

A Question of Loyalty: Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Stendhal, D'Annunzio, and Italian Nationalism

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“Was war mir Italien?” Hofmannsthal asked himself around 1917 as he pondered his growth as a writer (*Aufzeichnungen* 232). Though his thoughts at the time remained private, it is clear that a defining relationship with Italy began within the family (his paternal grandmother was a native Milanese, and his father spent part of his childhood in Lombardy) and was enriched by frequent visits, the last of which he made in 1929, the year of his death. Italy not only left its mark on his writings, but captivated him in general. “Das qualvolle Sehnen nach Italien,” he wrote in 1921 to Rudolph Borchardt at home near Lucca, was so intense, “daß es beinahe zur Halluzination wird” (Borchardt 160). Earlier, in 1897, the final weeks in Varese of a six-week cycling tour through Venetia and Lombardy had proved particularly conducive to his writing, so that in 1928, once again in Varese, he remembered them as “vielleicht die glücklichsten Wochen meines Lebens” (Borchardt 282). But did this early association of Italy, family history, creativity, and personal happiness include tacit approval of the aims of Italian nationalism that compromised his loyalty to Habsburg Austria? For this is a frequent response to two works, one written during the 1897 journey – “Die Rede Gabriele D’Annunzios. Notizen von einer Reise im oberen Italien” (published in the same year in *Die Zeit*) – and the other informed by memories of his 1897 journey – *Reitergeschichte* (first published in the *Neue Freie Presse* in 1899). Interpretations of these works invoke similarities with Stendhal and D’Annunzio to arrive at a politically suspect young Hofmannsthal. However, this image calls for correction since its proponents ignore salient aspects of Hofmannsthal’s outlook and background that precluded any approval of Stendhal’s and D’Annunzio’s advocacy of Italian nationalism.

Following earlier commentators such as John Botterman, Marianne Burkhard, Theodore Fiedler, and Uwe Henning, who have claimed that both works express sympathy for the Risorgimento (the movement for an independent and united Italy between 1815 and 1870), Jacques Le Rider has discovered an “Italienbewunderung” in *Reitergeschichte* that extends to agreement with the goal of Italian unification (93). He interprets the story as a deconstruction of official Habsburg history by *seminar* 42:1 (February 2006)

a young liberal-minded writer (without otherwise documenting Hofmannsthal's alleged liberal thinking) who feared the repercussions of an unambiguous public indictment of Habsburg oppression. Consequently, in what Le Rider terms Hofmannsthal's "Gedanken an 1848: eine Trauerarbeit," political and social caution led Hofmannsthal to the subterfuge of adopting the stylistic and liberal mask of Stendhal. Fiedler had earlier proposed an indebtedness to chapter 1 ("Milan en 1796") of *La Chartreuse de Parme* in Hofmannsthal's depiction of Wachtmeister Lerch's fatal obsession with thoughts of material gain after his encounter with the prostitute Vuic, so that his excited imagination inflates Vuic's portly male visitor into a grotesque source of wealth: "[er] wuchs zu einer schwammigen Riesengestalt, der man an zwanzig Stellen Spundlöcher in den Leib schlagen und statt Blut Gold abzapfen konnte" (*Erzählungen* 54). Fiedler interprets this phantasy as a reference to Stendhal's description of Gros's cartoon that shows a corpulent Austrian archduke bleeding grain, not blood, after having been bayoneted by a French soldier (Fiedler 149). Le Rider expands significantly on Fiedler's suggestion and detects further intertextual references – "Der Chronikstil, das hohe Erzähltempo, das Fehlen von Interventionen seitens des Erzählers" – and, above all, an intriguing resemblance between the opening sentences of both works, which record the entry of soldiers into Milan with a precise date (Le Rider 69). Adopting, too, Fiedler's view of a strategy of irony, Le Rider concludes that Hofmannsthal intended the similarities to be understood as allusions to Stendhal, the critic of Austrian occupation, and thus as a signal that *Reitergeschichte* was to be read ironically as a politically subversive work. This interpretation remains, of course, conjecture, since Hofmannsthal never commented on the story beyond his puzzling dismissal of it as a "Schreibübung" (Stern 110). Assuming, however, that he did have Stendhal in mind, a reading of *La Chartreuse de Parme* and knowledge of its author's opinions suggest more plausibly that Hofmannsthal viewed him as a political opponent, not as an ally.

Hofmannsthal's description in the first sentence of the fictional advance of an Austrian cavalry reconnaissance squadron on rebellious Milan on 22 July 1848 can indeed recall the first line of Stendhal's novel, which depicts the actual triumphant entry of Napoleon's army into Milan on 15 May 1796 after the withdrawal of Austrian forces. Napoleon declared Milan the capital of his Kingdom of Italy and raised there the tricolour of the future Italian state, replacing the French blue with the traditional green of Milan, and thus awoke in the Milanese a sense of nationalism that Stendhal regarded as a requirement of happiness: "Il fallait aimer la patrie d'un amour réel et chercher les actions héroïques" (*Chartreuse* 4). An opportunity to act in this spirit came in March 1848 when Milan rose against the Austrians and forced Radetzky's withdrawal. The supposed ironic reference of Hofmannsthal's date to Stendhal's constitutes decisive evidence in Le Rider's theory of subversion, since he argues that it was Hofmannsthal's intention to evoke

in readers a contrast between the repressive actions of Austrian dragoons, once more in retreat, and the earlier heroic and liberating deeds of the Armée d'Italie: "Es sind keine Bravour- und Geniestreiche, die der Anfang der *Reitergeschichte* erzählt, sondern bloss Nachhutgefechte [...]. Die Soldaten sind die Nachfolger jener Österreicher, welche die Franzosen am Anfang der *Kartause von Parma* aus Mailand verjagt haben" (Le Rider 67). Yet far from being deployed in mere rearguard actions, Hofmannsthal's dragoons move rapidly and decisively to the attack and, sweeping all opposition aside, ride through Milan itself. Thus their actions mirror on a minor scale Radetzky's offensive on the same day at Custozza, which resulted in a resounding defeat for Italian nationalism. Hofmannsthal admired Radetzky, and the opposition of 15 May 1796 to 22 July 1848 hints more persuasively at a clash of ideologies, as a young Austrian writer and cavalry officer in the reserves engaged an older French writer and former cavalry officer, with whom he shared, moreover, a personal connection to Milan.

