A View From Death: *Ariadne auf Naxos* as Failed Totality

Chadwick Jenkins

> I have the feeling that Hofmannsthal begins each of these pastiches of a past time with an ironic design but that his admirable virtuosity carries them off with such success that he always ends by taking them seriously. And it is a pity: a pastiche subject, like *Ariadne*, only has its value through irony, and this irony must especially come out in the end.
>
> —*Romain Rolland* (cited in Ward 2002:248; translation author's)[1]

Originating as a *divertissement* in Hugo von Hofmannsthal's adaptation of Molière's *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme, Ariadne auf Naxos* stemmed from the poet's attempt to create a work wherein "the buffo element . . . is throughout interwoven with the heroic." As he explained it to his collaborator Richard Strauss, the poet saw in this synthesis of *opera seria* and *commedia dell'arte* elements a "new genre which to all appearances reaches back to a much earlier one, just as all development goes in cycles" (Strauss and Hofmannsthal 1961:76).[2] Embedded in *Gentilhomme*, the work reached back towards the *divertissements* familiar in the *comédie-ballets* of Molière's time while simultaneously looking forward to a proto-postmodern aesthetic.[3]

The question that has bedeviled numerous commentators has been whether or not this synthesis is successful (and concomitantly, what constitutes a success in this case). The opera's conclusion has given rise to the most serious contentions (Forsyth 1982:194–203). On the one hand, those who identify the opera with the postmodern tend to see the synthesis as successful—a success predicated upon its perceived lack of cohesion, its tendency towards the fragmentary, the incommensurable. On the other hand, critics such as Karen Forsyth, concentrating on the historicism of the work, condemn it as a failure. Forsyth, in particular, feels that the opera fails owing to Hofmannsthal's inability to reconcile his reversion to lyric drama with the *divertissement* structure of the original conception (1982:56–61). However, such condemnation fails to consider the opera within the larger context of Hofmannsthal's increasing concern with the ethicality of his aesthetic project.

By placing *Ariadne* within the early twentieth century's—and particularly Hofmannsthal's—ambivalent stance regarding the ethical and political nature of aesthetic form, the successful realization of the opera's synthesis emerges as an inherent impossibility; its failure is a direct result of its

Current Musicology, No. 77 (Spring 2004)

author's ethical position. In this paper, I argue that the conclusion of the 1916 version of the opera is an enactment of this impossibility. This requires that we first explore Hofmannsthal's developing concern with the "language crisis" announced by his prose work *Ein Brief* (1903) and his efforts to reinscribe within his oeuvre the lost wholeness that *Ein Brief* describes. Second, we must turn to the opera's protracted genesis to understand how the opera reached its 1916 form and what those alterations imply for an interpretation of the work's meaning. Tracing the work's genesis is no simple task and has been more thoroughly broached in numerous other accounts (Bottenberg 1996; Forsyth 1982; Greene 1986). The "working friendship" of Hofmannsthal and Strauss was often vexed; if *Ariadne* can in some ways be seen to exemplify the virtues of mutual non-comprehension, then nowhere in real life was this virtue better enacted than within their difficult collaboration on this project. While this paper is primarily concerned with Hofmannsthal's aesthetic goals (and it is incontrovertible that Hofmannsthal himself wasted no opportunity in attempting to foist those concerns and goals upon his collaborator), it must necessarily occupy itself with some of the ways in which the poet's vision was refracted through Strauss's musical setting—a setting at times in stark contrast to Hofmannsthal's stated desires.[4] Third, we shall turn to the opera's seemingly intransigent conclusion, not to "solve" its contradictions, but rather to hermeneutically engage them. In sum, my paper revisits a work that began as an elegant ironic pastiche until its poet started "taking [it] seriously" and transformed what he originally termed a "slight interim work" into a projection of his ethical/political ideals (Strauss and Hofmannsthal 1961:77).[5]

Securing Spiritual Space: The Search for a New Totality

Hugo von Hofmannsthal's youthful poetry (written between 1890 and 1898 when the poet was between 16 and 24 years old) regales its readers with visions of unity and wholeness, a great chain of being in which all things are connected. The opening of his 1893 poem *Ich ging hernieder* provides a striking example of this joyous, mystical sense of the connectivity of all things:

> Ich ging hernieder weite Bergesstiegen
> Und fühlt im wundervollen Netz mich liegen,
> In Gottes Netz, im Lebenstraum gefangen.
> Die Winde liefen und die Vögel sangen.
>
> [I once walked down the distant mountain stairways
> And felt that I swayed in a sparkling web,
> In God's net, caught in life's half-dream

The winds rushed and the birds sang.] (translated in Underwood 1988:150–51)

Throughout much of his lyric poetry, the young Hofmannsthal attempts to reveal this "sparkling web" to which all things cohere. The artist is attuned to a Neo-Platonic harmony between the ego and the world, between signifier and signified. However, four years later in an allegorical verse drama entitled *Das kleine Welttheater* (The Little Theater of the World), Hofmannsthal begins to cast doubt upon one's ability to perceive or even experience the unity that had been at the center of so much of his earlier work. In the play, the character of the madman represents the artist. During a soliloquy, the madman characterizes the artist's role as transcending the mere artful description of nature's unity to become the very act of bringing order into being:

Hierhin und dorthin darf ich, ich bin hergeschickt
Zu ordnen, meines ist ein Amt
Des Namen über alle Namen ist.

[From here, from there onward I may go; I am sent
To order things; mine is an office
With a name above all names.] (translated in Underwood 1998:151)

Another character, identified as the servant, admiringly explains *how* the madman struggles to establish this order:

Mit dem ungeheueren Gemenge
Das er selbst im Innern trägt, beginnt er
Nach dem ungeheueren Gemenge
Ausseren Daseins gleichnishaft zu haschen.

[With the monstrous tumult
He carries within, he begins to grasp
For the monstrous tumult
Of outer existence, as if through allegory.] (translated in Underwood 1988:155–56)

By positing a direct relationship between the inner/spiritual world and the external/political world, the artist/madman attempts to order the cosmos by ordering himself. Hence, the political role of the artist is ultimately that of the visionary. The poet projects the totality the world requires (permanence being the only guarantor of value for Hofmannsthal), thus paving the way for its political/social realization. The fact that Hofmannsthal designates this character a madman may indicate his growing doubt in the

possibility of success.

And then came total collapse. In 1903, Hofmannsthal completed his prose work *Ein Brief*, a fictive letter of Lord Chandos to Lord Francis Bacon, sometimes translated as *The Lord Chandos Letter*. With this enigmatic fictional epistle, the writer simultaneously broke with the lyrical poetry that had been his primary form of expression and provided a rationale for that break, thus inaugurating his so-called "apocalyptic" middle period. *Ein Brief* expresses Hofmannsthal's anxiety issuing from his vision of the unbridgeable gap between the ego and the world, and between the word and the thing that it represents. Hofmannsthal, one of the most autobiographical of all writers, models Lord Chandos's "language crisis" after his own. Writing to a friend who inquires into why he has given up literature, Chandos explains that as a young man:

> the whole of existence struck me as one vast unity . . . Everywhere I felt myself at the center; never was I conscious of deceptive appearances. Or rather it seemed to me as though everything were simply metaphor, each creature a key to the next. (Hofmannsthal 1986:16–18)

But from this rarefied sense of wholeness, Hofmannsthal's Chandos fell into despair. Words such as "spirit," "soul," and "body" "fell to dust in [his] mouth like decaying mushrooms" (19). He was no longer able to see the divine connections between lofty concepts and the degraded state of the empty words bandied about thoughtlessly in quotidian discourse. The connections between language and the world were torn asunder; shattered and meaningless, all communication was the tattered refuse of a fragmented existence. Chandos declares religious concepts to be "but some of the cobwebs through which my own thoughts dart on their flight out into the void, while so many of their fellows catch there and come to rest" (18).

Whereas nine years prior he had born witness to the interconnection of all things, Hofmannsthal now saw his thoughts breaking through the torn cobweb (all that remains of the cohesiveness that he once believed gave meaning to the world) and drifting off endlessly into the void. Where he can no longer speak of connections (the primary goal of Hofmannsthal's poetics being *identification* with the object—the sublation of ego and non-ego), the poet must fall silent. Indeed, Hofmannsthal's turn away from lyric poetry towards dramas and essays, both thoroughly public genres, may be a demonstration that he recognized the "poetic injunction" (Broch 1984) raised by the felt incommensurability between the object world—which, in his understanding, included concepts—and the words used to describe it.

