

# GEORG TRAKL AND THE LITERATURE OF DECADENCE

Ruth Wishart

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD  
at the  
University of St Andrews



1994

Full metadata for this item is available in  
St Andrews Research Repository  
at:  
<http://research-repository.st-andrews.ac.uk/>

Please use this identifier to cite or link to this item:  
<http://hdl.handle.net/10023/13361>

This item is protected by original copyright

GEORG TRAKL  
AND  
THE LITERATURE OF DECADENCE

by

Ruth Wishart

A thesis submitted for the Degree  
of Doctor of Philosophy

University of St Andrews

December 1993

ProQuest Number: 10170670

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.



ProQuest 10170670

Published by ProQuest LLC (2017). Copyright of the Dissertation is held by the Author.

All rights reserved.

This work is protected against unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code  
Microform Edition © ProQuest LLC.

ProQuest LLC.  
789 East Eisenhower Parkway  
P.O. Box 1346  
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 – 1346

Th B502



## DECLARATIONS

I, Ruth Wishart, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 100,000 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

I was admitted as a research student under Ordinance No. 12 in October 1987 and as a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in March 1988; the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the University of St Andrews between 1987 and 1990, and then 1992 and 1993.

In submitting this thesis to the University of St Andrews I understand that I am giving permission for it to be made available for use in accordance with the regulations of the University Library for the time being in force, subject to any copyright vested in the work not being affected thereby. I also understand that the title and abstract will be published, and that a copy of the work may be made available to any *bona fide* library or research worker.

date: signature of candidate:

23.12.94

I hereby certify that the candidate has fulfilled the conditions of the Resolution and Regulations appropriate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the University of St Andrews and that the candidate is qualified to submit this thesis in application for that degree.

date: signature of supervisor:

23 December 1993

## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the poetry of Georg Trakl within the context of literary decadence in Europe at the turn of the century (1880-1914). It provides an analysis of Trakl's early writing, and traces themes of literary decadence which recur throughout his work, particularly in the late prose and the dramatic fragment of 1914. In so doing, it also undertakes a comparative study of Trakl's poetry and decadent literature in Austria, Germany, France and England. Chapter One looks at the literary background and attempts a definition of what was understood by literary decadence in France and Germany at the end of the nineteenth century. Chapter Two examines motifs of crime and horror in Trakl's writing, paying particular attention to the concept of *Lustmord* in the early dramas *Blaubart* and *Don Juans Tod* and the later dramatic fragment of 1914. Chapter Three examines the issue of sexual guilt, and the portrayal of women in Trakl's poetry, from the *femme fatale* of the early poetry to the figure of the sister and the androgyne in the later poetry. Chapter Four traces the theme of blasphemy from the early lyric to the last poetic utterances of 1914, and touches briefly on the question of Trakl as a Christian poet. Chapter Five looks at motifs of isolation, obsession with death and decay, and poetry as the expression of the poet's *état d'âme*. Chapter Six provides an analysis of the language and style of the early poetry, focusing on Trakl's affinity with the style of literary decadence.

## PREFACE

This work was undertaken in the belief that a close examination of Trakl's early poetry, prose and drama, which have rarely been regarded in any detail within Trakl scholarship, would provide a better understanding of the later lyric, labelled by many critics as 'hermetic'. I have concentrated on themes of decadence which can be traced throughout Trakl's oeuvre, and which elucidate much of the later poetry; this method of study, and cross-reference within Trakl's writing, has provided in particular a better understanding of the late prose poems and the dramatic fragment of 1914.

I owe a deep debt of gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Ray Furness, whose guidance and encouragement have been unflinching. I would also like to acknowledge the ready assistance of the following institutions, which put both published and unpublished material at my disposal:

The Trakl-Archiv, Salzburg

The Brenner-Archiv at the University of Innsbruck

The Deutsches Literaturarchiv, Marbach

I am particularly grateful to Professor-Magister Hans Weichselbaum at the Trakl-Archiv for his help.

I received financial support for my research from the Scottish Education Department and from the University of St Andrews Travel Grant.

It is impossible for me to acknowledge my indebtedness to all the individuals who have contributed in some way to this finished product; my thanks must go to friends in St Andrews and Würzburg who provided me with encouragement, understanding, and advice. Above all, I would like to thank my parents for the support which they have shown throughout this period of study.

Edinburgh, December 1993

Ich glaube, es müßte furchtbar  
sein, immer so zu leben, im  
Vollgefühl all der animalischen  
Triebe, die das Leben durch die  
Zeiten wälzen. Ich habe die  
fürchterlichsten Möglichkeiten  
in mir gefühlt, gerochen,  
getastet und im Blute die  
Dämonen heulen hören, die  
tausend Teufel mit ihren  
Stacheln, die das Fleisch  
wahnsinnig machen. Welch  
entsetzlicher Alp!

## CONTENTS

<i>Preface</i>	7
<i>Epigraph</i>	8
CHAPTER ONE: LITERARY DECADENCE	
"Une race condamnée au malheur": The Literary Background	9
"Womit kennzeichnet sich jene literarische Décadence?": Decadence in France, Austria and Germany	16
CHAPTER TWO: CRIME AND HORROR	
"Die Nacht ist voll Wahnsinn": The Legend of Bluebeard	28
"Deine Kindertage sind um": Herbert's Loss of Innocence	36
"Du geifernd Tier": The Personification of Decadent Sexuality	40
"Keusch blühende Rose": Elisabeth as Ambivalent Victim	50
"Dies wirre Bild": Style and Imagery	53
"Orgel seufzt und Hölle lacht": Blaubart Themes in the Later Lyric	60
"Im Zwiespalt deines Wesens": Don Juan's Dual Nature	77
"Weg, schreckliches Gesicht": The Struggle with Guilt	80
"Da bin mit meinem Mörder ich allein": Lustmord as Lustselbstmord	86

"O! ihr stillen Spiegel der Wahrheit":	
The Mirror as a Symbol of Recognition	93
"Die Fieberlinden des Jünglings":	
Blaubart's Heirs	101

### CHAPTER THREE: WOMEN AND SEXUALITY

"O rasende Mänade":	
The Masochistic Vision	113
"Die herrlichste Hetäre":	
The Allure of the <i>Femme Fatale</i>	119
"Verruchter Wollust Süße":	
Incest as a Decadent Motif	133
"Ein Geschlecht":	
The Androgynous Ideal	150
"Schwester stürmischer Schwermut":	
The Sister as Redeemer	169

### CHAPTER FOUR: PERVERSE RELIGIOSITY AND BLASPHEMY

"In der Hölle selbstgeschaffener Leiden":	
The Suffering Saint	175
"In seelenlosem Spiel mit Brot und Wein":	
Catholicism	187
"Der flammender Sturz des Engels":	
The Struggle with Sin	196

### CHAPTER FIVE: ISOLATION AND THE SOUL

"Mich däucht', ich träumte":	
Introspective Subjectivity	208
"Das Schweigen der Verlassenheit":	
The Poet's Isolation	210
"Und dich zermalmt des Alltags grauer Gram":	
<i>Ennui</i>	216

"In meiner Seele dunklem Spiegel":	
Seelenstände	221
"So spielt um kranke Blumen noch die Sonne":	
The Aestheticism of Death and Decay	229
"O Nacht, ich bin bereit":	
The Poet's Longing for Death	240
CHAPTER SIX: LANGUAGE AND STYLE	
"Car nous voulons la Nuance encor":	
Decadence as a Literary Style	250
"Meine ganze, schöne Welt, voll unendlichen Wohllauts":	
The Escape in Aestheticism	255
"Style ingénieux, compliqué, saveant":	
Over-refinement	258
"Notre style doit être rare et tourmenté":	
Linguistic Experimentation	261
"De la Musique avant toute chose":	
The Musicality of Poetry	264
CONCLUSION	
"Das lebendige Fieber":	
The Conquest of Decadence?	270
FOOTNOTES	280
BIBLIOGRAPHY	335

## CHAPTER ONE: LITERARY DECADENCE

So ist Dekadenz eine Abendröte der Menschheit, mit aller Müdigkeit des Abends, mit der indischen Stille des Abends, durch die lautlose Winde rinnen, alles in schwankende Bewegung auflösend. Und über den tausend Farben des Abends sinkt die Sonne mit der Theatralik eines Sternes, der kein Morgen verspricht.<sup>1</sup>

"Une race condamnée au malheur": The Literary Background

"Je suis l'Empire à la fin de la Décadence":<sup>2</sup> these words, from Paul Verlaine's sonnet 'Langueur' well convey the climate of the late nineteenth century: solitude, *ennui*, moral impotence expressed in an identification with the mood of Rome in its decline. The concept of decadence in Europe at the end of the century was not a new one, but rather the culmination of a century or more of gradual decline. In France, where the artistic movement was born and flourished, "décadence" was the final stage of a literary trend which included the writings of the Marquis de Sade, the French Romantics and Baudelaire.

In the late eighteenth century, the moral decline which was regarded as widespread in France, and much criticized by Montesquieu and Rousseau amongst others, found its affirmation in the writings of the Marquis de Sade. Unlike Rousseau, the 'divine Marquis' revelled in the lack of moral standards which he saw about him: "l'état le plus heureux sera toujours celui où la dépravation des moeurs sera la plus universelle."<sup>3</sup> His



writing presents a world of sexual perversion, where flagellation, rape, vampirism and castration are regular occurrences, and where gratification is only achieved through brutality and even murder. His novels *Justine* and *Juliette* demonstrate his belief that virtue leads only to oppression and ruin, whereas happiness and prosperity are gained through vice. The far-reaching influence of de Sade on the later generations of Romantics and decadents has been examined by Mario Praz in his study of *The Romantic Agony* (Chapter Three, "The Shadow of the Divine Marquis").<sup>4</sup>

The French Romantics, disillusioned by the failure of the revolutions of 1789 and 1830, turned their contempt of the bourgeois from politics to literature. First advocated by Théophile Gautier in his preface to *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, the theory of "l'art pour l'art" became the basis of Romantic Aestheticism: "Il n'y a de vraiment beau que ce qui ne peut servir à rien; tout ce qui est utile est laid ...".<sup>5</sup> In turning away from philistine society, the Romantics sought escape in the excesses of their art, which became an exploration of all that is outside conventional morality. Hence we find in their works a fascination with criminality, prostitution and adultery. As Maignon points out, *adultère* and *orgie* were the "deux principaux mots du dictionnaire romantique".<sup>6</sup> This delight in sin took its extremest form in works which emulated the Marquis de Sade with their treatment of sadism and perversion. In the French Romantics we find, too, emphasis on the sensitivity of the artist and the constant search for new sensations. Describing Raymon de Ramière, the hero of *Indiana*, George Sand spoke for a whole generation: "Un insatiable besoin d'émotions dévore leur vie; la passion les domine et rien ne saurait maîtriser ses transports."<sup>7</sup> In the criticism of one contemporary critic, Taine, we find a summary of the traits of Romanticism which could just as aptly apply to decadence at the end of the century: "Partout

le dégoût, l'abrutissement et la maladie, l'impuissance, la folie, le suicide".<sup>8</sup>

The term 'decadence' has carried connotations of degeneracy, corruption and weakness, especially amongst the aristocracy, since the days of the Roman Empire, and has often appeared within this context. In his *Considérations sur les causes de la grandeur des Romains et leur décadence* of 1734, Montesquieu not only popularized the concept of decadence in eighteenth century Europe, but also made an indirect criticism of his own society with the suggestion that abandonment to luxurious material comfort contributed to the Romans' decline, a theme which was re-iterated by Rousseau in his *Discours si le rétablissement des sciences et des arts a contribué à épourer les moeurs* (1750). The association of decadence and literature was probably first made by Voltaire in the mid-eighteenth century in his complaint that French literature had been in a state of decline since the golden age of Classicism:

Nous sommes en tout sens dans le temps de la plus horrible décadence. Cependant soyez sûr qu'il viendra un temps où tout ce qui est écrit dans le style du siècle de Louis XIV surnagera, et où tous les autres écrits goths et vandales resteront plongés dans le fleuve de l'oubli.<sup>9</sup>

A similarly pejorative view is found in Désiré Nisard's *Etudes de moeurs et de critique sur les poètes latins de la décadence*, which draws a parallel between French Romanticism and the decadent literature of the declining Roman Empire. In his view, decadence in literature was characterized by an over-refinement of style, with emphasis on "érudition", "description", and a "préférence pour le laid".<sup>10</sup>

By the mid-nineteenth century the notion of decadent literature was widely accepted in France, not just in connection with ancient Rome, but now applied also to French Romanticism, albeit in a predominantly pejorative manner. It was Charles Baudelaire who first

gave the concept of decadence a positive value. In his *Notes Nouvelles sur Edgar Poe*, whilst mocking the use of the term by Classical scholars as meaningless, he defends the style which is understood by this term:

*Littérature de décadence!* - Paroles vides que nous entendons souvent tomber, avec la sonorité d'un bâillement emphatique, de la bouche de ces sphinx sans énigme qui veillent devant les portes saintes de l'Esthétique classique ... Il est évidemment question d'un poème ou d'un roman dont toutes les parties sont habilement disposées pour la surprise, dont le style est magnifiquement orné, où toutes les ressources du langage et de la prosodie sont utilisées par une main impeccable.<sup>11</sup>

In the *Notes*, Baudelaire lays out his theory of aestheticism as well as drawing close parallels between his own ideas and those of Poe; the central issues here have their roots in Romanticism: the importance of beauty ("Un artiste n'est un artiste que grâce à son sens exquis du Beau"),<sup>12</sup> imagination ("La reine des facultés"),<sup>13</sup> and conscious artistry, as well as the artist's role in revealing a spiritual realm beyond the reality of appearances ("C'est cet admirable, cet immortel instinct du Beau qui nous fait considérer la terre et ses spectacles comme un aperçu, comme une correspondance du Ciel").<sup>14</sup> The concept of "correspondances" and the artist's part in revealing the mysterious relationship which Baudelaire believed exists between all things, and which was to become the basis of Symbolism, is further explored in the *Journaux intimes*: "Dans certains états de l'âme presque surnaturels, la profondeur de la vie se révèle tout entière dans le spectacle, si ordinaire qu'il soit, qu'on a sous les yeux. Il en devient le symbole."<sup>15</sup> This relationship is the subject of the poem 'Correspondances':

La Nature est un temple où de vivants piliers  
Laissent parfois sortir de confuses paroles;  
L'homme y passe à travers des forêts de symboles  
Qui l'observent avec des regards familiers.<sup>16</sup>

Poe's influence on Baudelaire was thematic as well as stylistic; the French poet was fascinated by the psychological study of madness, degeneracy, terror, the dread of falling and the horror of the abyss; he found in Poe his own recognition of the basically sinful nature of humankind: "Mais voici plus important que tout: nous noterons que cet auteur ... a imperturbablement affirmé la méchanceté naturelle de l'Homme."<sup>17</sup> Elsewhere, Baudelaire himself postulates: "Il y a dans tout homme, à toute heure, deux postulations simultanées, l'une vers Dieu, l'autre vers Satan. L'invocation à Dieu, ou spiritualité, est un désir de monter en grade; celle de Satan, ou animalité, est une joie de descendre."<sup>18</sup> Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du Mal* can be regarded as the first volume of decadent poetry, with its expression of the neurotic and the bizarre. Here we find art championed over nature in a world of exotic jewels and perfumes, and the artificial aristocracy of the dandy; there is the depiction of decay and putrefaction which is in turn transfigured through poetic expression; the *paradis artificiels* of drugs and wines are used to heighten the decadent desire for new sensations, both good and evil; there is the fascination with horror, sexual perversion, satanism, and death.

It was Gautier who hailed Baudelaire as the first writer of decadence. In his preface to the 1868 edition of *Les Fleurs du Mal*, he gives the first clear definition of what is meant by "le style de décadence":

style ingénieux, compliqué, saveant, plein de nuances et de recherches, reculant toujours les bornes de la langue, empruntant à tous les vocabulaires techniques, prenant des couleurs à toutes les palettes, des notes à tous les claviers, s'efforçant à rendre la pensée dans ce qu'elle a de plus ineffable, et la forme en ses contours les plus vagues et les fruyants, écoutant pour les traduire les confidences subtiles de la névrose, les aveux de la passion vieillissante qui se déprave et les hallucinations bizarres de l'idée fixe tournante à la folie.<sup>19</sup>

One of the great influences on Baudelaire, and also on the writers of decadence, was the German composer, Richard Wagner. Baudelaire recognized the erotic power of Wagner's music, and sought to communicate in his article 'Richard Wagner et Tannhäuser à Paris' something of the rapturous, ecstatic passion of the scandalous premiere of *Tannhäuser* in 1861: "Langueurs, délices mêlées de fièvre et coupées d'angoisses, retours incessants vers une volupté qui promet d'éteindre, mais n'éteint jamais la soif; palpitations furieuses du coeur et des sens, ordres impérieux de la chair, tout le dictionnaire des onomatopées de l'amour se fait entendre ici ..."20 One of the journals which supported the growing decadent movement in France in the 1880's, *La Revue Wagnérienne*, published poems which attempted to reproduce the effect of Wagner's music in the style of Baudelaire, such as Huysmans' 'Ouverture de Tannhäuser' and Mallarmé's 'Richard Wagner, rêverie d'un poète français'. The vast influence of Wagner on decadence has been examined in detail by Koppen and Furness.<sup>21</sup> What fascinated the decadents about Wagner's music was its power to arouse deep, sensuous emotions, often sexual and perverted in nature, through its direct appeal to the nerves. Wagnerian themes which can be found in the literature of decadence include *Liebestod*, perverted sexuality, especially incest, eroticism fused with mysticism, awareness of sin and a desire for redemption.

These, then, were the fathers of the decadent movement: de Sade, the French Romantics, Wagner, and, above all, Baudelaire. Yet one other name should be mentioned within this context. Arthur Schopenhauer, although not immediately associated with decadence, was the philosopher whose pessimism appealed especially to the French *Symbolistes*; yet he has also been called "der Philosoph der Dekadenz",<sup>22</sup> and his works, it is claimed, belonged to the "Standardlektüre der

Dekadenz".<sup>23</sup> In *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (first published in 1819, but which did not gain recognition until the middle of the century), he posited the theory that the world is the product of a Universal Will, of which each individual is only one part. Life consists of little other than the conflict of individual wills; free will is an illusion, happiness is unattainable. Schopenhauer views life as a process of continual dying: "ein stetes Hinstürzen der Gegenwart in die tote Vergangenheit, ein stetes Sterben";<sup>24</sup> the inevitability of death became the basis for the *ennui* which was to plague the generation of decadents: "endlich ist ebenso die Regsamkeit unseres Geistes eine fortdauernd zurückgeschobene *Langeweile*. Jeder Atemzug wehrt den beständig eindringenden *Tod* ab. ... Zuletzt muß er siegen ... er spielt nur eine Weile mit seiner Beute, bevor er sie verschlingt."<sup>25</sup> Release from this suffering can only come through "die ästhetische Freude am Schönen"<sup>26</sup> and "Mit-leiden" with other individuals, which is able to lift the barriers between the self and the other, thus leading to a mystical union with all things.

This philosophy of pessimism reflected the mood of the time. In his *Essais de psychologie contemporaine*, one of the first theoreticians of decadence, Paul Bourget, examined the belief that humankind was, after centuries of civilization, "une race condamnée au malheur":

d'un bout à l'autre de l'Europe, la société contemporaine présente les mêmes symptômes ... de cette mélancolie et de ce désaccord. Une nausée universelle devant les insuffisances de ce monde soulève le coeur des Slaves, des Germains et des Latins. Elle se manifeste chez les premiers par le nihilisme, chez les seconds par le pessimisme, chez nous-mêmes par des solitaires et bizarres névroses.<sup>27</sup>

Europe, at the end of the nineteenth century, was ripe for a literature which would reflect this widespread sense of pessimism and decline.

"Womit kennzeichnet sich jene literarische Décadence?":  
Decadence in France, Austria and Germany

In the 1880's, a group of writers in France took up the banner of decadence and the term soon came to represent a literary fashion which sought in art a release from the modern world.<sup>28</sup> From Gautier and Baudelaire they inherited the theory of *l'art pour l'art*, which in their writings became over-refined to the point of perversion.

The arguments as to who first used this deliberately provocative epithet must remain somewhat inconclusive. Koppen has attempted to determine a chronology of the term in his study of *Dekadenter Wagnerismus*.<sup>29</sup> Certainly, Bourget's essay on Baudelaire of 1883 looks also at the group of young writers who seek to express themselves in the literature of "décadence"; he examines their literary style as one of fragmentary over-refinement. In the same year, Verlaine wrote the famous line in his sonnet 'Langueur': "Je suis l'Empire à la fin de la Décadence". Verlaine can be regarded, along with Baudelaire, as one of the fathers of the movement, for although he was still producing poetry in the 1880's, he had written much of his work before the advent of decadence. Ernest Raynaud reports that Verlaine loved the word 'décadence' because of its connotations of refined culture: "J'aime ... le mot de décadence tout miroitant de pourpre et d'ors ... Ce mot suppose ... des pensées raffinées d'extrême civilisation, une haute culture littéraire, une âme capable d'intensives voluptés. ... C'est l'art de mourir en beauté."<sup>30</sup> Verlaine was distrustful of literary epithets, however, and elsewhere dismissed the word as a mere flag with no real meaning: "Quel bête mot!"<sup>31</sup>

The hallmark of Verlaine's poetry, which he passed on to the decadents, was the creation of moods through

the use of symbols such as the moon, autumn, clouds, rain. There is nothing of profound torment or passion in his verse, which is centred on the self and on the emotions, with its mood of melancholic regret and a delight in decay and decline. Verlaine saw in poetry a musical function, and used sound and rhythm to great effect, as in the opening line of 'Ariettes oubliées': "Il pleure dans mon coeur."<sup>32</sup>

The influence of Verlaine is obvious in the poetry which the decadents produced with alacrity in the mid-1880's: the melancholic decline of Henri de Régnier's *Lendemain*, the musical evocation of *ennui* in Ephraïm Mikhaël's *L'Automne*, the cultivation of the introversion and isolation of the soul in the poetry of Albert Samain, and Jean Moréas' *Syrtes*, which contained not only the principle themes of decadence, but were also satiated with the obscure and tormented style which was rapidly being recognized as one of its distinguishing features.

In 1884 a work appeared which was regarded as "the breviary of Decadence",<sup>33</sup> "un programme involontaire, la loi et le code, le texte de raillement, l'hymne des enrôlés pour l'art neuf".<sup>34</sup> This was the "poisonous book"<sup>35</sup> which so fascinated Dorian Gray: Huysmans' *A Rebours*. Des Esseintes, the degenerate hero of the novel, whose parentage must include Baudelaire, Count Robert de Montesquiou-Fezensac, Ludwig II of Bavaria, Edmond de Goncourt and not least Huysmans himself, is hypersensitive to the point of madness. His life is characterized by its deviation from the social norm; it is literally *à rebours*, and it is in this that we can see the one fundamental tenet of decadence: it is *perversion* - perversion of morality, nature, sexuality, and, in decadent poetry, even of conventional language.

An attack on decadence by Paul Bourde appeared in *Le Temps* on 6 August 1885. It drew the portrait of a typical decadent, and stands as evidence that the concept of decadence, which was by that time the height



of fashion within literary circles, was firmly established:

Solitaire d'abord, 'ayant une aversion déclarée pour la foule considérée comme souverainement stupide et plate'. Puis névrose: 'La santé étant essentiellement vulgaire et bonne pour les rustres, le poète doit être au moins névropathe'. Si c'est nécessaire, 'il a recours à la seringue de Pravaz, pour obtenir l'état morbide qui lui convient'; état où se complaire un tempérament à la fois mystique et pervers, 'aimant les amours tristes, et assaisonnant le tout de religion pour pouvoir pimenter ses plaisirs par l'attrait du péché, bref offrant un mélange de mysticisme exaspéré et de perversité satanique'.<sup>36</sup>

It was this caricature of the decadent which led Moréas to reject the term in favour of 'symboliste', and which eventually gave rise to a series of petty quarrels and rivalries within the French literary circles of the time, which have been well chronicled elsewhere.<sup>37</sup>

The concept of literary decadence in France was well established by the mid-1880's. For those who were involved in the new art, it was an exciting and fertile atmosphere, and it was in this hot-house of French decadence that both Hermann Bahr and Stefan George were to find the seeds which they hoped would revive the "totgesagten Park" of German literature.<sup>38</sup>

It was the German *Dichterphilosoph* Friedrich Nietzsche who was initially responsible for introducing the concept of 'décadence' to Germany and Austria, as Koppen has pointed out.<sup>39</sup> He himself recognized his own close links with decadence and examines them in his essay 'Der Fall Wagner' of May 1888, in which he singles out Richard Wagner as the paradigm of the cultural degeneration which he saw around him. Nietzsche claimed that he was in an ideal position to judge Wagner and his music, for he was Wagner's closest adherent, intimately familiar with his music, and yet he was able to overcome its power: "Ich bin so gut wie Wagner das Kind dieser Zeit, will sagen ein *décadent*;

nur daß ich das begriff, nur daß ich mich dagegen wehrte. Der Philosoph in mir wehrte sich dagegen."<sup>40</sup> Wagner's 'decadent' music is characterized as "brutal, künstlich und 'unschuldig' zugleich und damit zu den drei Sinnen der modernen Seele auf einmal redend."<sup>41</sup> The modernity of his music, with its fusion of religious mysticism and eroticism, appealed to decadents who were too weak to recognize Wagner's moral illness; it stimulated their exhausted nerves:

Wagners Kunst ist krank. Die Probleme, die er auf die Bühne bringt - lauter Hysteriker-Probleme -, das Konvulsivische seines Affekts, seine überreizte Sensibilität, sein Geschmack, der nach immer schärferen Würzen verlangte, seine Instabilität, die er zu Prinzipien verkleidete, nicht am wenigsten die Wahl seiner Helden und Heldinnen, diese als physiologische Typen betrachtet (- eine Kranken-Galerie! -): alles zusammen stellt ein Krankheitsbild dar, das keinen Zweifel läßt. *Wagner est une névrose.*<sup>42</sup>

Nietzsche further criticizes Wagner's music for its sensuous appeal; he mocks the insubstantiality of the dramatic plots and the over-refined style, although he elsewhere acknowledges the fascination of this music: "ich suche heute noch nach einem Werke von gleich gefährlicher Fascination, von einer gleich schauerlichen und süßen Unendlichkeit, wie der Tristan ist, - ich suche in allen Künsten vergebens ... Die Welt ist arm für den, der niemals krank genug für diese 'Wollust der Hölle' gewesen ist".<sup>43</sup> This is, in Nietzsche's view the essential difference between himself and the decadents. His decadence, he claims, is only a small part of his essentially healthy totality: "Als summa summarum war ich gesund, als Winkel, als Specialität war ich *décadent*."<sup>44</sup> He is, therefore able to balance this fascination with his affirmation of life, unlike the decadents, who, in their essential passivity, lack the health and the *Wille zur Macht* to overcome such sensuous stimulants as Wagner's music.

In general terms, 'decadent' meant for Nietzsche all that which lacks the strength and vitality to

affirm life, and in this he included Christian religion, in which he saw a complete negation of this world. This degeneration was, he believed, a cultural disease which had spread throughout Europe: "Es giebt heute fast überall in Europa eine krankhafte Empfindlichkeit und Reizbarkeit für Schmerz, insgleichen eine widrige Unenthaltbarkeit in der Klage, eine Verzärtlichung, welche sich mit Religion und philosophischem Krimskrams zu etwas Höherem aufputzen möchte, - es giebt einen förmlichen Cultus des Leidens."<sup>45</sup>

His tirade against Wagner also includes an attack on literary decadence, which, like Bourget, he characterizes as fragmentary to the point of incomprehension. Art cannot, in Nietzsche's view, be divorced from life: "Die Kunst ist das grosse Stimulans zum Leben; wie könnte man sie als zwecklos, als ziellos, als l'art pour l'art verstehn?"<sup>46</sup> Decadent literature contradicted the very function of art: "Kunst ist wesentlich *Bejahung, Segnung, Vergöttlichung des Daseins*."<sup>47</sup>

Six months after the publication of Nietzsche's essay, Hermann Bahr arrived in Paris, and it was in this essayist and champion of new trends (whom Maximilian von Harden aptly characterized as "der Mann von Übermorgen"<sup>48</sup>) that decadence was to find a more favourable critic. Bahr soon became aware of the development which had taken place in French culture in the 1880's, and acquainted himself not only with the writings of Baudelaire and Gautier, but also with those of Huysmans, Bourget, Barrès, Maeterlinck, and a whole host of minor decadents. The impact of the French *fin-de-siècle* writers and of the Parisian literary scene inspired Bahr to devote his life to literature. Although second rate as a novelist and dramatist, in his role as critic and essayist, bringing the latest literary trends to a new public in Austria and, in particular, Vienna, he is unparalleled.

To understand Bahr's perception of decadence it is necessary to study his essays, some of which deal specifically with 'die Décadence', others with the wider concept of 'die Moderne' of which, in Bahr's opinion, decadence was essentially a transitional but necessary phase, balancing the previous trend of Naturalism, while others deal with decadent writers, and yet others with various aspects of decadence: satanism, symbolism and dilettantism.

His essay on Villiers de l'Isle-Adam of 1889 examines the links between decadence and Romanticism; he believes that Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, in his attempt to escape the nebulosity of the *Spätromantik*, sought in this new art: "[das] Bizarre, Absonderliche, phantastisch Grotteske ... die Wollust des Gräßlichen ... die Freude am Blut".<sup>49</sup> This is Bahr's first portrayal of literary decadence; although its tone is sympathetic, it is not overtly enthusiastic. His next volume of essays, *Die Überwindung des Naturalismus* of 1891, paint a less ambiguous picture. In 'Die Krise des Naturalismus', Bahr assesses the importance of Bourget, "das eigentliche philosophische Gewissen dieser *fin de siècle*";<sup>50</sup> in 'Kunst und Kritik', he turns to the authors of decadence, examining their ability "uns mit sich selber [zu] tauschen und unsere Persönlichkeit in die ihre hinüber [zu] verwandeln".<sup>51</sup> His particular fascination is with Huysmans, with whom he felt a close affinity, and his power of aesthetic creativity: "Alles, was er nur jemals empfindet, immer gleich zu Kunst zu gestalten und was er nur jemals berührt, immer in Kunst zu verwandeln."<sup>52</sup>

The central essay of the collection, 'Die Überwindung des Naturalismus', proclaims the exhaustion of Naturalism and examines what will follow this literary trend. Bahr concentrates on the need for an entirely new approach to art, with the emphasis on the artist: "Die Natur des Künstlers sollte nicht länger ein Werkzeug der Wirklichkeit sein, um ihr Ebenbild zu

vollbringen; sondern umgekehrt, die Wirklichkeit wurde jetzt wieder der Stoff des Künstlers, um seine Natur zu verkünden, in deutlichen und wirksamen Symbolen."<sup>53</sup> Symbolism is used as a means of expressing the nerves of the writer rather than his reason or his passions.