Hofmannsthal's knowledge of Milan would have told him that on their way from the Porta Venezia to San Babila his dragoons pass the Palazzo Bovara. Today a plaque records Stendhal's first stay there in 1800 as a seventeen-year-old soldier with words from his journal that underline Milan's pivotal importance in his life: "Sur le Cours de cette Porte Orientale [...] s'est passée l'aurore de ma vie" (*Oeuvres intimes* 1079). Here Stendhal learned the art of living, fell in love, began his career as a writer, and became a partisan of Italian independence. "Cette ville devint pour moi le plus beau lieu de la terre," he wrote (*Oeuvres intimes* 392); from 1814 until 1821 it was his principal address, and he returned often until the Austrians barred him in 1828. So he did not die there, as Hofmannsthal still believed in 1892 (*Prosa I* 79), though the wording Stendhal chose for his gravestone – "Arrigo Beyle, Milanese visse, scrisse, amò" ('Henri Beyle, he lived, wrote, and loved as a Milanese') – confirms that in his mind he never left Milan.

Unlike Stendhal, who liked to believe that his receptiveness to Milanese life was the legacy of a putative Italian ancestor, a murderer who had fled to Avignon around 1650, Hofmannsthal had no need for romantic speculation to explain his ties to Milan. Though he could not match Stendhal's claim that his life only really began there, a remark in 1894 shows that Milan could evoke important associations in him, too: in a letter to his parents at the beginning of his *Freiwilligenjahr* in a particularly aristocratic cavalry regiment, he embellished the minor and recently acquired (1835) family title of Edler von Hofmannsthal with several invented ones, including "dominus patricius in Mailand" (*Briefe* 119). This mock title could have been claimed more properly by his grandfather, who had married the widowed Petronilla Rhò while representing the family firm in Milan. On his 1897 journey he delighted his grandmother with a postcard in Italian from Pusiano, the former country home of the Rhòs, just north of Milan where she still had relatives (*Briefe* 223). Towards the end of his life Petronilla came to mind again at a conference in 1926 when his

admiration for the three Italian delegates stirred pride of association and gratitude for an accident of birth: “Man erinnerte sich plötzlich was diese Nation der Welt gegeben hat [...] und ich freute mich wieder, daß ich eine lombardische Großmutter habe” (Perrig 193). In 1897 he also joined his future wife and her family on their tour of Milan, and she, together with their daughter, also accompanied him on his last recorded visit in 1920. His marriage in 1901 as a Catholic was also a result of his grandfather’s conversion in order to wed Petronilla. Therefore given his family history and the importance of Catholicism, especially for his later works and his acceptance in society (he was thin-skinned about his Jewish background), Milan belonged centrally to his self-definition, too.

Both writers also had in common that they first experienced Milan with minds influenced by cavalry service and that they both served in the Sixth Dragoons of their respective armies. With the crucial difference, of course, that Stendhal, commissioned in Milan in 1800 as a second lieutenant, saw himself as a liberator, whereas Hofmannsthal arrived in 1897 as a second lieutenant in the reserves of the former occupying power, fresh from military exercises in Galicia. Thus to him it was also a return to a collective past that Stendhal had opposed. Two of the figures in Austrian history whom Hofmannsthal most admired, Prince Eugene and Radetzky, had been Milan’s first and last Habsburg governors. It had belonged until 1859 to the empire that he was being trained to defend and that embodied for him the tradition of the Holy Roman Empire, nostalgia for which never left him, and three years before his death he still conceived of his bonds to it and Italy in the same breath: “Gefühl der Zugehörigkeit zum Heiligen Römischen Reich ungebrochen. So auch gegen Italien (hier durch Blut zugehörig)” (*Aufzeichnungen* 239). A year after the 1897 visit to Lombardy and Venetia, the first mention of a story based on Radetzky’s 1848 campaign to retain Austrian hold on these provinces occurs in a letter written on cavalry exercises in Galicia (Andrian 109); in *Reitergeschichte* memories of Milan and its surroundings fused creatively with the militant mind of a patriotic cavalryman.

Despite their occasional complaint about the boredom of routine, both writers found cavalry life appealing, and it left its mark on them. Hofmannsthal served his *Freiwilligenjahr* in 1894–95 in the aristocratic K. u. K. Dragonerregiment No. 6, followed by nine years of reservist training, and in later life others recognized the former cavalry officer in him (Fiechtner 210). When Henri Beyle used the pseudonym Stendhal for the first time in *Rome, Naples et Florence en 1817*, it was followed by “officier de cavalerie,” even though he had ceased to be one in 1802. Regimental pride also found its way into their writings, and from their diametrically opposed perspectives both rewrote history in *Reitergeschichte* and *La Chartreuse de Parme* to allow their regiments the honour of defending ideas they held to be important: the Waldmodenkürassiere (the pre-1867 name of the Dragonerregiment No. 6) never campaigned in Italy in 1848 and “le 6. dragons”