The question for Hofmannsthal became: where does one go from here? A precocious artist raised in turn-of-the-century Vienna, with its peculiar

revivification of historical architectural styles and its venerated cultural past constantly on display in the Burgtheater, Hofmannsthal was deeply concerned with maintaining strong ties to the aesthetic ideal of *Bildung*—an aesthetic ideal that was always equally an ethical ideal. He had already begun formulating his answer to the question with *Das kleine Welttheater*; it is no accident, of course, that the title of that play is a German rendering of the term *theatrum mundi*. Hofmannsthal, raised in what Michael Steinberg has termed the "ideology of the Baroque" with its dual interest in totality and theatricality (indeed a totality that is represented through theatrical instantiation), used the theatrical stage as means of testing and projecting the instauration of a new totality (1990:7). As the servant states in *Das kleine Welttheater* (quoted above), the means of achieving this projection was sought within allegory.

In 1916—the same year in which he and Strauss drastically revised *Ariadne auf Naxos*, setting it free of its Molière frame—Hofmannsthal engaged himself in a rather peculiar exercise in self-exegesis. His essay *H.v.H., eine Interpretation* constitutes an attempt to examine and explicate his own artistic development. Although he intended this essay (along with his *Ad me ipsum* begun in the following year) to prevent future misunderstandings of his work, it is perhaps more fruitful for modern readers to view the essay as a creative form of self-misunderstanding, a fashioning of his own past into a clear trajectory that would justify his current position and self-image. Hofmannsthal traces his development as moving from what he terms "Præexistenz," characterized as a "glorious but dangerous condition" in which one feels "the 'I' as a universal," to "Existenz" and the search for a reconstituted totality, a totality achieved precisely through the artist's efforts to project it. Hofmannsthal described the move from the earlier phase to the later as "connecting up with life. Forcing through from pre-existence to existence" ("Verknüpfung mit dem Leben. Durchdringen aus der Præexistenz zur Existenz") (Underwood 1988:157–58). That is, he believed himself to have moved from a naïve but essentially valid view of the world as connected towards an effort to truly make it so. Manfred Hoppe claimed that this 1916 essay first clearly articulated Hofmannsthal's concern for what he would come to term a "conservative revolution" (1968:2). It is with this re-imagining of his own literary past that Hofmannsthal initiates the final phase in his move toward securing a new totality.

By turning to allegory as the vehicle for the projection of a new totality (a totality that must in its essence recapture yet transform the lost totality of the past), Hofmannsthal positioned himself firmly within the Austro-Bavarian tradition he so venerated. Allegory is an inherently conservative mode of discourse in which iconic relationships are inherited from a tradition—

the application of those relationships is the continued exertion of the authority of an honored past. Allegory here becomes a political gesture, marshaled to buttress Hofmannsthal's conservative agenda of creating a "return to an image of absolute value and ultimate stasis" (Steinberg 1990:xxi). According to Steinberg, "Symbolic discourse for Hofmannsthal retained an indeterminate referentiality; allegory explained the cosmos. In this mode he never ceased to think in terms of totalities" (1990:144).

Moreover, Hofmannsthal's concentration on the myths of Greek antiquity (in sharp contradistinction to the Wagnerian reliance on German myth) further connected his efforts to what he saw as a distinctly Austrian form of artistic renewal. The poet dismissively rejected what he termed the nineteenth-century obsession with "historical and ethnographic accuracy" in favor of a return to the universal and eternal aspects that he believed connected ancient myth through Shakespeare to Goethe (Strauss and Hofmannsthal 1961:323; Ward 2002:245–46). Hofmannsthal angrily decried a treatise by Bernhard Diebold that connected the libretto of *Ariadne* with "(North-German) romanticism," when he insisted that his treatment of the Ariadne myth stems "from the Bavarian-Austrian baroque" (Strauss and Hofmannsthal 1961:324). It was through Austria and his allegorical use of Ancient myth, according to Hofmannsthal, that the German-speaking people would find a source of renewal, a mirror in which they would see themselves in "strange and purified reflection" (cited in Ward 2002:245).

The concise essay *Das Schriftum als geistiger Raum der Nation* (Literature as the Spiritual Space of the Nation), published in 1927 in *Die neue Rundschau*, best exemplifies Hofmannsthal's politicized conservative aesthetic. In it Hofmannsthal depicts his generation "confronting the totality of life." That confrontation, although intended to build a community, is not a collective effort but rather "everything in the rent world of exteriority must be drawn into the interiority of *each* and there composed into one, making a unity of the exterior." This ambiguous statement is clarified when read against the above-cited passage from *Das kleine Welttheater*. Hofmannsthal equates an individual, spiritual impulse with a nation-building political effort. In his formulation, "spirit becomes life and life spirit; in other words becomes the political comprehension of the spiritual and the spiritual of the political" (1997:341).

This securing of spiritual space is effected by means of a synthesis of dualities; everything is integrated into the whole and the relationships are rigidified. This process Hofmannsthal terms a conservative revolution whose "goal is form, a new German reality." Novelist and cultural critic Hermann Broch—twelve years Hofmannsthal's junior and, like Hofmannsthal, concerned with the ethicality of modern Austrian life—clarified Hofmannsthal's

demand for ethical and political renewal in his insightful study of the poet *cum* dramatist. According to Broch, a revolution for Hofmannsthal demands the renewal of the whole. This must be a whole achieved through the cessation of Becoming and the attainment of true Being—that is, the relationships achieve permanence, an ideal form that will not change (Broch 1984:54). The projection of this attainment—secured through allegory in which the relationship between the signifier and the signified is made rigid—was a political and ethical gesture for, as Broch notes, "the ethical resides in the inalterable" (51).

Confronting what Broch deemed "the value-vacuum of German art" ("das Wert-Vakuum der deutschen Kunst"), Hofmannsthal sought to "reconcile all the component parts of a disintegrating culture" by embracing a tradition that could vouchsafe continuity and wholeness (Hamburger 1961:xxiii–iv). As Hamburger states, Hofmannsthal attempted to "produce not only works, but a literature": that is, by self-consciously invoking the cultural past and by having continual recourse to myth, Hofmannsthal endeavored to continue what he saw as the aesthetic/political project of the unique Austrian past. It was the artist's ethical duty to present a new totality but this could not be fantasy—it must be projected, not imagined. In the search for artistic knowledge beyond rationality—the only knowledge capable of perceiving a totality since rationality (bound up with language) has failed—both Hofmannsthal and Broch sought a view from death. This realm was, of course, impenetrable and yet intimately bound to the work of both artists. Broch's 1945 novel, *The Death of Virgil*, follows the eponymous hero up to the moment of death, to the cusp of knowledge, but can go no further—it would be ethically inexcusable to go further, for to do so would be to assume a knowledge of the totality to which one can have no access (Broch 1984:22–26).

Likewise for Hofmannsthal, from his earliest work to his last, death is present to give meaning without ever revealing *its* meaning. In Broch's words, Hofmannsthal saw "death as an element of ethicality" (1984:97), but it was an element to which he did not have true access. In a world that was no longer the innocent totality of *Præexistenz* but not yet the reconstituted whole Hofmannsthal hoped to achieve, the artist faced a paradoxical dilemma: only art that projects a valid totality is ethical and therefore beautiful. But in a value vacuum with no access to the view from death—a value system that is at best "not yet"—any representation of that totality would be false and therefore corrupt. The only option left open to the artist is to attempt to present the ethically required totality and then allow the representation to fail. As we shall see, Hofmannsthal's refusal to fully realize a true synthesis within *Ariadne auf Naxos* is but one demonstration of the necessity of fail-

ure.

As suggested above, the years that span the completion of *Ein Brief* (1903) and the final version of *Ariadne auf Naxos* (1916), although generally thought to constitute the middle apocalyptic period, can hardly be thought of as a separate, self-standing period at all. Rather, these years witnessed the gradual transformation of Hofmannsthal's view on how to secure the lost totality that was required for both artistic expression and an ethically justifiable relationship to society. After what Hofmannsthal perceived as the failure of language as a viable means of communication, he sought a supplement that would allow his words to once again reach towards totality. He turned first to gesture with *Elektra*; the conclusion of the original, non-operatic version of the play ends with Elektra insisting that everyone fall silent, ceding expression to her dance. When that did not satisfy him, he turned to music.

