by aesthetics. A second insight into his character is gained from his mention of his deceased wife. He describes her as an "angel" who left him after only two years. While it is to be expected that he would think highly of someone to whom he was married, his use of precisely that adjective to describe her seems to indicate that throughout his first marriage he was still living in a dream-world.

When Arabella accepts Mandryka's proposal of marriage, he is beside himself with happiness. He orders his servants to bring champagne, food, and flowers to augment the dancing and the music. He feels he must celebrate this important occasion as he would if he were at home. As Mandryka thus tries to bring his world to him, he seems to be in the Zwischenzustand. He is not back at his Hungarian estate and he is not at home in Vienna, just as he is neither totally uncommitted nor totally committed to a new life.

But later, when Mandryka is at the hotel confronting Arabella, after having overheard the scene between Zdenka and Matteo, the supreme confidence of Praeexistenz returns. Upon hearing Arabella deny that she is guilty of any wrongdoing, Mandryka righteously says: "Nicht deine Seele so verschwören, Mädel! Mir tut das Herz so weh um dich." (p. 88) With the typical arrogance of a truly immature person, he will not even

listen to an explanation. His tone is not that of a forgiving future husband; his tone is that of a judge.

After Zdenka makes herself known, however, Mandryka no longer sees himself as the confident, self-righteous person. He recognizes that he has been the guilty one in that he has drawn such hasty conclusions. He is now angry with himself: "Das Mädél war der Groom! Ich möcht in den Boden sinken! Wie soll sie jemals mir verzeihen können, wo ich mir selber nicht verzeihen kann!" (p. 93) The one action of Zdenka stepping to the top of the stairway dressed as a girl is like a bolt of lightning striking him. It leaves him a changed man. In his new-found humility, Mandryka apologizes profusely. He has fallen out of his dream-world; he has grown up. He commits himself anew to Arabella, but that is all he can do. Now it is up to Arabella; will she return his commitment?

Arabella, the title figure, is characterized, as she is up to the present time, during the first act. That she is a teenager automatically places her on the pre-existential Daseinsstufe. She is beautiful and has a number of suitors who constantly vie for her companionship. She is having the "time of her life" being a young girl. And yet, Arabella is aware that the time has come for her to grow up and leave this phase of her life behind her. She is becoming aware of time's passing. There are two indications of her new awareness. First, she realizes that it is extremely unfair that her sister is not allowed to live a normal life. Her compassion is evident as she says, "Zdenkerl, mir scheint, Zeit wärs, dass du ein Mädél wirst vor aller Welt und die Maskerad ein End hat." (p. 22) Secondly, Fasching takes on a new significance for Arabella:

"Heut abend ist der Fasching aus, Heut abend muss ich mich entscheiden."  
 (p. 24) Fasching thus seems to be a symbol of the frivolous atmosphere of Praeexistenz. It is, therefore, appropriate that, after accepting Mandryka's proposal, Arabella should bid farewell to her Mädchenzeit at the Faschingsball.

She dances one last time with each of her suitors, tells them each good-by, and then goes home to retire early after her emotion-packed evening. But that she has not yet really changed is seen as she walks into the hotel lobby: "Arabella tritt ein...Ihre Augen sind halb geschlossen, ihr Gesicht hat einen glücklichen Ausdruck,...wie wach träumend." (p. 77) Arabella is living in a dream. When she looks at Mandryka, she does not see him; she sees a "prince charming."

Her dream is soon shattered, however, by Mandryka's allegations. Arabella is then further insulted by his refusal to believe her, and by his eagerness to engage in a duel with her father. She begins to see things more clearly: "Was ist an allem in der Welt, wenn dieser Mann so schwach ist und die Kraft nicht hat, an mich zu glauben!" (p. 86) The picture of "prince charming" fades away as Arabella recognizes that Mandryka is a unique person with his own special set of weaknesses and attributes. This realization is necessary if she is to share a mature life with him. The artificial glow of her Mädchenzeit has disappeared, but is she ready to commit herself to an adult relationship? Arabella requests her servant to bring her a glass of fresh, spring water. She goes upstairs to drink the water herself. As she is about to empty the glass, however, she feels that Mandryka is still waiting for her downstairs, and she feels that she does love him. She descends the stairs,

they drink the water together according to the old custom, and are thus "Verlobte und Verbundene." (p. 100) Because it involves much soul-searching and the painful awareness that the world is indeed not rose-colored, Arabella's Wandlung has not been easy. She is able, nevertheless, to reach the goal of Existenz.

## CHAPTER VIII

### CONCLUSIONS

The preceding chapters have included a study of twelve characters from five comedies with the intention of showing that the maturation theme (transition from Praeexistenz to Existenz) is an important theme in Hofmannsthal's comedies. In the introduction to this paper, Praeexistenz and Existenz were defined as immaturity and maturity, respectively. This definition is still valid, but as a result of the in-depth study of the twelve characters, it is now possible to embellish this definition in order to gain a clearer understanding of just what Hofmannsthal meant by the terms, Praeexistenz and Existenz.

An individual living in Praeexistenz is living in a dream-world. Accordingly, he is in touch neither with the real world as it exists nor with the real people who live there. Rather, his intoxication causes him to see everything through rose-colored glasses. Because his aesthetic view can only perceive silhouettes, he sees people only as part of a totality--as types. He cannot recognize individual personalities. Furthermore, since the "pre-existential" person is either very young or is trying to recapture his youth, he is usually arrogant, inconsiderate of others, and preoccupied with eroticism. He is assisted in his erotic adventures by his persuasiveness and by his use of flowery language. Moreover, because he either cannot, or will not, accept responsibility, the "pre-existential" individual remains totally uncommitted, and thus

succeeds in ignoring the past and future. He recognizes only the present tense.