did not see action at Waterloo. As early as 1831 in *Le Rouge et le noir*, Stendhal records how the sight of dragoons of the Sixth returning from Italy helps to nourish the Bonapartist ambitions of young Julien Sorel. Hofmannsthal's experiences provided his insubordinate dragoon with the name and rank of a Wachtmeister Lerch, whom he had known (Fewster, "Onomastics" 38), an interweaving of military memories and fiction that Stendhal had already anticipated in chapter 4 ("La Guerre") of *La Chartreuse de Parme*. During the confusion of Waterloo, in which Fabrice's dreams of glory are dashed, Stendhal describes the attempts of Colonel Le Baron (Stendhal's former colonel) of the Sixth Dragoons to restore order among soldiers fleeing over a bridge. He places Le Baron in the company of other names he had known in the Sixth: "le maréchal des logis" La Rose (the nickname and rank of a soldier admired for his bravery) and Captain Henriet (*Chartreuse* 573–74). This incident does suggest that a reading of Stendhal may have left its imprint on *Reitergeschichte*, for Hofmannsthal also portrays a baron, one by title, Rofrano, who also shoulders the responsibility of rank and confronts Wachtmeister Lerch's indiscipline, which threatens order in his squadron. Though the wounded Le Baron loses the struggle to prevent a disobedient soldier from riding off with Fabrice's horse and it is left to La Rose to kill him, the colonel's words – "Le diable l'emporte!" – as he stands over the dying man indicate that he would have applauded Rofrano's personal execution of Lerch, another mutinous soldier who refuses to release another man's horse. It is also possible that Fabrice provided the model for the young, handsome Italian of good family, who, no match for seasoned soldiers, loses his fine horse and his own life to Lerch.

These incidents mirror a consonance of minds shaped by military experiences, but the two writers would have disagreed about the ideological justification for the recourse to extreme measures. As one who had enlisted in support of the revolution, Stendhal sends his old regiment and his young Milanese hero, Fabrice, in French uniform to defend change, including an end to Austrian rule in Italy. The conservative Hofmannsthal, by contrast, never forgot how the revolution had dealt a death blow to his favourite Austria, that of Maria Theresia, Prince Eugene, and the Holy Roman Empire, and how its aftermath continued to undermine order within the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Thus the involvement of Rofrano, a name resonant of eighteenth-century Austria and shared with Octavian, *der Rosenkavalier* (Fewster, "Rofrano" 294), and of Hofmannsthal's former regiment in bringing to heel Italians whom notions of *liberté, égalité, fraternité* have turned into rebels, reflects Hofmannsthal's political thinking and his whole *raison d'être* as an officer in the reserves. After all, what was the purpose of his military training from 1894 to 1905 (which, significantly, he performed conscientiously and willingly), if not the defence of a multiethnic empire against domestic and foreign enemies? Among the internal opposition in 1815 ranked, of course, Stendhal's Fabrice. Whereas Rofrano shoots Lerch for his disobedience, Fabrice, an Austrian

subject, escapes the death his treason warrants, but lives in fear of incarceration in the Spielberg in Brünn (Czech Brno), the Habsburgs' infamous gaol for political prisoners. One famous inmate, Silvio Pellico, frequented until his arrest in 1821 the same Milanese salons as Stendhal. His description of Fabrice's later imprisonment in Parma reflects his reading of Pellico's *Le miei prigionieri* ('My Prisons'; 1832), which Hofmannsthal calls "die furchtbare Klageschrift" in "Die Rede Gabriele D'Annunzios. Notizen von einer Reise im oberen Italien" (*Prosa I* 289). The Austrians regarded Stendhal, too, as a subversive: in 1828 they ordered him to leave Milan within twelve hours, and in 1831 Metternich refused to accredit him as French consul to Trieste.

Hofmannsthal's use of geography also points towards a symbolic confrontation with Stendhal. The first sentence of *La Chartreuse de Parme* announces that Napoleon's army has entered Milan from the south, from Lodi (where it had defeated the Austrians, among them Radetzky), and has shown the world that "après tant de siècles César et Alexandre avaient un successeur" (*Chartreuse* 3). Hofmannsthal's opening sentence not only reverses the direction, thus symbolically setting his dragoons on a collision course with Stendhal's French, but also subverts Stendhal's reference to Alexander by choosing Casino San Alessandro as the departure point of his dragoons, a name suggestive of ultimate victory for divine and Habsburg order (Fewster, "Onomastics" 33). From here the Austrians ride south, and, after a successful day of routing the opponents of order (the Italians and Lerch), Rofrano's squadron reaches Lodi on its way to rejoin the main army, which under the command of Radetzky is shattering the dream of Italian independence at Custozza. Thus insofar as *Reitergeschichte* may reflect Hofmannsthal's reading of Stendhal, this reversal of direction appears as a symbolic reversal of history, as an imaginative annulment of the crucial victory at Lodi in 1796 of the historical forces that in the 1890s continued to threaten the multiethnic and multicultural image of Austria that was dear to Hofmannsthal.

Thus it is consistent with a rejection of Stendhal's opposition to Austrian rule that Hofmannsthal chose an Italian name for the officer who leads the fight against Italian rebels, since this reflects his supranational (and idealistic) understanding, exemplified in his own person by his Austrian, Italian, and Jewish-Bohemian antecedents, of the value of an empire that mediated between diverse peoples and cultures to mutual advantage. Stendhal, on the other hand, condemned the Rofranos of the time as traitors to their own people, as totally reactionary and as morally repulsive as the Milanese Marquis del Dongo, Fabrice's nominal father (his natural father is, significantly, the French Lieutenant Robert), who willingly collaborates with the Austrian administration. However, Stendhal is no disinterested witness to history and fails to meet his own definition of the novel as a mirror carried along a road, for *La Chartreuse de Parme* reflects only the enthusiasm of 1796 for the French, but nothing of

the subsequent discontent that spread to all classes and was by no means limited to die-hard reactionaries. Harsh taxation and conscription (the Austrians had exempted the Milanese from military service, whereas they were sent to die for Napoleon in Russia and Spain) provoked revolts, so that the Austrians were met with cheers when they reoccupied Milan briefly in 1799 (Clark 9).