Although Steinberg sees Strauss's music as a bulwark against the increasing rigidification of Hofmannsthal's employment of allegory, the latter's move towards writing libretti was inspired partially through an attempt to secure form (1990:151,161–62). A concern with form pervades Hofmannsthal's exchanges with his collaborator. When Strauss designated the moment in the scenario where he foresaw a coloratura aria for Zerbinetta, he offhandedly suggested that Hofmannsthal might invite the soprano Selma Kurz to sing him some sample coloratura arias—from Bellini and Verdi to Mozart and Louis-Joseph-Ferdinand Hérold—that might serve as models for the poet. Strauss soon had reason to regret the suggestion, for Hofmannsthal seized upon it with alacrity and continually beseeched the composer to send sample texts—a demand that Strauss repeatedly dismissed as unnecessary. However, Hofmannsthal saw in such formal constraints a means by which to construct an aesthetic cohesiveness that circumvented language's inherent slipperiness.

Contrary to Steinberg's assertion, music did not serve to efface the increasingly rigid quality of the poet's post-*Ein Brief* allegorical style; rather, Hofmannsthal marshaled operatic form to underwrite the aesthetic totality he sought to create: an aesthetic totality that to his mind was a projection of a needed and still possible political/ethical reality. In other words, Hofmannsthal's conservatism sought out musical structure as a way to insure meaning. Music, to Hofmannsthal's mind, provided a wholeness that language in its fragmented state had lost. For the poet, "musical structure appeared as a fixed pole" (Broch 1984:155). This explains both Hofmannsthal's disdain for the "formlessness" of Wagner and his insistence on a return to the number opera paradigm of Mozart. The restoration of the musical tradition of the Viennese past (here represented by Mozart) and the rejection of Wagner paralleled the writer's return to the poetics of

Goethe in refutation of Stefan George. In the following section, we shall read *Ariadne*'s revisions in light of Hofmannsthal's ever-developing quest for a new totality, his attempts to shore up the fragmentation of modernity, and—like his heroines Elektra and Ariadne—his desire to remember and honor the past while stepping into the future.

Separate But Equal: "Ironic Equipoise" in the *Szenarium* and the 1912 Première

Hofmannsthal first mentioned his concept for *Ariadne* to Strauss in a letter dated March 20, 1911, referring to the project as a *Zwischenarbeit* (an interim work—that is, between *Der Rosenkavalier* and *Die Frau ohne Schatten*) that would allow him to become more familiar with the formal demands of libretti.[6] He claimed to be devising a play consisting of a "combination of heroic mythological figures... [and] characters from the commedia dell'arte" (Strauss and Hofmannsthal 1961:76). The opera was meant to serve as the entertainment for the characters of Molière's *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*—a play within a play. The characters arranging the entertainment originally designed it to consist of a lyric drama (the Ariadne story) followed by a comic performance by the troupe led by the flirtatious Zerbinetta. However, Jourdain (the *Gentilhomme* to whom Molière's title refers) demands that the two performances take place simultaneously in order to save time. This is the conceit upon which Hofmannsthal constructs his "new genre." The *Szenarium*, written in 1911, provides the first complete sketch of the entire dramatic plan.[7] Ariadne, alone on her desert island except for the company of three nymphs, laments the treachery of her lover Theseus; he has deceived and abandoned her. Suddenly the comic troupe inexplicably intrudes upon the scene, attempting to improvise humorous lines around Ariadne's monologue while ostensibly trying to cheer her up. Zerbinetta and her followers insist that love is fleeting and that another lover will always come along; the mythological heroine resolutely ignores their impertinences. Finally, Bacchus arrives and Ariadne finds a new love. What to Ariadne is true love is for Zerbinetta confirmation that she was right all along.

Towards the close of the *Szenarium*, Zerbinetta, serving as a lady's maid, helps Ariadne to dress in preparation for the arrival of Bacchus. Although Ariadne does at first insist that the approaching god must be Hermes ("der Todtenführer"), there is no indication that she remains confused once Bacchus enters. Rather, Hofmannsthal describes them as falling immediately in love—they join hands and enter the cave "like a King and a Prin-

cess" ("wie ein König und eine Prinzessin").[8] Her new relationship is a compromise: she is aware that she is starting again after Theseus's betrayal but her new romance with Bacchus is not simply a new affair; it is described in terms of marriage. Zerbinetta turns to the audience and asserts, "It has come to pass as we said" ("Wie wir es sagten ist es gekommen"). The commedia figures and the nymphs then reenter and a joyful dance ensues. Zerbinetta is paired with Harlekin while the remaining comic characters are paired with each of the nymphs. As they dance, Bacchus leads Ariadne back out of the cave and the entire company exits together—what Forsyth terms "ironic equipoise": "the scenic symbol of the allegoric unity" (1982:35).[9] Thus love itself was shown to be ironic, containing both the erotic and the spiritual; fidelity personified by, but not identified with Ariadne, is here carefully balanced with infidelity personified by Zerbinetta. The sexual, bodily side of love counterbalances the lofty, spiritual side. Hofmannsthal's ironic stance depends upon what he considered the paradox of love itself: his fastidiousness drove him to view the physical aspects of love as a contradiction of the spiritual nature of love. Ideologically, they are mutually exclusive and yet they coexist: the very nature of paradox. The *Szenarium* reveals both sides of love as necessary and the various characters join together at the end and exit as a group—united if not unified. Here, as Forsyth declares, "irony means no more than an equipoise of conflicting impulses" (35).

Formally, the 1912 libretto remains close to the *Szenarium* model. The libretto retains the interaction between Zerbinetta and Ariadne as well as the final dance. However, the latter moment underwent an alteration that, although seemingly slight, is reflective of Hofmannsthal's efforts to forge an ever-greater division between the worlds of the heroic and the comic. As the poet feels increasingly obliged to defend his conception and as he deepens the "psychological motives of the action" (Strauss and Hofmannsthal 1961:86)[10], Hofmannsthal seems to forget the balance that he had envisioned, reveling instead in the fact that he was pushing the libretto towards "a higher spiritual plane from something which was merely meant to amuse" (91).[11] Zerbinetta is now described as merely "earthbound" and thereby unable to comprehend the miracle that she sees before her. Hofmannsthal relegates the comic troupe to "base figures" and "the merely human group" (94).[12] Equating the commedia with base sexuality through their concupiscent exploits, Hofmannsthal disdains them. As Broch explains in another context regarding the poet's fastidiousness: "When the human appears it already means the sub-human, that is, the partly horrifying, partly comical characteristics of the 'lower' orders" (1984:294).

Thus, while Hofmannsthal still concludes the piece with a final commedia dance, he has the troupe appear alone—the heroic couple never

reemerges after their love duet. The ironic equipoise is abandoned in favor of the apotheosis of Ariadne and Bacchus while the commedia group remains on stage, unable to comprehend what has passed. Indeed, Hofmannsthal envisioned the staging of this moment in a manner designed to overwhelm the audience, to wrest their attention away from everything else, including the Molière play to which the opera was supposed to be subordinate:

> [H]ere the small stage must grow to limitless space, at Bacchus' entry the doll-like sets must disappear, the roof of Jourdain's room rises up, night must enfold Bacchus and Ariadne and stars must shine down from above, no trace may be left of the 'play within a play,' M. Jourdain, his guests, his lackeys, his house, everything must be gone and forgotten, and the listener is to remember as little of these things as the person in a deep dream is aware of his bed. (translated in Forsyth 1984:98–99)

The librettist additionally increases Zerbinetta's single line of the *Szenarium* to a lengthy, mocking reprise of her rondo. While the two worlds are here drawn ever further apart, the 1912 libretto still retains some interaction (in the dressing scene) and allows the commedia group to have a substantial final scene to balance the love duet.