Bahr's insight into the characteristics of decadence is best demonstrated in his essay on 'Die Décadence' from the 1894 volume, *Studien zur Kritik der Moderne*. Here he describes how the term evolved from one of mockery to a defiant label used by the new generation of writers themselves; he admits that it is a label without precise meaning, but sets out in his essay to focus on the distinguishing features which the writers of decadence have in common. The underlying trend of the new art is "[der] starke Trieb aus dem flachen und rohen Naturalismus weg nach der Tiefe verfeinerter Ideale".<sup>54</sup> The first characteristic which Bahr notes is the stress on the nerves of the writer; like the Romantics, they look inward to the soul, they scorn the vulgar crowd, they strive constantly towards the eternal, they share the vagueness and obscurity, but theirs is "eine Romantik der Nerven".<sup>55</sup> The second characteristic of this new art is "der Hang nach dem Künstlichen".<sup>56</sup> Other features of decadence are "eine fieberische Sucht nach dem Mystischen ... Sie suchen Allegorien und schwüle, dunkle Bilder. Jedes soll einen geheimen zweiten Sinn haben, der sich nur dem Eingeweihten ergibt."<sup>57</sup> There is also "ein unersättlicher Zug ins Ungeheuer und Schrankenlose. Sie wollen immer gleich den ganzen Menschen ausdrücken ... Sie sind nicht umsonst Wagnerianer. Alles Gewöhnliche, Häufige, Alltägliche ist ihnen verhasst. Sie suchen die seltsame Ausnahme mit Fleiss."<sup>58</sup>

By 1892, Bahr was able to differentiate between various aspects of decadence. In his essay on 'Satanismus', he describes the attraction of satanism as a means of stimulating exhausted nerves, stating his belief in the fundamentally evil nature of humankind:

"Es wühlen, unvertreiblich und unwiderstehlich, in allen Menschen giftige und wilde Dränge, gerade das Schändliche und Verderbliche zu tun, bloß weil es schändlich und verderblich ist, ohne irgend einen anderen Reiz als den des Ungehorsams wider das Gesetz."<sup>59</sup>

Decadence had, however, never been seen by Bahr as a permanent solution to the search for modernity in art; it was, rather, a counter-movement to Naturalism, and a necessarily transient phase. By the mid-1890's he sensed that its themes were becoming exhausted, and that it was degenerating into mere dilettantism. This is the view of his essay on 'Décadence' in *Die Zeit* in November 1894, which criticizes decadents of the type of Count Robert Montesquiou and Oscar Wilde, who, Bahr argues, are ultimately unartistic, characterized not by the ability to create, but by the need to escape reality: "Das Leben fühlen, durch das Gefühl das Wesen aus der Hülle holen, fühlend sich selber in den Dingen und die Dinge in sich selber und seine Einheit mit der Schöpfung finden - das war immer der Sinn der Kunst. Das Leben fliehen, durch Laune, Wahn und Traum verdrängen, in sich vergessen - das ist der Sinn dieser Décadence."<sup>60</sup> It was this awareness that decadence was degenerating into extremism and dilettantism, as well as the desire to avoid any recriminations through its association with his essentially healthy drive towards 'die Moderne', which sought to return "die verlorene Freude"<sup>61</sup> to art, that Bahr sought to dissociate himself from literary decadence.

A far more scathing attack came from the Austro-Hungarian doctor and cultural historian Max Nordau in the two volumes of *Entartung*, published in 1892 and 1893. This polemic, couched in pseudo-scientific jargon, was written with the intention of halting the spread of degeneration and hysteria, which Nordau classifies as a mental disease, and which he believed

was spreading like an epidemic through society. His book includes a quasi-medical diagnosis of the characteristics of degenerates, such as physically irregular features and eye disease, as well as mental abnormalities: immorality, egoism, impulsiveness, emotionalism, pessimism, disinclination to action, predilection for inane reverie, inattentiveness, weakness of the will and mysticism. This last feature of degeneration is often combined with eroticism, which is in Nordau's opinion the result of malformed sexual nerve centres, and which forms the basis of the Symbolist movement.

Verlaine is seen as typical of this group of writers, displaying "alle leiblichen und geistigen Brandmarken der Entartung",<sup>62</sup> but it is Wagner who is singled out as the most degenerate of all degenerates:

Der eine Richard Wagner ist allein mit einer größern Menge Degeneration vollgeladen als alle anderen Entarteten zusammengekommen ... Er zeigt in seiner allgemeinen Geistesverfassung Verfolgungswahnsinn, Größenwahn und Mysticismus, in seinen Trieben verschwommene Menschenliebe, Anarchismus, Auflehnungs- und Widerspruchssucht, in seinen Schriften alle Merkmale der Graphomanie, nämlich Zusammenhanglosigkeit, Gedankenflucht und Neigung zu blödsinnigen Kalauern, und als Grundlage seines Wesens die kennzeichnende Emotivität von gleichzeitig erotomanischer und glauben-schwärmischer Färbung.<sup>63</sup>

Nordau's virulent attack concludes by attributing degeneracy in art and philosophy to a fundamental condition of exhaustion which produces a brain incapable of normal function. It is his conviction that the majority of people will recover from this state of fatigue and hysteria, and his book ends with a call to all healthy and moral men to combat the disease, to save those who can be saved, and to defend society against the degenerates.

His polemic was echoed by another, greater cultural critic, Karl Kraus, whose tirade against the literary dilettants of the day was expressed in a

letter to Arthur Schnitzler: "ich bekämpfe und werde immer bekämpfen diese posierte, krankhafte, onanierte Poesie!"<sup>64</sup>

Stefan George was the figure who played a vital role in the spread of literary decadence in Germany. His initiation into the new trend also took place in Paris, where he arrived some months after Bahr, in March 1889. Here, he gained entry into the literary circle which gathered around Mallarmé, and was acquainted with Verlaine, Francis Vielé-Griffin, Gustave Kahn, Henri de Régnier, Jean Moréas and Stuart Merrill amongst others.<sup>65</sup> Under the influence of this predominantly *Symboliste* circle, George began to study the new aestheticism, producing verse of exquisite beauty as well as his *Umdichtungen* of Baudelaire's lyric. It is within the context of Symbolism and aestheticism that George's work must predominantly be set, yet his links with decadence cannot be ignored. His volume of poems *Algabal* brings the cult of beauty and cruelty so admired by des Esseintes into German literature, presenting an artificial world of jewels and palaces, and Dionysian excesses of wine, roses and orgies. The opening poem, 'Ihr hallen prahlend in reichem gewande', reflects the architectural aspirations of Ludwig II, to whom this cycle of poems is dedicated.

Like Bahr, George was intent upon revitalizing German literature, and thus paving the way for a greater spiritual redemption: "In der kunst glauben wir an eine glänzende wiedergeburt."<sup>66</sup> This was the goal of his journal, *Die Blätter für die Kunst*: to establish the aestheticism of *l'art pour l'art* and to return art, especially poetry, to its true elevated status: "[*Die Blätter für die Kunst*] will die GEISTIGE KUNST auf grund der neuen fühlweise und mache - eine kunst für die kunst - und steht deshalb im gegensatz zu jener verbrauchten und minderwertigen schule die einer



falschen auffassung der wirklichkeit entsprang."<sup>67</sup> The journal provided a glossary of the most recent literary terms and contemporary thought in France. George's definitions, in keeping with his belief in the sacredness of art and its mysterious, quasi-religious status, are more poetic than Bahr's methodical and analytical approach:

NIEDERGANG (dekadenz) in verschiedener hinsicht ist eine erscheinung die man unklugerweise zum einzigen ausfluss UNSERER zeit machen wollte - die gewiss auch einmal in den rechten händen künstlerische behandlung zulässt sonst aber ins gebiet der heilkunde gehört.  
Jede niedergangs-erscheinung zeugt auch wieder von höherem leben.<sup>68</sup>

George's journal is written in the very manner of the new art he proclaims: "Wir wollen keine erfindung von geschichten sondern wiedergabe von stimmungen keine betrachtung sondern darstellung keine unterhaltung sondern eindruck."<sup>69</sup> Probably the greatest achievement of *Die Blätter für die Kunst* was the role it played in introducing foreign, especially French, writers to Germany. It published works by Mallarmé, Verlaine, Moréas and Régnier, mostly in George's own translations.

The concept of literary decadence was well-established, then, in German-speaking countries by the mid-1890's.<sup>70</sup> Evidence of this can be seen in the 1896 volume of the Brockhaus encyclopaedia:

*Décadence* (frz., spr.- dängss), Dekadenz, Verfall, Abnahme, Verschlechterung. In Frankreich nennt man neuerdings D. die zum Teil in Gegensatz zum Naturalismus entstandene Kunstrichtung der heutigen nervösen, zerrütteten, greisenhaften Gesellschaft, die, allen gesunden und natürlichen Gefühlen abgestorben, ihre Blasiertheit durch außergewöhnliche Reize aufstachelt. Die Vertreter dieser Richtung, besonders in der Literatur, heißen *decadents* (spr.- dängs).

It was a concept which continued into the twentieth century; in 1904, the 'Kritische Wochenschrift für

Politik, Literatur und Kunst', *Freistatt*, included the following definition of decadence:

Das Dekadenzproblem der Gegenwart ist das Problem des psychologisch geschulten Aestheten und des Moralphilosophen. ... Dekadenz ist Hunger nach neuen Sensationen. ... [Der Dekadente] ist im Grund genommen wirklichkeitsfeindlich. Er träumt von einer neuen Welt, ... mit Blumen deren Düfte töten und Menschen, deren Riesenleidenschaften in konvulsivischen Affekten das Nieerlebte gebären. Die Natur ist ihm verhaßt. ... Degeneration ist die Abweichung vom normalen Typus. Darum das Coquettieren mit der Perversion. ... Das Brutale als Aufpeitschung stumpf gewordener Nerven, als Stimulans für versagende Tatorgane. ... das Charakteristische der Dekadenz [ist] ... ein Gefühl vor dem Ende zu stehen, ein Abendgefühl und greisenhaft müde Resignation. Zwar schillert noch einmal in tausend Farben, bunter denn je der menschliche Geist. Aber es ist nur das nervöse Vibrieren der erlöschenden Kerze.<sup>71</sup>

## CHAPTER TWO: CRIME AND HORROR

And much of Madness, and more of Sin  
And Horror the soul of the plot!<sup>1</sup>

"Die Nacht ist voll Wahnsinn": The Legend of Bluebeard

As we have seen, the most prominent feature of decadent literature is its tendency towards perversity. In its attempt to escape the banal world of reality, it delights in an exploration of darker worlds. The affinity between degeneracy and brutality is one of the fundamental aspects of literary decadence; as Novalis had already pointed out: "Es gibt eine Energie aus Kränklichkeit und Schwäche, die gewaltsamer wirkt als die wahre - aber leider mit noch tieferer Schwäche aufhört."<sup>2</sup>

Trakl's *Puppenspiel, Blaubart*, completed by 5/6 February 1910 in Vienna, is the prime example of a decadent atmosphere of crime and horror within his work. It is set at night in an isolated castle. Organ music fades in the background as two servants discuss the crimes committed by their master against his succession of brides on their wedding nights, and anticipate the terrible fate of his latest victim.

It is a work which has often been ignored by critics; those who have examined Trakl's *Frühwerk* have rarely treated it as a serious piece of writing which, while not of the same poetic force as the mature lyric, and admittedly betraying a youthful penchant towards the excesses of decadent style and language, nevertheless deals thematically with many of the issues which pervade his later poetry.<sup>3</sup> Here we find, as will

be shown in the following chapter, themes with which Trakl will still be struggling in the poetry written in 1914, shortly before his death: the violent, even criminal nature of sexuality; the connection between the guilt of sexual awareness and death; the problem of innocence tainted by sin.

Before looking at Trakl's *Blaubart* in detail, it will be appropriate to look at the legend as it exists in other literature. The story was first set down by Charles Perrault, who in 1697 published a volume of "Mother Goose" stories, *Histoires et Contes de Temps passé. Contes de ma Mère l'Oye*, which included the stories of The Sleeping Beauty, Little Red Riding Hood, Puss in Boots, Cinderella, and Bluebeard. The origin of many of these stories is obscure. It is possible that when writing the story of Bluebeard, Perrault was referring to the historical figure of Gilles de Rais, a successful, young marshal in the French army, who helped Joan of Arc in the siege of Orléans in 1429, and, after the wars, became notorious for a life of violent crime; not, as in the Bluebeard story, for murdering his wives, but for luring small boys to his chateau south of the Loire, molesting and murdering them. In 1440, when he was 36, Gilles de Rais was arrested and hanged.<sup>4</sup>

Many writers have used the Bluebeard theme in their own literary works, some of which may have been known to Trakl. One of the first German writers to deal with the legend was Tieck. His *Die sieben Weiber des Blaubart* is a fine piece of Romantic Irony which concentrates on the histories of the six wives *before* the one immortalized in the fairy tale, and on the birth and life of Bluebeard himself. Tieck delightfully sets down the reason for his tale: "Der Leser wird schon merken, daß Viel darin umkömmt, und die Personen thun mir schon jetzt im Voraus mehr leid, als ihm, aber es ist nicht zu ändern, denn es ist nichts weiter, als

ein großes Opferfest, das angestellt wird, um den Leser zu verbessern."<sup>5</sup>

Like Tieck, other writers have used the original story for their own purposes. The best known study of Bluebeard as a historical character appears in Huysmans' *Là-Bas*, where the hero, Durtal, investigates the life and times of Gilles de Rais, dwelling with vicarious delight on his life of crime. Whether Trakl knew this novel, which also describes contemporary devil worship, magic and sexual perversion in France, is unknown. He may have been familiar with the discussion of the novel by Karl Hauer in his 1906 *Brenner* essay, 'Spiegel sterbender Welten', which examines the close affinity between Christianity and satanism in Huysmans' "Meisterwerk".<sup>6</sup> The novel includes a detailed biography of Gilles de Rais and examines the fascination of "comment cet homme, qui fut brave capitaine et bon chrétien, devint subitement sacrilège et sadique, cruel et lâche."<sup>7</sup> It shows how he became dominated by a passion for alchemy and mysticism which led to sadism and devil worship, claiming that: "Or, du Mysticisme exalté au Satanisme exaspéré, il n'y a qu'un pas ... la Pucelle ... attisa une âme sans mesure, prête à tout, aussi bien à des orgies de sainteté qu'à des outrances de crimes ... Comme il est très difficile d'être un saint ... il reste à devenir un satanique."<sup>8</sup> The novel describes in some detail Gilles' life of crime and evil, his trial and confession, and his repentance before his execution. In Durtal's version of the history of Gilles de Rais, the murderer hopes for redemption:

... foudroyé par la grâce, dans un cri d'horreur et de joie, il s'était subitement renversé l'âme; il l'avait lavée de ses pleurs, séchée au feu des prières torrentielles, aux flammes des élans fous. Le boucher de Sodome s'était renié, le compagnon de Jeanne d'Arc avait reparu, le mystique dont l'âme s'essorait jusqu'à Dieu,

dans des balbuties d'adoration, dans des flots de larmes!<sup>9</sup>

Trakl may also have known Maeterlinck's version of the Bluebeard story, *Ariane et Barbe-bleue*. Indeed, Lindenberger claims this as the source for Trakl's *Puppenspiel*, a claim which is somewhat tenuous, however, based as it is purely upon isolated imagery, which was fairly common in the literature of the *fin de siècle*, and a dramatic situation which can also be traced to the Bluebeard legend itself.<sup>10</sup>

As in Trakl's play, the scene opens with the premonition of the murder which will take place after the wedding; here, however, the crimes of Barbe-bleue are public knowledge, while in Trakl's play, they are a secret known only to two servants. Maeterlinck's Ariane is an independent individual, certain of Barbe-bleue's love for her. The focus of the play is less on Barbe-bleue's cruelty than on her strength of character. It is she who defends her husband and disperses the angry crowd who seek his death at their hands. In the second act, she frees Barbe-bleue's imprisoned wives, although they, rather than avenging themselves, choose to stay with him in his castle; the only exception is Ariane, who leaves. It is clearly hard to agree with Lindenberger that "the most prominent meeting ground"<sup>11</sup> between Trakl and Maeterlinck is in their treatment of the Bluebeard theme.

Another popular version of the fairy tale is the opera by Bartók, with a libretto written by his Hungarian compatriot Béla Balázs, which was first performed one year after the completion of Trakl's play, in 1911. In this version of the story, Bluebeard and Judith enter the castle on their wedding night. It is dark and gloomy; Judith desires to look behind seven locked doors, where she sees not only Bluebeard's might and splendour, but finally also a lake of tears and then three pale women representing dawn, noon and

evening. Judith is night, and as she joins the other three behind the closed door, night falls on Bluebeard's castle forever. The melancholy which pervades this version is in stark contrast to the decadent excesses of sexual violence which are found in Trakl's play.<sup>12</sup>

Trakl has also taken the popular fairy tale and adapted it to suit his own purposes. Traces of the tale form the basis of the plot: there is mention of the previous wives, whose ghosts now haunt the castle on this next wedding night; the predestination of the crime of murder; in her vision, Elisabeth refers to "ein Schlüsselein ... möcht's ein goldenes sein?" But there is little else. As we shall see, Trakl has taken the legend and written a play which explores on a psychological level the relationship between the sexes and the problematic nature of sexuality. Blaubart and Elisabeth may not be entirely typical of man and woman, but Trakl portrays in them archetypes of male violence and female innocence awakening to sexuality. He explores too the nature of sexual awareness and the question of sin.

One major difference between *Blaubart* and most other versions of this legend lies in the fact that Trakl has removed any trace of justification for Bluebeard's crimes. Even though there remain only fragmentary scenes, there is no suggestion whatsoever that Blaubart's murder of Elisabeth has anything to do with punishment of her curiosity, of her opening a secret chamber in Blaubart's castle.<sup>13</sup> Rather, Trakl's play takes the naive symbolism that lies behind the popular legend (the key as a symbol of the sexual act) and places the entire action on a psycho-sexual level. In this radical, but ultimately logical, interpretation, the key and the forbidden chamber exist as only metaphors for sexual awareness; when Herbert cries out to Elisabeth: "Kehr um - du Magd! Ein Schritt noch vom

Tor!" <439>, he is calling to her to turn from the threshold of sexuality. As Blaubart confirms, the golden key "öffnet zum Brautgemach die Tür" <444>; rather than forbidding her to enter this forbidden room, he violently takes her in. Her sexual awareness replaces the fairy tale *motif* of curiosity, her loss of virginity is at the same time her death at Blaubart's hands. This explains, too, why the murder of the wives takes place on their wedding night, while in more traditional versions of the tale, it is weeks, even months before the wives are tempted to use the golden key.

The problematic nature of sexuality is a theme which runs throughout Trakl's work. Much of the symbolism and style of this piece is, admittedly, somewhat crude, but that does not detract from its importance for an understanding of Trakl's entire oeuvre. Otto Basil certainly fails to see the symbolic significance of the play when he dismisses it as "ein blutrünstiges, grand-guignol-haftes Dramolett"<sup>14</sup>, which serves more as "eine klinische Durchleuchtung seines Autors als ein Stück ernsthafter Poesie".<sup>15</sup> This "Huhu-Dichtung" is in Basil's opinion merely "ein sado-masochistischer Exzeß mit deutlich exhibitionistischen Strebungen und dem Dämonismus der Jugendgedichte verwandt";<sup>16</sup> while it is impossible to deny these elements in the drama, it is not true to claim that this *Puppenspiel* is a return to the adolescent fantasies which motivated a poem such as 'Der Heilige'. Trakl was twenty-three years old when he completed this version of the play; as this chapter will show, the themes which it treats are themes which dominate the mature lyric.

The atmosphere and setting of Trakl's *Puppenspiel* are more akin to the dramas of Maeterlinck and Balázs in their eeriness than to the Eastern world of Perrault's fairy tale.<sup>17</sup> Here, Lindenberger is right in



alluding to similarities between *Blaubart* and Maeterlinck's play, the second act of which is set in a "une vaste salle souterraine dont les voûtes reposent sur de nombreux piliers ... plongée dans une obscurité presque complète".<sup>18</sup> Bartók's opera is similarly set in a "vast, round Gothic hall ... empty, dark and gloomy".<sup>19</sup> Trakl creates a simple atmosphere of horror with his sparse stage directions: "Zimmer im Schloß. Es ist Nacht. Orgelspiel verklingt." Throughout the play, a tense awareness of danger and horrific crime is maintained by references to the ghosts of *Blaubart*'s murdered brides:

Herbert:

Die alle  
Nach dieser Nacht den Tag nicht sahn  
Nun sind sie da unten wieder erwacht  
Und seufzen in die Blutbrautnacht! <437>

Elisabeth:

Mein Herr! Als wir gingen durch dies Haus  
Da löschten alle Fackeln aus!

...

Mich däucht es weint wo immerzu! <440>

The chaos inside the castle, and in the emotions of the protagonists, is mirrored in nature: "In den Wipfeln wühlt das Frühlingsgebraus". The onomatopoeia of this image underlines the surge of the wind outside the window, and at the same time the tension and rush of sexual awareness within both Herbert and Elisabeth. It is not by chance that the season is spring, the traditional time of passion and love.

One can see in the fact that the play is conceived as a *Puppenspiel* further evidence of the influence of Maeterlinck, although *Ariane et Barbe-bleue* was not one of the plays which the Belgian dramatist wrote for marionettes.<sup>20</sup> Here Trakl uses puppets to reflect one of the underlying themes of the play: that his characters, in particular *Blaubart*, are ruled by forces outwith themselves. This was not the only *Puppenspiel* which Trakl wrote. Klettenhammer has found evidence of an early Kaspar Hauser drama, which seems to have been

written in the decorative style of *Jugendstil*, rather than the flagrant decadence we find in *Blaubart*.<sup>21</sup> She cites Buschbeck's essay on "Salzburgs Kultur aus Vergangenheit und Gegenwart", which lists amongst Trakl's early work "ein Puppenspiel *Kaspar Hauser*, dessen verzückte, frühlingswarme Primitivität von ganz eigentümlichen Reiz ist und das in seinem Wesen merkwürdig an die schönen einfach-dekorativen Gemälde Karl Anton Reichels erinnert".<sup>22</sup> The essay makes no mention of a *Blaubart* drama. Klettenhammer examines the evidence that both the early *Puppenspiele* were prototypes for the *Dramenfragment* of 1914. Webber suggests that the *Blaubart* drama was actually a parody of the earlier *Kaspar Hauser* play.<sup>23</sup>

The play is prefaced by an ironic *Vorausnahme*, which anticipates the conclusion of the tale, namely that *Blaubart* will reform his ways. There is perhaps a slight echo of Tieck's *Moralität* here; Trakl certainly seems to be upholding the pose of the cynic which characterizes much of *Sammlung 1909*, challenging the anticipated objections of his audience and reassuring them that all will be well in the end. There is, however, an undeniable hint of blasphemy in the final "Amen!"

A variant *Zueignung* addresses *Blaubart*, rather than a self-righteous audience.

Beklagst du, Verworrner dein wirres Bild  
 Das von Gelächter und Schmerz zerwühlt  
 Gedulde, dich, bis du wieder erstehst  
 Und gewandelt, auf sittsamern Wege gehst.

<II.472>

Here, there is more emphasis on the fact that *Blaubart*'s fate is outwith his own control. Both his suffering and his redemption are in the hands of a higher power; the prologue can only advise patience in suffering: "Gedulde..." We think here of the passivity of later protagonists, such as Elis: "Laß, wenn deine Stirne leise blutet/ Uralte Legenden/ Und dunkle Deutung des Vogelflugs" <84>. There is a more genuine

note to this variant prologue, which Trakl rejected, an understanding of Blaubart's predicament, rather than a cynical pose.

"Deine Kindertage sind um": Herbert's Loss of Innocence

The opening words of the first scene point to Blaubart's sinful nature and his need for forgiveness, as well as Elisabeth's need of God's mercy in her plight. This is a theme which will be expounded in the second scene, for the focus of attention here is not so much on Blaubart as on his two servants, in particular Herbert. It is through this figure that Trakl first examines the central theme of the play: the problematic nature of sexual awareness as sin.

We first see Herbert in a position of servitude and piety, on his knees, seeking God's mercy for Elisabeth. He knows of Blaubart's past, and of the inevitability of the murder which is to come; he is aware, too, of the ghosts of the previous brides who haunt the castle. This would all be in keeping with the fairy tale as we know it, except for an important line in Herbert's first speech: "Hilf den Sündern aus ihrer Höllennot!" <437>. The plural noun here refers not merely to Blaubart, the most obvious sinner, but also to his victim, Elisabeth. As we shall see, sexuality is constantly associated with sin and death throughout this play. The wedding ceremony has just been completed; its consummation is, in the eyes of the innocent Herbert, sinful, and therefore leads to damnation in hell for Elisabeth as well as Blaubart.

It first appears that Herbert, in his naivety, cannot bear to be in the presence of such evil ("Ich halt's nicht aus!" <437>); yet we soon realize that

there is more to his predicament than this. In a trance-like state, he imagines the "Blutbrautnacht" not with horror, but rather with vicarious sadistic pleasure, already tainted by the evil within the place. His purity struggles as he expresses the desire to be free of his senses, that he might not be contaminated through them, but even in expressing this desire, he knows that it is futile: "Nimm mir Ohr und Aug! Ich bin verflucht!" <437>. He is already damned, not by the presence of Blaubart, but by the loss of his innocence; for Herbert, it is not the sexual act which seals his damnation, but simply the very knowledge of sexual feeling. His cry for help is as much for himself as for Elisabeth.

The second version of the scene makes the nature of Herbert's suffering more explicit. Dreaming of Blaubart and Elisabeth has aroused a feeling of "Fieberglühn", which Herbert himself does not entirely understand. In his dream he flees from his own sexuality as soon as it is awakened ("Fühlt ihre Näh, wie im Fieberglühn -/ Und mußte schrein und vor ihnen fliehn!" <439>). Yet the damage has been done; he is left feeling contaminated by uncleanness and disease. The old servant confirms the nature of his dream: "Deine Kindertage sind um -" <439>; a variant carries the line: "Deine ruhigen Tage sind um -" <II.474>. For Trakl, sexual awareness means a loss of peace.

The third, fragmentary version of the scene contains a further intensification of Herbert's sexual awakening, for here his "Fieberglühn" is not in response to a dream, but to the physical presence of Elisabeth. In his naivety, he is still unable to understand or name his passion. The old servant's response is one of pity: "Du sollst sie nicht ansehen, mein armes Kind" <440>.

Herbert's response to his predicament is quite different in the two fuller versions of the scene; yet in both versions, as we will see, are themes which are

central to Trakl's later lyric. In the first version, Herbert feels the need to escape from the castle and make the hideous crimes of Blaubart known in the village. By making verbal expression of these crimes, publically, Herbert can find release from them. This is a theme which pervades Trakl's lyric, the need to find a release from his own suffering through his poetry. Here, Herbert intends to give voice to "das Namenlose", not in the hope that the villagers will storm the castle and rescue Elisabeth, as in Maeterlinck's play, but simply in an attempt to release himself from the evil power of Blaubart's crimes and the related problem of his own awakening sexuality.

The second version of the scene provides a less happy end. As we have seen, the reason for Herbert's anguish is his subconscious awareness of his own sexuality. He is aware that his dream is evil, yet he is not able to express its sexual nature. This psychological suppression of his emotions is his attempt to cope with his sexuality; he has neither the strength nor the maturity to face the truth, therefore chooses to forget his dream, to deny it verbal expression and the power of language. A look at the variants confirms this interpretation. Trakl chose "Ich vergaß - warum" <439> over "Und weiß nicht warum" and "Micht ahnt - warum!" <II.474>; in these rejected lines, Herbert's knowledge of the nature of his dream is either non-existent, or at best vague. The final version, however, makes it obvious that Herbert understood his dream, but subconsciously drove this knowledge from his mind.

In this version, Herbert's need to escape is not so that he can make known Blaubart's crimes in the village, nor that he can no longer stand to be in the presence of evil, but that he can no longer bear the presence of one who awakes his sexual need. For Herbert, to be aware of sexuality is to be in a state of sin; this is accompanied by guilt, expressed in

visions of decay and death: "Aasgeier umflattern wieder den Ort!" <439>. Here is the premonition, too, of Elisabeth's death at Blaubart's hands. The blood which will be spilt on the threshold is obviously symbolic, not only of Elisabeth's death, but of the loss of her virginity and her innocence. This is the threshold of the forbidden chamber of sexuality; the door between virginity and sexual experience is at the same time the door between life and death. Herbert's vision of blood is in reality "Der Fackeln flackernde Glut" <439> - the symbolism of the virile, destructive flames reinforces the fact that Elisabeth's innocence will be taken by male force.

Herbert calls for Elisabeth to turn back before she enters the forbidden chamber. "Der Tod vor der Schwelle" <439> is death with innocence preserved. His desire to die in place of Elisabeth is the desire not simply the desire to atone for her murder, as an innocent sacrifice; the motivation behind Herbert's suicide is as much for himself as for Elisabeth. The guilt of his own sexuality, and thus his own sinful nature, causes him to jump out of the window in an attempt to preserve his own purity.<sup>24</sup> He chooses death "vor der Schwelle", because he has felt in himself the possibility that he could become like Blaubart. It was an awareness which haunted Trakl in his own life: "Ich habe die fürchterlichsten Möglichkeiten in mir gefühlt, gerochen, getastet und im Blute die Dämonen heulen hören, die tausend Teufel mit ihren Stacheln, die das Fleisch wahnsinnig machen."<sup>25</sup> Herbert's function is not as antithesis to Blaubart; he symbolizes archetypal man entering sexual awareness, which ends, in its extremest form, with rape and murder. Herbert's dreams adumbrate Blaubart's crimes; it is only by suicide that Herbert can prevent his degeneration into brutality.

"Du geifernd Tier": The Personification of Decadent Sexuality

Blaubart, like Don Juan and the saint of the early poem, is seen to be suffering at the hands of God: "Hab nie Herr einen gesehn in der Welt -/ Der so wie Ihr von Gott gequält!" <441>. Like Huysmans' Gilles de Rais, he is a superman capable of great good and great evil, although there is little evidence of the former; God can in this way be seen as responsible for his suffering, for in creating one with such capacity for good, he has also created a man with a capacity for excessive evil.<sup>26</sup>

The figure of Bluebeard is the personification of decadent sexuality. Bahr, in *Die gute Schule*, had called for "eine neue Erscheinung der Liebe, welche sich in die allgemeine Décadence schickte",<sup>27</sup> a love which is masochistic and sadistic: "Die neue Liebe mußte ungeheuer sein, gewaltsam, roh, jäh, furchtbar, maßlos-gothisch mußte sie sein, wie die Zeit."<sup>28</sup> The relationship between the artist and Fifi, which forms much of the content of *Die gute Schule*, is characterized by sadistic and masochistic desires, described by Bahr in crude voyeuristic detail:

Da heulte er auf, wie ein hungriges Raubtier, endlich über der Beute, und riß sie an sich und warf sich auf sie und durchwühlte sie mit bebenden Fingern und wälzte sich mit ihr, jauchzend in kurzen, schrillen, heiseren Pfiffen, und verwundete sie mit bissigen Küssen, am ganzen Leibe, als wollte er sie zerfleischen.<sup>29</sup>

In 1895, Przybyszewski described a similar emotion of brutal sexuality in *Vigilien*, which shocked Berlin literary society:

Aus den abgründigsten Tiefen meines Seins krochen merkwürdige Empfindungen empor; neue, immer neue, unbekannte, wilde, verbrecherische Instinkte wurden wach, und grell, voll Höllenröte lag vor meinem grauenden Blick der finstre Abgrund in mir aufgetan ... Alles schrie in mir nach Rache

und Verbrechen. ... ich sah eine schwarze,  
öde Leere, und dann hört' ich einen Schrei  
in mir: Morde sie!<sup>30</sup>

This animalistic nature of decadent love is  
portrayed by Trakl with equal exaggeration:

Ist's ein Affe oder ist's ein Stier  
Ein Wolf oder ander reißen Getier  
Hei lustig geschnäbelt zur Nacht -  
Bis zweie nur mehr eines macht!  
Und eins ist der Tod! <443>

Trakl's language is insufficient to express the horror  
of Blaubart's crime; the affectation with which he  
likenes Blaubart's bestial nature to that of a predatory  
wild animal is, rather, embarrassingly comic.

Blaubart's irreverent and cruel attitude is  
portrayed in the song which, rather than mitigating  
Elisabeth's fear ("Ich sing' dir ein Lied, das dich  
lachen macht." <442>), makes clear his complete lack  
of repentance, and protests his innocence with mocking  
blasphemy: "Wenn das mein Herze wüßte!/ Erbarm' dich, o  
Jesus Christe!" <442>. In his song, his perverse sexual  
desires are tinged with a penchant for necrophilia:

Wer sagt, daß ihr Licht erloschen war,  
Als ich zur Feier löste ihr Haar.  
...  
Wer sagt, daß ihr stummer Mund verwest,  
Als ich zur Nacht bei ihr gewest.  
...  
Wer sagt, daß offen stünd' ein Grab,  
Und daß ich im Blick was Böses hab! <442><sup>31</sup>

Within the symbolism of this play, however, is a close  
connection between sexuality and death. Blaubart is  
referring here not to an existing corpse, but to his  
bride, in this case (for it has happened many times  
before), to Elisabeth herself. Such is the  
inevitability of his crime that as soon as he loosens  
her hair, a sensuous gesture leading to the sexual act,  
she is condemned. For the sexual act is in itself seen  
as an act of sin and therefore an act which sacrifices  
innocence and brings death. The inevitable cycle of  
sexuality, death and decay is found throughout Trakl's  
poetry (one thinks, for example of 'Die junge Magd').  
As soon as Blaubart spends the night with his victim,



she is tainted by decay. The fact that her mouth is "stumm" emphasizes her inability to free herself from her predicament, for she is unable to express her fear or her guilt, and thus unable to find release and perhaps redemption through expression. Blaubart, too, calls for silence, only too aware of the power of words, and blasphemously denies the accusations of the bells, which symbolize righteousness and piety (one is reminded of the "Sturmglocken" which Herbert wanted to ring); bells which not only echo Herbert's death, but which also foreshadow the funeral toll for Elisabeth, whose grave has already been dug.