Stendhal's republican convictions result in a monochrome, unflattering portrait of the Milanese nobility as a class. Not only does he condemn its decadence and lack of patriotism, personified by the Marquis del Dongo, but Stendhal the lover of ideas and lively discussion seems to despise especially its superstitious, antiintellectual character, and he damns its members with the remark, "tous ces gens-là n'avaient pas lu quatre volumes en leur vie" (*Chartreuse* 12). At the age of twelve Fabrice is already a hussar officer who has learned nothing more than to drill and to ride a horse. Though Hofmannsthal does not present the Milanese nobility of 1848 in *Reitergeschichte*, his sympathies as a minor noble lay clearly with the Austrian aristocracy in the 1890s, and Andrian considered that the noble ambience of cavalry life had strengthened his friend's disposition to snobbery (Renner 6, 37). He allows Baron Rofrano to carry the day for the semifeudal world of Habsburg order, whereas it is his victims – the Italian rebels and Lerch envious of his commander's privileged life – who reflect Stendhal's hostility to the ancien régime.

Opposing views of the church also undermine any claim to complicity with Stendhal. As earlier in *Le Rouge et le noir*, Stendhal does not hide his anticlericalism. The Milanese priests strive to demonize the young French soldiers and their revolutionary message by declaring "du haut de la chaire sacrée que les Français étaient des monstres, obligés, sous peine de mort, de tout brûler et à couper la tête à tout le monde," so that the young soldiers mock the priests by marching behind a guillotine (*Chartreuse* 5). Rather predictably, Fabrice is schooled by Jesuits. Their suppression in 1773 had ranked as one of the greatest successes of the Enlightenment, but in 1814 the order was restored to combat the progressive ideas that Fabrice was determined to defend at Waterloo. So it is ironic that he spends his final days as a retired prelate in the eponymous religious house. Hofmannsthal, on the other hand, though rejecting dogma, valued the church as a vital guardian of tradition and order. Unsure of himself, the young Hofmannsthal admired the saints as exemplars of strength of character, and Felix Salten drew a connection between Hofmannsthal's regular church attendance and his favourable response to military service, since both mirrored his congenital need for ritual, order, and authority (Salten 43–44). This union of church and crown as the guarantors of order and tradition is reflected in *Reitergeschichte* in the description of the dragoons' passage through Milan: their drawn and glittering swords form part of a triumphal ensemble of order as they ride by the pointedly enumerated churches (eight in all) to the accompaniment of church bells and trumpets.

The dragoons pass through the Porta Ticinese as they leave Milan. Originally named the Porta Marengo, this monumental arch had been designed by Cagnola in the classical style to honour Napoleon's 1800 victory. Though Hofmannsthal may have only taunted history in his phantasy by sending his dragoons to Lodi on the day of the Austrian victory at Custozza, the Austrians on their return to Milan actually subverted a reminder of another defeat by rededicating the Porta Marengo in 1815 as the Porta Ticinese. They also added the inscription *Paci populorum sospitae* ('To peace, the saviour of peoples'), which can be read as an indirect rebuke to Napoleonic warmongering. However, Le Rider follows Theodore Fiedler's interpretation, which directs the irony at the Austrians. Since both critics argue that *Reitergeschichte* must be read ironically, then the inscription (which Hofmannsthal never mentions in the text) must stand as a mute condemnation of the violent actions of the Austrian dragoons who pass through the arch on their way south. Yet since they are doing in 1848 what Hofmannsthal's training would have demanded of him during an insurrection in the 1890s and since within the story Lerch is about to break with military obedience just beyond the arch, any irony implicit in its mention loses its anti-Austrian intent. The inscription can be read logically as an exhortation to Lerch to remain at one with military discipline and as a reminder to the Milanese to keep the peace (reminiscent of the call to seditious Berliners in 1848: "Ruhe ist die erste Bürgerpflicht!"). Hofmannsthal's own family history offers a further example of the Habsburgs' ironic rewriting of Milanese history. Just as the Porta Ticinese had originally honoured Napoleon, so the Orden der Eisernen Krone had been established by Napoleon for his Kingdom of Italy. Two of the three stipulations for its award (which Hofmannsthal's father received in 1912) now stressed loyalty to the Habsburg emperor and state and contributions to the welfare of the monarchy (Weber 180–81).

Significantly, in *Reitergeschichte* the Milanese do keep the peace and the Austrians ride unopposed through the city. Outside the walls of Milan they do clash with volunteers from the Giudicarie, Pisa, and Naples, who have answered the Risorgimento's call to national struggle. Hofmannsthal was also clearly aware of the historical significance of the "Legion Manaras" (actually the "battaglione Manara"), named after its founder, a Lombard who distinguished himself during the uprising in Milan and in later campaigns. Within Milan, however, the dragoons notice nothing more menacing than "fluchende und erbleichende Gestalten hinter Haustoren verschwindend," and most Milanese who throng the side streets are merely amazed by the dragoons' arrival (*Erzählungen* 51). While the city's eerie calm, a pause in the story's violence, adds to the dramatic tension, it could also reflect Hofmannsthal's unwillingness in fiction to allow Austrian soldiers to shed blood in a city in which his relatives lived; it is even conceivable that his own grandparents were living there at the time.