With the drafting of the libretto, the opera's characters became increasingly allegorical (in the sense in which Steinberg uses the term, that is, to mean that all space between signifier and signified is eliminated); therefore the rigidification of the form mirrored the rigidification of the characters' symbolic functions. Although Hofmannsthal's original conception of the work entailed "the buffo element . . . throughout interwoven with the heroic," he soon came to see the spiritual import of the opera exclusively within the heroic couple and shifted his emphasis away from the balance between the two different groups. Strauss, on the other hand, failed at first to see the spiritual meaning of the allegory at all and urged the librettist to make the conclusion "soar higher" (Strauss and Hofmannsthal 1961:92).[13] Hofmannsthal was distraught by the lukewarm reception his work had received from his collaborator and wrote a long explanatory missive subsequently dubbed the *Ariadne Brief* (1961:93–95).[14] In this letter, Hofmannsthal insists that the theme of the opera is transformation. But it is a transformation in which one is "to preserve one's essence, to remain a human being and not to sink to the level of the beast, which is without recollection." Put simply, the theme of the opera became the ethical project that Hofmannsthal had set himself within his aesthetic production. Strauss's reaction to the letter is telling. He claimed that he only understood the meaning of the libretto after reading the missive, "which is so beautiful and explains the

meaning of the action so wonderfully." He goes on to ask: "But isn't this a little dangerous? And isn't some of the interpretation still lacking in the action itself? If even I couldn't see it, just think of the audiences and—the critics" (95–96).[15] In a subsequent letter, Strauss proposed that Hofmannsthal's *Ariadne Brief* be revised and staged as part of the introduction to the opera itself—a proposal that would later be adopted during the 1916 revision (100).[16] This misunderstanding between the collaborators points to a shift in their respective estimations of the project itself: for Strauss *Ariadne* remained "a trifle" while for Hofmannsthal it had become something much more; it had become an attempt to project an ethical totality.

Succumbing to the Apotheosis: Removing the Frame and Opening onto Totality

Almost immediately after the 1912 premiere, Hofmannsthal began forging plans to jettison the Molière frame and present the opera as a self-sufficient work. "Imagine," he urged the dubious Strauss, "how crystalline and complete, how harmonious our beautiful Ariadne will emerge once she is placed on this pedestal" (1961:169).[17] Strauss, at first reluctant to revise the work, finally acquiesced. With the loss of the framing device, the ironic equipoise was totally abandoned. As yet another attempt to verbally explain the libretto's meaning, the collaborators expanded the spoken *Zwischenspiel* of 1912—a short scene that set up the conceit of simultaneously presenting the lyric drama and the comedy—to become the justly celebrated *Vorspiel*. However, as we shall see below, the *Vorspiel* served a greater function than a mere motivator for the conceit of the plot; it was essentially an enactment of the *Ariadne Brief*. Within the opera itself (that is, disregarding the excised frame and the new *Vorspiel*), the collaborators curtailed the interaction between Zerbinetta and Ariadne and eliminated the dance finale, thereby further limiting the interactions between the two worlds.

The opera consists of an overture and three scenes: the second scene, featuring the commedia players, serves as an intermezzo between the first and third scene, devoted to the seria characters.[18] Thus, on the formal level, Hofmannsthal has segregated the two worlds. One might here object that the worlds do interact, albeit briefly. However, these moments of "interaction" demand careful scrutiny. The first occurs during Ariadne's monologue in the opening scene. Three of the commedia players (Zerbinetta, Harlekin, and Truffaldin), later augmented by a fourth (Scaramuccio) interject short comments on Ariadne's grief framing the first section of her aria ("Ein Schönes war"). At their initial entrance, Ariadne is instructed to sing to her-

self, without heeding them. The interjections of the commedia players culminate in the assertion that Ariadne has gone mad ("toll"). She responds, "mad but wise" ("toll aber weise"), but the libretto's instructions here are crucial: "to herself, without turning her head, as if she heard the last words in a dream." Despite the efforts of the commedia group to address the heroine's misery, Ariadne refuses to acknowledge them.

The strict segregation of the heroic and commedia worlds is maintained in Hofmannsthal's and Strauss's positioning of the first full statement by a commedia character: Harlekin's strophic song that interrupts Ariadne's soliloquy. Walter Frisch suggests that Ariadne's entire aria may have been loosely modeled after the Italian double aria (2005:233). If so, the strophic song occupies the position of a *tempo di mezzo*, the section of the double aria that divides the *adagio* from the *cabaletta* and is therefore responsible for breaking the mood of the slow section and dramatically justifying the faster tempo of the *cabaletta*. In other words, the *tempo di mezzo*—the proportions of which were greatly expanded by Verdi and his contemporaries—often contains a jarring moment, something far removed from the established mood and hence the perfect position for Harlekin's song; it is contained, separated from Ariadne's aria as such.[19] Strauss further emphasizes the separation between Ariadne and the commedia through his instrumentation. He employs the harmonium in connection with the eponymous heroine while using the piano exclusively in conjunction with the commedia group.

Strauss strikingly sets the second scene off from the first. The second part of Ariadne's aria ends firmly in B♭ Major, a key that operates as the controlling tonality throughout most of the last part but the actual tonic of which arrives forcefully after much delay at rehearsal number 73.[20] The second scene opens without transition in the minor dominant: F minor, accompanied primarily by the commedia sonority of the piano. Hence the troupe has musically wrested our attention away from Ariadne and although she remains onstage until the beginning of Zerbinetta's aria, she utterly ignores them—a fact upon which the commedia players themselves comment. Once Zerbinetta—the allegorical embodiment of infidelity—takes center stage, Ariadne retreats to the isolation of her cave; there is nothing Zerbinetta can say to reach her. The move to the third scene is equally jarring. The buffa quintet ends with a clear perfect authentic cadence in D Major. Immediately the strings sound an octave on C♯ against which a trumpet tattoo outlines a C♯ Major chord—thus without preparation the music lurches away from the buffa world and back to the heroic. The abrupt musical shift both into and out of the commedia intermezzo serves to hermetically seal the scene. As a mere intermezzo it has no formal bearing on the remainder

of the opera.

The comments made regarding the first two scenes of the opera apply equally to both the 1912 and the 1916 versions. However, what in the 1912 version created an ironic balance between the two worlds—a balance that would be further explored through the interactions contained in the third scene—in the 1916 revision established the rigid separation of the commedia and heroic figures. In the latter version, the commedia world is all but absent from the final scene. Even Zerbinetta's intrusion on the finale, the only moment that could be considered an interaction between the commedia and heroic worlds, is undifferentiated from the context of the love duet.

Both Strauss and Hofmannsthal, although in quite different ways, felt the weakness of the ending. Strauss suggested bringing the character of the Composer, the central character of the *Vorspiel*, back onstage to replace the framing technique—a proposal vehemently rejected by Hofmannsthal. He could not allow anything to spoil the "lofty atmosphere which we have striven so hard to reach" (Strauss and Hofmannsthal 1961:242)—a comment that betrays Hofmannsthal's allegiance to his theme of transformation and his abandonment of any sense of ironic balance.[21] In the end, nothing would emerge to deflate the mystical conclusion focusing on the noble lovers.

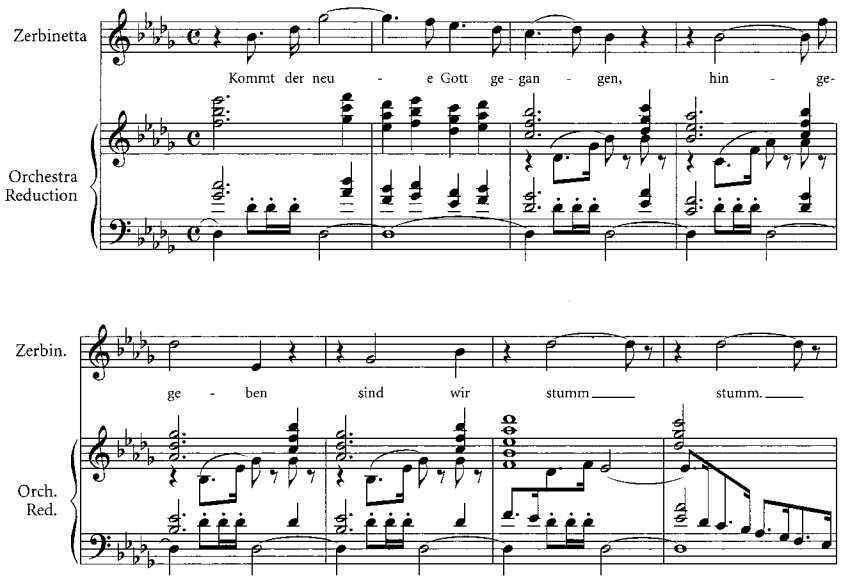
It is perhaps to Hofmannsthal's credit that not even he was totally satisfied with such a heavy-handed finale:

> But—it would be a shameless betrayal of the work and its future for me to concede—out of pusillanimity—that the human counterpart (Zerbinetta) should be deprived of some last word! . . . I will only insist that the counter-voice, represented by the sole figure of Zerbinetta, should be heard at the end for a second. Something like this: while to the rear of the stage the couple step down towards the sea, and before the orchestra opens the epilogue, Zerbinetta appears in front, right, in the wings, but visible, waves her fan mockingly over her shoulder towards the back and proceeds to sing her couplet . . . If need be let her only begin to sing, sing the first line—then let the orchestra drown her, so that the rest is to be found only in the libretto; I am satisfied with her symbolic, mocking presence and exit. (246–47)[22]

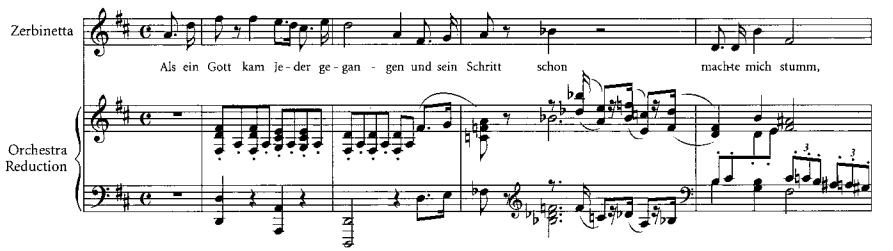
However, this is a highly ambivalent letter. One cannot help but feel that Hofmannsthal would just as soon do without Zerbinetta altogether. He moves from firmly stating that the loss of Zerbinetta's final remark would be "a shameless betrayal of the work," to a position that would allow her to be immediately overwhelmed by the orchestra, rendering her final words inaudible.

When Strauss set her "last word" it was reduced to just one line: "When the new god comes, we surrender silently" ("Kommt der neue Gott gegangen,

Example 1a. Zerbinetta's last word.



Example 1b. Opening, Zerbinetta's rondo.



Hingegeben sind wir stumm"). She now enters briefly, nearly unnoticeable and certainly ignored by the noble couple. The score instructs Zerbinetta to sing "softly and discreetly" ("leise und diskret") and her melodic line is undifferentiated from the mood of the love duet. This is not the mocking reprise (it is not even a partial one) that Hofmannsthal seemed to have in mind. The opening gesture of her line (ex. 1a) resembles her rondo theme (ex. 1b) but this reprise soon smoothes out the striking contour of the rondo. Instead of outlining the tonic triad as in its original appearance, her line here outlines the subdominant. The latter chord soon resolves to the tonic D♭. In essence, Zerbinetta gives her blessing to the love duet over an "Amen"

plagal cadence instead of mocking it (Greene 1991:171). Her characteristic descending fourths from the rondo are first replaced by a more conjunct line and then widened to a descending minor seventh setting the last part of "hingegeben" (we surrender)—a means of expression associated more with Ariadne than Zerbinetta.

Zerbinetta musically disappears in this passage, an interpretation supported by the stage directions. She points over her shoulder at Ariadne and Bacchus, singing her line but not disturbing the action. She remains on the periphery and then quickly departs. In the *Szenarium* and 1912 versions of the plot, Zerbinetta was to sing her remark after the conclusion of the love duet, but in the 1916 revision she is briskly brushed aside by a brief final statement of the love duet, and several concluding lines sung by Bacchus. Far from providing ironic equipoise, Zerbinetta is here engulfed by the heady rapture of the love duet. In this version, it is the romantic hero who gets the "last word." During his final line, the moment of transcendence, the score directs the commedia players and the nymphs to reappear at the side of the stage and listen in silence while the heroic lovers vanish beneath the canopy.

There is no ironic equipoise here—this is absorption; the commedia presence is so immersed within the apotheosis of the lovers that it is only slightly noticeable. Throughout the course of preparing the 1912 libretto and the 1916 revisions, the collaborators shifted the opera away from allegory as ironic equipoise towards the baroque allegorical practice described by Steinberg wherein "the relationship between the symbol and the symbolized is made rigid" (1990:144). In the process, Ariadne was no longer merely associated with fidelity, but rather she *embodied* it, while Zerbinetta stood in the same metonymic relationship to infidelity. In other words, Ariadne is not merely a faithful woman; she *is* fidelity. With this rigidification came the increasing impossibility of forging a balance, however ironic, between the opposing forces. The commedia group, having become the source of some embarrassment for the fastidious Hofmannsthal, was relegated to the confined spaces of the *tempo di mezzo* and the intermezzo. As Norman Del Mar describes the 1916 revision, "the comedians often seem left out on a limb" (1986:72).

In their final versions, the Intermezzo and the final scene create an intriguing symmetry that further reinforces the separation of the heroic and commedia worlds. The frivolous solution to Ariadne's problem represented by the commedia group's opening quintet balances the trio of scene iii in which the nymphs allude to the true solution to Ariadne's woe: the coming of Bacchus. Zerbinetta's aria occupies the same position as Bacchus's less impressive soliloquy. The final section of the Intermezzo, the conclusion of which features three commedia figures juxtaposed with the temporary couple

comprised of Zerbinetta and Harlekin, adumbrates the end of the opera wherein the love duet is set against the trio of nymphs. Whereas in the 1912 version Hofmannsthal balanced scene i, focused on Ariadne, and scene ii, focused on the commedia, so as to create a sort of unity (the ironic equipoise achieved by having both groups interact) in scene iii, in the 1916 revision the Intermezzo serves as a comic adumbration of the heroic finale demonstrating the ludicrous distance between the contrived nature of infidelity and the transcendental, authentic mode of being embodied by the ever-faithful Ariadne.

Fidelity and the View From Death

Hofmannsthal's interest in achieving a totality in *Ariadne auf Naxos* nevertheless remained unabated—he merely shifted the focus of that totality away from the ironic balancing of the two worlds towards the mystical union of Ariadne and Bacchus. In other words, this ending still explored the problem of fidelity and infidelity but the focus turned away from the irresolution of paradox (love as both spiritual and corporeal) towards Ariadne herself (fidelity embodied) and what for Hofmannsthal had become the central question of the opera:

> [W]hether to hold fast to that which is lost, to cling to it even unto death—or to live, to live on, to get over it, to transform oneself, to sacrifice the integrity of the soul and yet in this transmutation to preserve one's essence, to remain a human being and not to sink to the level of the beast, which is without recollection. (Strauss and Hofmannsthal 1961:94)[23]

This is the totality which Hofmannsthal now sought to project—that is, the totality that would allow the faithful "One in a Million" to fall in love again and yet maintain her essence— but in a world without a "total worldview," in a world that was no longer fully tied to tradition (a world reduced to a value-vacuum), it was unethical for the artist to represent what he himself could not access.

From his earliest poetry, Hofmannsthal viewed death as both an element of life and that which gives meaning to life. Death is what seals life shut, transforms it from Becoming into Being. The whole of life does not exist until the moment of death. With death, life acquires permanence, is made complete. Repeatedly in Hofmannsthal's plays, the main character only understands life when confronted irrevocably by the personification of Death. At the close of his play *Der Tor und der Tod* (The Fool and Death) (1893), the eponymous Fool, Claudio, proclaims to Death:

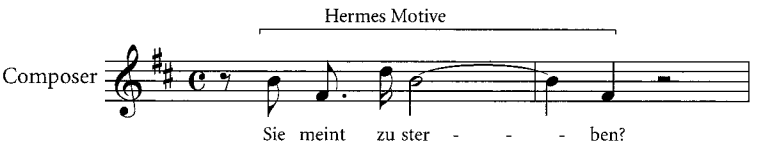
> . . .[A]cross this larger stage of life
> I passed, without conviction, strength or worth.
> Why was this done to me? Why, tell me, Death,
> Did I need *you* to teach me to see life?
> . . . . . .
> This poor and faded life will not be missed:
> Dying, at last I feel I exist.
> When a man sleeps, often his dream will break
> With too much dreamed emotion, dream's excess;
> So from the dream of life I now may wake,
> Cloyed with emotion, to death's wakefulness. (translated by Hamburger 1961:134–35)

Only Death teaches the fool (all of humanity) to see life and, concomitantly, life only truly comes into Being (is made a whole, a totality) at the moment of death; one awakes from the dream of life to the reality of death. However, it was not possible for Hofmannsthal to represent the view from death so he consistently led his audience as far as he could, to the brink of that death. After the speech reproduced above, Claudio collapses dead. Death ruminates on the strange lot of mankind and then leads Claudio's silent spirit away. We never hear Claudio's voice from the beyond. Indeed, we *could not* hear it; it is unintelligible to us and yet, for Hofmannsthal, it is that voice from the beyond (that view from death) that grants meaning to our existence.[24] Ethically, Hofmannsthal could not portray the actual moment of transformation; he could only project it.