Blaubart prepares for the murder of Elisabeth in a spirit of hedonistic devil worship: "Starb Gott einst für des Fleisches Not/ Muß der Teufel feiern zur Lust den Tod" <444>. As Webber points out, his insistence that she drink wine is a parody of the Eucharist;<sup>32</sup> thus the wine, spilt, not only functions as a crude symbol of her virginity, as in Hofmannsthal's 'Die Beiden', but also stands for the blood of Christ, spilt for human sin. Here is adumbrated, then, the theme of woman as man's redeemer which will be essential to the later lyric.<sup>33</sup>

Blaubart is not without a sense of humour, albeit a somewhat cynical one, especially in his mockery of Elisabeth's sweetheart, Heinrich. In Blaubart's view, even innocent love, such as that between Elisabeth and Heinrich, is motivated by one thing only, and that is a desire for sex which is both brutal and animalistic. Courtship and wooing have but one goal - the wedding night. Unlike the innocent Heinrich, Blaubart fully acknowledges this goal, at the same time with mocking cynicism: "Wie dein Knabe - so keusch, o lieb ich dich!/ Doch soll ich dich Kindlein ganz besitzen - " <444>. Once he has taken her virginity, however, she will no longer be the "Kindlein" which he wished to rape, and her subsequent murder is inevitable.

Decadent sexuality, driven by a desire for new sensations, explores even perversion and murder. As Clément, one of the monks in *Justine* explains to the heroine: "... tu ne sais pas jusqu'où nous entraîne cette dépravation, l'ivresse où elle nous jette, la commotion violente qui résulte, dans le fluide électrique, de l'irritation produite par la douleur sur l'objet qui sert nos passions; comme on est chatouillé de ses maux!"<sup>34</sup> And Omphale, like Justine one of the victims, speculates upon the depravity to which the monks will sink: "... le meurtre, le plus exécration des crimes, serait-il donc pour eux, comme pour ce célèbre maréchal de Retz, une sorte de jouissance dont la cruauté, exaltant leur perfide imagination, pût plonger leur sens dans une ivresse plus vive?"<sup>35</sup>

Trakl's Blaubart is equally brutal in his sexuality; here is no longer the motive of the fairy tale, Blaubart does not kill his wives to punish curiosity, but simply in a hedonistic and grotesque celebration of murder. Regarding Blaubart as the personification of exceptional and perverse male sexuality, one should not forget the psychological significance of his unusual beard. This symbolism is no doubt embedded within the original legend, and, although no actual reference is made to his beard in the text of Trakl's play, one cannot but wonder if Trakl bore in mind a passage from Weininger's *Geschlecht und Charakter*: "Die Wirkung des männlichen Bartes auf die Frau ist in einem weiteren Sinne und aus einem tieferen Grunde, als man vielleicht glaubt, psychologisch ein vollständiges, und nur in der Intensität geschwächtes, Abbild der Wirkung des männlichen Gliedes selbst."<sup>36</sup>

Sexuality is the key to this play. In reply to Elisabeth's question, "Trägst du nicht am Hals ein Schlüsselein? ... Was öffnet's mir?" <443-44>, Blaubart willingly answers, "Es öffnet zum Brautgemach die Tür!" <444>. Yet it is sexuality fraught with death and

decay: "Sein Geheimnis ist Verwesung und Tod" <444>. In Blaubart's view, all human activity is motivated by sexual need, this is "des Fleisches tiefster Not" <444>, and thus all human activity leads to death and decay. In the imagery of his speech, innocence is like an unopened flower, but a flower once opened, like a maiden de-flowered, must die. This is to be the fate of Elisabeth, like so many others: "In Mitternacht du brünstige Braut/ Zur Todesblume greifend erblaut" <444>. The relationship between man and woman is characterized by harsh, violent sexuality: "Lust peitschen Haß, Verwesung und Tod/ Entsprungen dem Blute, gellend und rot" <444>.

Blaubart's extreme viewpoint is not unlike that of the misogynist Weininger in *Geschlecht und Charakter*:

Daß aller Geschlechtstrieb der Grausamkeit verwandt ist, hat man nach Novalis oft wiederholt. ... Alles, was vom Weibe geboren ist, muß auch sterben. Zeugung, Geburt und Tod stehen in einer unauflöselichen Beziehung; vor einem unzeitigen Tode erwacht in jedem Wesen auf das heftigste der Geschlechtstrieb als das Bedürfnis, sich noch fortzupflanzen. Und so ist der Koitus, nicht nur psychologisch als Akt, sondern auch vom ethischen und naturphilosophischen Gesichtspunkte dem Mord verwandt: er verneint das Weib, aber auch den Mann; er raubt im Idealfall beiden das Bewußtsein, um dem Kinde das Leben zu geben. ... Hier vollendet sich die Parallele zwischen der Grausamkeit der Erotik und der Grausamkeit der Sexualität. Liebe ist Mord. Der Geschlechtstrieb negiert auch das körperliche, die Erotik das psychische Weib.<sup>37</sup>

Woman is entirely within the power of the man; in a later chapter, Weininger continues:

So erklärt sich denn die absolute Gewalt der männlichen Geschlechtlichkeit über das Weib. Nur indem der Mann sexuell wird, erhält das Weib Existenz und Bedeutung: sein Dasein ist an den Phallus geknüpft, und darum dieser sein höchster Herr und unumschränkter Gebieter. Der Geschlecht gewordene Mann ist das Fatum des Weibes; der Don Juan der einzige Mensch, vor dem es bis zum Grunde erzittert.<sup>38</sup>

Whether Trakl himself entirely subscribed to Weininger's views on sexuality is questionable. It is well known that he said, with reference to contemporary views on women: "Totschlagen sollt' man die Hunde, die behaupten, das Weib suche nur Sinnenlust!"<sup>39</sup>

Blaubart takes the precept that "Liebe ist Mord" to its logical conclusion. The only way that he can possess Elisabeth "ganz" is to cut her throat:

Doch soll ich dich Kindlein ganz besitzen -  
 Muß ich, Gott will's den Hals dir schlitzen!  
 Du Taube, und trinken dein Blut so rot  
 Und deinen zuckenden, schäumenden Tod!  
 Und saugen aus deinem Eingeweid  
 Deine Scham und deine Jungfräulichkeit <444>

A study of sexually motivated crime, *Angst, Lust, Zerstörung. Sadismus als soziales und kriminelles Handeln* by Schorsch and Becker, reveals that the cruelty involved in such crime is motivated by a basic desire to wield total control over the victim:

Sadistische Intentionen als Phantasien oder Handlungen zielen auf die Bemächtigung des anderen, auf ein totales Verfügen über ihn, die Aufgabe seiner Eigenständigkeit. Dominanz - Subordination in extremer Zuspitzung wird zum sexualisierten Thema; es geht nicht in erster Linie um Aggressivität oder Grausamkeit, sondern um Beherrschung. Schmerz zufügen und Verletzen können dabei fehlen, sind aber deshalb ein häufiger Bestandteil sadistischer Aktivitäten, weil das Hinnehmenmüssen von Schmerz, das Erleiden von Qual der deutlichste Ausdruck von Selbstaufgabe und Ohnmacht ist.<sup>40</sup>

This is the closest Trakl comes to a graphic description of sexual perversion, a faint echo of the exploits described by de Sade in *Justine* or *Juliette*, or even Bahr in *Die gute Schule*. De Sade's protagonists, both male and female, find many and increasingly bizarre uses for their victims' intestines after they have committed *Lustmord*; Huysmans, probably taking the "Divine Marquis" as his *Lehrmeister*, attributes a similar predilection to his Gilles de Rais:

Gilles et ses amis se retirent dans une chambre éloignée du château. C'est là que les petits garçons enfermés dans les caves sont amenés. On les déshabille, on les bâillonne; le Maréchal les palpe et les force, puis il les taillade à coups de dagues, se complait à les démembrer, pièces à pièces ... Cedit sire s'échauffait avec des petits garçons, quelque fois avec des petites filles avec lesquelles il avait habitation sur le ventre, disant qu'il y prenait plus de plaisir et moins de peine qu'à le faire en leur nature. Après quoi, il leur sciait lentement la gorge, les dépeçait ... Le vampirisme le satisfait pendant des mois. Il pollua les enfants morts, apaisa la fièvre de ses souhaits dans la glace ensanglantée des tombes.<sup>41</sup>

The vampire element in *Blaubart* continues the blasphemous parody of the black mass. As Christ's blood was shed on the cross, so Blaubart takes the blood of Elisabeth; the appellation "Taube" (and its variant form, "Lilie" <II.484>) reinforce the parallels with divine purity. Perhaps one may also see here a prefiguration of the theme of woman as man's redeemer, in that Elisabeth's blood may lead to some form of recognition, if not salvation, for Blaubart. The imagery has all the symbolism of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*; Blaubart's desire to feed on Elisabeth's blood is synonymous with his desire to rob her of her virginity. In her vision she calls upon Heinrich to drink her blood, revealing that the criminal potential of Blaubart is within her too; like *Dracula*'s victims, she too may become like her violator, and the description of her "zuckenden, schäumenden Tod" <444> is reminiscent of van Helsing's murder of the vampire brides, accompanied as it is by "the horrid screeching as the stake drove home; the plunging of writhing form, and lips of bloody foam."<sup>42</sup>

The vampiric nature of sadistic passion is found in Bahr's *Die gute Schule*:

Es wandelte ihn erst an, sie nimmermehr zu lassen, bevor er nicht von ihrem Fleische gekostet, von diesem glühenden, bebenden

Rosenfleisch ... und nicht in durstiger  
Liebkosungen von ihrem Blut geschlürft, aus  
den zernagten Lippen, Brüsten und Lenden,  
und diese ganze namenlose Gier, sie zu  
verzehren, auszutrinken, mit jedem Sinn  
besonders zu genießen, nicht endlich,  
endlich gestillt!<sup>43</sup>

Przybyszewski's *Totenmesse* (1893) explores the dark, violent nature of the relationship between the sexes. The protagonist describes a vision in which a corpse evokes his feelings of hatred for the woman whom he imagines to have been his lover:

Im Scheine einer Totenkerze lag ein totes  
Weib. ... Und das tote Gesicht sprach in  
wechselnder Kerzenlichtsprache, und sah mich  
an mit lüsternen, üppigen Augen. ... Das  
mußte ich sehen, ... die wüste Brautnacht,  
in der sich Tod und Leben paaren. ... ich  
küßte ihr Gesicht, ich riß und sog an ihr,  
und plötzlich biß ich mich mit geifernden  
Lippen, wie ein Vampir, schrill an ihre  
Brust hinein.<sup>44</sup>

Here, however, the sadistic fantasy ends in retribution, as the victim turns upon the violator: "Das tote, blutende Weib reckte sich in fürchterlicher Majestät im Sarge auf, und mit weit ausholender Armbewegung, mit jäher, fürchterlicher Wucht stieß sie mich mit beiden Fäusten in die Brust. Bewußtlos flog ich weit weg."<sup>45</sup> This is a gesture which is found not in *Blaubart* but in the *Dramenfragment* of 1914, where Johanna accuses Kermor of violation of her sleep: "KERMOR:... erhebt sich und flieht ins Dunkel)/ JOHANNA (hoch aufgerichtet): Mein Blut über dich - da du brachtest in mein Schlaf" <459>.

The theme of sexuality as a violent battle between the sexes, often culminating in *Lustmord*, is far from uncommon in Austrian and German literature around the turn of the century. Przybyszewski, as we have seen, deals repeatedly with this topic. One thinks also of Wedekind's *Büchse der Pandora*, with Jack the Ripper as the *Lustmörder* who brings an end to Lulu's sexual games; the phallic symbolism of the knife is obvious.

In the poems of the Viennese decadent, Felix Dörmann, which are characterized by a rather harmless pose, this brutal love gives way to repulsion and *ennui*. In 'Madonna Lucia', the protagonist, like Blaubart, expresses a desire to possess his mistress:

Du mußt in mir versinken,  
 Mir ganz zu eigen sein,  
 Ich will Deine Seele trinken  
 Wie feuerflüssigen Wein.<sup>46</sup>

Like Elisabeth, Lucia is filled with desire equal to that of her lover:

Von Deinen Lippen ringt sich  
 Ein jauchzender Liebesschrei, -  
 Und achtlos rollen die Stunden  
 In endlosen Küssen vorbei.<sup>47</sup>

Dörmann's protagonist is, however, no match for the *femme fatale* he has awakened; his response is one of disgust. Like Blaubart, his desire is to kill his lover once he has used her; but the passive and world-weary decadent falls back into *ennui*:

Ich könnt' Dich erwürgen, Lucia,  
 Wie giftige Vipernbrut,  
 Ich möchte Dein Antlitz zerfetzen,  
 Zerstampfen in rasender Wut.<sup>48</sup>

Was stachelst Du wieder und wieder  
 Erlöschende Sinnengier,  
 Hinweg mir aus den Augen,  
 Mir ekelt, ekelt vor Dir.

Perhaps the most famous treatment of this theme is in Kokoschka's *Mörder, Hoffnung der Frau*, which reduces the battle between male and female to its most basic level, a relationship of love and hate, attraction and repulsion, physical dependence and desire to dominate and destroy. Their division and confrontation is symbolized on stage by the phallic tower and the vaginal cage, which stand as isolated representatives of their irreconcilable domains. The ending of Kokoschka's drama is as bleak as that of *Blaubart*: the force of their passionate hatred brings mutual destruction, as the woman lies brutally murdered and the tower burns.<sup>49</sup>

Blaubart's collapse at the foot of the cross after the murder has been interpreted by some critics as his eventual submission before God.<sup>50</sup> A close examination of the text reveals, however, that this act is neither a simplistic admission of guilt, nor a final act of blasphemy.

Up until his murder of Elisabeth, Blaubart's attitude is one of unrepentance. He answers Elisabeth's despairing question - "Neigt niemand sich meiner grausen Not?" <445> - with mockery: "Gott!" As far as Blaubart is concerned, there is no one to help her, and divine aid is useless. This blasphemy is emphasized by the presence of the crucifix on the stage; although it is only mentioned at the end of the play, one must remember its visual presence on stage throughout the entire scene. One can imagine Elisabeth turning towards it as she cries, "Gott steh mir bei!" <445>; indeed, a variant has her beg Blaubart for mercy for the sake of Christ: "Erbarm dich mein um Christi Tod" <II.484>. This has, of course, no power to move the satanic Blaubart.

He drags her violently from the stage, only to return some time later dripping with blood; as he falls down before the crucifix, we are reminded of Trakl's description of Tolstoy as a figure of Dionysian vitality who had submitted to Christianity: "Pan unter dem Kreuze zusammenbrechend".<sup>52</sup> It is hard to see any real piety or search for forgiveness here; the drunken ecstasy after the crime is the delirious pleasure of a sadist.<sup>52</sup> The fact that Blaubart falls "wie niedergemäht" <445> closes the play with the opening theme: namely, that Blaubart is controlled by forces outwith himself, whether by Satan, during his lifetime, or by God in his death.

Blaubart's collapse at the foot of the cross is reminiscent of Gilles de Rais' gesture, as described by Huysmans in *La-Bas*. Gilles de Rais, no longer satisfied with physical abuse of his victims, turns to spiritual



abuse, and a bizarre decadent fusion of expiation and sin. Finally madness leads to repentance and submission beneath the cross: "Les corps qu'il a massacrés et dont il a fait jeter les cendres dans les douves ressuscitent à l'état de larves et l'attaquent aux parties basses. Il se débat, clapote dans le sang, se dresse en sursaut, et accroupi, il se traîne à quatre pattes, tel qu'un loup, jusqu'au crucifix dont il mord les pieds, en rugissant."<sup>53</sup>

#### "Keusch blühende Rose": Elisabeth as Ambivalent Victim

Blaubart's victim, Elisabeth, is, like Herbert, tainted not only by the presence of evil, but also by her own sexual desires. Although emphasis is placed on her purity and youth, it soon becomes apparent that this is not her first encounter with sin: "Träumt gestern unter dem Lindenbaum/ An Vaters Haus einen bösen Traum" <443>. Like Herbert, she has been troubled by bad dreams of awakening sexuality. It is important to note that the dream took place "gestern", that is before she met Blaubart, while she was still in the 'safe' childhood domain of her father's house, under the linden tree, where childhood sweethearts traditionally meet.<sup>54</sup> Again, we see that the "pure" love of Elisabeth and Heinrich is destroyed by sexuality. Elisabeth's innocence is not violated by Blaubart's presence alone; nor does he, as is the case with Herbert, act as a catalyst for her awareness of the violent potentiality of her own sexuality; the key to her doom, to the forbidden chamber of sexual desire, comes from within herself, and the parental authority of "Vaters Haus" is violated in the face of lost innocence. Certainly, her proximity to Blaubart may

have a corrupting influence, intensifying the sado-masochistic element of her vision. In her dream-like trance she names her once-innocent sweetheart, Heinrich, and calls for help - not only from Blaubart, but from her own sexuality.

Like Herbert, now that sexual desire has been stirred, she can no longer find peace at night; she is completely cut off from her previous innocent self: "Weiß nimmer, nimmer was gestern war" <443>. This loss of innocence is accompanied by a sensation of choking on her own blood: "Blut stickt und würgt mir die Kehle zu" <443>; spilt at the sacrifice of her innocent self, it is at the same time a symbol of her death at Blaubart's hands and her own sexuality, which is accompanied by physical maturation in the form of menstruation.

Her vision is a sexual fantasy of a blatantly sado-masochistic nature, and, by involving Heinrich, taints his presumably innocent love, too.<sup>55</sup> This fantasy, born out of her innermost desire, corrupts the innocence of her love, thus making her, and not Blaubart, guilty of her own degeneration. This is one of the clearest examples we have in Trakl's writing of the influence of Weininger's philosophy.<sup>56</sup> Elisabeth becomes, if only temporarily, the personification of sexuality, which Weininger claimed was the true nature of woman: "weil sie nichts ist als Sexualität, weil sie die Sexualität selbst ist".<sup>57</sup> Thus woman's existence becomes one of desire for, and submission to, man: "So erklärt sich denn die absolute Gewalt der männlichen Geschlechtlichkeit über das Weib. Nur indem der Mann sexuell wird, erhält das Weib Existenz und Bedeutung: sein Dasein ist an den Phallus geknüpft."<sup>58</sup> Where Herbert had sought to make Blaubart's crimes known in the village, Elisabeth's exhibitionist desire is to make her own sexuality a public spectacle, to receive and inflict pain in an orgiastic frenzy.

The term "sado-masochism" had been used by the psychopathologist Richard von Krafft-Ebing, whose study of sexual deviation, *Psychopathia sexualis* (1886), gave detailed accounts of sexual abnormalities within most European societies, including *Lustmord*, masochism and sadism. He had found as the result of his study that: "Wenn die Assoziation zwischen Wollust und Grausamkeit vorhanden ist, so weckt nicht nur der wollüstige Affekt den Drang zur Grausamkeit, sondern auch umgekehrt: Vorstellung und besonders der Anblick grausamer Handlungen wirken sexuell erregend und werden in diesem Sinne vom perversen Individuum benützt."<sup>59</sup> Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, the original "masochist", provided the prototype of the willing male victim and the cruel dominant female in *Venus im Felz* (1869). Woman, in Sacher-Masoch's view is capable of the most diabolical as well as of the most divine:

Kein Weib ist so gut oder so böse, daß es nicht jeden Augenblick sowohl der teuflischen, als der göttlichsten, der schmutzigsten, wie der reinsten Gedanken, Gefühle, Handlungen fähig wäre. ... es hat den Charakter des *Wilden*, welcher sich treu und treulos, großmütig und grausam zeigt, je nach der Regung, die ihn gerade beherrscht.<sup>60</sup>

One of the most blatantly sado-masochistic females in German literature of the *fin de siècle* is Fifi in Bahr's *Die gute Schule*:

Es hätte sie einer vergewaltigen müssen. Das brauchte sie. Einfach, wie über ein störisches Vieh, mit Zwang, mit Marter, mit Geißel über sie her, nach seiner Willkür, nach seiner Laune, unter seinem Befehle, ohne Bitte, ohne Frage, in Züchtigungen, roh und grausam, herrisch, unerbittlich, daß sie sich fürchtete, daß er sie unterjochte ... Ah, das stellte sie sich schön vor - Wollust und Qual zugleich.<sup>61</sup>

The vampire element found in many of these sado-masochistic fantasies is present in Elisabeth's vision, too:

Mein Knabe komm! Trink' meine Glut,  
Bist du nicht durstig nach meinem Blut,  
Nach meiner brennenden Haare Flut? <443>

Here the vampire bride is offering up her own blood; offering to her innocent sweetheart the very blood which symbolizes her sexual maturation. The assonant rhyme of "Blut" pervades the passage, as her sexuality takes over every area of her life. Here, too, is the influence of Weininger's concept of woman as sexuality, to the point of total submission: "Der Geschlecht gewordene Mann ist das Fatum des Weibes; der Don Juan der einzige Mensch, vor dem es bis zum Grunde erzittert."<sup>62</sup> Elisabeth's desire for male domination is such that she offers up her life:

Nimm alles, alles was ich bin -  
Du Starker - mein Leben - du nimm hin! <443>

Only when Blaubart attempts to seize her does she awaken from her vision and call on Heinrich to rescue her. This is, of course, in vain, for it is impossible to return to her previous state of innocence. Just before her death Blaubart teases her with the appellation "Keusch blühende Rose auf meinem Altar- " <444>; once she has awakened from her sado-masochistic vision, she may have regained some measure of "Keuschheit", but she can do nothing to reverse her situation; a rose, once it has started to bloom, cannot return to the bud.

#### "Dies wirre Bild": Style and Imagery

Thematically, the play is closer to the mature lyric than has been acknowledged by most critics. Stylistically, however, it still belongs very much to the epigonic early lyric of *Sammlung 1909*. It is hard to accept Schneditz's rapturous enthusiasm for "dieses hinreißende, kleine Drama": "Es hat die ganze Dichte und dramatische Spannkraft einer komprimierten großen Tragödie, starrt von unheimlicher Triebhaftigkeit und

ist echterster Trakl."<sup>63</sup> Basil, on the other hand, is perhaps too harsh in his embarrassed condemnation of the piece: "Verse ... auch Wendungen oder Wortungeheuer ... sind von so gewalttätiger Lust, partout schauerlich zu wirken, daß sie die gegenteilige Wirkung hervorrufen. Das Stück wäre heute ein Heiterkeitserfolg ..."<sup>64</sup>

That the play has recently been performed with some measure of success proves that it rises above the level of the mere farcical. Cesare Lievi's production of *Blaubart* at the Vienna Burgtheater in summer 1991, which was run again at the Berlin Theatertreffen in 1992, was held by one critic to be "the brightest jewel of the festival ... a totally unselfconscious surrender to beauty ... a near-perfect fusion of text, music (Mahler, Schubert, Sibelius *et al*) and visual beauty."<sup>65</sup> Lievi himself, discussing the text, stresses the poetical power of the language: "Es ist ja ein kleines Fragment mit einer sehr poetischen, kraftvollen, bilderreichen Sprache ... Die Bilder und Visionen der Sprache ... erfordern eine besondere Art des Spiels. Wir haben das Stück wie ein Gedicht gelesen."<sup>66</sup>

In comparison with the power of Trakl's later lyric, *Blaubart* is undeniably weak. Much of the language is, as Basil suggests, more comic in its effect, especially when the poet attempts to convey an atmosphere of horror. One thinks, for example, of Herbert's final speech, punctuated, like much of the play, by a surfeit of exclamation marks:

Die Schatten winken der bleichen Braut  
 Was heißt mich tun - davor mir so graut!  
 Kehr um - du Magd! Ein Schritt noch vom Tor!  
 Ihr geliebten Frauen tretet doch vor!  
 Der Tod vor der Schwelle! Bete für mich!  
 Der Tod vor der Schwelle: Laß mich sterben für  
 dich.

Maria, - Jungfrau o bitt' für mich! <439-40>

and of the attempt to convey Elisabeth's horror when she wakes from her vision:

Hu! Hu! Wies mich schüttelt und graut!  
 Nicht du! Nicht du! O rette mich!  
 Lieber! <444>

Some of the imagery contains clear echoes of other *fin-de-siècle* lyric. The depiction of Elisabeth's hair uses a standard topoi of decadent lyric. Trakl's lines:

Komm Lieber! Feuer fließt mir im Haar

...  
 Bist du nicht durstig nach meinem Blut,  
 Nach meiner brennenden Haare Flut? <443>

have little to distinguish them from the imagery of a poem like Dörmann's 'Madonna Lucia':

Ich will meine Zähne vergraben  
 In Deinem knirschenden Haar,  
 Im Bluttausch will ich vergessen,  
 Daß ich ein Anderer war.<sup>67</sup>

Blaubart's image of the moon - "Der Mond/ Wie eine besoffene Dirne stiert - " <441> - is a direct borrowing from Wilde's *Salomé*: "The moon has a strange look tonight. ... She reels through the clouds like a drunken woman....I am sure she is looking for lovers."<sup>68</sup> Wilde's play contains several images of the moon, always female. In *Blaubart*, however, the image of the moon as "eine besoffene Dirne" is followed in quick succession by an image in which the moon has changed sex: "Sieh nur, wie der Mond dich brünstig anschaut!" <441>. Webber seeks to trace this apparent contradiction to the relationship of Elisabeth and Blaubart to the moon.<sup>69</sup> It seems clear, however, that Trakl has borrowed one image from Wilde, who was writing within a culture which regards the moon as unambiguously and unquestioningly female. In German mythology, however, the moon is male and the sun female - *Frau Sonne und Herr Mond*. This is the more powerful image in Trakl's play, and one which we find again in the later lyric; in 'Im Dorf' the image of the lustful moon is again associated with sinful sexuality:

Die Mauern starren kahl und grauverdreckt  
 Ins kühle Dunkel. Im Fieberbette friert  
 Der schwangere Leib, den frech der Mond bestiert.  
 Vor ihrer Kammer ist ein Hund verreckt. <64>

In 'Die junge Magd', the association is a similar one,

although here it is the sense of sound rather than vision which characterizes the moon as a perverse eavesdropper on the maid's dreams:

Nächtens übern kahlen Anger  
 Gaukelt sie in Fieberträumen.  
 Mürrisch greint der Wind im Anger  
 Und der Mond lauscht aus den Bäumen. <13>

The image of the moon as a lecherous onlooker is more powerful than the Wildean borrowing, not only for its originality, but also because it underlines the play's basic theme of awakening sexuality. As Janet McCrickard points out in her investigation of sun and moon mythology, "One of the most striking and recurrent elements in world religion is the association of women's monthly cycle with the Moon. In virtually every tribal culture, menstrual bleeding is imagined as the visible result of an invisible encounter - sexual intercourse with the Moon, who is almost invariably a masculine deity among primitive peoples."<sup>70</sup>

A study of the moon imagery throughout Trakl's poetry reveals a symbolism of one of the major themes of Trakl's lyric, namely the often cryptic relationship between sexuality and redemption. While sexuality is almost always associated with sin in the early lyric, as in *Blaubart*, in the mature lyric it is somehow connected to the figure of a female redeemer; almost every reference to the moon in Trakl's lyric reflects this theme.

In the early lyric, the moon is often seen as a source of male sexuality.<sup>71</sup> In the earliest work, *Traumland*, the moon presides over the scene where the young protagonist becomes aware of his own sexuality, and his own sexual fantasies, which involve his cousin, Maria:

wenn ich sah, wie beim leise plätschernden  
 Brunnen im Mondenschein zwei Menschen enge  
 aneinander geschmiegt lange dahinwandelten,  
 als wären sie ein Wesen, und mich da ein  
 ahnungsvoller heißer Schauer überlief, da  
 kam die kranke Maria mir in den Sinn; dann  
 überfiel mich eine leise Sehnsucht nach

irgend etwas Unerklärlichem, und plötzlich sah ich mich mit ihr Arm in Arm die Straße hinab im Schatten der duftenden Linden lustwandeln <190>.

Subconsciously, even within his own fantasy, he realizes that his own sexual violation of her purity is somehow responsible for Maria's imminent death, for her paleness increases in the moonlight: "Und in Maria's großen, dunklen Augen leuchtete ein seltsamer Schimmer, und der Mond ließ ihr schmales Gesichtchen noch blasser und durchsichtiger erscheinen" <190>.

This symbolism of the moon as male sexuality is found throughout the early prose and lyric. In *Maria Magdalena*, it symbolizes Marcellus' arousal as he watches Maria Magdalena dance: "Es ging vor sich in einer glühenden Sommernacht, da in der Luft das Fieber lauert und Mond die Sinne verwirrt" <196>. *Sammlung 1909* also contains many examples of this symbolism., such as 'Das Grauen' and 'Sabbath', where it shines on the scene of the protagonist's awakening sexuality. In 'Schweigen' the moon's function is thus raised above the level of epigonic Symbolist *topoi*; the dreams which it awakens are of a sexual nature, causing the willows' silent weeping. Such is the darkness of the protagonists' sinful sexuality (one wonders if incest is hinted at here), that the expression of sorrow around them is silent; theirs is an inexpressable sin, and finds no release through the nebulosity of the poem. In the third stanza of 'Die drei Teiche in Hellbrunn', the poet describes the mysterious and unfathomable nature of the pond which mirrors his own existence:

Der Mond steigt auf, es blaut die Nacht,  
Erbliht im Widerschein der Fluten -  
Ein rätselvolles Sphinxgesicht,  
Daran mein Herz sich will verbluten. <238>

The atmosphere in which the poet glimpses his own puzzling reflection does much to explain the nature of his existence; two opposite forces are at work here in the poet's life: the rising moon and the blue night,



the spheres of sexuality and spirituality, male lust and the female power to redeem. This is one of the dominant themes of Trakl's lyric.

In *Gedichte* we often find the moon associated with the suffering of sexual fantasies, which leads, as in *Blaubart*, to death and decay. One thinks of 'Romanze zur Nacht':

Der Knab aus Träumen wirr erwacht,  
Sein Antlitz grau im Mond verfällt. <16>

or 'Helian', where the feverish dreams are connected with the sisters' departure:

Leise rollen vergilbte Monde  
Über die Fieberlinden des Jünglings,  
Eh' dem Schweigen des Winters folgt. <71>

The association of the moon with incestuous sexuality is found in 'In der Heimat':

Resedenduft. Die Mauern dämmern kahl.  
Der Schwester Schlaf ist schwer. Der Nachtwind  
wühlt  
In ihrem Haar, das mondner Glanz umspült <60>

In 'Im Winter' and 'Die Ratten' the moon is associated with images not only of male sexuality, but of prurience and disease, which suggest the predatory, bestial nature of male sexuality; this is found again in poems from *Sebastian im Traum*, such as 'Geburt', where the moon appears as a distant father-figure, reminiscent of its function in mythology, 'Föhn', and 'Winternacht'. In the two longer prose poems, which, as we shall see, bear a striking resemblance to *Blaubart*, the moon is associated with violent male sexuality.