Important parts of the Hofmannsthal family biography remain missing, including information on the Italian years of the grandparents and Hofmannsthal's father (see Raponi, "Mondo Milanese" 158–59). Though the grandparents married in 1840 in Milan (for legal reasons they had to marry again in 1850 in Vienna), their whereabouts in 1848 remain a mystery, and there is no record of how the family may have discussed the events of 1848 in later years. It is known, however, that Petronilla's family, the Rhòs, had worked closely with the French administration and that their gratitude to the French survived in Petronilla's habit of quoting from *Cinque Maggio* ('The Fifth of May'), Manzoni's ode on the death of Napoleon (Raponi, "Mondo Milanese" 149). Nonetheless, she managed to reconcile patriotic sentiments with marriage to an Austrian, and her ambivalence was widely shared. Most Milanese desired freedom from Austrian rule and yet, however grudgingly, had to admit that the Austrian administration had worked so efficiently that, censorship aside, Milan was considered one of the most progressive cities in Europe (Clark 103; Fucci 28–29, 34). Even Stendhal conceded respect for "la sage et très sage administration de la maison d'Autriche" (*Pages* 146). At a more personal level, Silvio Pellico, seriously ill during most of his eight years in the Spielberg, spoke highly of the kindness of some gaolers, especially the ex-grenadier Schiller, "il buon vecchio carceriere" ('the good, old gaoler'; Pellico 182–84). Whatever hostility the Milanese felt towards the Austrians in 1848, it rarely resulted in violence towards civilians, and mixed marriages may have had a moderating effect on events (Fucci 124–25). Radetzky, who lived in Milan from 1831 until his death in 1858, found greater happiness with his Italian mistress and their children than with his legal family, and it is widely thought that their safety determined his decision to withdraw (to Lodi, like Hofmannsthal's dragoons), rather than to bombard Milan into submission (Fucci 48–49). Later in August 1848, the victorious Radetzky heeded the request of the municipal authorities to hasten his return to prevent the collapse of public order, and grateful Milanese pulled his carriage into the city (Fucci 189). Hofmannsthal reflects Radetzky's reluctance to cause civilian casualties, whereas the Milanese showed that they could share with Hofmannsthal the Goethean preference for political injustice rather than disorder that Olga Schnitzler discerned in his character (Fiechtner 210). This contrasted sharply with the reputation of Stendhal, who during a treason trial in Milan in 1821 was portrayed by the Austrian police as "un homme irréligieux, révolutionnaire, ennemi de la légitimité et de tout gouvernement régulier" (Dédéyan 76).

The attitude of most Milanese at least in August 1848 and in *Reitergeschichte* reflects, therefore, nothing of the willingness to risk one's property and life for the *patria* that Napoleon's arrival inspires at the beginning of *La Chartreuse de Parme*. It also compares unfavourably with the heroic language and deeds associated with Gabriele D'Annunzio in his commitment to Italian nationalism. D'Annunzio, too, had served in the cavalry, but, unlike Stendhal

and Hofmannsthal, with a sense of martyrdom: “My worst enemy could not have imagined a more ferocious, inhuman torture for me” (Woodhouse 88). Nonetheless, a love of riding survived and, accompanied by a reading of Nietzsche and a determination to revive ancient glories, it helped to shape a particularly aggressive attitude to life. This is attested by an essay, “Il venturiero senza ventura” (‘The Adventurer without an Adventure’), dated 29 August 1898, nineteen days before the only recorded meeting between Hofmannsthal and D’Annunzio in the latter’s villa near Florence. Astride his horse and his imagination aroused from galloping, D’Annunzio gazes down on Florence and identifies with the drunken mercenaries who fell on “Madonna Fiorenza” during the Renaissance (D’Annunzio, *Prose* 2: 9–10). His nostalgia for more heroic times, when an adventurer was allowed to indulge his lust to conquer, contrasts with the disciplined behaviour of Hofmannsthal’s troopers in an undefended Milan, and Wachtmeister Lerch’s downfall begins with phantasies of unrestrained power. This essay possesses a prophetic quality, for D’Annunzio realized finally in Fiume (Croatian Rijeka) in 1919 the adventure of seizing a city. It also mirrors the mind that had earlier composed the election speech, *Il discorso della siepe* (‘The Hedge Speech’), which D’Annunzio held on 22 August 1897 in the riding of Ortona a Mare, which included his hometown of Pescara.

Reading the newspaper reports in Varese about D’Annunzio’s entry into politics so engrossed Hofmannsthal that he had D’Annunzio send the full text of the speech, though curiously in “Die Rede Gabriele D’Annunzios. Notizen von einer Reise im oberen Italien,” published in October 1897, he says that his abridged translation is based on a version in a Neapolitan newspaper. D’Annunzio’s politics did not particularly interest him, and he described them as reactionary. But then he thought all (!) contemporary writers were reactionaries (*Briefe* 230), and personally he must have found congenial D’Annunzio’s antisocialism and emphasis on hierarchy. What really engaged his attention was a shared view of the writer’s relationship to society expressed in D’Annunzio’s first words: “Ihr Leute aus meiner Heimat, ich habe mit euch von den Banden zu reden, die den Geist eines Dichters mit dem Boden seines Landes verknüpfen” (*Prosa I* 290). “Verknüpfung mit dem Leben” belonged, of course, to Hofmannsthal’s major concerns at this time, so that he applauded the decision of an icon of European aestheticism to enter into the life of his society. D’Annunzio’s call to intellectuals – “Es ist nicht mehr die Zeit, einsam im Schatten des Lorbeers und der Myrte zu träumen” and “jedem Zwiespalt zwischen Denken und Tuen ein Ende zu machen” (*Prosa I* 292–93) – echoed Hofmannsthal’s own thoughts. He approved, too, of the emphasis on strength of will in the speech, since he saw its absence as a weakness of much contemporary literature and many of his early essays revolve around this theme. His increasing interest in theatre as a means of connecting with society also reflected D’Annunzio’s development, whose first play, *La città*

morta ('The Dead City'), was completed in 1896. For D'Annunzio, politics was an extension of theatre in his promotion of a nationalist agenda that anticipated fascism. Hofmannsthal's manner of social involvement was less radical and flamboyant, and his most practical service to his society in the 1890s took place in the ordered world of a cavalry regiment, not in the free-for-all of politics.