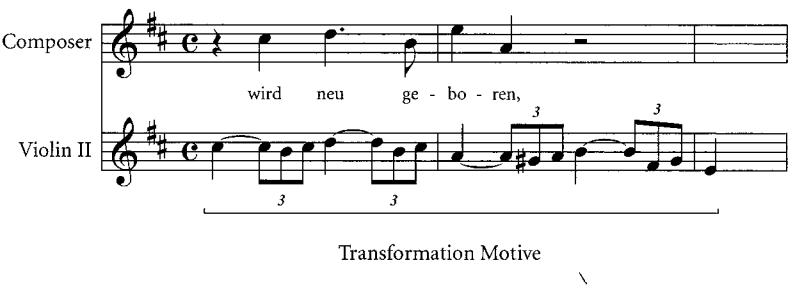
The *Vorspiel* written for the 1916 revision of *Ariadne* textually and musically prepares the listener for an understanding both of the necessity of the view from death and the artist's inability to represent the totality such a view would provide. The use of a prologue to frame the following play as a moral lesson was typical of Hofmannsthal and was prominently featured in a play he considered among his most important: *Jedermann* (Everyman), completed in 1911 around the time the poet began working on *Ariadne*. Just as Hofmannsthal's Everyman is declared "the human paradigm who is to be judged" (Steinberg 1990:36), so Ariadne is proclaimed by the character of the Composer to be the allegorical embodiment of fidelity—"the One in a Million; the one who cannot forget." In his confrontation with Zerbinetta, the Composer attempts to disabuse the commedia leader of her frivolous misunderstanding of the opera's plot by asserting, "[Ariadne] believes she will die! No, she truly dies," the first part of which is sung to the Hermes motive that will pervade the second part of Ariadne's lament (ex. 2).

The motive symbolizes the coming of death that Ariadne (and the Composer *and* Hofmannsthal) sees as the only solution to the question she poses

Example 2. The "Hermes" motive, *Vorspiel.*



Example 3. The "transformation" motive, *Vorspiel.*



to the concept of fidelity: how can she simultaneously remain faithful to the past (inasmuch as it is the past that underwrites Hofmannsthal's *Bildung*-informed notion of wholeness) and yet move beyond her fractured state of existence after her lover Theseus abandoned her? Later, in her aria, Ariadne refers to her past identity as "Theseus-Ariadne." The two names are inextricably combined; the union with Theseus constituted the fullness (the wholeness) of her existence. Without Theseus, she does not wish to hear the name Ariadne alone for that name "is with another grown intertwined so closely." Severed from the plenitude granted by that lost love, she no longer fully lives and seeks refuge in death.

As the Composer continues in his explanation during the *Vorspiel*, other themes that will become associated with Ariadne's misery and longing for death appear and become interwoven with motives representative of the Composer himself—the artist is ineluctably wrapped up in his desire to achieve a totality, one that can only be achieved through Ariadne's transcendence of the fractured state of the world into death. The Composer explains (the stage directions say "to himself," *für sich*, —much like his heroine): "She gives herself to death—is no more—wiped out—plunges herself into the mysteries of Transformation—is born anew" ("Sie gibt sich dem Tod hin—ist nicht mehr da—weggewischt—stürtz sich hinein ins Geheimnis der Verwandlung—wird neu geboren"). Just as he intones the words "is born anew," the second violins play the transformation motive, which will reappear near the opera's conclusion to symbolize Ariadne's tran-

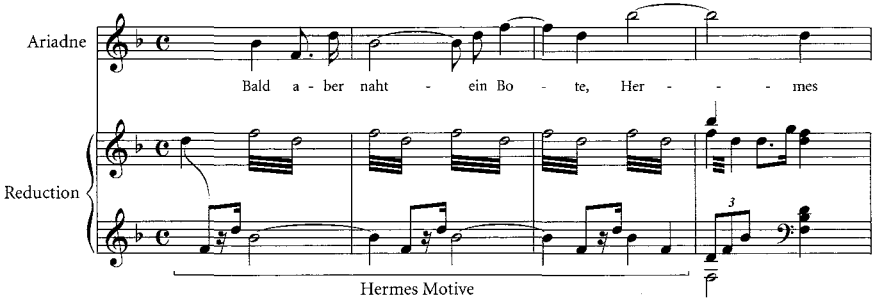
scendence through death (ex. 3).

Zerbinetta then convinces the Composer that she too is looking for someone to be "faithful to unto death." For a moment the Composer is transported and, addressing the Music Teacher, he sings his paean to Music as "a holy art" ("ein heilige Kunst"), for while poets can write good words for music, only music itself can unite "all varieties of courage" ("alle Arten von Mut"). Clearly this aria reflects Hofmannsthal's aesthetic justification for his turn to gesture and music after the publication of *Ein Brief*. Indeed, for a moment music seems capable of realizing the unity to which the Composer alludes. Here Strauss brings the harmonium (already representative of Ariadne and the Composer) together with the piano (representative of Zerbinetta and the commedia group) for an extended passage. Prior to this moment, Strauss fastidiously separated the two, at times emphasizing the sudden exchange of one for the other.[25] However, this totality of instrumentation is short-lived. The Composer, watching the commedia group scattering about, becomes enraged. Claiming that the comic element will pollute his work, he bemoans his fate—the piano quickly vanquishes the harmonium. The totality the Composer thought he achieved in "real" life has failed.

In the first part of her aria, Ariadne neatly summarizes the opera's dilemma: she was so intimately tied to the totality of the past, her union with Theseus represented by her reference to Theseus-Ariadne, that she is unable to extricate herself from it. She cannot connect with her own past, cannot remember the maid she once was, and yet is unable to move on for her existence is fragmented without the lost totality.[26] When the nymphs call Ariadne by name she cries out: "Not any longer" ("Nicht noch einmal")—she doesn't truly exist outside of the lost totality. Her only option is death. After Harlekin's interruption, Ariadne returns to this thought, claiming: "Here nothing is pure;" the only way to cleanse oneself of the past is through death. She proclaims, "from all pain must my life be purified," a purification that can only be achieved in the land of death. First appearing in the bass, the Hermes motive pervades the texture of "Es gibt ein Reich," quickly moving to the oboes, then appearing in Ariadne's vocal line as she describes the coming of Hermes, the herald ("Bote") or messenger of death (ex. 4).