Within the later poetry, however, we also find the moon associated with the seemingly contradictory concept of purity, most explicitly in 'Gesang des Abgeschiedenen', which describes a realm of spiritual harmony: "Maß und Gesetz und die mondnen Pfade des Abgeschiedenen" <144>. This is not, however, the entirely paradoxical transition which it may at first seem. Spirituality is found through the awareness of

suffering and renunciation of the source of that suffering, which is, as an examination of Trakl's poetry shows, often sexuality:

... und es schaut aus nächtigen Augen  
 Stille dich der Bruder an, daß er ruhe von  
 dorniger Wanderschaft. <144>

The transition from the sexual to the spiritual sphere is symbolized in the moon imagery of several poems. 'Ruh und Schweigen' contrasts spirituality and suffering. When the light of the sun is buried, the time of the moon brings submission to suffering which is essentially sexual: "Oder er neigt das Haupt in purpurnem Schlaf" <113>. As the moon is a reflection of the sun's light, so the protagonist preserves tenuous links with the previous spiritual realm in which he dwelt:

Doch immer rührt der schwarze Flug der Vögel  
 Den Schauenden, das Heilige blauer Blumen,  
 Denkt die nahe Stille Vergessenes, erloschene  
 Engel. <113>

Although he does not have the strength to free himself from his sexuality, redemption comes in the form of a hermaphroditic sister-figure, who brings purging light to his darkness:

Wieder nachtete die Stirne in mondenem Gestein;  
 Ein strahlender Jüngling  
 Erscheint die Schwester in Herbst und schwarzer  
 Verwesung. <113>

In 'Siebengesang des Todes' redemption is gained through confrontation of sexuality, and expurgation of the bestial nature of man, which allows purity to return:

Und es jagte der Mond ein rotes Tier  
 Aus seiner Höhle;  
 Und es starb in Seufzern die dunkle Klage der  
 Frauen.

Strahlender hob die Hände zu seinem Stern  
 Der weiße Fremdling;  
 Schweigend verläßt ein Totes das verfallene Haus.  
 <126>

A strikingly similar image is found in 'Abendland':

Mond, als träte ein Totes  
 Aus blauer Höhle,

Und es fallen der Blüten  
Viele über den Felsenpfad. <139>

Here, the image of the moon, a symbol of male sexuality, as a dead thing emerging from the blue, spiritual realm of the night is a powerful one. It is the way of redemption; as in 'Siebengesang des Todes', this is a path taken by those who have found purity by confronting and dying to the sinful sexuality within themselves:

Auf schwarzen Kahn  
Hinüberstarben Liebende. <139>

"Orgel seufzt und Hölle lacht": *Blaubart* Themes in the Later Lyric

The atmosphere of threat and menace which is evoked in *Blaubart* with exaggerated affectation is much more effectively evoked in some of the later lyric. The first poem titled 'Klage', for example, uses the topoi of *Blaubart* in a much simpler way, the more effective for its quiet statement of terror and the desperate need for spiritual values:

Orgel seufzt und Hölle lacht  
Und es faßt das Herz ein Grauen;  
Möchte Stern und Engel schauen. <163>

The bestial, criminal nature of mankind was a problem which haunted Trakl throughout his life, and which he constantly sought to transfigure in his poetry. Two letters, written almost five years apart, testify to his fundamental awareness of his own potential criminality:

Ich habe die fürchterlichsten Möglichkeiten  
in mir gefühlt, gerochen, getastet und im  
Blute die Dämonen heulen hören, die tausend  
Teufel mit ihren Stacheln, die das Fleisch  
wahnsinnig machen. Welch entsetzlicher  
Alp!<sup>72</sup>

... allzuviel Härte, Hochmut und allerlei  
 Verbrechertum – das bin ich ... Ich sehne  
 den Tag herbei, an dem die Seele in diesem  
 unseeligen von Schwermut verpesteten Körper  
 nicht mehr wird wohnen wollen und können, an  
 dem sie diese Spottgestalt aus Kot und  
 Fäulnis verlassen wird, die ein nur  
 allzutreues Spiegelbild eines gottlosen,  
 verfluchten Jahrhunderts ist.<sup>73</sup>

Trakl was convinced that his own cruel, sinful nature was a mirror of western society, seeing himself not as an isolated sinner, but as a representative of mankind through the ages.<sup>74</sup> It was this gathering violence in society which would result in the outbreak of the First World War, as Trakl foresaw. 'Im Osten' depicts a bleak picture of the triumph of mankind's animal nature and the loss of spirituality:

Dornige Wildnis umgürtet die Stadt.  
 Von blutenden Stufen jagt der Mond  
 Die erschrockenen Frauen.  
 Wilde Wölfe brachen durchs Tor. <165>

That man's sinful nature leads to the crime of *Lustmord* is not a theme which is confined to the early dramas, *Don Juans Tod* and *Blaubart*. We find it, in particular, in four pieces which are closely related through themes, imagery, vocabulary and style: *Verwandlung des Bösen*, *Traum und Umnachtung*, *Offenbarung und Untergang* and the *Dramenfragment* of 1914. Within the verse poetry, the figure of "der Mörder" as a general concept, not specifically related to sexual murder, occurs in such poems as 'Romanze zur Nacht', 'Menschliches Elend', 'Kaspar Hauser Lied'. The theme of *Lustmord* is, however, less common; it is touched upon in 'Die junge Magd', which focuses on awakening female sexuality. 'De profundis' is the only verse poem which deals specifically with the theme of sexual crime and murder. It is, as the title tells us, a lament from the depths of human suffering, echoing the one hundred and thirtieth psalm (a variant title of this poem is 'Psalm'): "Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord". In fear and in awe, the psalmist seeks God's



description of the body faint echoes of Blaubart's song:

Bei der Heimkehr  
Fanden die Hirten den süßen Leib  
Verwest im Dornenbusch. <46>

'De profundis' hints at the hope of salvation; not through poetic expression of sin nor through recognition of his crime, but purely through divine grace, which comes to him in his despair:

Nachts fand ich mich auf einer Heide,  
Starrend von Unrat und Staub der Sterne.  
Im Haselgebüsch  
Klangen wieder kristallne Engel. <46>

The theme of *Lustmord* is dealt with more explicitly in the three long prose poems and the *Dramenfragment* of 1914. Even a superficial reading of these complex and obscure texts shows that they are all closely related, not only thematically, but in imagery and style. The affinity of these texts with the decadent *Lustmord* theme of Trakl's early piece, *Blaubart*, is evidence that Trakl's dalliance with decadence was more than a youthful fascination which can be limited to his earliest works.

We know from the manuscripts that all these pieces were written in Innsbruck between September 1913 and May 1914. The earliest of these, *Verwandlung des Bösen*, opens with images of evil and brutality: "Minute stummer Zerstörung ... Unter dem Haselgebüsch weidet der grüne Jäger ein Wild aus ... ein Ort des Mordes, an dem ein steiniger Weg vorbeiführt ... aus dem Sternenweiher zieht der Fischer einen großen, schwarzen Fisch, Antlitz voll Grausamkeit und Irrsinn ... Böse" <97>. The atmosphere of evil established, the text focuses on the protagonist, who as sacrificial animal and pale priest is Blaubart, Elisabeth and Herbert in one: "Du, ein blaues Tier, das leise zittert; du, der bleiche Priester, der es hinschlachtet am schwarzen Altar" <97>. He is both "traurig und böse" and there is the suggestion that he, like Blaubart, is the victim of cosmic forces which rule his fate: "Aber durch die

Mauer von Stein siehst du den Sternenhimmel, die Milchstraße, den Saturn; rot" <97>. The protagonist is in the end, however, more akin to Herbert than Blaubart; confronted with his own evil, he is forced to flee: "hinsterbend stürzte über schwarze Stufen der Schläfer ins Dunkel" <98>. Here, the recognition of his own criminal nature, which is also implicit in *Blaubart*, paves the way for the possibility of redemption and leads to submission: "O! Verzweiflung, die mit stummen Schrei ins Knie bricht" <98>. Unlike Blaubart's fall at the foot of the cross, this submission is accompanied by a tenuous hope of redemption, which will be examined in detail in a later chapter.

It is tempting to try to glean some autobiographical material from *Traum und Umnachtung*, although the obscure imagery obfuscates any straightforward interpretation of Trakl's childhood. The reference to the sister may hint at incest; the "nächtige Gestalt seiner Mutter" <148> may refer to the fact that his mother discovered the relationship between brother and sister; but this must remain, on the whole, speculation. The prose poem itself does not rely on its affinities with Trakl's own life for its value.

As in *Verwandlung des Bösen*, the dual nature of the protagonist is internalized; he is both evil and innocent. Like Blaubart, his suffering comes from God: "Gottes Zorn züchtigte seine metallenen Schultern" <147>. He is filled with criminal desires:

Haß verbrannte sein Herz, Wollust, da er im  
grünenden Sommergarten dem schweigenden Kind  
Gewalt tat ... Unter kahlen Eichbäumen  
erwürgte er mit eisigen Händen eine wilde  
Katze ... O, das graue Antlitz des  
Schreckens, da er die runden Augen über  
einer Taube zerschnittener Kehle aufhob.  
Huschend über fremde Stiegen begegnete er  
einem Judenmädchen und er griff nach ihrem  
schwarzen Haar und er nahm ihren Mund <148>.

Yet he is also the innocent victim of his own criminal desires. Like Herbert, he flees from his own sexuality, which is aroused by the presence of the sister: "Aus blauem Spiegel trat die schmale Gestalt der Schwester und er stürzte wie tot ins Dunkel" <147>. And like Herbert, he is troubled by unspeakable dreams: "Wenn er in seinem kühlen Bette lag, überkamen ihn unsägliche Tränen" <147>. As in *Verwandlung des Bösen*, the protagonist also has traits of the victim, murdering his own innocent self; *Blaubart* is therefore Elisabeth, the murderous brother is the sister. One is reminded of the physical similarity between Trakl and his sister Gretl in the description of the violation of the silent child, in whom the protagonist recognizes his own "umnachtetes Antlitz" <147>.

Here, however, the parallels to *Blaubart* end. *Traum und Umnachtung* is a much more complex piece of poetry; the themes of guilt and damnation, the murder of the innocent self and especially the theme of incest will be examined in a later chapter.

As *Blaubart* and *Don Juans Tod* were set in castles, and the protagonist of *Traum und Umnachtung* visited and dreamt he had lived in a castle, so the setting of the *Dramenfragment* is: "Hütte am Saum eines Waldes. Im Hintergrund ein Schloß" <455>. Here, then, is the familiar setting for the *Lustmord*. A variant suggests that this will also be a re-enactment of the Bluebeard-theme: "Warum deuten wir die dunklen Sagen der Edelleute" <II.495>. But this is no drama in the conventional sense; the characters occupy a nebulous reality with interchanging personae. The ambivalent identity of victim and murderer, male and female results from the externalization of the emotions which were largely attributed to the protagonists in *Verwandlung des Bösen* and *Traum und Umnachtung*; but this is not a return to the straightforward symbolism of *Blaubart*, for the relationship of guilt and



innocence has become much more complicated. Indeed, in this fragmentary piece, which Basil claims to be "das vollkommenste <Psychodrama> in deutscher Sprache",<sup>75</sup> the protagonists themselves are often uncertain as to the identity and location of both the other and the self, and the text is full of questions: "Wo bist du, Peter? ... wer bist du? ... Wer hat mein Antlitz genommen ... wo träumte ich das? Wo bin ich ... Wer sind wir?"<sup>76</sup> The complexity of the drama is reflected in the fact that there are two female victims - Johanna and Maria, who seems to be both sister and mother - and two male *Lustmörder*, each of whom has two identities - Peter/der Wanderer and Kermor/der Mörder. Furthermore, the female victim, Johanna, is in turn mistaken by the *Erscheinung* for her murderer, and the *Wanderer* is stabbed by the *Mörder* with obvious phallic overtones.<sup>77</sup>

In trying to identify the relationship between the protagonists, we must look first of all at the figures of Peter and Johanna, whom we can identify as brother and sister, son and daughter of the *Pächter*. Johanna, like Maria Magdalena, was one of the penitential women who followed Christ with the disciples. An unpublished poem, 'An Johanna', suggests that this might also be a cipher for Trakl's own sister. This poem was written in Berlin, shortly after Gretl's miscarriage; the image of the second stanza connects Johanna with the sister-figure in *Offenbarung und Untergang*:

In der dämmernden Laube  
Saß ich schweigend beim Wein.  
Ein Tropfen Blutes  
Sank von deiner Schläfe

In das singende Glas  
Stunde unendlicher Schwermut. <330>

The identification of the protagonist as the brother, that is the poet himself, is the logical conclusion to the identification of Johanna as the sister. This is reinforced by their shared memories of childhood:

Als käm' ich von den grünen  
Tannenhügeln und Sagen

Unserer Heimat,  
Die wir lange vergaßen - <330>

Yet even the poet is uncertain of their identity: "Wer sind wir?" This confusion arises out of some great horror; one may speculate that this refers to the incestuous relationship between Trakl and his sister, that the miscarried child was their own, as they are made aware in Berlin, the stony city,<sup>78</sup> of the consequences of their childhood passion:

Ein friedliches Dorf im Sommer  
Beschirmte die Kindheit einst  
Unsres Geschlechts,  
Hinsterbend nun am Abend-

Hügel die weißen Enkel  
Träumen wir die Schrecken  
Unseres nächtigen Blutes  
Schatten in steinerner Stadt. <331>

Such speculation is no basis for literary analysis. However, a further textual cross-reference identifies Peter as the brother of Grete in the early one-act play, *Totentag*, which dealt with themes not unrelated to those of the *Dramenfragment*: sexual jealousy, contemplated murder and suicide. One cannot deny the evidence of emotions relating to autobiographical family relationships, especially the allegedly incestuous relationship with his younger sister, as a basis for much of Trakl's work.

In the *Dramenfragment*, Peter, in the first version of the first scene, is apparently aware of Johanna's death, although that death does not occur until the second scene; the father, too, foretells her demise: "Sprichst du von deiner Schwester! Ihr Antlitz sah ich heut' nacht im Sternenweiher, gehüllt in blutende Schleier. Des Vaters Fremdlingin - " <455>. In the father's dream-vision, however, Johanna appears as the "Knabe" who was found near the mill: "Die roten Fische haben seine Augen gefressen und ein Tier den silbernen Leib zerfleischt; das blaue Wasser einen Kranz von Nesseln und wildem Dorn in seine dunklen Locken

geflochten" <455>. Confusion arises about the identity, and indeed the gender, of the murdered victim; one notes that in a variant, the murder victim of the opening lines is "ein Kind" <II.494>, not a "Knabe". Yet in another variant the "Pächter" identifies the dead boy as "unser Sohn, dein Bruder", his "Erstgeborenes" <II.496>. Further complication arises when we discover in scene two that it is *Maria*, the mother-sister figure who has been murdered.

Peter's premonition of his sister's death is more akin to the depiction of that death in the next scene: "Die Schwester singend im Dornenbusch und das Blut rann von ihren silbernen Fingern, Schweiß von der wächsernen Stirne. Wer trank ihr Blut?" <455>. This vampiric element to the murder takes us back to *Blaubart*; but the complex relationship between the prose poems, the *Dramenfragment* and 'An Johanna' leads us to the conclusion that the vampiric murderer is none other than the brother, Peter. For Johanna's blood which drips in 'An Johanna' into the brother's glass, is also drunk by him in *Offenbarung und Untergang*: "Und schimmernd fiel ein Tropfen Blutes in des Einsamen Wein; und da ich davon trank, schmeckte er bitterer als Mohn" <169>. Here we have once more the Eucharist motif which was implicit in *Blaubart*; the Johanna-sister figure is also through the association of her silver arms, her bleeding feet and the thorn of her suffering with the figure of Christ cast into the role of redeemer. It is her blood which will atone for the sins of the brother.

The realization that his son is his daughter's murderer causes the *Pächter*, like *der Alte* in *Blaubart*, to blame God for suffering: "Gott mein Haus hast du heimgesucht" <455>. He is helpless when confronted by the violent sexuality of his son and can do nothing to prevent the tarnishing of purity through evil betrayal: "In dämmerndem Zimmer steh ich geneigten Haupt, vor der Flamme meines Herdes; darin ist Ruß und Reines ...

Wer ruft euch; daß ihr in Schlummer das Haus und das  
weiße Haupt verlasset eh' am Morgen der Hahn kräht"  
<455-56>.

Peter, like Herbert, is overcome by sexual fantasies, which he attempts to identify with a Bluebeard-figure in the castle; as we have already seen, however, his own sexual criminality is responsible for his sister's death, whether literally, or merely by involvement in his own sexual fantasy. Like Herbert, he tries to flee his own nature: "Gewitter ziehn über das Schloß. Höllenfratzen und die flammenden Schwerter der Engel. Fort! Fort! Lebt wohl" <456>.

Left alone, the *Pächter* dwells on the uncertain fate of his family. As in *Traum und Umnachtung*, there is little hope of redemption, for the bread of communion has turned to stone. Their damnation can, perhaps, be traced to the incestuous nature of their relationship as a family: Maria is at once "hingegangenes Kind" and "mein verstorbene Weib" <456>, although in a variant, it is Kaspar - the eldest son? - who is the "hingegangenes Kind" <II.498>, thus giving rise to an identification of mother and son; Johanna is for the *Pächter* "Blut von meinem Blute", yet he is nevertheless uncertain as to her identity - "Wer bist du?", and in a variant, he likens her to the mother - "Wie gleicht sie ihrer Mutter" <II.496>; Peter, the "dunkelster Sohn" is at the same time a representative of the father - "ein Bettler sitzest du am Saum des steinigen Ackers, hungernd, daß du die Stille deines Vaters erfülltest" <456>. The close relationship is underlined in a variant, where Johanna, Peter and Frau are interchangeable figures called upon at the "Pächter"'s death: "Johanna/Peter/Frau schließe die Lider mir" <II.499>.

The second scene focuses on the murder which has taken place and its consequences for the other

protagonists involved in the male/female relationship, that is Johanna, *der Wanderer* and *der Mörder*. The victim is Maria, who, as the father's child and wife, is also sister and mother to Johanna: "In kahlem Baum wohnt die Mutter, sieht mich mit meinen traurigen Augen an ... Rühre nicht dran, Schwester mit deinen kalten Fingern" <456-57>. Indeed, that the mother-sister-figure looks at Johanna "mit meinen traurigen Augen" <456> indicates a further identification of this figure with Johanna herself; they are all aspects of the female victim, Blaubart's Elisabeth. But the "Knabe" victim of the opening lines has not been forgotten. A variant draws further parallels between the mother-sister and the eldest brother, Kaspar. Johanna originally cries out: "Rühre nicht dran, Bruder, mit deinen kalten Fingern" <II.500>. And *die Erscheinung* is none other than Kaspar. In the confusing world of shifting sexual identity, the distinction between male and female, violator and victim, is repeatedly blurred.

Like Elisabeth, Johanna is aware of her own sexuality. Her opening words - "Stich schwarzer Dorn" <456> - are also those of the sister in *Offenbarung und Untergang*; but where the sister is addressing the protagonist in the prose poem, Johanna is alone. Her sexual fantasies, like Elisabeth's, express sado-masochistic desires involving an unknown agent - perhaps she, like her brother, is running from a mutual experience of sexual awakening; or they are of a brutal, self-violating nature, which may be an attempt to expunge her own sinful sexuality. A further parallel to Elisabeth's (and Peter's) vision is found in the vampiric element of her fantasies and her desire to flee her own brutal sexuality: "Fort! Fort! Rinnt nicht Scharlach vom Munde mir. Weiße Tänze im Mond" <456>. Blood drips from her mouth; the "weiße Tänze im Mond", far from being entry into the pure lunar sphere of the later poetry, are firmly rooted in the context of violent sexuality, and, as such, are more like the

frenzied moon-lit revels of Dracula's vampire brides. Yet at the same time, she is the victim of the "Tier" who has aroused her passion, forcing her, as Dracula forces Mina, to drink his blood, and thus sealing her doom. With a deep sense of loss, she remembers the innocent joy of childhood, and feels the sorrowful reproach of her mother: "O wie süß ist das Leben! In kahlem Baum wohnt die Mutter, sieht mich mit meinen traurigen Augen an" <456>. As Elisabeth's "böser Traum" took place at her father's house, here, too, the father's authority is supplanted: "Tier brach ins Haus mit keuchendem Rachen. . . Weiße Locke des Vaters sank ins Hollundergebüsch" <456>.

Johanna's sexuality, like Elisabeth's, is characterized by the decadent motif of voluptuous hair: "Liebes es ist mein brennendes Haar" <456-57>. The mother-sister who appears to her in a vision may be a cipher for her own lost innocence; she warns her away from her own sexuality, but the warning comes too late, for the mother-sister has already suffered violation. The vision, given sight through Johanna's own eyes, reenacts the murder which has already taken place, thus casting Johanna into the role of vicarious murderer. That the murder involved sexual violation is made clear from the imagery, which has distinct echoes of *Blaubart*: the image of an opening blossom - "Leises Schweben erglühender Blüte" <457> - echoes *Blaubart*'s lines to Elisabeth, who is both "Zur Todesblume greifend erblaut" and "Keusch blühende Rose auf meinem Altar" <444>; the inner wounding - "die Wunde die dir am Herzen klafft" <457> - is the result of brutal sexual violation: "Muß ich, Gott will's, der Hals dir schlitzen! . . . Und saugen aus deinem Eingeweid / Deine Scham und deine Jungfräulichkeit" <444>. As the victim of the *Lustmord*, the mother-sister is condemned to an eternity of pain: "Brennende Lust; Qual ohne Ende. Fühl' meines Schoßes schwärzliche Wehen" <457>. In the variant, however, it is the innocent brother who has

been murdered: "Sieh wie ich schuldlos krank litt" <II.500>. The victim in Trakl's psychodrama is both male and female.

The identification of the murderer provides further evidence for the inter-relationship between the various characters of this complex piece. In glimpsing the face of the murderer in the sister's shadow, Johanna sees one who is the victim of his own sexuality: "In deinem Schatten wes Antlitz erscheint; gefügt aus Metall und feurige Engel im Blick; zerbrochne Schwerter im Herzen" <457>. It is Peter; the "Höllensfratzen und die flammenden Schwerter der Engel" <456>, which symbolized his sexual awakening, have caused (or will cause) the deaths of the mother-sister-brother, Johanna, and his own innocent self. The death of Johanna, which Peter had foreseen in the previous scene, becomes clearer now. It is caused by her recognition of her brother as the murderer of her mother-sister; his sexuality, as we have seen, is linked directly to hers. It is, then, their mutual sexual awakening which has caused the mother-sister-brother's death. In recognising her brother as murderer, Johanna also recognises herself; not only the victim, but also the murderer has dual sexuality. This throws light on the vision's recognition of Johanna as her murderer. Further insight into this inter-relationship of Peter and Johanna comes from the image in *Traum und Umnachtung* of the sister as a hermaphroditic reflection of the brother: "Purpurne Wolke umwölkte sein Haupt, daß er schweigend über sein eigenes Blut und Bildnis herfiel, ein mondenes Antlitz; steinern ins Leere hinsank, da in zerbrochenem Spiegel, ein sterbender Jüngling, die Schwester erschien" <150>. One is reminded, too, of the physical similarity between Georg and Gretl Trakl; in the *Dramenfragment*, brother and sister are constantly cast and re-cast in their roles as victim and murderer.<sup>79</sup>

The recognition of sexual guilt causes, in turn, Johanna's death in the thorn-bush which symbolizes her sexual torment. Like her violated sister, she will find no peace in death: "Schneeiges Feuer im Mond" <457>. The moon as male sexuality will preside over her purgatory of passion. Johanna's death, then, is a subconscious sexual pact of incest, suicide and murder.

The scene of murder involving the two female protagonists now becomes a scene of murder between two male protagonists, *der Wanderer* and *der Mörder*. As there is a similarity between Johanna and the mother-sister, so there is a similarity between the wanderer and the murderer. These unnamed figures both seem, in fact, to be representatives of Peter. Here we have, then, the murder of the innocent self, which is a theme central to Trakl's poetry, portrayed on stage. *Der Wanderer* is a direct descendant of Herbert; a figure of innocence at the brink of sexual awareness, who has chosen to forget the nature of his sexual dreams: "Wer schrie in der Nacht, stört das süße Vergessen in schwarzer Wolke mir?" <457>. Like Herbert, he cannot successfully suppress his recognition of his own sexuality, and calls on the Madonna for help: "Stimme im Innern kündigt Unheil, heilige Mutter trockne den Schweiß auf meiner Stirne, das Blut" <457>. His murderer is the personification of his own subconscious violence. *Der Mörder*, like *der Wanderer*, has been woken from his sleep by the death of Johanna; he is *der Wanderer*'s opposite, his "verödete Pfade" a stark contrast to the latter's "Weg und Hügel" <457>. Like Blaubart, he is himself a victim of a higher power, whom he blames for his suffering: "Wer hat mein Antlitz genommen, das Herz in Kalk verwandelt. Verflucht dein Name! ... Wer drückt das Messer in meine rote Rechte" <457>. He, too, has chosen the easier way of forgetfulness and self-deception; his questioning meets only with "Wildes Vergessen" <457>. As the fate of



Johanna has shown, recognition brings fatal consequences.

The murder of the *Wanderer* is the murder of the innocent, righteous self. Not only is life taken, but with it all ability to express, and thus release, suffering - "Weg von meiner Kehle die schwarze Hand" <457> - and all ability to see and thus all possibility of recognition - "weg von den Augen nächtige Wunde" <457>. The forgotten dream of childhood, suffering at the mercy of one's own sexuality, has come true: "purpurner Alb der Kindheit" <457>. This is the bad dream which Herbert had fled in suicide; as Herbert and Blaubart are both aspects of male sexuality, so here, in perpetrating the murder of his own self, the murderer has, like Blaubart, secured his own damnation: "Lachendes Gold, Blut - o verflucht!" <457>.

The second version of the *Dramenfragment* has a named figure, Kermor, as the apparently alien violator who disturbs the sanctity of the family; the *Pächter* regards him as a "Furchtbarer Gott, der eingekehrt in mein Haus" <459>. But this figure is not the stranger he at first seems. The name Kermor is used elsewhere in the poetry, in a variant title for *Traum und Umnachtung*, which also has as possible titles: *Der Untergang Kaspar/Kermor Münchs* <II.265>. Kermor, therefore, is a variant of Kaspar, the eldest son; a further parallel to the variant titles of *Traum und Umnachtung* is seen in the murder victim in the pond: now "die Leiche des Mönchs" <458>, but still implicitly the body of Kaspar, the first-born son. The identification of brother and sister in guilt is reflected in the relationship of the father to Johanna and Kermor, both of whom he regards as "Fremdling/in". In both figures, the father recognizes the alienation of sexuality and suffering, they are both his wayward children.<sup>80</sup> Not only is Kermor a variant of Kaspar and brother to Johanna, but he also usurps the position of

the father, speaking lines which in the first version of the text are the father's. The figure of Kermor, then, is not an outside force; the damnation of this family, as in *Traum und Umnachtung*, comes from within.

The textual parallels between Kermor and the protagonist of *Offenbarung und Untergang* are obvious. What we find in this second version of the play is a depiction of the bad (that is, sexual) dreams which have haunted the protagonists of each of these pieces: even before *Blaubart*, we have the dreams of the protagonist in *Traumland* - "ich ... hing stundenlang wirren, sinnverwirrenden Träumen nach, bis der Schlaf mich übermannte" <191>; Herbert's "Ein böser Traum hat mich krank gemacht" <439>; Elisabeth's "Träumt gestern unter dem Lindenbaum/ An Vaters Haus einen bösen Traum." <443>; in *Verwandlung des Bösen*, "O die Hölle des Schlafs" <98>; in 'Winternacht', "Schwarz ist der Schlaf" <128>; in *Traum und Umnachtung*, which is in itself a dream of madness, "Wenn er in seinem kühlen Bette lag, überkamen ihn unsägliche Tränen. ...da er aus bösen Träumen erwachte" <147, 150>; and finally, the sleep-walking protagonist of *Offenbarung und Untergang*: "Seltsam sind die nächtigen Pfade des Menschen. Da ich nachtwandelnd an steinernen Zimmern hinging..." <168>. In the first version of the drama, the *Wanderer* and the *Mörder* appear when Johanna collapses "besinnungslos" into the thorn bush, called out of night and sleep, as if to take part in her unconscious dream. Here, the violation takes place in a dream shared by Kermor and Johanna, as if Herbert in his fantasies had broken into Elisabeth's vision of herself as a sado-masochistic *femme fatale* with voluptuous hair: "Wo bin ich. Einbrech ich in süßen Schlummer, umflattert mich silbernes Hexenhaar! Fremde Nähe nachtet um mich. (Er sinkt am Herd nieder)" <458>. Heir to *Blaubart*'s necrophilic desires, his dream of violation is of a corpse: "Leise hebt die silberne Hand das Bahrtuch von der finsternen Schläferin, beut in

Dornen das metallene Herz" <458>. His now is the father's vision of Johanna drowned, but at the point of greatest desire - "Mädchen dein glühender Schoß im Sternenweiher" <459>. Kermor, like Herbert, takes fright at his own sexuality, and seeks to flee from his dream, as Peter, his alter-ego, who has shared in his sexual awakening, has fled the room: "Laß ab - schwarzer Wurm, der purpurn am Herz bohrt!" <459>.

Johanna shares Kermor's dream, or rather, he shares hers, as he is the intruder. Like Elisabeth's vision, this dream is sado-masochistic: "O das wilde Gras auf den Stufen, das die frierenden Sohlen zerfleischt, Bild in hartem Kristall, laß dich mit silbernen Nägeln graben - o süßes Blut" <459>. On awakening, Kermor is overcome with guilt: "Heule Herbststurm! Falle auf mich, schwarzes Gebirge, Wolke von Stahl; schuldiger Pfad, der mich hergeführt" <459>. It is too late, however, to reverse the damage; Johanna's sleep, her innocence, has been violated. The mutual sexual awakening of brother and sister in the first version is here in the form of a shared dream: "Mein Blut über dich - da du brachtest in meinen Schlaf" <459>. Much of the obscurity of this *Dramenfragment*, then, arises from the shifting personae and the portrayal of male and female, who are both violator and victim in a complex sexual struggle.

The fraught issue of sexuality finds some kind of answer in *Offenbarung und Untergang*, written in May 1914, when Trakl had probably finished working on the *Dramenfragment*; it is an answer through recognition and expression, the very answer which Trakl sought in vain in his earlier works, but which provides a solution which is ultimately unrealisable. This last prose poem will be examined in detail in Chapter Three; it presents a scenario in which male and female, brother and sister, are both guilty and innocent. In the end, however, the sister is cast in the role of victim, thus

able to transfigure her guilt. The brother is left, like Kermor, to spend his days wandering "Dornige Stufen in Verwesung und Dunkel" (459).

Although the way to redemption from violent sexuality is hinted at, or given to the protagonist in the form of a spiritual revelation, for the male perpetrators of this crime, from Blaubart to the protagonist of *Offenbarung und Untergang*, there is no release from suffering, no indication of redemption. The problem of sexuality finds no solution here.

#### "Im Zwiespalt deines Wesens": Don Juan's Dual Nature

All that remains of Trakl's play *Don Juans Tod. Eine Tragödie in 3 Akten* is a fragmentary prologue and two versions of a scene from the third act. The play was never performed and no complete manuscript remains. We know that the entire play did exist, however:

Daß dieses Drama ... ein abgeschlossenes, abendfüllendes Schauspiel war, bezeugt Franz Bruckbauer, dem Trakl angeblich erst 1912 die ganze Dichtung vorlas, wobei Bruckbauer 'mehr noch als im Bann der dramatischen Vorgänge im Bann der herrlichen, ganz neu klingenden Sprache gewesen' sein will. Kurz nach dieser Vorlesung unter vier Augen teilte Trakl dem Freunde mit, er habe das Stück verbrannt.<sup>81</sup>

The material of the play belongs to a well-established literary tradition. The original play of the famous legend, *El Burlador de Sevilla Y Convivado de Piedra*, dates back to the seventeenth century (Tirso de Molina, 1630); it was followed by a succession of plays on the subject, including Molière's *Don Juan* (1665) and Mozart's opera (1787). In the nineteenth century the material was treated by authors including Byron, Hoffmann, Lenau, Mérimée and Pushkin. Trakl may

well have known the version of the story by Lenau (1844), who deviates from the original legend by portraying Don Juan as a cold-hearted and cynical seducer who finally becomes the victim of *ennui*, allowing himself to be killed in an attempt to fulfil his desire for new sensations:

Mein Todfeind ist in meine Faust gegeben;  
Doch dies auch langweilt, wie das ganze Leben.  
(*Er wirft den Dolch weg; Don Pedro ersticht ihn*)<sup>82</sup>

Unlike the popular legend, Lenau's Don Juan is killed not by a statue arisen from the dead, but by the son of the dead man (significantly called Don Pedro), who takes on the role of avenger, not only of his father's death, but also of the women whom Don Juan has seduced.