Is it admissible, therefore, to deduce, from his enthusiasm for D'Annunzio's speech and from the travel impressions that accompany it, any enthusiasm for Italian nationalism? How justifiable, for instance, is the claim that "'Die Rede Gabriele D'Annunzios' makes it clear that Hofmannsthal applauded the Italian nationalists' eventual victory, but his support was founded on the perception of a spiritual victory for culture, for the preservation of the beautiful and the noble" (Botterman 3)? Thus John Botterman and Le Rider in their interpretations of *Reitergeschichte* conclude that Hofmannsthal shared D'Annunzio's definition of Italy in his speech as the mother of beauty ("Das Schicksal Italiens ist nicht zu trennen von den Geschicken der Schönheit, deren Mutter Italien ist"; *Prosa I* 295), and they infer from this equation that it confirms a political *parti pris* for Italy. Le Rider sees the handsome, young Italian prisoners as examples of this aesthetic image of Italy, but exempts Rofrano, despite his Italian roots, and decries him as a morally ugly aberration, "ein reaktionärer Aristokrat, ein Vertreter des habsburgischen Neo-Absolutismus" (Le Rider 94). Botterman succeeds in saving Rofrano from complete condemnation through the sleight-of-hand of distinguishing between him as a type (the Habsburg officer who kills Italians) and as a symbol of culture and beauty who identifies with the Italians as fellow bearers of innate Italian values. Thus Rofrano's shooting of the non-Italian Lerch, his mind corrupted by dreams of filthy lucre, is understood as Hofmannsthal's tacit approval of D'Annunzio's "exhortation to the spiritual, intellectual elite" to embrace militancy, "um so wie im Kriege die Sache des Geistes gegen die Barbaren zu verteidigen" (Botterman 12).

What was, however, the nature of the Italian mind and beauty that D'Annunzio wished to defend in 1897, and who were the barbarians? Impelled by his message of national renewal, he indicts the politicians who after the liberation of Rome in 1870 saw the Risorgimento's mission as complete and whose actions were no longer guided by its idealism. He recalls "die blutigen Gestalten der Kämpfer" whom he and his rural listeners were taught to honour at school, the young men who gave their lives for a free Italy, such as those whose names Hofmannsthal read on countless memorials on his way to Vicenza. They exemplify the spirit of Italy that D'Annunzio swears to defend and that the discredited politicians have betrayed. Thus the latter belong to the barbarians, among whom D'Annunzio included all non-Latins. Two years before this speech, in 1895, he had remarked that "beyond the Latin races, there is only barbarity" (Woodhouse 274). He follows his second and final mention of Italy as

the mother of beauty with words that reveal that the spirit of his Italy was marked by a will to conflict inspired by ancient Rome: “Lateinischer Geist wird nicht anders seine Vorherrschaft in der Welt zurückgewinnen als unter der Bedingung, daß der Kult des ungebrochenen Willens wiederhergestellt wird und daß jenes Empfinden unangestastet bleibt, dem zu Ehren das alte Latium ein tief sinniges Fest, das Fest der Grenzsteine, besaß” (*Prosa I* 296).

This allusion to the Roman festival of Terminalia (from *terminus*, a border stone) introduces his appeal to the farmers to strengthen the hedges around their fields: “Niemals genug zäh und dicht und dornig und lebendig ist die Hecke [...] Stärket sie noch [...] denn einer droht sie zu entreißen, sie niederzuschlagen, sie auszureißen [...]” (*Prosa I* 296). The central image of the hedge is commonly understood as a metaphor for private property and its preservation and increase. Insofar as this presupposes relentless exertion of will, it reflects D’Annunzio’s cult of powerful personality (“Um soviel tugendhafter ist ein Mensch, als er sich bemüht, sein Dasein zu steigern”; *Prosa I* 296), which was encouraged by his reading of Roman history and Nietzsche; strong-willed individuals would produce a heroic Italy. Yet given the harsh reality of rural life, the poetic praise of private property, replete with classical references, to an audience of mainly poor tenant farmers does seem incongruous, as Richard Dehmel thought at the time. Unmoved by D’Annunzio’s and Hofmannsthal’s declarations of an end to aesthetic isolation, Dehmel concluded that they remained “einsame Geister,” woefully ignorant of, and perhaps indifferent to, the hardships of everyday life; he rebuked them with D’Annunzio’s own words: “Es ist nicht mehr die Zeit, einsam zu träumen” (Dehmel 216). Certainly D’Annunzio had a more grandiose project in mind than an improvement in the living conditions of the underprivileged, and he abandoned Pescara for Florence once he had won his seat, “um dem Verkehr mit der Bevölkerung in seinem Wahlbezirk auszuweichen,” as Hofmannsthal noted (*Briefe* 268). Indeed, there is evidence in his praise of the hedge that it has a subtext, one more germane to his nationalism and unconcerned with the concrete problems of struggling farmers: “Und mehr als einmal bin ich stehengeblieben, die Pracht eurer Hecke zu loben. Und ihr waret zufrieden, und doch wußtet ihr nicht von dem Lichte, in dem ich sie erblickte, und von dem göttlichen Sinn, der in meinem Lob verborgen lag” (*Prosa I* 297). This reference to a hidden divine meaning, seen in the context of the earlier indirect mention of the Terminalia festival and the call to revive the dynamic fervour of the Risorgimento, suggests that hedges on a monumental, national scale were what really mattered to him: the frontiers of Italy in the north, the solid hedge of the Alps. D’Annunzio, who had excelled in classics at school, knew that the Terminalia celebrated not only the limits of private property. On the same day, February 23, the community congregated at a point on the former boundary of Rome, six miles from the centre, to call upon divine protection for the frontiers of the state (see *Paulys Realencyclopädie*).

Though the *Discorso della siepe* exists today only in Hofmannsthal's abridged translation, another 1897 election speech, *Laude dell'illaudato* ('Praise of the Unpraised'), has survived in Italian. It also contains references to the Terminalia, the hedge, and its divine meaning in language that corresponds to that of Hofmannsthal's translation (D'Annunzio, *Prose* 1: 473–74). These ideas belonged to the core of D'Annunzio's politics, and in a 1900 newspaper article he revisits his 1897 speeches and reiterates their main points, including the image of the hedge. This time its meaning clearly transcends agriculture to include any ideal border around anything acquired by beautiful, masculine effort ("Qualunque cerchio ideale che si stenda intorno a qualunque acquisto compiuto dalle belle energie virili nell'universo"; Castelli 598). Politically, this definition extended to the masculine energy that was being invested since 1888 to establish the borders of an Italian empire in Africa, for which D'Annunzio was an enthusiastic advocate.