Hearing Bacchus sing his soliloquy in scene iii, Ariadne believes it to be the voice of Hermes and she uses similar language in anticipation of his arrival, describing the voice as the "Todesbote." When Bacchus appears before her she cries out "Theseus," mistaking the new god for her old lover—confusing the possibility of a new totality with the memory of the old one. Musically, this passage is striking. For the first time since the *Vorspiel*, piano and harmonium play simultaneously, along with a full consort of brass,

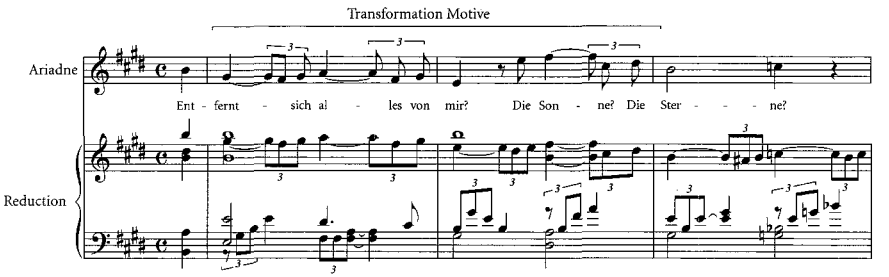
Example 4. The "Hermes" motive, "Es gibt ein Reich."



harps, and celesta. Strauss thus returns to the orchestration he employed when the Composer praised Music as the art capable of realizing a wholeness unavailable to other forms of creation. Ariadne here remembers that lost totality underwritten by her relationship with Theseus while yearning for a renewed wholeness through death. Realizing her mistake, yet still mistaken regarding his identity, she greets Bacchus as the "Bote aller Boten," and the music returns to the Hermes/Death motive. Bacchus is equally confused and, believing Ariadne to be another Circe (the temptress of his youth) he asks if she too has a cask of magic wine. Ariadne replies, "I know not what thou sayest" ("Ich weiss nicht, was du redest"); as Zerbinetta noted earlier in a similar context, these two are not speaking the same language. The Hermes motive returns as Ariadne assures the man she believes to be the messenger of death that she has long been awaiting him. Bacchus unwittingly encourages her in her misunderstanding. Ariadne asserts that he is lord of a "dark ship" and he rejoins, "I am the lord of a ship."

That Ariadne is convinced she is dying is touchingly conveyed in nearly every line: she begs him to take her on his ship; her stage directions instruct her to "continue with apparent terror;" she asks how he will transform her, whether by a wand or the wine he mentioned. This last inquiry launches another set of misunderstandings. Forgetting his earlier reference, Bacchus insists he knows nothing of wine. Ariadne takes this to be an indication of the forgetfulness that she will experience after death. Even when Bacchus assures her that the stars would sooner fall than she die in his arms, Ariadne persists in her misconception. She draws back in fear, believing Bacchus's assertion to be an incantation that will end her life—even this most death-obsessed of heroines nearly recants as she faces her demise exclaiming, "What! So soon!" ("Weh! So schnell!") She feels her life passing from her; the orchestra doubles her voice as she sings the transformation motive—most of the remainder of her music is derived from this motive (ex. 5).

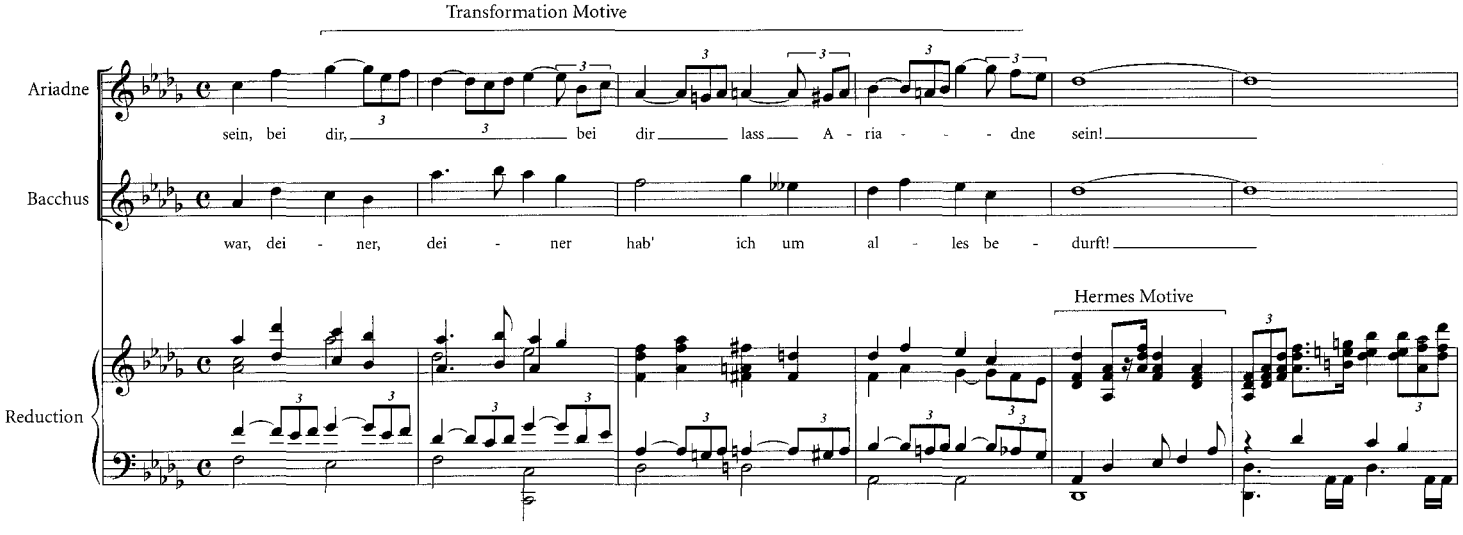
Example 5. The "transformation" motive.



Ariadne remains deaf to Bacchus's repeated efforts to disabuse her. She thinks she sees the eyes of her mother in his mantel. This is a most significant image: after death, upon achieving the new totality, she will be able to reconnect with her past, to attain a complete identity; she sees it now shining forth from beyond the brink of death. As she asks if she shall be free of the needs of the world, the horns perform the Hermes motive, which immediately gives way to the transformation motive—the two musical gestures become increasingly commingled, as do the concepts they represent. This passage serves as a transition marked by a modulation to a limpid C Major. As Ariadne sings, "Is there no passing over? Are we already there?" ("Gibt es kein Hinüber? Sind wir schon da?"), the orchestration again returns to the full consort (including both piano and harmonium). Once again this "totality of instrumentation" derives from Ariadne's belief that she is entering a realm of permanence vouchsafed by death itself.

The transformation motive sets her final statement, "Let my sorrows not be in vain; allow Ariadne to be near you" ("Lass meine Schmerzen nicht verloren sein, bei dir lass Ariadne sein"). As she sings her last note, the Hermes motive once again appears (ex. 6). It is with death that she longs to be. It is in the realm of death that she can forget what she was ("Who abides there quickly forgets"— "Wer dort verweilet, der vergisst gar schnell"), that she will be transformed into something else. It is in death that she yearns to attain Being. This is Hofmannsthal's only solution to the riddle of fidelity after loss: "to hold fast to that which is lost" and to move on—but to move on through transformation, a transformation that not only resembles but truly is a form of death. Her voice is no longer heard; her last statement leads to the musical representation of death. To the conclusion of the opera, Ariadne believed she was dying. As the Composer would have it, she did die. The opera took us up to the moment of death but, like Broch's *The Death of Virgil*, like Hofmannsthal's *The Fool and Death,* was ethically un-

Example 6. The "transformation" and "Hermes" motives.



able to take us any further—we are not allowed access to the new totality that the artist is able only to project, *not* represent.

"And sooner shall the eternal stars perish, than you shall die in my arms." ("Und eher sterben die ewigen Sterne, eh' denn du stürbest aus meinem Arm.") These are Bacchus's final words as he embraces Ariadne and the canopy closes over them. Zerbinetta, the rest of the commedia group and the nymphs have retreated to the sides of the stage; they have joined the audience as spectators, observing the apotheosis of the heroic couple. Bacchus promises Ariadne a new permanence wherein her position shall be secured, as the stars are fixed within their constellations. The wholeness he offers her is a new ethical/political reality. In that new totality, fidelity will have a place and a purpose; faithfulness unto death will not be in vain.

Bacchus intones his final line in the resplendent D♭ Major of the finale. His voice then subsides, ceding the focus to the orchestra and a last climactic appearance of the transformation motive—the harmonium and piano united until the very last chord. Hofmannsthal described the union of the comic and heroic as operating through non-comprehension and indeed the union of the lovers equally relies upon misunderstanding. But the ritualizing effect of their union and withdrawal (while the other characters are reduced to mere spectators) coupled with Strauss's overwhelming music for the duet augurs a new beginning, a beginning that redeems the fragmented state of the present. This was the effect that Hofmannsthal strove so hard to create: a continual dramatic crescendo from the "problem" voiced in the *Vorspiel*, through the depiction of Ariadne's fallen state to the "almost mystical heights" of the finale (Strauss and Hofmannsthal 1961:242). We are left at the brink, unable as yet to follow Ariadne and Bacchus into the new world—representation, as such, has failed. But according to his own ethical/political program, Hofmannsthal (through Strauss's music) has *projected* the possibility of a new sense of wholeness, a new "totality of life;" it is left to the audience to realize that possibility. The opera points the way to the new totality; it is to its credit that it does not pretend to actually arrive there.