On the other hand, the individual who has undergone a change to Existenz does see the world and its people as they really are. He sees the complete picture instead of just the silhouette. Because of the growing awareness of his own age, he knows that time does not stand still. This awareness is often a by-product of a vivid realization of his mortality. Because the "existential" person understands that he is a finite being, whose life had a definite beginning and will have a definite ending, he is quite humble. He no longer categorizes people because he recognizes the individuality of each person. Ironically, however, due to his understanding that each experience and each emotion is unique, the "existential" person finds words sometimes inadequate to express his feelings. The "existential" individual has accepted responsibility, and he, therefore, commits himself to another person. This commitment is usually symbolized by marriage. By committing himself to another individual in marriage, this person is fulfilling a traditional social role, and is thus also committing himself to society. Only in this way can he experience the true happiness of life.

Because one criterion (the maturation theme) has been applied to the twelve characters studied in the preceding chapters, one tends inevitably to draw comparisons between the figures. For example, Octavian, Baron von Ochs, Florindo, Jaromir, and to a lesser extent, Mandryka, are similar in that they are typical examples of Praeexistenz at the beginning of their respective comedies. Jaromir and Mandryka undergo the change to Existenz, but the others remain stereotypes of Praeexistenz. A

second comparison can be made between Cristina, Anna, and Arabella because they are portrayed as young, naïvé girls. All three, however, mature into women. A further similarity is seen between the Marschallin and Baron von Ochs. Both try to regain their lost youth, but neither succeeds. The Marschallin finds herself, and thus stops trying to find her youth. Ochs, however, does not change; he continues his search. The realization of age and time is a fourth condition which offers a comparison between a few of the characters. The Marschallin, the captain, Hans Karl, Jaromir, and Arabella all are partially forced into Existenz through their awareness of time. A final comparison and contrast is seen in the characters' achievement, or lack of achievement, of the mature state of Existenz. The Marschallin, the captain, Cristina, Hans Karl, Helene, Jaromir, Anna, Mandryka, and Arabella are similar to each other in that they all reach Existenz. On the other hand, one sees that Octavian, Ochs, and Florindo are similar to each other and different from the others because they do not reach Existenz.

In spite of the above-mentioned similarities, however, Hofmannsthal's characters do not remain types. On the contrary, each becomes an individual in his own right. No character in the five comedies studied in this thesis ever becomes a "duplicate-copy" of any other character. Only when one understands this can one truly enjoy the comedies. It seems, in fact, that precisely because Hofmannsthal is so convincing in the individualization of his characters and their actions that his comedies are such satisfying works of art.

In order to acquire a complete understanding of how important the maturation theme is to Hofmannsthal's comedies, it is also necessary to



look at their structure. In most of the comedies the setting of the last act is exactly the same as, or very similar to, the setting of the first act. Thus, physically at least, the characters are in the same place at the end of the play as at the beginning. Emotionally, however, they have not remained in the same place; they have moved into Existenz. The emotional development of the characters is further accentuated by the lack of exterior action. The setting is changed and the action occurs within the characters themselves. This "inner action" also seems to be emphasized by the span of time within each comedy. The time-span ranges from one evening in Der Schwierige to a few days in Der Rosenkavalier. The setting, the action, and the time-span thus become secondary to the development of the characters. The one exception to the above is Cristinas Heimreise where the first and last acts take place in two different locations, and where the time-span is sixty-four days. Since this comedy is entitled Cristina's Journey Home, however, neither the setting nor the time-span seems to represent a departure from the theme of the other comedies. Both the setting and the time seem to be necessary to show her homecoming--her inner transition to maturity.

Because everything in the comedies seems to be geared to the maturation of the characters, yet another observation should be made. The three characters who remain at the level of immaturity, all seem to help the other characters in their respective comedies to reach Existenz. In Der Rosenkavalier, for example, the actions and conversations of Octavian and Ochs (who do not change) assist the Marschallin in her transition to Existenz by causing her awareness of her age. One also

finds Florindo, in Cristinas Heimreise, assisting in the maturation of both the captain and Cristina, while remaining in Praeexistenz himself. Hence, the function of Octavian, Ochs, and Florindo as characters themselves seems to be diminished. Their function becomes secondary--to hold the plot together and to provide the impetus for the other characters' Wandlung. It seems obvious that Hofmannsthal intended the audience to remember best those characters who do achieve Existenz. In his last three comedies, almost all the characters undergo the transition from irresponsibility to responsibility; it, therefore, seems that the more comedies Hofmannsthal wrote, the more didactic he became.

It has been seen that the majority of Hofmannsthal's characters do change from Praeexistenz to Existenz. It has thus been shown that the maturation theme is indeed central to Hofmannsthal's comedies. This is especially significant if one remembers that his last three comedies were written, and that his characters were assuming responsibility and making ethical commitments to society, between the years of 1918 and 1926. Hofmannsthal was creating art out of contemporary life and giving his audiences a clue to solving conflicts in their own lives at a time when on both sides of the Atlantic members of the "lost generation" were raising their cries of doom, and when in Germany many weird doctrines were being spawned. Hofmannsthal's achievement in the genre of comedy is fantastic when viewed in this perspective. As a result, the importance of Hofmannsthal's comedies for German literature cannot be over-emphasized. There is no tradition of high comedy as a strong ethical and educational influence in German literature. The fact that Hofmannsthal gave to literature in general, and to German literature

in particular, masterpieces of comedy which present and solve universal problems assures him a place among the great figures of literature.

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