Within Italy, however, D'Annunzio bemoaned the absence of similar national effort to complete the Risorgimento's work of unification by wresting Trieste and the southern Tyrol from Austria-Hungary. He also shared the general suspicion that the old foe was planning to redraw the existing frontier. Thus his exhortation to farmers to guard their hedges – "denn einer droht sie zu entreißen, sie niederzuschlagen, sie auszureißen" (*Prosa* 1 296) – signifies more than a comment on Social Darwinism in the countryside, however compatible D'Annunzio's perception of the acquisitive egoism of farmers was with his Nietzschean equation of morality with decadence. It reflects his overriding concern for the territorial integrity and expansion of Italy, and the only barbarians who appeared to threaten this in 1897 were the Austrians. Historical reality contradicts, therefore, the contention that "by the time *Reitergeschichte* was written the national question had been resolved in Italy. By 1871 animosities had given way first to Austrian conciliation and finally to [*sic*] Austrian-Italian alliance" (Botterman 3). Both Vienna and Rome realized what improbable bedfellows they were in the Triple Alliance, and predictably it failed the test in 1914. Hofmannsthal was aware of these strained relations, and, however strong his affection for Italy, he knew where his loyalties lay. Even in 1898 at the time of his closest contact with D'Annunzio, he did not confuse literary fellowship with politics. Both writers were attracted by the life and character of the Empress Elisabeth, and on the one occasion when they met in person, outside of Florence on 17 September 1898, the assassination of the empress in Geneva exactly one week earlier may have entered their conversation. Yet when Hofmannsthal did a translation (published in October 1898 in *Die Zukunft*) of D'Annunzio's tribute to the empress, he modified its language to avoid offence to Austrian sensibilities (Raponi, *Italia* 130–34). Chiefly, he reined in D'Annunzio's admiration for the empress's poetic and independent mind, which made her an outsider at the Habsburg court, and chose as his title "Kaiserin Elisabeth" instead of "La virtù del ferro" ('The Virtue of Iron') with its allusion

both to Lucheni's murder weapon (a sharpened file, though D'Annunzio thought it was a *martello*, a hammer; D'Annunzio, *Scritti* 127) and to the empress's known yearning for death to catch her unawares. Also from the 1890s onward, through contact with military and upper-class circles, Hofmannsthal was familiar with the widely held opinion that a war against Italy or Serbia or both would rally the squabbling nationalities within the empire. He saw this confirmed in 1908 when the imminence of war in the Balkans led to unexpected displays of solidarity, so that when war was averted he felt almost disappointed and made the telling comment to Harry Graf Kessler, "daß man bedauert, daß es nicht auch gegen Rußland, und wenn es hätte sein müssen, gegen Rußland und *Italien* gegangen ist" (Kessler 216; emphasis added). When in 1912 D'Annunzio expressed his anti-Austrian feelings insultingly in *La canzone dei Dardanelli* ('The Song of the Dardanelles'), Hofmannsthal did not hesitate to write in defence of his maligned emperor and homeland. Despite this, Uwe Henning, who sees an "Engagement für das Risorgimento" in Hofmannsthal's writings from 1897 to 1912, asserts that "Die Antwort auf die 'Neunte Canzone' Gabriele D'Annunzios" constitutes indirect criticism of "revanchistische Bestrebungen" of official Austria, though he does not point to evidence within the text (Henning 263).

Hofmannsthal's attitude to the successes of the Risorgimento in his 1912 rejoinder to D'Annunzio does not differ in essence from that in 1897 in "Die Rede Gabriele D'Annunzios. Notizen von einer Reise im oberen Italien." In 1912 he stresses that Austria was forced in 1866 to cede its remaining major Italian province, Venetia, even though it had defeated the Italians decisively on land and sea, because of the ambitions of Prussia and its victory at Königgrätz. He in no way questions the legitimacy or the manner of Austrian rule, which after 1806 continued the tradition of the Holy Roman Empire: it was "unsere historische Mission [...]. Wir hatten dieses Land als Erbe und haben uns betragen, wie es unsere Schuldigkeit war" (*Prosa III* 84). In "Die Rede Gabriele D'Annunzios," too, he applauds neither the successes of Italian nationalism nor even an abstract and aesthetic "spiritual victory for culture, for the preservation of the beautiful and noble" (Botterman 3). His remark in the first section that to the Austrian even the evening air of the places he passes through, witnesses to the bloody struggles of the Risorgimento, seems "beladen mit den Nachgesichten einer sorg- und grauenvollen Zeit" (*Prosa I* 288), does not imply censure of past Austrian actions. It serves as an indirect reminder that these were grim times for Austrians, too, even though the remark is embedded among references to the Italian dead. It required D'Annunzio's ridicule of Austria in 1912 before Hofmannsthal said unambiguously that war also inflicted horror on Austrians ("brave Leute" died fighting "brave Leute") and that this commingling in death, as in marriage (an oblique reference to his grandparents' wedding), entitled an Austrian, especially one like himself, to a sense of legitimacy in former provinces (*Prosa III* 84).

If he had really intended to suggest even discreetly in 1897 any repugnance for Austrian resistance to the Risorgimento, it remains surprising that he did not signal this, for instance, by mentioning Garibaldi. On his way to Varese he must have been reminded often of the Risorgimento's emblematic figure, and in Varese, where he decided to write about D'Annunzio's speech, a large plaque on the town hall records since 1888 Garibaldi's appearances there in 1848, 1859, and 1866 to recruit for his irregulars. Whereas Garibaldi is conspicuous by his omission, Hofmannsthal does mention Silvio Pellico, an anti-Garibaldi, insofar as his Christian faith led him to repudiate the use of violence by Garibaldi and others in their opposition to Austrian occupation (Pellico 343). But the purpose of "Die Rede Gabriele D'Annunzios" is not to honour the Risorgimento dead (Henning 26), nor to indict Austrian history, nor even to be critical of the Risorgimento, but to express Hofmannsthal's preoccupation with the writer's function in society. Its first section, written in Vicenza, with its list of bloody encounters and monuments to "schöne junge Menschen" who shed "schönes Blut," is essentially a rhetorical device to introduce his central theme of the role of language in shaping history.