Notes

This paper was originally written for a 2002 class conducted by Lydia Goehr and Walter Frish at Columbia University entitled "Aesthetics and Politics." I would like to thank the anonymous readers at *Current Musicology*, Cathy Cox, Chika Matsuzaki, and Walter Frisch for their many insightful suggestions during the revision process of my own *Zwischenarbeit*. I owe a particular debt of gratitude to Katherine Dacey-Tsuei for her patience and critical acumen; her assiduous efforts, working with the various incarnations of this essay, have

helped to refine and clarify its content immeasurably.

1. Rolland's intriguing comment stems from a letter to Strauss dated 6/10/24. "J'ai le sentiment que Hofmannsthal commence chacun de ces 'pastiches' d'un temps passé, avec un dessein ironique, mais que son admirable virtuosité les réussit avec tant success qu'il finit toujours par les prendre au sérieux. Et c'est dommage: un sujet-pastiche, comme Arianna, n'a toute sa valeur que par l'ironie; et cette ironie doit surtout s'épanouir à la fin."

2. Letter to Strauss, 3/20/11.

3. For a discussion of *Ariadne*'s historical genesis and its ties to the *comédie-ballet,* see Forsyth (1982:15–54). For references tying *Ariadne* to the postmodern see, among others, Könneker (1972), Kuhns (1999), and Frisch (2005).

4. The correspondence is rife with evidence that Hofmannsthal was at times dissatisfied with Strauss's understanding of his poetry as well as with the composer's setting of it. In a letter of 1/5/16, Hofmannsthal mentions the "resulting misrepresentations and disparagement" that results from collaboration with a musician (1961:237). And in a letter dated 6/11/16 but wisely never sent, Hofmannsthal accuses Strauss of treating "quite a few things in the wrong style altogether" (1961:251).

5. Letter to Strauss, 3/20/11.

6. In his original conception, Hofmannsthal clearly sees this project as an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the structural aspects of the libretto in preparation for "something important," that is, *Die Frau ohne Schatten.* In this letter, Hofmannsthal assesses *Der Rosenkavalier*—which he conceived as a stage play *set* to music as opposed to a true libretto—as somewhat inferior to what they could achieve with *Die Frau.* As Hofmannsthal writes: "I am also inclined to think that this interim work [*Ariadne*] is necessary, at least *for me,* to make myself still more familiar with music, especially with your music, and to achieve something which brings us even closer together than in *Rosenkavalier*—which as a fusion of word and music satisfies me *greatly,* but not *wholly*" (Strauss and Hofmannsthal 1961:76–77).

7. The *Szenarium* is contained, without translation, in Appendix B of Forsyth (1982:273–77).

8. All translations from the libretto are my own. These translations have benefited from many helpful suggestions made by Cathy Cox.

9. It should be immediately obvious that Forsyth's use of the term "allegory" is at variance with the rather pejorative use employed by Steinberg and throughout most of this study.

10. Letter to Strauss, 5/28/11.

11. Letter to Strauss, 5/7/11.

12. Letter to Strauss, 7/11 (exact date unknown).

13. Letter to Hofmannsthal, 7/14/11.

14. Letter to Strauss, 7/11 (exact date unknown).

15. Letter to Hofmannsthal, 7/19/11.

16. Letter to Hofmannsthal, 7/24/11.

17. Letter to Strauss, 3/6/13.

18. David B. Greene proposes a three-part division for the first scene consisting of the overture, the trio, and Ariadne's aria. This division further shows that all three scenes break down into three parts each. In the effort to demonstrate symmetry, he mistakenly ignores

the divisions in her aria and Harlekin's interjection while incorporating the overture into the scene. I believe one could consider the overture an integral part of scene i but it would then be part of the trio to which it is so intimately tied. See Greene (1991:120).

19. One of the best examples of this effect can be found in Leonore's aria from Verdi's *Il Trovatore*. While I am not implying that Hofmannsthal modeled his aria after this one specifically, it is probable that the poet was aware of the Italian double aria format. He was researching opera libretti at this time, primarily Mozart-da Ponte libretti but also those used by Verdi—for instance, Strauss recommended he look at "Caro nome" to get a sense of coloratura arias. Additionally, Hofmannsthal was an admirer of Verdi's works and could not have been blind to the dramatic implications of the double aria's form.

20. One of Strauss's most remarkable harmonic effects, used to heighten the emotional catharsis of the arrival on B♭, is his use first of D Major to the dominant F (at rehearsal number 72) and then B Major to the dominant (the two measures prior to 73). After such a tantalizing withholding of tonic, the B♭ seems more firm in our ears and therefore the sudden shift (one cannot really call this a modulation) to F minor is all that more shocking. The rehearsal numbers are consistent in the various publications of the score.

21. Letter to Strauss, 4/13/16.

22. Letter to Strauss, 5/15/16.

23. Letter to Strauss, 7/11 (exact date unknown).

24. There is a similar gesture in Ingmar Bergman's *The Seventh Seal*, in which Death claims not to have knowledge of God (the guarantor of meaning that the hero of the film seeks). Death merely serves as the means of conveyance from one world to the next but can provide no information concerning what one will find in the latter.

25. For this reason among others it is most lamentable that the harmonium is rarely audible in recordings of the opera.

26. In this Ariadne resembles Elektra who, when confronted with the loss of her past through the treachery of her mother, ritualistically reenacts the death of her father, forging a relationship with a past that no longer exists.

References

Bottenberg, Joanna. 1996. *Shared Creation: Words and Music in the Hofmannsthal-Strauss Operas*. Berlin and New York: Peter Lang.

Broch, Hermann. 1984. *Hugo von Hofmannsthal and His Time: The European Imagination, 1860–1920*, translated, edited and with an introduction by Michael P. Steinberg. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

Del Mar, Norman. 1986. *Richard Strauss: A Critical Commentary on his Life and Works*. Vol. 2. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Forsyth, Karen. 1982. Ariadne auf Naxos *by Hugo von Hofmannsthal and Richard Strauss: Its Genesis and Meaning*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Frisch, Walter. 2005. *German Modernism: Music and the Arts*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Greene, David B. 1991. *Listening to Strauss Operas: The Audience's Multiple Standpoints*. New York: Gordon and Breach.

Hamburger, Michael. 1961. Introduction. In *Hugo von Hofmannsthal: Poems and Verse Plays*.

New York: Pantheon Books.
Hofmannsthal, Hugo von. 1986. *The Lord Chandos Letter*, translated by Russell Stockman. Marlboro: The Marlboro Press. (Orig. pub. 1903)
———. 1997. Literature as the Spiritual Space of the Nation. In *Revolution from the Right: Politics, Class, and the Rise of Nazism in Saxony, 1919–1933*, edited by Benjamin Lipp, 341. Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press.
Hoppe, Manfred. 1968. *Literatentum, Magie und Mystik im Frühwerk Hugo von Hofmannsthals.* Berlin: de Gruyter.
Könneker, Barbara. 1972. Die Funktion des Vorspiels in Hofmannsthals *Ariadne auf Naxos. Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift* 12: 124–41.
Kuhns, Richard. 1999. The Rebirth of Satyr-Tragedy in *Ariadne auf Naxos*: Hofmannsthal and Nietsche. *Musical Quarterly* 15 (3): 437–50.
Schorske, Carl. 1981. *Fin-de-siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture.* New York: Vintage Books.
Steinberg, Michael. 1990. *The Meaning of the Salzburg Festival: Austria as Theaterand Ideology, 1890–1938.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
Strauss, Richard. 1993. *Ariadne auf Naxos.* New York: Dover Publications.
Strauss, Richard and Hugo von Hofmannsthal. 1961. *A Working Friendship: The Correspondence between Richard Strauss and Hugo von Hofmannsthal*, translated by Hans Hammelmann and Ewald Osers. New York: Vienna House.
Underwood, Von Edward. 1988. *A History that Includes the Self: Essays on the Poetry of Stefan George, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, William Carlos Williams and Wallace Stevens.* New York and London: Garland Publishing.
Ward, Philip. 2002. *Hofmannsthal and Greek Myth: Expression and Performance.* Oxford: Peter Lang.