The opening lines of the prologue of *Don Juans Tod*, which is incomplete, stress the apparent blessing of the gods on Don Juan and his ancestors; the second part concentrates, however, on the reality of "Tod und heißer Wahnsinn" <447> which is Don Juan's fate. The gaps in the prologue are reported by Demmer in her dissertation, *Georg Trakl*:

Anders, als zur Zeit da festlich hohe Träume seinen Blick umdüstern, sieht er jetzt die Gestalt Don Juans. Er sieht nicht mehr ein dionysisch Antlitz ... Juans Stimme klingt in seinem Herzen, als schläge klirrend Eis und Erz zusammen, und sie füllt sein Blut mit Schrecken. Furchtbar tönt seine Seele das qualentlochte Schicksal wieder. Aus der Ewigkeit des Leides entsteigt Juan und geht, statt es jauchzend zu überwinden, in Finsternis unter.<sup>83</sup>

Whilst the prologue suggests revulsion of Don Juan's acts, what we actually detect is a decadent fascination for the figure of the amoral and passionate seducer, much as we found in *Blaubart*. In his definition of decadence, Bahr noted that one of its principle features is "ein unersättlicher Zug ins Ungeheure und Schrankenlose. ... Alles Gewöhnliche, Häufige, Alltägliche ist ihnen verhaßt. Sie suchen die seltsame Ausnahme mit Fleiß."<sup>84</sup> Trakl can certainly be

categorized with the decadents in his portrayal of Don Juan not merely as a cold-hearted lover, as in the legend, but as a sadistic sexual criminal.

The prologue emphasizes Don Juan's dual nature; on one hand, a capacity for Dionysian joy; on the other, the pain and madness which must inevitably result when such a Promethean figure is confined to an "Erdendasein" <447>. It is this duality which is the cause of his tragedy; Don Juan's fate is descent into hell and "Finsternis". One is reminded here of Baudelaire's 'Don Juan aux Enfers', which shows the hero as a "fils audacieux",<sup>85</sup> descending to hell with no sign of remorse:

Mais le calme héros, courbé sur sa rapière,  
Regardait le sillage et ne daignait rien voir.<sup>86</sup>

As in *Blaubart*, Trakl makes it clear that Don Juan is at the mercy of a fate outwith his control, determined both by his own nature and his "Schicksal", which has given him a destiny of alienation and suffering: "Ein Fremdgeborener und ein Qualbestimmter" <447>. Like *Blaubart*, he is singled out for a life of abnormal potential for both good and evil; he may achieve great heights and walk "auf eisigen Gipfeln, die den Menschen fremd" <447>, but this leads to the mortal sin of *hubris*, his challenge of God, and his eventual damnation.

There are obvious parallels between Don Juan and Nietzsche's Zarathustra, both in his Dionysian *Lebensfreude* and his defiance of God: "Ein Jäger, der die Pfeile schickt nach Gott" <447>. One notes here the contrast between the use of "Götter" in the first part of the prologue, which suggests the gods of antiquity, and "Gott" of the final line, which suggests the Christian God. The prologue is strongly reminiscent of a passage from 'Zwischen Raubvögeln' in *Dionysos-Dithyramben*. Zarathustra is here addressed as he stands high above a great chasm:

O Zarathustra  
grausamster Nimrod!  
Jüngst Jäger nach Gottes,

das Fangnetz aller Tugend,  
 der Pfeil des Bösen! -  
 Jetzt -  
 Von dir selber erjagt,  
 deine eigene Beute,  
 in dich eingebohrt.<sup>87</sup>

It was Don Juan's audacity to challenge God that appealed to George Bernard Shaw. He uses the Don Juan material in a dream sequence in *Man and Superman*, a book which was in Trakl's possession. In the "epistle dedicatory", which forms a prologue to the play, Shaw sketches out his fascination for this figure in words which echo the stance of the decadents towards bourgeois mentality:

Philosophically, Don Juan is a man who, though gifted enough to be exceptionally capable of distinguishing between good and evil, follows his own instincts without regard to the common, statute, or canon law; and therefore, whilst gaining the ardent sympathy of our rebellious instincts ... finds himself in mortal conflict with existing institutions, and defends himself by fraud and force. ... What attracts and impresses in 'El Burlador de Sevilla' is not the immediate urgency of repentance, but the heroism of daring to be the enemy of God.<sup>88</sup>

#### "Weg, schreckliches Gesicht": The Struggle with Guilt

The main part of the extant drama comprises a long speech by Don Juan in which he comes to terms with a vision of his guilty conscience. Trakl shows an awareness of stage-craft in the direction which precedes Don Juan's entrance: "Don Juan erscheint in der Tür zur rechten Seite, durch die man die Leiche der Donna Anna auf einem Ruhebett liegen sieht" <450>. During the speech, the dimly-lit corpse of Donna Anna, the source of his guilt, is visible off-stage.<sup>89</sup> Thus, while Don Juan confronts and overcomes the fantastic

vision of his guilty conscience, the physical reality of Donna Anna's corpse remains a constant reminder of his crime.

The vision which terrorizes Don Juan has been interpreted both as that of "die ermordete Geliebte"<sup>90</sup> and "a projection of the hero's own dichotomy".<sup>91</sup> As Webber points out, the influence of Weininger is clear here: "Es gibt wenige Menschen die nicht ein oder mehrere Tiergesichter haben."<sup>92</sup> What Don Juan is confronted with here is a vision of his own bestial nature, a reminder of his guilt and his crime, which he himself has sought to ignore in the thrill of erotic sensation and superhuman power which has accompanied the murder:

Weg, schreckliches Gesicht!  
Was scheuchst du mich von meinem Lager auf  
Da dieser Stunde tiefster Wonnenschauer  
Mir noch im Blute bebt und mich erfüllt  
Mit Übermenschlichen Gesichtern. <450-51>

Here, as in *Blaubart*, is clearly the influence of decadence; one thinks of Baudelaire's 'Le Vin de l'Assassin', where, after the crime, the murderer declares:

Autant qu'un roi je suis heureux;  
L'air est pur, le ciel admirable...<sup>93</sup>

Bahr examines the decadent attraction towards sin in his 1894 essay 'Satanismus'. Like Baudelaire, Bahr recognized that evil is a fundamental aspect of human nature. The desire to experience vicious sexual crime as the extremest of sensations has already been examined in the works of Huysmans, Bahr, Przybyszewski and others; in Trakl's *Blaubart* this theme is dealt with in a more explicit way (although we cannot, of course know, what was written elsewhere in *Don Juans Tod*).

Trakl's Don Juan is reminiscent, too, of the Dostoyevkian heroes Raskolnikov and Stavrogin. As with Raskolnikov, Don Juan's ecstasy is threatened by an overwhelming sense of guilt which haunts him like a spectre and threatens to rob him of his desire for



life. What Don Juan sees is the self-accusing stare of his own bestial nature:

Ah! Schwebst du mir noch vor und blickst mich an  
 Aus toderstarrten Augenhöhlen, worin  
 Die Finsternis, die noch kein Lichtstrahl je  
 Erhellte, weint. <451>

This is a vision of the darkest depths of his soul, his basest nature; in his moment of triumphant ecstasy, when he feels himself to be superior to the rest of humankind, he is forced to recognize his own bestiality: "Mich ekelt, sehe ich dich an - ich möcht' / Es nicht und muß" <451>. Interesting here is Otto Rank's psychoanalytic study of 1924-1932, where, as well as focusing on the Freudian concept of Don Juan's oedipal motivation, he puts forward the suggestion that Don Juan and his servant Leporello are two aspects of the same identity, with the servant representing "the inner criticism, the anxiety and the conscience of the hero ... We can understand, moreover, that the enormity of Don Juan's wickedness is due to the splitting off of the inhibiting element of his personality."<sup>94</sup> As we have seen from the prologue, it is this dichotomy within Don Juan's nature which will lead to his damnation; it is when he is walking "auf eisigen Gipfeln" that his true nature as a "Jäger" is revealed. Don Juan's attempts to quash this vision only serve to emphasize further his violent character:

... So fass' ich dich verfluchtes  
 Gebilde du Auswurf meiner heißen Sinne  
 Erwürge dich mit diesen Händen, versenge  
 Mit meines Atems Glut, dich, Tiergesicht! <451>

In contrast to Don Juan's Dionysian excess, this vision of his murderous, guilty self is distinguished by a lack of vitality; its eyes are "toderstarrte Augenhöhlen" and it fills the room with a silence which attempts to smother Don Juan's instinct for life:

... Und füllst den Raum mit Schweigen,  
 Das blaß, grufttief sich schleicht in meines  
 Aufschäumend Pulsen und schlangengleich sich Herzens  
 Um meiner Sinne trunkene Entzückung, windet

Daß ferner immer ferner mir des Lebens  
Vielstimmiges Geräusch verklingt. <451>

As in *Blaubart*, guilt is characterized by silence, by an inability to express and thus overcome the horror of the crime. This is a theme which is introduced at the opening of the scene, in a conversation between two servants, Catalinon and Fiorello, where the crime is described as a "namenloser Frevel". The servants have fled the house in a desperate attempt to purge the vicarious guilt of being in Don Juan's presence through articulation of the crime, in a manner reminiscent of Herbert's need to let "Sturmglöcken läuten in die Nacht":

Leer steht das Haus, die Diener sind geflohn  
Laut schreiend in die Nacht die Greuelthat  
Die hier in dieser Stunde sich bereitet. <449>

Yet the suggestion here is that language has not sufficient power to overcome the horror of the crime. Catalinon's opening speech touches on the *fin-de-siècle* theme of *Sprachkrise*:

Dem Unfaßbaren hascht das träge Wort  
Vergeblich nach, das nur in dunklem Schweigen  
An unsres Geistes letzte Grenzen rührt. <449>

In 'Ein Brief', Hofmannsthal described his own loss of faith in the power of language: "... sondern die abstrakte Worte, deren sich doch die Zunge naturgemäß bedienen muß, um irgendwelches Urteil an den Tag zu geben, zerfielen mir im Munde wie modrige Pilze."<sup>95</sup>

Don Juan at first threatens to fall victim to this vision of his own guilt; a sense of claustrophobia and panic is created by the use of short clauses; the contrast to the complex sentences spanning several lines during the first part of the speech is obvious; surely the suggestion here, too, is that Don Juan is losing his power of expression:

... Es engt der Raum sich und  
Verschlingt, der nahen Dinge sichere  
Gestalt. Es steigt an mir empor und schon  
Droht es mich zu umfassen. <451>

Don Juan does not succumb to his guilt, however; he refuses to recognize his own base nature by denying it

its very existence: "Weg Wesenloses!" <451>. He is able to assert his vitality over the darker side of his nature, and his triumphal return to life is characterized by the joy of expression as well as Dionysian vitality:

Noch wiedertönt mein Blut von dieser Welt  
 Die Erde hält mich und ich lache dein.  
 (Er taumelt ans Fenster, und stößt es auf)  
 Hier öffne ich dem Leben weit die Pforten,  
 Und tönend braut's herein, mich zu umfassen,  
 Mit seinen Schwingen hüllt's mich ein - und ich -  
 Bin sein!  
 Und atme ein die Welt, bin wieder Welt  
 Bin Wohllaut, farbenheißer Abglanz -  
 Unendliche Bewegung - bin. <451>

Unlike the count in *Verlassenheit*, who remains passive behind the window whilst life, in the form of the storm, rages outside, Don Juan is essentially active; he is able to open the window, to experience life directly, breaking the silent, stifling oppression of his guilt with the endless movement of nature.<sup>96</sup> The influence of Nietzsche, who believed that the purpose of the artist was to praise and affirm life, is obvious here: "Kunst ist wesentlich *Bejahung, Segnung, Vergöttlichung des Daseins*".<sup>97</sup> This is the same spirit which was behind Trakl's letter to Minna of October 1908, where he writes of his own struggle against his animalistic instincts and his escape into his private aesthetic world of language and poetry ("Meine ganze, schöne Welt, voll unendlichen Wohllauts" <sup>98</sup>). Within this context, we should also note Rank's assertion of the cathartic function of art as a means of releasing repressed guilt, which in the case of the Don Juan legend is "a tension between unchecked sensuality and the guilt and punishment tendency."<sup>99</sup> Perhaps Trakl's treatment of the legend is a further attempt to deal with the sexual guilt born out of his own incestuous desires.

Don Juan as portrayed by Trakl is not only a figure of decadent sadism, but also a prime example of that which Nietzsche extolled; like Zarathustra, he is

an *Übermensch*, one who rises above conventional morality to challenge the divine, fulfilling Nietzsche's call for the "Umwertung aller Werthe". As J W Smeed has pointed out, towards the end of the nineteenth century, Don Juan developed from the Romantic hero into the Nietzschean Superman, "someone whose uncompromising desire to be himself inescapably led him to revalue conventional moral standards",<sup>100</sup> such as is found in Lipiner's *Der neue Don Juan* (1880) and Bernhardt's *Don Juan* (1903). Smeed looks also at the contrasting influence of Schopenhauer on the transformation of Don Juan, which has clearly also played its part in Trakl's concept of his hero:

The rival theory - that Don Juan is not so much set on a course of assertive individualism as unwittingly in the grip of a force stronger than he (the Life Force) - receives philosophical sanction from Schopenhauer. It matters little whether the Life Force manifests itself in and through Don Juan or whether he is the prey; the essential thing is that the human being is reduced to the status of an agent or tool.<sup>101</sup>

Trakl's Don Juan, like *Blaubart*, is caught between the two main philosophical influences of the *fin de siècle*, Nietzschean assertiveness and Schopenhauerian passivity. It must not be forgotten that this fragmentary scene in which Don Juan exerts his own vitality over his guilt was not intended as the close of the play, which was more akin to that of *Blaubart*. This "dionysisch Antlitz" was to be replaced by a stony mask, "Dahinter Tod und heißer Wahnsinn lauern" <447>. Nietzschean vitality was ultimately denied: "Aus der Ewigkeit des Leids entsteigt Don Juan und geht, statt es jauchzend zu überwinden, in Finsternis unter" <II.489>.

There is a strange affinity between the cult of Dionysian vitality and the decadent desire to experience the extremest sensations. Dehmel's 'Bekanntnis' depicts a similar fusion of rapture, ecstatic relish in crime, and rejection of conventional morality as is found in *Don Juans Tod*:

Ich will ergründen alle Lust,  
 so tief ich dürsten kann;  
 ich will sie aus der ganzen Welt  
 schöpfen, und stürb' ich dran.

Ich will's mit all der Schöpferwut,  
 die in uns lechzt und brennt;  
 ich *will* nicht zähmen meiner Glut  
 heißhungrig Element.

Ward ich durch frommer Lippen Macht,  
 durch zahmer Küsse Tausch?  
 Ich ward erzeugt in wilder Nacht  
 und großem Wollustrausch!

Und will nun leben so der Lust,  
 wie mich die Lust erschuf.  
 Schreit nur den Himmel an um mich,  
 ihr Beter von Beruf!<sup>102</sup>

"Da bin mit meinem Mörder ich allein": *Lustmord* as  
*Lustselbstmord*

As an analysis of *Blaubart* has shown, the male protagonists, *Blaubart* and *Herbert* are two extreme aspects of the male sexual ethos, the innocent contrasted to the sadistic murderer, aspects which are internalized in the later prose poems. A much earlier poem, 'Das Grauen', which Sharp rightly calls "a drama of the psyche",<sup>103</sup> also depicts the internalization of the male struggle towards sexual identity.<sup>104</sup>

The self is split into the dual personality of *Cain* and *Abel*, and the poem reaches its climax with a vision of the self as murderous brother in the mirror. The split identity is present from the opening of the poem, in the detachment from the self expressed in the first line: "Ich sah mich durch verlass'ne Zimmer gehn"  
 <220>.

As in *Blaubart*, the confusion and agitation of sexual awareness is externalized in the protagonist's view of nature:

- Die Sterne tanzen irr auf blauem Grunde,  
Und auf den Feldern heulten laut die Hunde,  
Und in den Wipfeln wühlte wild der Föhn. <220>

The confusion of the stars mirrors the confusion in his own soul as a result of his sexual awareness,<sup>105</sup> and the howling dogs represent the bestial, untamable nature of male sexuality, like *Blaubart*'s "Wolf oder sonstig reißend Getier" <443> and *Don Juan*'s "Tiergesicht" <451>. This is an image which is also found in the later lyric; one thinks of 'Winternacht', *Traum und Umnachtung*, where the protagonist is "ein flammender Wolf" <147>, and 'Im Osten', where the forces of violence triumph: "Wilde Wölfe brachen durchs Tor" <165>.

The image of the stormy wind, here specifically *Föhn*, is one which we have already seen in *Blaubart* as symbolic of sexual excitement. *Föhn* is used consistently throughout the mature lyric in association with an atmosphere of sinful sexuality. This is found in 'Im Dorf', and in 'Die Verfluchten', where the ghostly *Föhn* accompanies a "glühendes Gefühl des Bösen" <104>. In 'Drei Blicke in einen Opal', this lustfulness is in a context of perverse religious sentiment: "Aus Schwarzem bläst der Föhn. Mit Satyrn im Verein/ Sind schlanke Weiblein; Mönche der Wollust bleiche Priester" <66>. The sexual sin associated with *Föhn* in 'In der Heimat' is that of incest, and the wind is seen to take an active part in the transgression of brother and sister:

Im Spülicht treibt Verfallnes, leise girrt  
Der Föhn im braunen Gärtchen; ...

...

Der Schwester Schlaf ist schwer. Der Nachtwind  
wühlt

In ihrem Haar, das mondner Glanz umspült. <60>

It is within this context that we are able to construe the negative imagery of 'Föhn' as the expression of a guilt which is specifically sexual: "Schmerz und Plage/ Des steinigen Lebens/ Daß nimmer der dornige Stachel

ablasse vom verwesenden Leib" <121>. The elements which here make up an atmosphere of sinful sexuality are by no means confined to the early lyric; indeed, here are images which, in the same context and with the same connotations, will recur throughout the poetry.

The caesura after "Stille" intensifies, rather than relieves, the atmosphere of menace. The conflict is removed from nature to within the protagonist; the sultry atmosphere of fever reminds us of Herbert's "Fieberglüh": "Dumpfe Fieberglut/ Läßt giftige Blumen blühn aus meinem Munde" <220>. The image here is obviously borrowed from the French decadents: Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du Mal* is the most obvious source; possibly also Maeterlinck's 'Aquarium', which has in the translation by K L Ammer the line: "Und doch blühen aus ihrem Munde/ Blumen auf blauem Stiel".<sup>106</sup> The image of poisonous flowers blooming from his mouth is obviously linked to the concept of poetry as expression. It is tempting to see the "giftige Blumen" as the decadent poems of *Sammlung 1909*, of which this poem is one of the prime examples.<sup>107</sup> Clearly, the protagonist is aware of his sexuality threatening to gain control over him, and seeks to find release from the ensuing guilt through poetic expression. Letters written not long after the completion of *Sammlung 1909* describe the poetic process as one inspired by "das lebendige Fieber",<sup>108</sup> which at time threatens to overcome the poet: "Aber ich bin derzeit von allzuviel (was für ein infernalisches Chaos von Rhythmen und Bildern) bedrängt, als daß ich für anderes Zeit hätte, als dies zum geringsten Teil zu gestalten ..."<sup>109</sup> The "Blumen" of 'Das Grauen' are poisonous, aggravating his own plight; rather than effecting release, his poems of indulgent decadence serve to ensnare him further in his sexual guilt, perverting the "blaue Blume" of the Romantic ideal, which is the subject of Trakl's three unpublished poems to Novalis. In this later poetry, he

achieves a more successful transformation of suffering through poetry:

In dunkler Erde ruht der heilige Fremdling.  
 Es nahm von sanftem Munde ihm die Klage der Gott,  
 Da er in seiner Blüte hinsank.  
 Eine blaue Blume  
 Fortlebt sein Lied im nächtlichen Haus der  
 Schmerzen. <325>

The image of the flower reminds us of the imagery of *Blaubart*, where sexuality is portrayed as a flower blossoming and dying, thus reinforcing the underlying theme of sexual suffering. That the flowers which come out of his own mouth are poisonous implies that essentially his suffering comes from within him. Although the murderous self may be externalized as Cain, it is nevertheless the mirror image of the protagonist, and ultimately therefore himself. He is poisoned by his own sexuality; as with Herbert and Elisabeth, corruption comes not from outside, but from within. The deadly nature of this sexuality may further be a reference to its unhealthy, abnormal nature; perhaps incestuous desire is implied here.

The sense of threat is upheld in the image of dew falling as blood: "Aus dem Geäst fällt wie aus einer Wunde/ Blaß schimmernd Tau, und fällt, und fällt wie Blut" <220>. The sexual guilt which we have already established as central to this poem suggests that the image here is, as in *Blaubart* and the prose poems, one of sexual violation. The image of dew falling as blood figures not only as a premonition of the protagonist's own self-murder, but of the sexual guilt which is its preliminary. Here, there may also be hints at the possibility of redemption, which is closely associated with the imagery of blood and sexual wounding in the later poetry, although here they are somewhat tenuous.<sup>110</sup> The dew falling from the tree's branches like blood may stand as a veiled image of Christ nailed to the Tree. The image of Christ's blood falling like



dew is found in 'Gesang einer gefangenen Amsel', written some five years later:

So leise blutet Demut,  
Tau, der langsam tropft vom blühenden Dorn. <135>

The octet has set the background of sinful sexual awakening; the sestet focuses upon the murderous deed. The examination of *Blaubart* and the *Dramenfragment* have shown the fatal consequences of recognition of one's own sinful sexual nature; here, too, the protagonist is confronted with a vision in the mirror which reveals his true self. It is the very depth of this revelation which makes the smooth, empty surface of the mirror "trügerisch". There is no doubt that the reflection which the protagonist sees is of himself. His own doom is within him; Abel looking in the mirror is confronted by Cain, the innocent self by the self who has entered the world of sexual awareness. In the later lyric the reflection in the mirror will at times be of the sister; any doubt about the identity of the murderer here is dispelled by the last line: "Da bin mit meinem Mörder ich allein" <220>.111

The background again adds to the atmosphere of menace: "Sehr leise rauscht die samtene Portiere" <220>.112 Here is no longer the confusion of the first stanza; the wild effects of the *Föhn* are reduced to a gentle rustling of a curtain, as the protagonist recognizes and accepts his sinful nature. Unlike Herbert and Peter, he does not try to flee his own sexuality, but passively acquiesces to his own self-murder.113 The darkness of the reflection ("Aus Graun und Finsternis ein Antlitz: Kain!" <220>) symbolizes its sinfulness; it is a reflection bound to the human sphere, through a glass darkly. Here, no divine light is shed to banish the darkness of sin; the only light is that of the moon, the symbol of male sexuality.

The theme of *Lustselbstmord* may be interpreted in one other Trakl poem: 'Kaspar Hauser Lied'. The theme of contrast between the corruption of the town and the

purity of nature has been much examined;<sup>114</sup> what is often ignored, however, is that Kaspar's decline comes not from the influence of the town, but, as with most of Trakl's protagonists, from within himself.<sup>115</sup> The influence of the town-dwellers upon his development, which forms the basis of other versions of the story, such as Jakob Wassermann's *Caspar Hauser oder die Trägheit des Herzens*, is noticeably absent here.

The first two stanzas focus upon the figure of Kaspar as a figure of innocence and his harmonious relationship with nature and God. Like Abel in Genesis, God finds favour with him:

Ernsthaft war sein Wohnen im Schatten des Baums  
Und rein sein Antlitz.  
Gott sprach eine sanfte Flamme zu seinem Herzen:  
O Mensch! <95>

As soon as he leaves the realm of nature, however, before he has had contact with others, the darkness of sin presents itself in his heart. Here, it is not a question of sexuality, but, as was the case with Cain, of dissatisfaction with what God has given him and a desire to control nature:

Stille fand sein Schritt die Stadt am Abend;  
Die dunkle Klage seines Munds:  
Ich will ein Reiter werden. <95><sup>116</sup>

It is possible, then, to see in the figure of the murderer, the same Cain/Abel split identity as in 'Das Grauen'.<sup>117</sup> Like the protagonist of the earlier poem, he is left alone with his fate: "Nachts blieb er mit seinem Stern allein" <95> is an unmistakable echo of "Da bin mit meinem Mörder ich allein" <220>.<sup>118</sup> The symbolism of the star, as we have already seen, can carry implications of sexual awareness; perhaps Kaspar, too, has contemplated sexual dreams: "sein leiser Schritt/ An den dunklen Zimmern Träumender hin" <95>. It is significant that he only sees the shadow of the murderer, for this may indeed be his own shadow, as in an unpublished poem, 'Der Schatten':

Da ich heut morgen im Garten saß -  
Die Bäume standen in blauer Blüh,

Voll Drosselruf und Tirili -  
Sah ich meinen Schatten im Gras,

Gewaltig verzerrt, ein wunderlich Tier,  
Das lag wie ein böser Traum vor mir.

Und ich ging und zitterte sehr,  
Indes ein Brunnen ins Blaue sang  
Und purpurn eine Knospe sprang  
Und das Tier ging nebenher. <266>

The violent, bestial self is born out of apparent innocence and peace, and once present, does not leave the protagonist. In winter, the season where human disharmony with nature is at its greatest, the murderer comes upon Kaspar Hauser at twilight, like the murderer in 'Dämmerung'. In the depiction of "sein Mörder suchte nach ihm" <95> we are reminded of the vision of the Cain-self stalking the Abel-self in 'Das Grauen': "Ich sah mich durch verlass'ne Zimmer gehn" <220>.119 The final line, "Silbern sank des Ungeborenen Haupt hin" <95> is not the murder of the legend, but the submission to sexuality, the acquiescence to the murder of the innocent self that is familiar to us from 'Das Grauen'. Significantly, a variant line reads: "Eines Ungeborenen sinkt des Fremdlings rotes Haupt hin" <II.163>. Red, the colour of sexuality was to characterize Kaspar Hauser's demise.

Within this context must also be mentioned Trakl's own mental state, which, after his breakdown at the front in October 1914, was diagnosed as "Geistesstörung (Dement. praec.)";120 dementia praecox is today known as schizophrenia, a mental disorder characterized by alternation between violently contrasting behavioural patterns. Perhaps this illness was the conclusion of an identity split into Cain and Abel; and perhaps the vision of the murderer which troubled Trakl in reality was, as for his Kaspar Hauser, nothing other than his own violent self: "Seit seiner Kindheit schon hat er zeitweise Gesichtshallucinationen, es kommt ihm vor wie wenn hinter seinem Rücken ein Mann mit gezogenem Messer

steht. Von 12-24 Jahre hat er keine solche Erscheinungen gehabt, jetzt seit drei Jahren leidet er wieder an diesen Gesichtstäuschungen..."<sup>121</sup> It was Trakl himself who claimed Kaspar Hauser's fate as his own: "Wozu die Plage. Ich werde endlich doch immer ein armer Kaspar Hauser bleiben."<sup>122</sup>

The image of the mirror reflection as a symbol of sinful nature is not uncommon in the literature of the *fin de siècle*. Most notable, perhaps, is the portrait in Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, which will be examined shortly.<sup>123</sup> In a poem by Hofmannsthal, we find a situation similar to that of 'Das Grauen'. 'Vor Tag' opens with images of the day awakening to life, and the violent forces which form its essence:

... Nun im stummen Wald  
 Hebt der Landstreicher ungewaschen sich  
 Aus weichem Bett vorjährigen Laubes auf  
 Und wirft mit frecher Hand den nächsten Stein  
 Nach einer Taube, die schlaftrunken fliegt,  
 Und graust sich selber, wie der Stein so dumpf  
 Und schwer zur Erde fällt. ...<sup>124</sup>

The poem culminates in the depiction of a young man who has spent the night with a woman and now creeps secretly away, implying the sinful nature of his sexual experience:

... Nun  
 Schleicht einer ohne Schuh von einem Frauenbett,  
 Läuft wie ein Schatten, klettert wie ein Dieb  
 Durchs Fenster in sein eignes Zimmer, ...

So great is his alienation from his past self that it is as if what was his the day before, now no longer belongs to him, but to the stranger that he was. His recognition of his sinfulness comes in a vision of himself as his own murderer, as in 'Das Grauen':

...sieht  
 Sich im Wandspiegel und hat plötzlich Angst  
 Vor diesem blassen, übernächtigen Fremden,  
 Als hätte dieser selbe heute nacht  
 Den guten Knaben, der er war, ermordet  
 Und käme jetzt, die Hände sich zu waschen  
 Im Krüglein seines Opfers wie zum Hohn,

Like the protagonist in 'Das Grauen', the boy here projects his own confused emotions on to nature:

Und darum sei der Himmel so beklommen  
Und alles in der Luft so sonderbar.

"O! ihr stillen Spiegel der Wahrheit": The Mirror as a Symbol of Recognition

The mirror image is associated throughout Trakl's poetry, as in 'Das Grauen', with the protagonist's recognition of his own sinful nature, and, increasingly as the poetry develops, with his redemption. The theme of decadent *Lustselbstmord* becomes its very opposite as the poet transcends his own sinfulness; in the end, through God's grace, the mirror image is reflected back on itself, and Abel triumphs over Cain.<sup>125</sup>

Within the body of Trakl's poetic work, reflection is both in a mirror and in water.<sup>126</sup> In 'Die drei Teiche in Hellbrunn', the pools reflect not only the extremest conditions of human existence, but offer the poet a vision of his own soul:

Erbliht im Widerschein der Fluten -  
Ein rätselvolles Sphinxgesicht,  
Daran mein Herz sich will verbluten. <238>

But here is no recognition, and the poet is left in sorrowful uncertainty.

The imagery of 'Die junge Magd' is similar to that of 'Das Grauen', as is the theme of death through sexual guilt. The maid is at first, like Narcissus, enraptured by her own reflection as she collects water from the well, the motif of voluptuous hair emphasizing her fascination with her own sexual maturation. As she willingly indulges in her own sexuality, she becomes a stranger to her innocent self:

Silbern schaut ihr Bild im Spiegel  
Fremd sie an im Zwiellichtscheine

Und verdämmert fahl im Spiegel  
 Und ihr graut vor seiner Reine. <12>

Here, however, the reflection is not of the murderous, sexual self, but rather of the innocent self; the murder of 'Das Grauen' has taken place here, as the maid has already given herself over to her sexual nature. That her self-alienation is sexually motivated is made explicit by the reference to her "Fieberträume" and the juxtaposition of her past innocence and the powerful force of sexual attraction, with the wind again playing a phallic role, violating the night sky which bleeds the red of sexual wounding:

Traumhaft singt ein Knecht im Dunkel  
 Und sie starrt von Schmerz geschüttelt.  
 Röte träufelt durch das Dunkel.  
 Jäh am Tor der Südwind rüttelt. <13>

In 'Psalm', the image of "Schatten, die sich vor einem erblindeten Spiegel umarmen" <55> is one of the many images of desolation and hopelessness which symbolize the human realm. Here, recognition is denied, as the mirror, "erblindet", offers no reflection, no possibility of release from sinful sexuality, and the figures before it remain ghostly shadows. We may conclude from the associations of the mirror image with sexuality, that the embrace here is sexual, like the much earlier image in *Traumland*, where the boy's desire for his cousin is depicted in the following sequence:

Leise wollte ich dann am Fenster vorüber-  
 huschen, als ich den zitternden, zarten  
 Schatten von Marias Gestalt sich vom Kiesweg  
 abheben sah. Und mein Schatten berührte den  
 ihrigen wie in einer Umarmung. ... Wie oft  
 hat dieser kleine, mich so bedeutsam  
 dünkende Vorgang sich wiederholt! Ich weiß  
 es nicht. Mir ist, ... als hätten unsere  
 Schatten sich unzählige Male umarmt <191>.

In accordance with its sexual symbolism, the image is often of two figures reflected in a mirror or in water. In 'Abendländisches Lied' there is no direct reference to the sister, yet we may interpret the image of "die Liebende" bent over the dark waters as brother and sister: "Ein Geschlecht" <119> is not only a

possible reference to androgyny, but to the fact that the brother and sister do indeed come from one "Geschlecht", that is elsewhere doomed to damnation. The recognition of their own sin is at the same time the recognition of the wickedness of Western civilization. As the reflection in 'Das Grauen' was seen in "Graun und Finsternis" <220>, so here, the reflection is one of "ein steinernes Antlitz in schwarzen Wassern" <119>. The recognition which comes from this reflection is the prerequisite for redemption; the downward movement of "die bittere Stunde des Untergangs" is reversed:

Aber strahlend heben die silbernen Lider die  
Liebenden:  
 Ein Geschlecht. Weihrauch strömt von rosigen  
Kissen  
 Und der süße Gesang der Auferstandenen. <119>

The connotations of androgyny in this poem cannot be ignored, and will be examined in detail later. Suffice it to say that here, recognition of sin provides release from flesh which had turned to stone and resurrection into new life.