Seen in this way, the physical sacrifice of the young Italian patriots represents simply a more heroic form of the active participation in the nation's life that D'Annunzio's speech reflects. He continues the tradition of nineteenth-century writers (Hofmannsthal mentions only Manzoni, Foscolo, and Pellico by name) who contributed to the Risorgimento by keeping alive the ideal of a free Italy and thus inspired young men to take up arms (even though, in Pellico's case, passive resistance was advocated). In Bergamo Hofmannsthal draws a connection between the dead young men he had seen on yellowing illustrations, sprawled over burst canons and collapsed walls, with the famous books, such as Manzoni's *I promessi sposi* ('The Betrothed'), that told of their country, its sorrows and hopes, strewn over the table of a second-hand bookseller. Reflecting D'Annunzio's conviction that the words of the writer addressed directly to his audience are on a par with the deeds of the hero ("Das Wort des Dichters, wenn es über das Gedränge hinfliegt, ist Tat, wie die Gebärde des Helden"; *Prosa I* 292), Hofmannsthal underlines that the writers were active participants in a common struggle:

Sie liegen hier übereinander, diese berühmten Bücher, mit keiner anderen Gebärde, als dort auf den Gedächtnisbildern die Leichen der jungen Leute auf geborstenen Kanonen und zerschossenen Mauern. In jeder ihrer Tausenden und Tausenden von Zeilen atmen sie Tat, nichts als Tat, die eine Tat, an der alles Glück, alle Würdigkeit des Daseins zu hängen schien. (*Prosa I* 289–90)

This insistent emphasis on action ushers in his translation of D'Annunzio's speech, which continues the activism of the earlier writers whose works embody what D'Annunzio judges to be integral to the writer's role: to provide

intellectual leadership and to awaken the reader to the “Genius seines Stammes” (*Prosa I* 296).

Hofmannsthal appears to have been so absorbed in his own efforts to engage with society as a writer that in 1897 he could overlook the xenophobia inseparable from D’Annunzio’s understanding of the genius of the Italian people, so alien to Hofmannsthal’s cosmopolitan culture and so inimical to Austria. Instead, he focussed on D’Annunzio’s extraordinary act of connecting with society, what he termed in a letter to Hermann Bahr “eine der merkwürdigsten Sachen der Welt” (Raponi, *Italia* 125). In the conclusion to “Die Rede Gabriele D’Annunzios,” written in Venice in September 1897 after D’Annunzio’s election, he defends D’Annunzio against criticism in the Italian press that he offered a “lächerliche Ideologie” (*Prosa I* 298) instead of dealing with down-to-earth issues such as taxation and conscription. With the image before him of the mighty doge kneeling before the open book held by the winged lion of St. Mark, Hofmannsthal reminds his readers that ideological rhetoric can alter the world. He mentions as contrasting illustrations the saints (always character models for Hofmannsthal) and the orators of the French Revolution (who had inspired the young Stendhal and who anticipated D’Annunzio’s belief that the spoken word should incite action, however violent). D’Annunzio’s speech, a “rhetorisches Kunstwerk,” also had its effect on society, since it helped him to win a parliamentary seat. Thus Hofmannsthal can end his essay with D’Annunzio’s demand that an intellectual caste, “für die noch kein Name geprägt ist,” should assume a role of public leadership alongside the representatives of military power, religion, and wealth (*Prosa I* 293, 299). A name was eventually found for an ideological leadership that united worldly power and writers such as D’Annunzio: fascism. Where Hofmannsthal saw before him on the wall of the doge’s palace the open book of St. Mark with its message of peace (“Pax tibi Marce, evangelista meus”), D’Annunzio’s belligerent personality was reflected more accurately in the militant winged lion on the battle flag of the Venetian Republic, who brandishes a sword over the closed book of peace. His final residence on Lake Garda contains a large painting, *Il Condottiero*, a gift from the artist Cesare Sofianopulo, which is a fascist reworking of Venetian traditions: instead of St. Mark’s lion, a doge-like figure clad in armour, with the face of Mussolini (*Il Duce*, which is the standard Italian form of the Venetian *Il Doge*), holds his sword over an open book; however, it is not St. Mark’s gospel of peace that he intends to defend but a quotation from Macchiavelli on the virtue of dictatorship.

Thus on an imperial and bellicose scale D’Annunzio continued Stendhal’s rejection of the legitimacy of Austrian rule south of the Alps, whereas Hofmannsthal’s nostalgic view of Austrian history revealed a mind “dessen Liebe keine Provinz hergeben wollte, nicht einmal das längst verlorene Venedig und die Lombardei” (Fiechtner 266). In this respect his writing was indeed a “Trauerarbeit,”

but not anti-Habsburg and pro-Risorgimento, as Le Rider argues in the case of *Reitergeschichte*. Attempts to invoke Stendhal and D'Annunzio as witnesses for an encoded indictment of Austrian history in Italy ignore the depth of Hofmannsthal's commitment to Austria and the overall emphasis on fidelity in his works. Since his image of Austria also reflected the supranational policy of the Holy Roman Empire, which as the "österreichische Idee" survived the downfall of the Habsburgs and continued to determine his political and cultural bearings after 1918, he was able to accommodate his Italophilia without compromising his loyalty to Austria. In 1926, three years before his death, he expressed in succinct terms this association, which already in 1897 was helping to define the particular Austrian character of the man and his works: "Gefühl zum Heiligen Römischen Reich ungebrochen. So auch gegen Italien (hier durch Blut zugehörig)" (*Aufzeichnungen* 239).

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