This redemption is denied in *Traum und Umnachtung*, where the sister appears as the protagonist's androgynous reflection. The physical similarity between the poet and his youngest sister can be seen from photographs: "Schon als Kind sieht sie Georg auffällig ähnlich. Später verstärkt sich noch diese Ähnlichkeit: groß und kräftig erscheint die Nase in dem breiten, grobknochigen Gesicht, aus dessen Zügen Vitalität und Sinnlichkeit sprechen."<sup>127</sup> Else Lasker-Schüler, a great admirer of Trakl's, was less favourably impressed by his sister, whom she called: "seine schlechte Copie".<sup>128</sup> One thinks also of the version of the Narcissus myth found in Pausanias' *Guide to Greece*, where the youth's amorous contemplation of his own face is in memory of his dead twin-sister, his exact counterpart.<sup>129</sup> It is significant that Weininger, whose philosophy clearly influenced Trakl, regarded male

desire as essentially narcissistic: "In aller Liebe liebt der Mann nur sich selbst."<sup>130</sup>

The androgynous reflection is found also in Stefan George's decadent volume *Algabal*. The gentle, more feminine side of his nature, and the suggestion of his bisexuality and hermaphroditism, are developed in the final stanza of the poem "So sprach ich nur in meinen schwersten tagen":

Dann schloss ich hinter aller schar die riegel.  
Ich ruhte ohne wunsch und mild und licht  
Und beinah einer schwester angesicht  
Erwiderte dem schauenden ein spiegel.<sup>131</sup>

In *Traum und Umnachtung*, the protagonist is denied recognition of his guilt because of his own violence in shattering the mirror, thus avoiding the revelation of truth. It is this truth which he also attempts to flee at the opening of the piece: "Aus blauem Spiegel trat die schmale Gestalt der Schwester und er stürzte wie tot ins Dunkel" <147>. Here is not narcissistic self love, like that of Dorian Gray, nor the recognition of the self as sexual entity, but rather the recognition of the sister as the object of his sexual desires, Kleefeld's "narzißtische Spiegelbeziehung".<sup>132</sup> It may be that he recognizes her in his own features, or that, as in 'Ballade II', she appears behind him, calling him.<sup>133</sup> His attempt to flee from his own sexuality is futile. That he falls "wie tot" carries echoes, too, of Cain's murder of Abel at the dawn of sexual awareness. The protagonist finds himself in the dark realm of sinfulness, where desire ripens like a red fruit and his suffering finds no release: "Nachts brach sein Mund gleich einer roten Frucht auf und die Sterne erglänzten über seiner sprachlosen Trauer" <147>. The red fruit of sexuality, like the "giftige Blumen" of 'Das Grauen' deny him release through expression of his suffering.

The protagonist's attempt to flee and find peace is futile; finally, in an act of silent retribution, an attempt perhaps, like Dorian Gray, to kill the image of Cain in the mirror, he attacks his own reflection:



"Purpurne Wolke umwölkte sein Haupt, daß er schweigend über sein eigenes Blut und Bildnis herfiel, ein mondenes Antlitz" <150>. This can do nothing to prevent his own damnation, however, and his final glimpse of recognition at the truth is in the reflection of the sister as "ein sterbender Jüngling" <150>. He sees in the reflection of his own dying face the image of the sister, who is inextricably bound up with his guilt and sin; the two participants in the crime of incest cannot be separated, but the fusion into androgyny is not a solution here; the brother in the real world and the sister in the mirror form together "ein sterbender Jüngling", an androgynous ideal which cannot survive. Where they become one in resurrection in 'Abend-ländisches Lied', here, unable to give up their sinful sexuality, they are one in damnation: "die Nacht das verfluchte Geschlecht verschlang" <150>.

In 'Helian' recognition leads to redemption through divine grace. Towards the end of this poem, when the movement is upwards out of the trough of sin and despair, we find the following image:

In schwarzen Wassern spiegeln sich Aussätzige;  
 Oder sie öffnen die kotbefleckten Gewänder  
 Weinend dem balsamischen Wind, der vom rosigen  
 Hügel weht. <72>

The reflection in the water reveals the outer signs of sin and guilt in the form of leprosy; the depth of their wickedness is again in the image of black, rather than dark, waters. As in 'Abendländisches Lied', recognition and acceptance of guilt are the prerequisites for redemption, and lead them to seek divine grace. This is a painful process, carried out with the tears of true repentance, but it leads to cleansing from sin.

In the final section of the poem, it is Helian's soul which undergoes a similar process:

Die Stufen des Wahnsinns in schwarzen Zimmern,  
 Die Schatten der Alten unter der offenen Tür,

Da Helians Seele sich im rosigen Spiegel beschaut  
Und Schnee und Aussatz von seiner Stirne sinken.

<73>

Helian overcomes his madness only by recognition of the sinful state of his soul and acceptance of divine grace, as the signs of leprosy are taken from him. In the complex, apocalyptic imagery of the poem's conclusion, one thing is certain: left to himself, Helian's fate would be a "dunkleres Ende" of death and madness; salvation comes from God's grace alone: "Der stille Gott die blauen Lider über ihn senkt." 'Herbstseele' gives clearer confirmation of the power of simple faith:

Rechten Lebens Brot und Wein,  
Gott in deine milden Hände  
Legt der Mensch das dunkle Ende,  
Alle Schuld und rote Pein. <107>

An unpublished, untitled poem, written at the same time as, or shortly after, 'Helian', depicts an apparently more negative picture of the "rosiger Spiegel":

Rosiger Spiegel; ein häßliches Bild,  
Das im schwarzen Rücken erscheint,  
Blut aus brochenen Augen weint  
Lästernd mit toten Schlangen spielt.

Schnee rinnt durch das starrende Hemd  
Purpurn über das schwarze Gesicht,  
Das in schwere Stücken zerbricht  
Von Planeten, verstorben und fremd. <302>

What we have here is not a negation or parody of 'Helian' but a depiction of the image which Helian saw "im rosigen Spiegel", a description of the sinful self which must be recognised as a prerequisite for salvation.<sup>134</sup> One is reminded of Trakl's description of his own body as an "unseelige[r] von Schwermut verpesteten Körper ... diese Spottgestalt aus Kot und Fäulnis."<sup>135</sup> The reflection "im rosigen Spiegel" is, like Dorian Gray's portrait, a mirror of the soul, revealing all the ugliness of sin. Such is the horror of recognition that it destroys his own power of vision: "Blut aus brochenen Augen weint." As in the image of a blind mirror in 'Psalm', there seems here to

be no release through recognition. Yet the connotations of blood as an agent of redemption are here, too; in recognition of sin, however painful that recognition may be, and whatever consequences it may have, lies the way to repentance, redemption and restoration of sight. The snakes, symbols of sin and sexual guilt are dead, and must be left behind if purification is to be complete.

Redemption through recognition and renunciation of sin is found also in the imagery of 'Siebengesang des Todes'. In a dream-like state, the protagonist ("der Schläfer") descends to a confrontation with his own sinful self in the dark realm of nature. Here the image of 'Das Grauen' has come full circle, with Abel returning to triumph over Cain. In a "blauer Quell" <126>, a source of spirituality, he recognises his own leprous sin, "sein schneeiges Antlitz" <126>. The expurgation of sinful sexuality ("Und es jagte der Mond ein rotes Tier/ Aus seiner Höhle" <126>) leads to purification and peace.

In Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, one of the books which Trakl owned and which may have influenced his writing, the emphasis is on the conscious choice to live a life of sin, rather than the involuntary powers of sexual awareness, and the contrast between the apparent innocence of the protagonist and the reality of his soul, mirrored here in the changing portrait.

Unlike Trakl's protagonists, who are blighted by leprous signs of their own sin and guilt, Dorian Gray is able to preserve the outer signs of youth and innocence by casting the physical degeneration of his wanton life-style onto his portrait, which becomes the true depiction of his soul.

At first Dorian truly possesses "all youth's passionate purity",<sup>136</sup> but like Trakl's figures, his corruption comes from within him, for, despite the apparent influence of Lord Henry Wotton, the latter

only reveals to Dorian the criminal possibilities which he carries within himself: "Why had it been left for a stranger to reveal him to himself?"<sup>137</sup> When he discovers that his wish "to be always young",<sup>138</sup> and for the picture to grow old is true, he abandons himself to the fatal promise which he made: "I would give my soul for that!"<sup>139</sup> He gives himself over to excessive hedonism, and delights in watching the secret progress of his own sinful soul: "Eternal youth, infinite passion, pleasures subtle and secret, wild joy and wilder sins - he was to have all these things. The portrait was to bear the burden of his shame ... it would reveal to him his own soul."<sup>140</sup>

While Dorian becomes a figure of wickedness inside an untainted body, the physically marred portrait becomes an agent of Dorian's conscience, of his former innocence, calling him to retribution: "His own soul was looking out at him from the canvas and calling him to judgement."<sup>141</sup> In a cowardly gesture of self-preservation, he destroys the only piece of evidence against him, the portrait, fully believing that he can live without the mirror of his conscience: "[The knife] would kill the past, and when that was dead he would be free. It would kill this monstrous soul-life, and, without its hideous warnings, he would be at peace."<sup>142</sup> In his final act of violence, Dorian learns the impossibility of existing without one's conscience in his gruesome self-murder. Surely Trakl saw the significance of Dorian's glimpse at the path of redemption: "Yet it was his duty to confess to suffer public shame, and to make public atonement. There was a God who called upon men to tell their sins to earth as well as to heaven. Nothing that he could do would cleanse him till he had told his own sin."<sup>143</sup>

"Die Fieberlinnen des Jünglings": Blaubart's Heirs

The association of sinful sexuality and male guilt is one which has already been seen in much of the poetry. Two basic types emerge: Blaubart and Don Juan on the one hand, Herbert, the protagonists of 'Sabbath' and 'Andacht' on the other. Yet the relationship between these two types is not a straightforward one of evil and good; all the poetry so far has pointed to the closer relationship of the two, not as separate types, but as different stages in sexual development. The innocent youth, who carries within him the possibility of a Blaubart, is central to Trakl's poetry; it is this fall from innocence into sin which forms one of the major themes of the entire oeuvre, from *Traumland* of 1906 to the *Dramenfragment* of 1914. An examination of two of the male protagonists in Trakl's mature lyric, Helian and Elis, their relation to the concept of the male as *Lustmörder* and *Lustselbstmörder*, the *Gedichtskomplex*, 'Lange lauscht der Mönch...', and cross-reference within Trakl's oeuvre, will show that their unnamed crimes also fall within this category.

One of the main problems in the somewhat obscure sequence of 'Lange lauscht der Mönch...' is one of identity, the difficulty of defining the relationships between the shifting images and various protagonists, and trying to establish whether we are dealing with one or more figures. This is far from clear in the poem itself, and the obliquity with which Trakl refers to "der Mönch ... der Wanderer ... Helian ... der Blinde" <421> is confusing, yet it is possible to establish a relationship between all of these figures which suggests that they are facets of the one poetic persona. This insight into the identity of Helian will in turn throw light upon Trakl's poem of that title.

'Lange lauscht der Mönch...' depicts the process of a soul becoming diseased as a result of sexual



Finster ihr Bild im Sternenweiher beschaut;  
 Stille verwest die Magd im Dornenbusch <421>

Grammatically, "ihr Bild" could be either that of the "kranke Seele" or the "Nymphe"; but the pool as the location of the violated female has already been established. This is not qualified by the apparent contradiction of the following line, where the decomposing body is placed in a thorn bush, familiar from 'De profundis' as another location of the female victim; both are loci of the sex crime. One thinks of the *Dramenfragment*, where Johanna's face is glimpsed "im Sternenweiher" <455>, yet she is also "Die Schwester singend im Dornenbusch" <455>, which is the place of her physical death: "Sie stürzt besinnungslos in den Dornenbusch, der sich über ihr schließt" <457>.

The figure of the monk, then, is a sexual criminal, a *Lustmörder*; the perverse nature of religious figures appears elsewhere in the poetry, and will be examined in more detail in a later chapter. Now arises the question of identity: to what extent can the figure of the monk be identified with the figures in the following stanza:

Wo an schwarzen Mauern Besessene stehn  
 Steigt der bleiche Wanderer im Herbst hinab  
 Wo vordem ein Baum war, ein blaues Wild im Busch  
 Öffnen sich, zu lauschen, die weichen Augen  
 Helians.

Wo in finsternen Zimmern einst die Liebenden  
schliefen  
 Spielt der Blinde mit silbernen Schlangen,  
 Der herbstlichen Wehmut des Mondes. <421>

Certainly, there would appear to be a connection between the descending figure of the *Wanderer* and the isolated *Mönch* of stanza 1; the verb "lauschen" also forms a connection between this monk and Helian, while the fact that Helian's "weiche Augen" are opened, not to see, but to listen, associate him in turn with *der Blinde*. This inter-relationship is confirmed by a look at the variants, where the figures of *der Verruchte*, *der Mönch*, *der Tote* and *der Blinde* are interchangeable.

It would appear, then, that Helian is a blind monk, and a *Lustmörder*.

Further examination of Trakl's oeuvre shows that the connection between sexual guilt and blindness is not infrequent; like leprosy, this is one of the physical signs of inner sin. *Der Blinde*, like *der Aussätzige*, carries the physical burden of his sin. The connection between blindness and sexual guilt is more explicit elsewhere. Don Juan's vision of his guilt confronts him as a "Tiergesicht" with "toderstarre Augenhöhlen" <451>; in 'Nachts', the protagonist's fall is accompanied by the loss of sight: "Die Bläue meiner Augen ist erloschen in dieser Nacht" <96>; "die blinde Magd" <93> in 'Im Dorf' is involved in the depiction of descent into sin; the protagonist of *Traum und Umnachtung* mirrors the cold moon "in seinen zerbrochenen Augen" <149>, while the eyes of the sister are "steinern" <150>; finally, in the *Dramenfragment*, the sexual guilt of the various protagonists is reflected in the imagery of sightlessness.

The theme of sight and blindness is one which is also found in 'Helian'. It is not the aim of this chapter to provide a full interpretation of this poem; as has been often pointed out, this huge and complex piece operates on many different levels; here, we shall trace an aspect in the depiction of the fall of Helian which has been largely ignored by critics, that is, the unnamed sin as one of sexual guilt.<sup>144</sup> Certainly, the Helian-figures in the unpublished poems, 'Lange lauscht der Mönch...', 'Finster blutet...' and 'Rosiger Spiegel...', are all tainted by this sin. The scope and obscurity of Trakl's published version of 'Helian', which he himself called "das teuerste und schmerzlichste, was ich je geschrieben",<sup>145</sup> present many problems of interpretation. The protagonist appears, as he has done in the unpublished poems, in several guises: *der junge Novize*, *der Fremdling*, *der Jüngling*, *der Knabe*, *der Verwaste* and *der Enkel* are certainly all



aspects of the one character. The *Sohn* and the *Schläfer* may also be Helian, or they may represent a second, parallel protagonist.

The first part of the poem presents an idyllic, timeless paradise, where life and death are in harmony; this gives way, however, to images of decline and sin. The Garden of Eden has been desecrated: "Gewaltig ist das Schweigen des verwüsteten Gartens" <70>. The crime is not named, yet there is the suggestion of the criminal possibilities within the young novice;<sup>146</sup> there is no icy sweat, but he decks his "Stirne" with "braunem Laub" and drinks "eisiges Gold" <70>; there is even the hint of forbidden, perhaps incestuous, sexual desire:

Die Hände rühren das Alter bläulicher Wasser  
 Oder in kalter Nacht die weißen Wangen der  
 Schwestern. <70>

This is the depiction of the struggle between good and evil, between the beauty and harmony of man's spiritual innocence and his inevitable decline into darkness and sin;<sup>147</sup> the section ends with Helian's fall:

Zur Vesper verliert sich der Fremdling in  
 schwarzer Novemberzerstörung,  
 Unter morschem Geäst, an Mauern voll Aussatz hin,  
 Wo vordem der heilige Bruder gegangen,  
 Versunken in das sanfte Saitenspiel seines  
 Wahnsinns,

O wie einsam endet der Abendwind.  
 Ersterbend neigt sich das Haupt im Dunkel des  
 Ölbaums. <70>

As with Trakl's other protagonists, this process of self-alienation is mirrored in nature, as Helian becomes a "Fremdling" to his previous self. This may be the identity of the "heilige Bruder", the innocent Abel-self; now he desecrates the ground which he walked on in his days of spiritual harmony with his present state of madness and isolation. Here, then, may be an oblique reference to the theme of the *Lustselbstmord*.

Helian's sight, too, is affected by his fall; on one of the many levels at which the complexity of this poem's symbolism operates, it is possible to interpret

the following lines as a glimpse of recognition, of insight before his demise:

Schön ist der Mensch und erscheinend im Dunkel,  
Wenn er staunend Arme und Beine bewegt,  
Und in purpurnen Höhlen stille die Augen rollen.

<70>

Grimm has interpreted this as an image of birth,<sup>148</sup> yet I would agree with Sharp that the wording here points more towards "the onset of death or insanity. Facing the impending end of consciousness, man becomes manifest or evident (*erscheinend*) to himself, gaining a heightened self-awareness at the moment of his demise."<sup>149</sup> This interpretation is justified, as Sharp points out, by the variants: "O wie schön ist der sterbende Mensch ... O wie bleich ist im Wahnsinn der Mensch und erscheinend im Dunkel" <II.453>. This then is a variation of the horrific insight gained at the moment of self-recognition, as Cain sees Abel in the mirror, or "die junge Magd" the reflection of her pure self. In the *Gedichtkomplex* 'Lange lauscht...', blindness comes as a result of this recognition: "Purpurne Höhlen darin verblichene Augen rollen" <422>. The colour purple and the silence in 'Helian' symbolize too the suffering and sexual guilt.

The imagery of sight continues in the third section of the poem:

Erschütternd ist der Untergang des Geschlechts.  
In dieser Stunde füllen sich die Augen des

Schauenden

Mit dem Gold seiner Sterne. <71>

The stars, which still contain the gold of their spiritual source, fall from the heavens to the human sphere, accompanying the "Untergang des Geschlechts". Their gold must inevitably decay, as is later confirmed: "An den Wänden sind die Sterne erloschen" <73>. Further signs of sexual guilt come in the form of "Fieberträume" <71>, the "feuriger Mitternachtsregen" <71>, and the moon; "Knechte", themselves representatives of male sexuality, add to his torment by stinging his eyes with nettles (a variant stresses that

they are "Brennesseln" <II.129>, thus seeking to secure the transformation of his "sanfte Augen" to the "entzündene Lider" of sinful desire.

There is a profound spiritual level to this poem, with undeniable reference to Christ as the way of salvation. On this deeper, Christian level, it would appear that Helian, too, finds salvation. This poem is far removed from the sinful sexuality of decadence. As in earlier poems, Helian's fall leads to his death, yet there is the suggestion that this death, like that of Herbert, is of one who has not given in to his "Fieberträume", who has preserved his purity at the cost of his sanity and his life:

Lasset das Lied auch des Knaben gedenken,  
 Seines Wahnsinns, und weißer Brauen und seines  
Hingangs  
 Des Verwesten, der bläulich die Augen aufschlägt.  
<72>

This Helian, then, has not given way to his criminality, as is the fate of the protagonists of the *Gedichtkomplex* 'Lange lauscht...', which depicts the consequences of a sexual murder, and ends in Helian's spiritual demise:

Wo an Mauern die Schatten der Ahnen stehn,  
 Vordem ein einsamer Baum war, ein blaues Wild im  
Busch  
 Steigt der weiße Mensch auf goldenen Stiegen,  
 Helian ins seufzende Dunkel hinab. <423>

There are various motifs which we have so far identified with sexual guilt which are apparent in the poems dealing with Trakl's other enigmatic protagonist, Elis. In 'An den Knaben Elis' and 'Elis', we find:  
 "Untergang ... deine Stirne ... blutet ... Nacht ...  
 Dornenbusch ... deine mondenen Augen ... ein Mönch ...  
 Schweigen ... verfallene Sterne ... Blutet ...  
 Dornengestrüpp ... Zeichen und Sterne/ Versinken leise  
 im Abendweiher ... den eisigen Schweiß, / Der von Elis'  
 kristallener Stirne rinnt..." <84-86>. These motifs set the poems clearly in a context of sinful sexuality, and a close look at the poems suggests that this is the

cause of the contrast between the idyll of part one and the decline of part two of 'Elis'.

As with 'Helian', it would be a mistake to try to limit the interpretation of this poem to one sphere of reference; it is a complex piece of work which draws on many various and shifting resources, each equally valid and essential for a full understanding of the poem.<sup>150</sup> Here, however, I will concentrate on that area of interpretation which has largely been ignored by those who tend to see Elis as a figure of innocence and purity.<sup>151</sup> Drawing on the associations which we have established elsewhere, we find that the cause for the spiritual decline of part two of 'Elis' is sexual guilt. The poem opens with a depiction of righteousness, peace and spiritual harmony within a distinctly Christian framework:

Am Abend zog der Fischer die schweren Netze ein.  
Ein guter Hirt  
Führt seine Herde am Waldsaum hin.  
O! wie gerecht sind, Elis, alle deine Tage. <85>

Elis appears as a Christ-like figure, whose presence alleviates suffering and brings peace to those who worship in love:

An deinem Mund  
Verstumt ihre rosigen Seufzer. <85>

Yet the signs of decline are already apparent within this idyll:

Leise sinkt  
An kahlen Mauern des Ölbaums blaue Stille,  
Erstirbt eines Greisen dunkler Gesang.

Ein goldener Kahn  
Schaukelt, Elis, dein Herz am einsamen Himmel.

<85>

The cause of this sudden juxtaposition is not named; yet the second part of the poem shows clearly that it is a crime of a sexual nature. What we have here, then, is the depiction of paradise lost, the "Schweigen des verwüsteten Gartens" <70>, as humankind is banished to the realm of sin and death, leaving Elis isolated in his purity. Yet even Elis' pure existence is not stable; the verb "schaukeln" suggests the precarious-

ness of his position, a pendulum between the possibilities of good and evil.

In the second part of the poem, Elis is a figure of spirituality in decline, located in the world of darkness:<sup>152</sup> "Da sein Haupt ins schwarze Kissen sinkt" <85>. The obliquity of this poem does not name Elis' crime, yet his decline is accompanied by images which have clear associations with sexual violation. The passive female victim is represented by a "Wild", and the location of the dying body provides further evidence of the sexual nature of the crime:

Ein blaues Wild  
Blutet leise im Dornengestrüpp. <86>

In his state of sin, mankind is no longer able to receive divine blessing; the flock of line 9 have gone astray, no longer benefitting from the blue fruit of spiritual *kharisma*:

Ein brauner Baum steht abgeschieden da;  
Seine blauen Früchte fielen von ihm. <86>

The stars which control man's fate also mirror his fall; again, the locus is that of sexual crime, indicating the cause of the fall, and the passive acceptance of fate:

Zeichen und Sterne  
Versinken leise im Abendweiher. <86>

When the focus of the poem returns to the figure of Elis, it is with further evidence of his sexual guilt:

Blaue Tauben  
Trinken nachts den eisigen Schweiß,  
Der von Elis' kristallener Sterne rinnt. <86>

This is a specifically sexual guilt, whose temporal location is the night. Elis' fall is one from innocence into sinful sexuality. The final image of the poem is of paradise in utter desolation; Elis, too, is banished outside the walls of righteous existence, with the wind as a constant and futile reminder of what has been lost:

Immer tönt  
An schwarzen Mauern Gottes einsamer Wind. <86>

That Elis is a figure of decline is quite clear also from 'An den Knaben Elis', which opens with the words:

Elis, wenn die Amsel im schwarzen Wald ruft,  
Dieses ist dein Untergang. <84>

Here, the poet addresses his protagonist with the advice to endure, to withstand the sexual desire awakening within him, symbolized by the mystical secrets and legends of man's fall which bleed from his forehead:

Laß, wenn deine Stirne leise blutet  
Uralte Legenden  
Und dunkle Deutung des Vogelflugs. <84>

This is the advice which the poet also gave Blaubart: "Gedulde, dich, bis du wieder erstehst, / Und gewandelt auf sittsameren Wege gehst" <II.472>. Here, as there, it is advice which is ignored, as Elis chooses to follow his own desires, to enter the sinful, Dionysian realm of the night:

Du aber gehst mit weichen Schritten in die Nacht,  
Die voll purpurner Trauben hängt,  
Und du regst die Arme schöner im Blau. <84>

This is an existence of greater intensity and apparent freedom, yet the associations which follow are of sexual crime and inevitable death:

Ein Dornenbusch tönt,  
Wo deine mondenen Augen sind.  
O, wie lange bist, Elis, du verstorben. <84>

The thorn bush is the locus of sexual violation - here an admittedly oblique reference to the nature of Elis' crime.<sup>153</sup> The image of his eyes as moon-like links him again to Blaubart ("Sieh nur, wie der Mond dich brünstig anschaut" <441>). Yet there is the suggestion that Elis is not only the violator, but also the victim, like the protagonist of *Verwandlung des Bösen* ("Du, ein blaues Tier, das leise zittert; du, der bleiche Priester, der es hinschlachtet am schwarzen Altar" <97>). The thorn-bush marks his grave, a reminder of his death. And in the following image, Elis plays a passive role within the context of sexual violation:

Dein Leib ist eine Hyazinthe,  
In die ein Mönch die wächsernen Finger taucht.

<84>

Here, Elis is victim of the lustful monk, one of "der Wollust bleiche Priester" <66>.154

The final image, like that of 'Elis', is of the bitter reminder of his fall. The gold of the heavens falls in the form of stars which mirror his fate, turning into black dew as they touch his skin:

Auf deine Schläfe tropft schwarzer Tau,  
Das letzte Gold verfallener Sterne. <84>

Far from being a figure of innocence, then, Elis is clearly one who has fallen from grace into a state of sin and guilt which are essentially sexual, an aspect which has been largely ignored by critics. There is not the divine forgiveness of 'Helian' here, with both Elis-poems closing with the emphasis on his state of sin. This is also true of 'Abendland', where Elis features as a figure of sorrow and dark criminality:

O des Knaben Gestalt  
Geformt aus kristallinen Tränen,  
Nächtigen Schatten. <139>

## CHAPTER THREE: WOMEN AND SEXUALITY

Alle Erotik ist voll von Schuldbewußtsein.<sup>1</sup>

"O rasende Mänade": The Masochistic Vision

As literary decadence is characterized by its tendency towards perversion, so too is its treatment of the theme of sexuality. 'A rebours' is once more the rallying cry, as a penchant for sadism, masochism, necrophilia, homosexuality, and incest flourishes in the literature of the European *fin de siècle*. Within the context of Trakl scholarship is, of course, the question of incest, both as a literary motif and as a reality of Trakl's life; this will be examined towards the end of this chapter. Sadistic *Lustmord* has already been uncovered as a theme throughout Trakl's poetry, from *Don Juans Tod* to the *Dramenfragment* and later prose poems. What we are concerned with now is the question of sexuality; motifs of masochism, the *femme fatale*, sinful lust, sexual guilt, as well as incest, and androgyny.

'Sabbath' is one of the most obviously decadent poems of *Sammlung 1909*. In this febrile hot-house vision, the poet's masochistic desires are given free rein, as he is depicted as the passive victim of lascivious plants, a motif which is by no means uncommon in the decadent literature of the turn of the century. Here are images which we have already established as associated with sexuality: the moon, feverish dreams, and the passive contemplation of one's own sexual violation in a mirror.



The sultry, threatening atmosphere of the hot-house is a familiar motif within the literature of decadence; Maeterlinck's 'Serres Chaudes' depicts a series of stifling *Symboliste* projections of the soul trapped within the confines of a hot-house, longing for an escape which it has not the strength to effect:

O serre au milieu des forêts!  
 Et vos portes à jamais closes!  
 Et tout ce qu'il y a sous votre coupole!  
 Et sous mon âme en vos analogies!

...  
 Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu! quand aurons-nous la pluie,  
 Et la neige et le vent dans la serre!<sup>2</sup>

Within the Austrian *fin de siècle*, too, we find the motif; in Hofmannsthal's *Märchen der 672. Nacht*, where the *Kaufmannssohn's* fascination with the hot-house turns into terror after his encounter with a four-year-old girl. Here, the Maeterlinckian world of artificiality reveals more than the listlessness of the soul; the *Kaufmannssohn* has left the narcissistic self-contemplation of his isolated existence and is drawn into a world of harsh reality, where his terror in the hot-house is part of a dream-like sequence of events which exposes his deepest fears and leads away from his artificial and beautiful life towards an ugly death: "Jetzt war es in dem Glashause schon nicht mehr ganz hell, und die Formen der Pflanzen fingen an, sonderbar zu werden. In einiger Entfernung traten aus dem Halbdunkel schwarze, sinnlos drohende Zweige unangenehm hervor, und dahinter schimmerte es weiß, als wenn das Kind dort stünde."<sup>3</sup> One thinks too of the sterile, ominous orchids in 'Die Töchter der Gärtnerin', with their "lauernden, verführerischen Kelchen, / Die töten wollen..."<sup>4</sup>

Like the flowers of Hofmannsthal's poem, and those of 'Das Grauen', the plants here are "giftig", evil and poisonous in their threat to his innocence. It is their perfume which evokes his vision of the witches' sabbath; here, too, the fever of the protagonist's awakening sexuality is transposed on to nature, as we

have seen in *Blaubart* and 'Das Grauen'. One is reminded here of *Der Tod in Venedig*, where the protagonist's sexual uncertainty and desire to escape the constraints of his surroundings find expression in a vision of exotic and threatening flora: "er sah, sah eine Landschaft, ein tropisches Sumpfgebiet unter dickdunstigem Himmel, feucht, üppig und ungeheuer ... sah aus geilem Farrengewucher, aus Gründen von fettem, gequollenem und abenteuerlich blühendem Pflanzenwerk haarige Palmenschäfte nah und ferne emporstreben ... und fühlte sein Herz pochen vor Entsetzen und rätselhaftem Verlangen."<sup>5</sup>

As Trakl's "Gewächsen" are "fiebernd giftig", so there are also "Blutfarbne Blüten ... pestfarbne Blumen" <222>. The association of flowers with blood and death is found in the description of des Esseintes' "sickly blooms": "Les jardiniers apportent encore de nouvelles variétés; elles affectaient, cette fois, une apparence de peau factice sillonnée de fausses veines; et la plupart, comme rongées par des syphilis et des lèpres, tendaient des chairs livides, marbrées de roséoles, damassées de dartres."<sup>6</sup> Diseased plants are found, too, in one of the depraved visions of Przybyszewski's *Androgyne*: "Aus dem syphilitischen Rachen unglaublicher Orchideen streckten sich Zungen empor, mit purpurroten Fieberflecken besprenkelte Ungeheuer, die herauskriechen und das Gift über das umgebende Blütenmeer zu verschleppen schienen."<sup>7</sup>

Under the narcotic influence of these deadly plants, comes a vision of a black mass, with the protagonist as the helpless victim; as in 'Das Grauen', he is the passive spectator of his own sexual fall, at the power both of the plants' perfume which causes his dreams, and of the plant-witches which entangle him within the masochistic vision. Here we have a more detailed description of the dreams of 'Drei Träume', entering with the poet the "seltsam belebte, schimmernde Gärten, / Die dampften von schwülen,

tödlichen Wonnen" <215>. The tortuous imagery of lines 4-6 reflects both the entangled tendrils of the plants which twine themselves around him, and the disordered confusion of his feverish dreams. At the same time, the word order places emphasis on the image of the witches' sabbath, and, along with the title of the poem, gives substantiality to the vision; the imagined witches appear on the same level of reality as the hot-house flowers as the reader shares the poet's subjective fantasy.

The association of exotic flora and sexual desire has already been seen in Hofmannsthal, Mann and Przybyszewski. This decadent theme is, of course, a perversion of Romanticism; Novalis' Mathilde as a "blaue Blume" in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* is given the twist of a decadent *femme fatale*. In "Die Erfüllung", the unfinished second part of the novel, the sexual fusion of human and flower was to have culminated in an initiation ceremony for Heinrich: "Heinrich muß erst von Blumen für die blaue Blume empfänglich gemacht werden. Geheimnisvolle Verwandlung.] Übergang in die höhere Natur."<sup>8</sup>

This fusion of plant and female is found also in Wagner's *Parsifal*, within the "tropische Vegetation, üppigste Blumenpracht" of Klingsor's magic garden, where Parsifal, beleaguered by maidens who have dressed as plants in order to seduce him, asks: "Seid ihr denn Blumen?"<sup>9</sup> The vision of des Esseintes in *A Rebours* must surely stand as the ultimate perversion of Heinrich von Ofterdingen's dream:

Sur le sol quelque chose remua qui devint  
une femme très pâle, nue, les jambes moulées  
dans des bas de soie verts. ... Une soudaine  
intuition lui vint: 'C'est la Fleur', se  
dit-il; ... d'une geste irrésistible, elle  
le retint, le saisit et, hagard, il vit  
s'épanouir, sous les cuisses à l'air, le  
farouche *Nidularium* qui baillait, en  
saignant, dans les lames de sabre.<sup>10</sup>

The protagonist of 'Sabbath', unlike des

Esseintes, does not awaken from his dream; he is trapped within his masochistic delight. The flames which the plant-witches press from his breast symbolize virility, as they did in *Blaubart*, but it is a virility which also causes pain. He is the victim of female violence, but even this violence brings a drunken ecstasy of agony:

Und ihre Lippen kundig aller Künste  
An meiner trunknen Kehle wütend schwellen. <222>

The harsh 'k'-sounds emphasize the fury of these maenads; the sexual skill with which their lips attack the protagonist's throat again brings Stoker's Vampire Brides to mind:

In the moonlight opposite me were three young women ... There was something about them that made me uneasy, some longing and at the same time some deadly fear. I felt in my heart a wicked, burning desire that they would kiss me with those red lips ... I could feel the movement of her breath upon me. Sweet it was in one sense..., but with a bitter underlying the sweet, a bitter offensiveness, as one smells in blood.<sup>11</sup>

Sexual fantasies involving plants are the ultimate interpretation of Dörmann's famous line: "Ich liebe die hektischen, schlanken/ Narcissen mit blutrotem Mund" ('Was ich liebe').<sup>12</sup> Maeterlinck's poetry, too, bears evidence of his floral fetish:

O les glauques tentations  
Au milieu des ombres mentales,  
Avec leurs flammes végétales  
Et leurs éjaculations

Obscures de tiges obscures,  
Dans le clair de lune du mal,  
Éployant l'ombrage automnal  
De leurs luxurieux augures!

...

Sous les ténèbres de leur deuil,  
Je vois s'emmêler les blessures  
Des glaives bleus de mes luxures  
Dans les chairs rouges de l'orgueil.<sup>13</sup>

The hot-house or garden is the realm of female vice, where the male is cast in an essentially passive role as victim. This is true also of Mirbeau's *Le*

*Jardin des Supplices*, which describes in vivid detail a Chinese torture garden, and the sexual pleasure which the female protagonist derives from its atmosphere:

elle huma l'air autour d'elle. Un  
frémissement, que je connaissais pour être  
l'avant-coureur du spasme, parcourut tout  
son corps. Ses lèvres devinrent  
instantanément plus rouges et gonflées ...  
En effet, une odeur puissante, phosphatée,  
une odeur de semence humaine moutait de  
cette plante...<sup>14</sup>

There is little split between the octet and the sestet of 'Sabbath'; the vision which leads towards the climax of the poem is merely a continuation of the opening lines, with the protagonist being invited to join the witches' sabbath, as he is offered a parody of the Communion cup in the form of the plants' calyxes:

Pestfarbne Blumen tropischer Gestade,  
Die reichen meinen Lippen ihre Schalen,  
Die trüben Geiferbronnen ekler Qualen. <222>

It is hard to find any real sense of menace in the hyperbole here. The orgiastic climax of the poem is accompanied by an interpolation of delight ("— o rasende Mänade —") as the protagonist accepts the masochistic joy of pain: "Und schmerzverzückt von fürchterlichen Brünsten" <222>. The shrill 'ü' throughout these last lines echoes the intensity of his emotions. The masochism depicted here has much in common with the decadent poetry of Dörmann, such as is found in 'Ein Souvenir':

O grabe der herrlichen Zähne  
Blauschimmernde Perlenreihn  
In raubtierwild-rasenden Küssen  
Tief in die Schulter mir ein!

...

Der brennenden fiebernden Wunde  
Wollustdurchfoltete Qual,  
Sie sei unsrer sterbenden Liebe  
Blutiges Totenmal.<sup>15</sup>

Another contemporary poem more effectively evokes the carnal desire and sexual dreams aroused by a hot-house atmosphere. In Stadler's 'Im Treibhaus', quiet

understatement proves more effective than the crass, explicit description of 'Sabbath':

Und kranke Triebe züngeln auf und leuchten  
aus jäh gespaltner Kelche wirrem Meer  
und langsam trägt die laue Luft den feuchten  
traumschlaffen Duft der Palmen drüberher.

Und schattenhaft beglänzt im weichen  
gedämpften Feuer strahlt der Raum  
und ahnend dämmern Bild und Zeichen  
für seltne Wollust frevlen Traum.<sup>16</sup>

"Die herrlichste Hetäre": The Allure of the *Femme Fatale*

The figure of the *femme fatale* is not one which is readily associated with Trakl's poetry. Woman appears in many guises - sister, redeemer, penitent - but there is little in the mature lyric to suggest the power held by woman over man. Where there is sinful indulgence in sexuality, where there is the hint of incest, it is a crime which is shared; likewise, where there is redemption, there is redemption for both, even to the extent of fusion of the two sexes into "ein Geschlecht", an androgynous union. These are themes which will concern us later. What is at issue here are the few examples of decadent *femmes fatales* which are to be found in Trakl's earliest poetry.

The *femme fatale* is a figure which fascinated the late Romantic and decadent generations of artists and writers. Chapter IV of Praz' *The Romantic Agony* is devoted to a study of "La Belle Dame sans Merci", such *femmes fatales* as Mérimée's Carmen, the eponymous heroine in Gautier's *Une Nuit de Cléopâtre*, and the cruel beauties which abound in Swinburne's poetry.

This association of woman with sexuality was not confined to the literature of decadence, however.

Within Habsburg society, woman's dual role was that of mother or prostitute, the ancient dichotomy which denied women any right to sexual feelings. Krafft-Ebing writes of "das Weib, welches dem Geschlechtsgenuss nachgeht" as an "abnorme Erscheinung".<sup>17</sup> Freud was the first to question this view; the popular philosophy of Weininger's *Geschlecht und Charakter*<sup>18</sup> takes the discovery of female sexuality in both *Mutter* and *Dirne* to an extreme conclusion, stating the belief that woman is amoral, without soul or will, that her purpose is to serve male desire, and that she herself is sexuality incarnate: "Der Zustand der sexuellen Erregtheit bedeutet für die Frau nur die höchste Steigerung ihres Gesamtdaseins. Dieses ist immer und durchaus sexuell."<sup>19</sup> While the male principle (M) is the image of God, capable of transcending sexual desires, W, the female principle, is the opposite of Weininger's human ideal: "Der reine Mann ist das Ebenbild Gottes, des absoluten Etwas, das Weib ... repräsentiert das Nichts, den Gegenpol der Gottheit, die andere Möglichkeit im Menschen."<sup>20</sup> Woman, in contrast to man, is incapable of controlling the sexuality which Weininger sees as her entire existence: "Grob ausgedrückt: der Mann hat den Penis, aber die Vagina hat die Frau."<sup>21</sup>

It was this concept of woman as total and dominant sexuality which appealed to the world-weary decadents, offering a new *frisson* to stimulate tired nerves. The male desire to be subjected to female cruelty is found in much of the literature of decadence, such as Sacher-Masoch's *Venus im Pelz*: "Lieben, geliebt werden, welch ein Glück! und doch wie verblaßt der Glanz desselben gegen die qualvolle Seligkeit, ein Weib anzubeten, das uns zu seinem Spielzeug macht, der Sklave einer schönen Tyrannin zu sein, die uns unbarmherzig mit Füßen tritt."<sup>22</sup> As Rasch points out,<sup>23</sup> Wedekind took this concept of woman as sexuality to its ultimate conclusion in the prologue to *Erdegeist*, where Lulu, perhaps the best known *femme fatale* of German

literature, is introduced along with other circus animals, as "unsre Schlange":<sup>24</sup>

Sie ward geschaffen, Unheil anzustiften,  
Zu locken, zu verführen, zu vergiften,  
Zu morden, ohne daß es einer spürt.<sup>25</sup>

This is the "Urgestalt des Weibes", at times concealed by feminine wiles. The connection between woman and snake can be traced back to the myth of temptation in the Garden of Eden; although the devil there is a male tempter, and the snake has undeniable phallic symbolism, the role of temptress has been cast on Eve, and the snake has taken on a female dimension; in German, of course, its gender is feminine. This dual sexuality can be seen in Franz von Stuck's paintings of *Die Sinnlichkeit* and *Die Sünde*. A decadent gem from the Viennese *fin de siècle* by an editor of *Moderne Dichtercharaktere*, Wilhelm Arent, combines the concept of woman as snake and satanic temptress:

Dein Kuß ist Gift, du schöne Schlange!  
Wenn ich an deinem Halse bange  
Packt mich verzehrendheiße Lust,  
Vergeh'n möcht' ich an deiner Brust  
Die tausend Wollustflammen sprüht,  
Dämonisch-wild dein Auge glüht,  
Ein Märchen winkt dein blasser Leib -  
*O töte mich, satanisch Weib!*<sup>26</sup>

Within Trakl's poetry, we have already seen the idea of the cruel, deadly seductress explored in the fantasy realm of 'Sabbath' and in the entranced vision of Elisabeth in *Blaubart*. This is a theme which is undeniably confined to Trakl's early writing; two of his earliest pieces, *Maria Magdalena* and the one-act play *Fata Morgana*, both written in 1906, focus to some extent on the figure of the *femme fatale*.

In *Maria Magdalena*, published in the *Salzburger Volksblatt* on 14th July 1906, Marcellus, preoccupied with the past, no longer shows any interest in present reality. As Regine Blaß has pointed out in her study of "Unmittelbarkeit" and "Reflexion" in Trakl's early work, it is only in the past that Marcellus is able to experience life directly;<sup>27</sup> his attitude towards the



present is characterized by a lack of involvement. Only in remembering his sensuous response to Maria's dance can his imagination produce imagery: "Es war als hätte sich die Nacht in ihrem Haar zu einem schwarzen Knäuel zusammengeballt und entrückte sie uns ... Ihr Leib war ein köstliches Gefäß der Freude" <196>. The description of the dance is the only instance in Marcellus' speech of direct involvement in what he is describing; it is only when relating this memory that he finds the vitality to complete sentences; his description betrays his rapture: "Es ging vor sich in einer glühenden Sommernacht, da in der Luft das Fieber lauert und Mond die Sinne verwirrt" <196>. The description of the dance shows that aspect of decadent style which stressed the appeal to the nerves: Trakl here attempts to create what Bahr defined as "eine Kunst, ... die nur aus den Nerven kommt und nur auf den Nerven geht, die allen Erwerb aller bisherigen Kunst verwendet, um Nervöses auszudrücken und Nervöses mitzuteilen."<sup>28</sup> "... in einer glühenden Sommernacht, da in der Luft das Fieber lauert und Mond die Sinne verwirrt ... der Rhythmus ihres Körpers ließ mich seltsam dunkle Traumbilder schauen, daß heiße Fieberschauer meinen Körper durchbebten" <196>.

The dance in *Maria Magdalena* can be seen as a parallel to the Dionysian celebrations in *Barrabas*, the other piece in *Aus goldnem Kelch*; Maria takes on the characteristics of a decadent Salomé figure; in the description of her hair one finds a typical fascination of the decadents - found in Baudelaire's 'La Chevelure', for example, or Felix Dörmann's 'Neurotica': "Ich will meine Zähne vergraben/ In deinem knirschenden Haar".<sup>29</sup> Maria Magdalena is portrayed as an erotic, exotic *femme fatale*; she gives her body to those who desire it, she enchants all men, whatever their background, thus making all men equal: "Ich sah sie Bettler und Gemeine, sah sie Fürsten und Könige lieben" <196>. She lives for physical joy alone,

symbolized by the showering of her body with roses. Her worship of Dionysus' statue is passionate and alive, more ecstatic than the cold marble of the statue, thus *more* Dionysian than Dionysus himself. Such is the force of her passion that she attempts to seduce the lifeless marble: "Und ich sah sie die Statue des Dionysos mit Blumen kränzen, sah sie den kalten Marmor umarmen, wie sie ihre Geliebten umarmte, sie erstickte mit ihren brennenden, fiebernden Küssen" <196>. In her dance she achieves the heightened sense of rapture that was sought by the followers of Dionysus, the mythical entourage of satyrs and maenads who worshipped the god, and achieved communion with him, in orgiastic revels and drunken celebration.

Trakl's piece is in the tradition of literary depictions of Salomé as a *femme fatale* which were abundant in Britain, France and Germany at the turn of the century. Oscar Wilde's *Salomé*, first published in French in 1893, is perhaps the best known of these. Wilde's play shares certain motifs with Trakl's *Dialog*, in particular, those of the naked feet and the deranging effects of the moon. Herod's words, "the moon has a strange look tonight ... she is like a mad woman, a mad woman who is seeking everywhere for lovers ... she reels through the clouds like a drunken woman"<sup>38</sup> are echoed in Trakl's "und Mond die Sinne verwirrt" <196>, but there is no description of the dance in Wilde's text. His *Salomé*, too, charms all with her beauty, with the exception of Jokanaan, a figure which has a parallel in Christ in *Maria Magdalena*. Salomé's desire to possess the one man who rejected her is a monstrous, vampiric passion, which culminates in her necrophilic seduction of his severed head: "Ah! thou wouldst not suffer me to kiss thy mouth, Jokanaan. Well! I will kiss it now. I will bite it with my teeth as one bites a ripe fruit."<sup>31</sup>

The theme of Salomé's passion for John the Baptist was first dealt with by Heine in 'Atta Troll' (1841);

it features as one of Flaubert's *Trois Contes*, published in 1877. Again, it is impossible to state with any certainty whether Trakl knew this text - we know of his familiarity with *Madame Bovary* (in the summer of 1908 he dedicated a copy of the book to his sister Gretl). Salomé's dance forms the climax of *Hérodias*, and the text bears remarkable similarities to that of Trakl:

Ses [Salomé's] attitudes exprimaient des soupirs, et toute sa personne une telle langueur qu'on ne savait pas si elle pleurait un dieu, ou se mourait dans sa caresse. Les paupières entre-closes, elle se tordait la taille, balançait son ventre avec des ondulations de houle, faisait trembler ses doux seins, et son visage demeurait immobile, et ses pieds n'arrêtaient pas ... de ses bras, de ses pieds, de ses vêtements jaillissaient d'invisibles étincelles qui enflammaient les hommes.<sup>32</sup>

Trakl may also have come across the Salomé figure in Huysmans' *À Rebours*, where almost an entire chapter is dedicated to des Esseintes' worship of Gustav Moreau's painting of Salomé, including a sensuous description of the beauty, clothing and exquisite jewellery of the poised figure in the painting. For des Esseintes Salomé is the archetypal *femme fatale*: "Elle devenait, en quelque sorte, la déité symbolique de l'indestructible Luxure, la déesse de l'immortelle Hystérie, la Beauté maudite..."<sup>33</sup>

One of the best known pieces to deal with the theme is Mallarmé's *Hérodias*, written in 1864, but not published until 1898. Here the Salomé/Hérodias figure is portrayed, not as a *femme fatale*, but as a narcissistic virgin coming to terms with her awakening sexuality, a woman isolated by her beauty in a bleak and desolate atmosphere. In this fragment we also find the motifs of madness and the moon. When Mallarmé returned to the subject in 1898, however, he made it clear that his *Hérodias* was not to be classed along with the popular figure of the *fin de siècle*; his preface stresses the difference between his *Hérodias*

and "la Salomé je dirai moderne ou exhumée avec son fait-divers archaïque - la danse, etc."<sup>34</sup>

Within German literature, we find the Salomé theme in a *Biblische Novellette* published by Peter Hille in 1893, entitled *Salome*; here, sensuous description is used to reproduce the rhythm of the dance, with the use of rhyme to suggest music and song: "Da klirren die Kettchen und schimmern, und flimmern die Falten am spielenden Stoff am tanzenden Neckergewand."<sup>35</sup> For Hille's Herodias, penitence comes only at the end of her life, brought about by a fear of death and the realization that she must account for her sin.

The motif of the sensuous dance is also common in German literature of the time, if not always in connection with Salomé. Désirée Wulp is the *femme fatale* of Holitscher's *Der vergiftete Brunnen*, who attempts to seduce Sasse, the hero of the novel, by dancing to Wagner's *Tannhäuser*. The eponymous heroine of Hermann Stehr's *Leonore Griebel*, the last off-spring of a degenerate family, is a *femme fragile* who turns from her life of isolation and illness as an inner compulsion towards sensuality takes over, culminating in a dance with an imaginary partner reminiscent of that of Salomé and Trakl's Maria.

Although the language and the style of Trakl's *Maria Magdalena* show the poet's efforts to assimilate himself to the literature of the *fin de siècle*, and in particular that of the decadence, with its exotic *femme fatale*, the theme of this *Dialog* is undeniably removed from such blasphemous excesses. Maria's dance is certainly to be seen in the tradition of Salomé, which fascinated the decadents, but the entire tone of the passage is unambivalent in its rejection of hedonism, Dionysian worship and perverse lust.

Trakl's one-act play, *Fata Morgana*, first performed on 15th September 1906, deals with the tension between the real and the unreal. The content is related by Felix Brunner in his dissertation:

In der „Fata Morgana“ handelt es sich um einen jungen Mann, der zur Nachtzeit durch die Wüste wandert. Er gelangt an einen Felsen und vermeint auf ihm die ägyptische Königstochter Kleopatra zu sehen. Er klettert hinauf, glaubt eine Nacht in ihren Armen zu verbringen, träumt aber alles und erkennt am nächsten Tag, daß ihm eine Trugerscheinung, eine Fata Morgana, verlockt habe und er nicht mehr lebend dem Sandmeer entkommen werde. So stürzt er sich vom Felsen hinab um zu sterben.<sup>36</sup>

Again, the influence of decadence can be seen; the choice of subject matter may have come from Trakl's knowledge of George Bernard Shaw - Trakl's library contained four plays by Shaw, including *Caesar and Cleopatra*. The setting for Act One of Shaw's play is a desert at the rising of the moon; on meeting Cleopatra, Caesar exclaims: "What a dream! What a magnificent dream! ... Do you suppose that I believe you are real, you impossible little dream witch?"<sup>37</sup> Another possible source is Théophile Gautier's short story, *Une Nuit de Cléopâtre*, which tells of one ecstatic night spent by a young man, Meïamoun, with Cleopatra. Gautier's Cleopatra suffers from the sultry, oppressive atmosphere of the desert, itself quintessentially decadent, which seals the fate of the protagonist in Trakl's play: "cette Égypte m'anéantit et m'écrase ... ce pays est vraiment un pays effrayant; tout y est sombre, énigmatique, incompréhensible! L'imagination n'y produit que des chimères monstrueuses et des mouvements démesurés..."<sup>38</sup> Like the heroine of Pushkin's fragment of the same name, she allows a young man to spend the night with her at the cost of his life; Meïamoun, the beautiful youth in question, agrees, convinced that after making love to this most beautiful and unattainable of women, life will no longer be worth living. The ecstasy which he

experiences is unique, beyond normal human emotion, yet it is like a dream, and afterwards there is nothing left for the young man but to kill himself: "Il a obtenu tellement au delà de ses plus folles espérances, que le monde n'a plus rien à lui donner ... Après avoir jeté sa vie à sa maîtresse dans un dernier regard, il porta à ses lèvres la coupe funeste où la liqueur empoisonnée bouillonnait et sifflait."<sup>39</sup>

Faced with the thought of the *ennui* of normal human existence after the ecstasy of his dream, Trakl's wanderer chooses to take his own life. Like the blind man in *Totentag*, the dreamer in *Fata Morgana* sees a higher beauty which cannot compare with the dullness and suffering of reality. The theme of female cruelty as the only power capable of stimulating the tired nerves of the decadent is a common one, and has already been seen in *A Rebours*. It recurs, too, in the poetry of Dörmann:

Ich grüße Dich, Taumel der Sinne  
Hirnzehrendes Autodafé,  
Nur du kannst löschen und dämpfen  
In rasenden Wollustkrämpfen  
Der Seele schneidendes Weh.  
Ich grüße Dich, Taumel der Sinne.<sup>40</sup>

Although the *femme fatale* in *Fata Morgana* appears in the form of a mirage, this deception is nevertheless portrayed as cruel and deliberate in its seduction; the young man is again the passive victim: "erkennt ..., daß ihm eine Trugerscheinung, eine Fata Morgana, verlockt habe". The world-weary decadent Dörmann, too, knew the allure of the *fata morgana*, yet even this proved at times insufficient stimulus for his exhausted nerves:

Totenmüde,  
Mit wankenden Gliedern,  
Mit fiebernder Stirne  
Steh ich auf dürrer,  
Trostloser Heide.

Mein Herz ist zerfressen,  
Qualenzerrissen  
Und halbvermodert.

...

Und wenn am dunstigen,  
 Bleifarbenen Himmel  
 Schimmernde Schemen  
 Fata Morganas  
 In brennenden Farben  
 Lockend erglänzen, -  
 Ich bleibe kalt.<sup>41</sup>

Yet there seems to be more to Trakl's drama than we find on the well-trodden path of decadent *ennui*. The female seductress is a mirage, a vision, a product of the protagonist's imagination, like the witch-plants in 'Sabbath'. As with so many of Trakl's young protagonists, it is his own awakening sexuality which is responsible for his destruction. The vision of Cleopatra is nothing other than creation of his *Fieberträume*; his fall from the cliff is not caused by the realization that he is trapped in the desert, nor by his inability to live in a mundane reality devoid of Cleopatra's beauty, but, like Herbert's fall from the window in *Blaubart*, it is an attempt to preserve his own endangered innocence.

Within the poetry of *Sammlung 1909*, the theme of the *femme fatale* is infrequent. Other than the lewd plants of 'Sabbath', we encounter it only in two poems, 'Ballade I' and 'Andacht'. The first of these is a somewhat epigonic re-working of standard *fin-de-siècle* topoi. The fool is one uninitiated into the ways of sexuality, yet in his innocence has a perception of the mystical, an insight which recurs in a later poem, 'Im Dorf': "Der Idiot spricht dunklen Sinns ein Wort / Der Liebe" <64>.

The pale maid, too, is a figure whom we encounter elsewhere; Elisabeth, *Blaubart*'s victim, springs to mind ("Deine Wangen sind bleich" <442>) and the "junge Magd" of the 1910 poem ("Wächsern ihre Wangen bleichen" <13>), although where these two figures are victims, the maid here has power over the fool. She appears mysteriously; there is no mention of her approach, and there is something fatalistic in the way in which she

suddenly stands before him. The background to this meeting is the impervious roar of the ocean: "Laut sang, o sang das Meer" <229>, the rush and rhythm of the waves on the shore echoing the implicit sexual tension between the two protagonists.

The image of the "Becher" as a symbol of erotic passion is a familiar one. Within the context of German literature, one thinks of Goethe's 'König in Thule', or *Torquato Tasso*, where the image is used by Tasso to express his own sexual desire:

Beschränkt der Rand des Bechers einen Wein,  
Der schäumend wallt und brausend überschwillt?<sup>42</sup>

The most obvious comparison here is with Hofmannsthal's 'Die Beiden'. In this poem, too, it is the woman who carries the goblet, symbol of the virginity which she has preserved:

Sie trug den Becher in der Hand  
- Ihr Kinn und Mund glich seinem Rand -,  
So leicht und sicher war ihr Gang,  
Kein Tropfen aus dem Becher sprang.<sup>43</sup>

The male protagonist here, however, is characterized by a strength and purpose which Trakl's passive fool lacks:

So leicht und fest war seine Hand:  
Er ritt auf einem jungen Pferde,  
Und mit nachlässiger Gebärde  
Erzwang er, daß es zitternd stand.<sup>44</sup>

In Trakl's poem it is also the maid who holds the goblet, her sexuality:

Sie hielt einen Becher in der Hand,  
Der schimmerte bis auf zum Rand,  
Wie Blut so rot und schwer. <229>

Yet there is here, too, a passivity which suggests little of the *femme fatale*; she holds, but does not actively offer, the goblet, unlike the plants in 'Sabbath' or, as we shall see, the woman in 'Andacht'. She makes no attempt to conceal the cup; her temptation is her very being. Woman exists as sexuality alone, as in Weininger's philosophy, and as such does not have to seduce in any active way.





It is only at the end of the poem that we discover the reason for this melancholic self-alienation: sexual corruption. This one memory crystallizes out of his hazy recollection of the past. The unnamed woman, too, bears the signs of sexual fall, sorrow and guilt in a perverted dark halo: "umflort von finstrer Trauer." She is undeniably responsible for the boy's sexual sin; yet there is some responsibility, too, in his passivity, and his sense of sexual thrill despite the heinous nature of their crime. One wonders if there is a hint of some greater sin here; the adjective "verruucht" is used elsewhere in connection with incest: "Noch bebend von verrucher Wollust Süße" <249>.

The "Andacht" of the title, then, which at first appears to be the memory of religious sentiment takes on a new twist; while the prayers of his youth are forgotten, one woman stands out as a clear memory from his past, and the emphasis of the poem lies on the last three lines. The cup of communion has been left for the "Kelch verruchter Schauer"; the *femme fatale*, and the sexual sin into which she has initiated him, have replaced his faith with an emotion which is both loathsome and exciting.

There is little evidence of the *femme fatale* in the mature lyric. The woman as victim, redeemer, reformed prostitute, and the sister figure are all more important themes, and will be examined below. One poem, however, is worth looking at in this context. 'Nachts', written after 5 May 1913, was regarded by Trakl as "über alles teuer".<sup>45</sup> There is no direct evidence that incest is the subject of this poem, although one wonders if the "Du" addressed is Trakl's sister. Beyond the realm of speculation, however, one can state with certainty that this is one poem in the mature lyric where the protagonist is passive and the woman is the active figure within a sexual context.

The colour symbolism of blue and red dominates in this scene of sexuality and madness. The colours associated with the protagonist pale, are enveloped and overcome by those of the woman. "Die Bläue meiner Augen" <96>, associated with spirituality, is extinguished, like the light of the idiot in 'Ballade I'. Again, the woman seems to be responsible; yet we are not surprised to find a hint of the protagonist's own sexual guilt in the image of "Das rote Gold meines Herzens" <96>; the purity of his heart has become tainted with red, the colour of sinful desire.

The use of the past tense, unusual in Trakl's poetry, seems to suggest that, despite the generic title of the poem, it is referring to a specific event: "in dieser Nacht". Might this be the memory of 'Andacht'? Certainly the woman is dominant here. It is hard to reconcile the contention that blue in Trakl's poetry is always associated with the spiritual<sup>46</sup> with the image of "dein blauer Mantel" <96>; there seems to be little in the way of a move towards redemption here, particularly in light of the last line: "Dein roter Mund besiegelte des Freundes Umnachtung" <96>. Her coat does not stop his fall, but rather envelops him as he falls, symbolic of her power over him, enticing him into sin. She does not save, but rather seals his madness with her own sexuality. As the idiot's signs are "verweht" in 'Ballade I', so the protagonist here falls from a spiritual existence into madness. He is entirely at her mercy; the structural stress of the poem shifts from the protagonist to the *femme fatale*, who, like the "bleiche Magd" and the "Frauenbild" of the earlier poems, holds illimitable sway over the victim of her sexual desire.

"Verruchter Wollust Süße": Incest as a Decadent Motif

The sexual transgression of incest is one which takes its place in the literature of decadence amongst other deviations from what was accepted as the social norm. Mario Praz has indicated its function as a literary motif in the works of the Romantics, in particular Chateaubriand's *Atala*.<sup>47</sup> In his thorough study of decadence in European literature, Koppen points to it in Mann's *Wälsungenblut* as "ein tabuisiertes sexuelles Phänomen, ... dem man überhaupt in der Décadence-Literatur vergleichsweise selten begegnet".<sup>48</sup> Fischer concurs with his view: "Bedenkt man aber, daß der Inzest keineswegs (wie man vermuten könnte) zu den ständigen Motiven der Fin de siècle-Erotik gehörte...".<sup>49</sup> In his vast study of the incest motif in literature and legend, however, Otto Rank also acknowledges its blatant appearance in modern, if not specifically decadent literature.<sup>50</sup> Furness also claims that this sin was one which "captivated the imagination of the *décadents*", from Swinburne's *Lesbia Brandon*, D'Annunzio's *La città morta*, Mendès's *Zohar*, Barrès' *Un amateur d'âmes*, to, of course, Wagner's *Die Walküre* and Mann's *Wälsungenblut*.<sup>51</sup>

It is true that incest as a literary motif is not confined to the works of decadence; following Chateaubriand and more obviously Wagner, however, decadent fascination with incest focuses on the love between brother and sister, rather than on the Classical Oedipus motif of mother and son. It is in the relationship between brother and sister that incest enters Trakl's poetry. As Basil has pointed out, Trakl was fascinated by Wagner, in particular his treatment of incest in *Die Walküre*.<sup>52</sup>

Thomas Mann was, like Nietzsche, very aware of his literary origins in decadence, and his attempts to overcome its influence:

Ich gehöre geistig jenem über ganz Europa verbreiteten Geschlecht von Schriftstellern an, die, aus der *décadence* kommend, zu Chronisten und Analytikern der *décadence* bestellt, gleichzeitig den emanzipatorischen Willen zur Absage an sie, - sagen wir pessimistisch: die Velleität dieser Absage im Herzen tragen und mit der Überwindung von Dekadenz und Nihilismus wenigstens experimentieren.<sup>53</sup>

His most blatantly decadent works are the *Novellen Tristan* and *Wälsungenblut*, the latter of which focuses on the Wagnerian motif of incest.<sup>54</sup> Here, the forbidden love between Siegmund and Sieglind Aarenhold is a symptom of degeneracy and inherited weakness,<sup>55</sup> and the narcissistic quality of their desire is emphasized throughout the *Novelle*. When a performance of Wagner's *Die Walküre* acts as a catalyst for their passion, it is a hasty and awkward affair; Mann shows nothing of the decadent penchant for erotic indulgence in his writing: "Sie atmeten diesen Duft mit einer wollüstigen und fahrlässigen Hingabe, pflegten sich damit wie egoistische Kranke, berauschten sich wie Hoffnungslose, verloren sich in Liebkosungen, die übergriffen und ein hastiges Getümmel wurden und zuletzt nur ein Schluchzen waren - -".<sup>56</sup> Koppen has shown that this incestuous desire is to be set quite clearly within the context of decadence, over and above its association with the mythical: "Gleichzeitig aber muß dieser Inzest auch als Manifestation dekadenten Verhaltens gedeutet werden, als vorerst latentes Symptom des dekadenten Syndroms, das durch die verführerische und morbide Wirkung der Wagnerischen Kunst offenbar wird."<sup>57</sup>

The similarity between Mann's *Novelle* and Elémir Bourges' *Le Crépuscule des Dieux* (1884) has not gone unnoticed. As Koppen has indicated, there can be no certainty of any influence of the French author on Mann; rather there is clear evidence of their mutual

re-working of decadent Wagnerism: "Es darf ... angenommen werden, daß beiden Autoren unabhängig voneinander der Gedanke kam, daß sich Wagners *Walküre* vorzüglich dazu eigne, dekadenten Eros und dekadente Wagner-Schwärmerei auf einen Nenner zu bringen."<sup>58</sup>

Rank's detailed study of incest in literature and legend, focuses in the final chapter on contemporary German literature, claiming that "modern literature tends most strongly to the undisguised depiction of sexual, especially incestuous themes".<sup>59</sup> Although not limiting his examination to specifically decadent works, he shows how widespread this motif was at the beginning of the twentieth century, referring to such works as Heinrich Mann's *Die Schauspielerin*, Kurt Münzer's *Der Weg nach Zion*, Christian Kraus's *Gechwister* and a story written by Trakl's acquaintance Karl Borromäus Heinrich, *Menschen von Gottes Gnaden*. Incest is a theme, too, of Musil's *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*, which has been examined by Webber in his joint study of Trakl and Musil.<sup>60</sup>

One author of German decadence to focus on the motif of incest as degenerate sexuality is Przybyszewski, whose *De profundis* depicts the growing and violent realization of latent passion between brother and sister as the ultimate social taboo.

The opening pages depict the protagonist in a state of fever, a motif familiar in Trakl's oeuvre:

Bald trat ihm kalter Schweiß auf die Stirne, eine unangenehme feuchte Hitze kroch schwül über seinen Körper, und die Stiche im Halse wurden noch häufiger und schmerzhafter. ... Eine kranke Sehnsucht nach ihren Händen, eine quälende Gier, ihren Leib an sich zu pressen, sein Gesicht auf ihre Brust zu legen ... Und die Sehnsucht fing an zu sprießen und schwoll und schoß wild hinauf...<sup>61</sup>

Yet this state of fever is linked not only to thoughts of his wife, but more significantly to his sudden insight into his sister's incestuous desire for him,

forcing him to confront his own violent and painful desire: "Aber Agaj ist ja meine Schwester! schrie er entsetzt in sich hinein. ... Ein schmerzhafter Wollustkrampf fraß saugend an seinem Hirn, er wehrte sich nicht: die Schauer einer gierigen Lust krochen wie Gift in jeden Nerv seines Körpers. ... Das war das gräßliche Fieber!"<sup>62</sup>

This recognition of his incestuous desire culminates in "Fieberträume" of a blasphemous, apocalyptic and violently sado-masochistic vision, a "Fieberorgie dieser blutschänderischen Wollust".<sup>63</sup>

The question of incest and its implications both as a literary motif and a physical reality in Trakl's life is one that is impossible to ignore. From what biographical evidence is available, and clearly from the poetry itself, the only female figure with any significance in Trakl's life appears to be "die Schwester". Spoerri, in his "psychiatrisch-anthropologische Untersuchung" of 1954, claims to have found indisputable proof that an incestuous relationship existed between Georg and Gretl Trakl, which he refused to publish out of consideration for the family members who were still alive.<sup>64</sup> The reports that Trakl considered his sister "das schönste Mädchen, die größte Künstlerin, das seltenste Weib" are well known.<sup>65</sup> Spoerri speculates about the possibility of sexual violation: "Nach den Dichtungen ist - jedoch ohne Beweiskraft - zu schließen, daß sich eine Art Gewaltakt ereignet hat, freilich kaum eine richtige Vergewaltigung, da eine versteckte Aufforderung durch die Schwester spürbar ist. Vermutlich begannen die Beziehungen in der Pubertät oder Spätpubertät...".<sup>66</sup>

The treatment of the theme of incest develops in Trakl's poetry from a decadent flout of the social norm to a deep struggle with a profound sense of guilt. In a letter to Werner Meyknecht, Trakl's close friend Ficker stressed this aspect of his poetry:

Die tragische Beziehung Trakls zu seiner Schwester ... ist für das Bild des Menschen bei Trakl wichtig, für das Inferno, durch das er gegangen ist, um seine Erlösungshoffnung, die ganze Passion, durch die er gegangen ist, zu verstehen. Das Seherische ... kommt bei Trakl aus diesem Fegefeuer, diesem brennenden Dornbusch seines Wahnsinnsvermögens im Bewußtsein seiner Schuld, begangen am Ebenbild seiner Verzweiflung im Fleisch und Blut. Darüber war Trakl persönlich die Verstumtheit selbst, doch hat sich mir seine Schwester, die nach seinem Tode nur mehr ein Schatten seiner und ihrer selbst war, in einem verweifelten Selbstverwerfungsbedürfnis - sie hat ja dann später Hand an sich gelegt - darüber einmal anvertraut.<sup>67</sup>

Despite the reservations of some critics,<sup>68</sup> it seems clear, not only from the poetry itself, but also from Spoerri's unpublished evidence and Ficker's indirect admission of Gretl's confession, that incest did take place. Sauer mann even speculates about the possibilities that the child of Gretl's miscarriage was fathered by Georg.<sup>69</sup>

Incest and jealousy were the central themes of Trakl's one-act drama, *Totentag*, first performed in the Salzburg Stadttheater on 31st March 1906, when the poet was just nineteen years old: "Peter, ein Blinder, verliebt sich in die junge, frische Grete, glaubt an ihre Ergebenheit und Treue, wird aber von ihr mit dem Studenten Fritz betrogen. Peter wird wahnwitzig und tötet sich zuletzt auf der Bühne."<sup>70</sup> Thematically, *Totentag* shows links with Trakl's later poetry: it deals with the love of a blind man, Peter, for Grete. Whether Grete is the sister of Peter within the play is uncertain; the *dramatis personae* does not provide this information, yet the critic of the *Salzburger Chronik*, writing two days after the performance, believes this to be the case, referring to Grete as the "jugendliche Schwester".<sup>71</sup> The choice of name clearly indicates the real figure behind the character - Trakl's own sister. Whether Trakl was already involved in an incestuous



relationship cannot be stated with certainty (in 1906 Gretl was only 14); here, however, we have evidence of the incestuous nature of Trakl's fantasies.

The most blatant treatment of incest as a decadent motif in *Sammlung 1909* is found in 'Blutschuld', originally excluded from the first *Gesamtausgabe* because of its sensitive subject matter. The title itself does not refer directly to incest,<sup>72</sup> but rather to blood-guilt, thus drawing on the theme which we have already seen as central to the poetry, namely the association of *Lustmord*, blood-letting and sexual violation as an expression of the guilt which Trakl associated with sexuality; here, the similarity to the word "Blutschande", and the obvious reference to the incestuous desire of brother and sister, put this guilt in a clear context.

In 'Blutschuld', however, is little of the anguish of the later poetry; what we have here is the decadent pose of the *poète maudit*, a delight in sinful indulgence which is all the greater for the awareness that it is sinful.<sup>73</sup> It is night, the time associated with sinful sexuality; their guilt is mutual, for this is a shared crime, and not one of violation. The first stanza sets the tone of the poem, which contrasts their perverse pleasure, the sweetness of their crime, with the voice of conscience which prompts them to seek forgiveness. This contrast of the worldly and the spiritual is echoed in the rhyme scheme of the poem: "Küsse" and "Süße" in opposition to "Schuld" and "Huld".

A further decadent motif is found in the assumption of Catholicism; although a Protestant, Trakl calls on Maria for mercy, as is the case in another early poem, 'Metamorphose'. One must remember, too, that Maria was also the name of Trakl's mother; indeed, a variant, "Mutter Maria", may still be a reference to the Mother of Christ, but may also indicate a more personal reason for seeking forgiveness.



others, are controlled by some sexual power which is greater than their will to resist, which lures them with the sweetness of their sin, and at the same time confronts them with the inscrutability of their guilt. The "Sphinxgesicht" is found also in Przybyszewski's *De profundis* to symbolize the paradox of the guilt and love, revulsion and desire of an incestuous relationship: "Er hörte kaum hin. Seine Augen flogen suchend umher. Endlich entdeckte er sie. Sie saß da regungslos mit einem kalten Sphinxgesicht und sah ihn ruhig an."<sup>74</sup>

As they plunge once more into sin, their cry for forgiveness becomes desperate: "Wir schluchzen: Verzeih uns, Maria, in deiner Huld!" (249). The futility of this cry expresses the paradox of their irresistible sexual desire and their certainty of damnation. There is no humility or sense of true repentance, for the protagonists are unwilling, perhaps even unable, to turn from their sin. The inefficacy of their prayer is emphasized in the repeated rhyme of "Schuld" and "Huld"; the intimate association of these two words echoes their fate: the more they seek forgiveness, the greater is their sin, and the greater their sin, the more their need of forgiveness. Although the poem ends with "Huld", it seems unlikely that any form of divine grace will release them from their sexual guilt.<sup>75</sup>

And yet, behind Trakl's decadent pose may lie a real sense of guilt, which the poet is trying to hide behind the mask of decadence. In a much later work, *Traum und Umnachtung*, there is also mention of the masks used to hide the chaotic emotions of reality: "... aus purpurnen Masken sahen schweigend sich die leidenden Menschen an" (150). One thinks, too, of Nietzsche's aphorism: "Alles, was tief ist, liebt die Maske".<sup>76</sup> Despite the decadent pose, one may trace behind this poem the very real sense of sexual guilt which is the one central motif of Trakl's poetry.

A scene in Przybyszewski's *De profundis* has a similar juxtaposition of incestuous desire and blasphemous prayer; the protagonist reminds his sister of "die furchtbare Nacht" when, in their childhood fear of a thunderstorm, they first became aware of their mutual sexual attraction:

Es regnete Blitze und Feuer vom Himmel. Und jedesmal, wenn der Himmel barst und unser Schlafzimmer in grünem Licht stand, bekreuzigten wir uns und beteten: Und das Wort ist Fleisch geworden ... So ging es die ganze Nacht über. Und da plötzlich: dies furchtbare, minutenlange Krachen und Bersten, als der Blitz dicht neben unserem Hause in die Pappel einschlug! Da warfst Du Dich zitternd auf meine Brust und preßtest Dich so fest an mich... noch fühl ich Deine mageren Händchen um meinen Körper geschlungen und Deine zarten Beine sich mit kranker Hitze in mich hineinglühen. Damals hattest Du auch Fieber.<sup>77</sup>

The incestuous relationship is the subject of two other poems in *Sammlung 1909*, although less obviously so. 'Ballade II' and 'Ballade III' follow the depiction of sinful sexuality and the *femme fatale* in 'Ballade I'. In both of these poems, the woman, too, seems to be the one in control, and here the suggestion is that it is the sister.

In 'Ballade II', we find the familiar motifs of the night and the doorway in the repeated line: "Es weint die Nacht an einer Tür!" <230>. Here, it is the male protagonist who is being lured over the threshold. The sultry atmosphere of sin betrays the presence of death, a warning of the consequences of sexual fall, and an expression of the protagonist's inability to withstand the *Lustselbstmord* which he knows is inevitable: "O dumpf, o dumpf! Es stirbt wer hier!" <230>. Like the sinning protagonists of 'Blutschuld', he becomes desperate in his longing for a release from his own desire: "Ein Schluchzen noch: O säh' er das Licht!" <230>. Instead of the light of grace, however, he is plunged into the darkness of sin. The whispered

voice of the sister, which had lured him into the room, now too expresses something of fear: "Ein Schluchzen: Bruder, o betest du nicht?" <230>. Her question suggests that she, too, longs for redemption, hoping to find release through her brother's prayers (one must assume that her state of sin is so great that, like the protagonist of 'Andacht', she is no longer able to pray), yet at the same time adds the blasphemous atmosphere of 'Blutschuld' to their sin.

The mysterious atmosphere of this poem seeks to distance it from any direct reference to the poet himself. There is a nebulous quality to the location of the sin, an impersonality to the protagonists, betrayed only by the telling line: "Bruder, o betest du nicht?" This atmosphere is repeated in the third 'Ballade'. Again it is night; the location, like that of 'Sabbath', is the domain of oppressive nature: "Ein schwüler Garten stand die Nacht" <231>. The garden as a locus of sexual sin has already been examined as a motif of decadent literature; it is, of course, also a Biblical image; the fall here is an echo of the sin of Adam and Eve, which led to their banishment from Paradise.<sup>78</sup>

Again, sin is characterized by silence. Here, the suggestion is of the inability to express the horror of their crime: "Wir verschwiegen uns, was uns grauend erfaßt" <231>. This futile hope that they will lessen the horror of their sin if they deny it expression only serves to worsen their predicament, for expression of guilt can have a liberating effect: "Davon sind unsre Herzen erwacht/ Und erlagen unter des Schweigens Last" <231>. The silence which accompanies sexual damnation is a recurrent theme throughout the poetry; one thinks for example of the traumatic climax of *Traum und Umnachtung*, where the cursed family meet in a travesty of the Last Supper: "O der Verwesten, da sie mit silbernen Zungen die Hölle schwiegen" <150>.

There is a sense of damnation in the second stanza as the horror of their sin is realized. The night is characterized by the intensity of its darkness; the stars, often associated with sexual guilt, as we have seen, are absent from the heavens, a sign that their fall has already taken place. There is no sign of divine grace, nor is there anyone to pray for them. Here, they are deeper in their guilt than in 'Blutschuld', where both can pray, or 'Ballade II', where the brother can - but perhaps does not - pray. Neither of them are capable of expressing their guilt; they are under "des Schweigens Last", incapable of forming the words of a prayer, thus entangled in the snare of their own sin. The nature of their crime, which is surely the taboo of incest, has so isolated them from the society of others, that there is no-one else who can bear the burden of their guilt in prayer.

As in 'Blutschuld', with its sirens and sphinx, there is the suggestion that they are mocked by forces of sexuality which control their fate: "Ein Dämon nur hat im Dunkel gelacht./ Seid alle verflucht!" <231>. The satanic powers which were responsible for the fall of Adam and Eve are at work here, taunting them within their own "schwüler Garten", reminding them that in committing this sin they are participating in the original sin which has been the curse of humankind since the Fall. One remembers, too, that Trakl called Gretl his "Dämon": "Meinem geliebten kleinen Dämon, der entstieg ist dem süßesten und tiefsten Märchen aus 1001 Nacht" was the dedication which he wrote on a copy of *Madame Bovary*.<sup>79</sup> With the suggestion of blasphemy in 'Ballade II', this may also be the portrayal of the sister as *femme fatale*, luring the brother to his doom.

The poet accepts his place in the general damnation of humankind. This poem ends, not with a prayer for forgiveness, nor with a sense of desperate sorrow, as we have seen in the previous poems, but with a simple statement: "Da ward die Tat" <231>. This

concise and straightforward sentence may be the poet's own admission that incest did take place.

Within the mature lyric, the theme of incest is treated with less blatant flagrancy, yet it, and the figure of the sister, are undeniably central to Trakl's poetic world. The title of the poem *Traum des Bösen* immediately evokes the "Fieberträume" which have accompanied the awareness of sexuality in many of Trakl's protagonists and poetic personae. Here, visions of a feverish dream mingle with reality to produce an impressionistic vision of a world seen through the eyes of "Ein Liebender" who awakes "in schwarzen Zimmern" <29>. The heat of fever on his cheeks betrays the erotic nature of his dreams, as the black rooms indicate the darkness of his sin.

The series of images of decline and evil form a general scene of sinful sexuality, into which all are drawn; music and dancing express lustful desire and prelude sexual indulgence, which, through their intimate contact with the crowd, taints those normally associated with the spiritual:

Ein Mönch, ein schwangres Weib dort im Gedränge  
Guitarren klimpern, rote Kittel schimmern.  
Kastanien schwül in goldnem Glanz verkümmern;  
Schwarz ragt der Kirchen trauriges Gepränge. <29>

The sultry atmosphere of the chestnut blossom in the golden light of evening is the scent of sinfulness bathed in the fading light of the heavens. Humankind's damnation is watched over by the sorrowful splendour of the church, which stands like a reminder of divine judgement.

The faces of those who indulge their sinful nature are pale; in giving themselves over to evil, they have lost their individuality: "Aus bleichen Masken schaut der Geist des Bösen" <29>. There is a sense of horror at their sin, but the progress towards evening and night is unstoppable. Only those who are already marked as outcasts, who bear the sign of their guilt in their

leprosy, unlike the hypocritical masses, who hide their guilt behind their pale masks, are able to understand the nature of this confusion. Their guilt is accompanied also by recognition, lacked by the crowds, who refuse to acknowledge their sin:

Des Vogelfluges wirre Zeichen lesen  
 Aussätzige, die zur Nacht vielleicht verwesen.  
 Im Park erblicken zitternd sich Geschwister. <29>

It is this recognition which strikes the "Geschwister" at the end of the poem; although the verb is "erblicken" rather than "erkennen", "zitternd" suggests a sense of mutual guilt at the acceptance of their part in the sexual fall. They no longer hide behind their masks, and their eyes meet in a simple but powerful depiction of their incestuous desire.

The sister is central to the three poems which form the *Rosenkranzlieder*; a variant of the first poem has the title 'An meine Schwester', suggesting further a reference to Trakl's own sister, and any incestuous relationship which may have taken place. The depiction of the relationship here is much more complex than that of the *Sammlung 1909* poems, far from the decadent pose of 'Blutschuld'. There is no doubt, however, that the relationship described here is a sexual one:

In dieser Nacht lösen auf lauen Kissen  
 Vergilbt von Weihrauch sich der Liebenden  
 schwächliche Glieder <57>

The sorrowful mood of evening unites all three poems. In 'An die Schwester', the "Weiher", elsewhere the locus of sexual violation, is a place of melancholy, where the sister is a "blaues Wild", an oblique suggestion that she is the victim of sexual crime.<sup>80</sup> This solitary sorrow at the pool's edge is transferred to the brother in 'Nähe des Todes', the poems together depicting acceptance and complicity in their love. There is a hint, too, that the sister is beginning to assume a redemptive quality in the eyes of the poet; where in the decadent 'Blutschuld', brother and sister had called on Maria, here the brother addresses his



sister as "Karfreitagskind", one who will carry and thus atone for the burden of his shame.

Their awareness of sin brings the knowledge of the proximity of death: "O die Nähe des Todes. Laß uns beten." <57> The hollowness of this call to prayer strikes a deeper note of despair than the blasphemous pose of 'Blutschuld' and 'Ballade II'; the need for release from sin is still with them as they lie together, but there seems little sign that this need will be met.

In 'Amen' their death is complete. Here is a scene of decay as an indication of sinful sexuality, where the shadows remind of the darkness of their crime:

Verwestes gleitend durch die morsche Stube;  
Schatten an gelben Tapeten; in dunklen Spiegeln  
wölbt  
Sich unserer Hände elfenbeinerne Traurigkeit. <58>

Recognition of their dark nature comes in the mirror's reflection. Their sin, which they cannot renounce, leads to their death, but not to redemption.<sup>81</sup> Even in death, their hands remain intertwined. Here, too, it is hard to agree that blue is a predominantly spiritual, positive colour; there is no sign of forgiveness in the eyes of Azrael, the angel of death. Their sin leads to damnation; as in 'Ballade III', it is a fall from divine grace which echoes the Fall of Adam and Eve:

Blau ist auch der Abend;  
Die Stunde unseres Absterbens, Azrael's Schatten,  
Der ein braunes Gärtchen verdunkelt. <58>

If blue here is a characteristic of the spiritual realm, then its function here can only be a reminder of what they have lost, a contrast to their dark realm of sin and death.

The most obvious treatment of incest in the later poetry is 'In der Heimat', a poem whose dark and disturbing imagery describes a sultry atmosphere of sin and decay, dominated by the sweet scent of reseda.<sup>82</sup> There is the familiar contrast of the spiritual and the sinful in gold and dark:

Resedenduft durchs kranke Fenster irrt;  
 Ein alter Platz, Kastanien schwarz und wüst.  
 Das Dach durchbricht ein goldener Strahl und fließt  
 Auf die Geschwister traumhaft und verwirrt. <60>

The atmosphere is heavy with sin; the golden light may offer momentary insight into the nature of their guilt, but it appears to have the function more of a cruel juxtaposition, emphasizing the darkness of their fallen world, for they remain "traumhaft und verwirrt". Indeed, this golden light is not the elucidating light of the heavens, but, as is clear from the sestet, it is the moonlight; here then, is the motif of *Blaubart* and 'Im Dorf', the lustful and voyeuristic moon watching the scene of sinful sexuality through the window. Erotic dreams and confusion, as we have seen, are accompanying signs of sexual guilt.<sup>83</sup>

The sense of menace is intensified in the second stanza; the evil of their sin is symbolized by the murky decay, a reference surely to the sexual act which has just occurred and the quiet but unstoppable force of the *Föhn* in the garden, the locus of sexual fall. Nature mirrors their decline as the gold of the sunflower fades. The "Ruf der Wache" serves as a reminder of the order and discipline which control society, in contrast to their dream-like confusion, the result of their transgression of one of society's strongest taboos.

The focus in the sestet moves from "die Geschwister" and the general impressions both inside and outside the room on to the sister, emphasizing the fact that the scene is viewed through the brother's eyes:

Der Schwester Schlaf ist schwer. Der Nachtwind wühlt  
 In ihrem Haar, das mondner Glanz umspült. <60>

The brother's forbidden desire is here transposed to nature, in the wind and moon, symbols of male sexuality. The golden light of the first stanza is echoed in the moonlight, which now forms the perversion

of a halo around the sister's head. Her animal quality is expressed in the image of the cat in the final stanza, where the quiet menace hints at greater disaster to follow:

Der Katze Schatten gleitet blau und schmal  
 Vom morschen Dach, das nahes Unheil säumt,  
 Die Kerzenflamme, die sich purpurn bäumt. <60>

The shadow of the cat is cast by the "goldner Strahl" of the moonlight: male sexuality violating the female, who yet remains elusive. The poet is aware of the consequences of their sin, of the divine judgement and damnation which must follow, yet he is incapable of controlling his sexual desire; the phallic symbolism of the "Kerzenflamme" closes the poem with no sense of release or redemption.<sup>84</sup>

'Unterwegs' also focuses, although less obviously so, on the theme of incest. The poem opens with a series of images which are associated throughout the poetic oeuvre with sexual desire and the sister: evening, decline, the piano, the garden, autumn, the park, sunflowers. Although the sister is not mentioned, it is clearly she who is with the poet in the park, as in 'Traum des Bösen' and the *Rosenkranzlieder*. There is a sense of timelessness in the way that this evening is constantly replayed in the poet's mind: "immer wieder kehrt dieser vergangene Abend" <81>.

The evening encounter in the park is a sexual one, the woman reminiscent of the *femme fatale* of 'Nachts': "geheimnisvoll die rote Stille deines Munds" <81>. A variant line here has a direct confession of love, unique in Trakl's poetry: "O, ich liebe dich" <II.142>. A further indication that the sister is the unnamed "Du" is the reference to their shared consumption of drugs: "Deine Lider sind schwer von Mohn und träumen leise auf meiner Stirne" <81>. Again we see something of the androgynous fusion between brother and sister in the closeness of their association: "Deine Lider ... auf meiner Stirne ... dein Antlitz auf mich gesunken".

There is evidence, too, of "Fieberträume", which cause her to tremble: "Sanfte Glocken durchzittern die Brust" <81>. The variants contain more overtly sexual imagery, with the poet cast in the role of violator: "Eine finstere Wolke ist mein Antlitz über dir. Gewaltig dröhnen die Hämmer auf rotes Metall" <II.142>. Like the moonlight of 'In der Heimat', his shadow forms a dark halo over the sister, transposing his crime on to her sleeping form. The rhythm of the hammers and the red of the metal are blatant symbols of sexual desire.

Insight into the depth of his sin, and his inability to return to a state of innocence cause the poet to fall in submission: "Unsäglich ist das alles, o Gott, daß man erschüttert ins Knie bricht" <81>. This guilt is both personal and universal, again an indication that the sin of incest is to be seen as part of humankind's fallen state. Nor is there any sense of release through poetic expression, for his insight is "unsäglich". This spiritual submission is momentary, and his recognition is replaced once again by darkness: "O, wie dunkel ist diese Nacht" <82>. Any hopes of redemption through poetry are eradicated and he is left with silence:

... Eine purpurne Flamme  
 Erlosch an meinem Mund. In der Stille  
 Erstirbt der banger Seele einsames Saitenspiel.  
<82>

The final line closes the poem with a bleak, drunken submission which replaces any hope of lasting divine grace. Like Elis, his fate is not to overcome, but to endure: "Laß, wenn trunken von Wein das Haupt in die Gosse sinkt" <82>.

"Ein Geschlecht": The Androgynous Ideal

Critics have attempted to see the androgynous fusion of the "Liebende" in 'Abendländisches Lied' and the reconciliation of brother and sister in *Offenbarung und Untergang* as evidence of a positive balance to the despair of the later poetry.<sup>85</sup> This chapter will now focus on some of the poems which explore a mutual acceptance of guilt to see to what extent, if any, redemption can be found through union of male and female, ultimately in the figure of the androgyne.

The concept of the androgyne was a decadent fascination, especially in the painting of the time, from the Pre-Raphaelites Rossetti and Burne-Jones, to the decadents Moreau and Beardsley. The best known example in literature is Gautier's *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, an androgynous female who loves and is loved by both men and women, and who feels herself to be of neither sex, but rather claims to belong to "un troisième sexe ... qui n'a pas encore de nom".<sup>86</sup>

The Polish writer Przybyszewski was also drawn to this theme. The fantastic visions which constitute *Androgyne* range from sexual desire for plants to the megalomaniac blasphemy of his own "Himmelfahrt"; the piece ends with the fusion of male and female into one:

Er und sie sollten zum Urschoss zurückkehren um zu  
 einer  
 heiligen Sonne zu werden.  
 Eins und unteilbar sollten sie werden,  
 und alle Geheimnisse nackt und gelöst mit ihren  
 Augen  
 schauen  
 und in gottewiger Klarheit alle Ursachen und Ziele  
 durchdringen und sie leiten  
 und alle Erden und jegliches Sein beherrschen in  
 dem  
 Gottgefühl: Er-Sie!  
 Androgyne!<sup>87</sup>

Yet there is nothing of this decadent *frisson* in Trakl's poetry, not even in *Sammlung 1909*. Androgynous fusion only appears as a motif in the later lyric, at

the beginning of 1914. As Heckmann has pointed out, this is a further point of concurrence between Trakl and Weininger,<sup>88</sup> whose philosophy sought an ideal beyond sexuality: "der Mann muß vom Geschlechte sich erlösen, und so, nur so, erlöst er die Frau. *Allein* seine *Keuschheit*, nicht, wie sie wähnt, seine Unkeuschheit, ist ihre Rettung. Freilich geht sie, als *Weib* so unter: aber nur, um aus der Asche neu, verjüngt, als der *reine* Mensch, sich emporzuheben."<sup>89</sup> Trakl, unlike Weininger, believed sexual guilt to be a fundamental human condition, male as well as female, and it is in his later lyric that he explores the possible transfiguration of *die Liebenden* into "ein Geschlecht".

The final version of 'Passion', which appears in *Sebastian im Traum*, contains oblique references to the incestuous relationship:

Dunkle Liebe  
 Eines wilden Geschlechts,  
 ...  
 Unter finsternen Tannen  
 Mischten zwei Wölfe ihr Blut  
 In steinerner Umarmung; <125>

This depiction of incest is far from the decadent atmosphere of 'Blutschuld'; the confrontation of sexual guilt and the search for redemption which may have motivated the earlier poem here find a more profound expression. Many critics have pointed out the significance of the first version of 'Passion', published in the *Brenner*, for an understanding of the elliptical final version;<sup>90</sup> this study, too, will turn to that version of the poem and examine its treatment of the theme of incest.<sup>91</sup>

The setting is a familiar one of sexual violation: the "Abendgarten ... der blaue Teich" <392>. Perhaps the "Totes" for whom Orpheus' lament is sung is the innocent youth, whose death coincides with the sexual awareness of the protagonist, Abel slaughtered by Cain; there are links, too, with Elis in the image of a

"Ruhendes unter hohen Bäumen" <392>, another of Trakl's protagonists who have fallen victim to their own sexuality. The suffering of the youth is described in the following stanza, as is the pain of the mother, who has brought her child into a world of sin:<sup>92</sup>

Weh, der schmalen Gestalt des Knaben,  
Die purpurn erglüht,  
Schmerzlicher Mutter, in blauem Mantel  
Verhüllend ihre heilige Schmach. <392>

At the same time, the evocation of Mary and Christ here cannot be ignored; as in 'Blutschuld', poet sees in his own mother the Virgin Mary. The poet's hope that the protagonist might die in childhood innocence is in vain; as one who is born, he is inevitably born into original sin, and cannot avoid tasting its fruit. Here again is a strong parallel to Adam, the first man, who brought guilt into the world by eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge:

Weh, des Geborenen, daß er stürbe,  
Eh er die glühende Frucht,  
Die bittere der Schuld genossen. <392>

If the protagonist is Adam, then the sister is Eve, who also is to be mourned, for they are mutual participants in the sin of incest. Theirs is the realm of night and sin; the golden light of day departs from them, as did God's blessing from Adam and Eve in their expulsion from the Garden of Eden. The prayer of 'Blutschuld' is echoed with genuine fervour here:

O, daß frömmer die Nacht käme,  
Kristus. <392>

As Christ had prayed to his Father in another garden, Gethsemane, to let his suffering pass from him, so the protagonist here prays to Christ to release him from the suffering of his own sexuality and sin. The subjunctive tense, however, betrays the futility of this hope. As Christ, the one sinless man, had to endure the suffering of the cross, so the protagonist must endure his suffering before he can be released from his guilt.

There is an echo of the imagery of *Blaubart* in the opening lines of the middle section of the poem:

"Purpurn erblüht im Herzen die Höllenblume" <393>. This is the blossom of sexual desire, which opens in the proximity of darkness and death. Emphasizing the mutuality of their guilt, there is no indication if this stanza refers to male or female protagonist. The shared sin finds further expression in the androgynous fusion of male and female:

Über seufzende Wasser geneigt  
Sieh dein Gemahl: Antlitz starrend von Aussatz  
Und ihr Haar flattert wild in der Nacht. <393>

There is deliberate ambiguity here, giving the impression that both male and female are bending over the waters; that the leprous face and the voluptuous hair belong to them both; that they share one reflection in the water, a motif which is frequent in Trakl's poetry.

There is none of the sexual violation of the earlier poetry here; the depiction of the incestuous act is one of complicity in sin:

Zwei Wölfe im finsternen Wald  
Mischten wir unser Blut in steinerner Umarmung  
Und die Sterne unseres Geschlechts fielen auf uns.  
<393>

Where the wolf is elsewhere a symbol of violent male sexuality, here male and female share the same intensity of desire. This is a far more powerful image of the sexual act than the excesses of decadence. What is also of great significance here is the sense of bearing the guilt of generations, like the protagonist in *Traum und Umnachtung*, who is under the "Fluch des entarteten Geschlechts" <147>. Their sin is seen as the culmination of all sin since the Fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden; it rises above the level of personal guilt. The male and female here, whom we can take to be brother and sister, have become representatives of humankind, a latter-day Adam and Eve "im verlorenen Garten" <394>. The sin of incest is also



significant here, for as Eve was created from Adam's side, so they were, in the truest sense, "one flesh".

Their sin is followed by an immediate awareness of death: "O, der Stachel des Todes" <393>. The image of the thorn is both one of phallic aggression and penitence; here it occurs significantly at the "Kreuzweg", not only the via dolorosa of Christ, but also the place where they must choose which path to follow. At this point, they are still clearly in the realm of sin:

Verblichene schauen wir uns am Kreuzweg  
 Und in silbernen Augen  
 Spiegeln sich die schwarzen Schatten unserer  
 Gräßliches Lachen, das unsere Münder zerbrach. Wildnis,  
<393>

This common guilt, however, is contrasted by the separate fates which follow. Like Johanna, the "finstere Schläferin" <458>, the sister's path is through a "dornige Wildnis", which causes blood to flow from her feet; this atoning power cleanses her sin and she is able to rise above the blood, like Christ walking on water:

Auf purpurner Flut  
 Schaukelt wachend die silberne Schläferin. <393>

The brother's fate is a transformation reminiscent of that of Heinrich von Ofterdingen;<sup>93</sup> like Elis, he experiences an existence both as violator (the phallic tree, bearing the snowy leprosy of sexual guilt) and victim (the "Wild", bleeding from a sexual wound). Yet this is not sufficient to atone for his sin; he returns to his previous existence: "Wieder ein schweigender Stein" <394>. Stoniness as a sign of sexual guilt was the result of his incestuous desire ("in steinerner Umarmung"), which was also characterized by silence: "das unsere Münder zerbrach" <393>.

The male protagonist is unable to overcome his own sin; yet he is cleansed by divine grace:<sup>94</sup>

Da in dorniger Kammer  
 Das aussätzige Antlitz von dir fiel. <394>

Like Helian, he must realize that any atonement which

he himself can provide is imperfect; but where the figure of Christ features in 'Helian' as a mediator between man and God, here the figure who emerges from the "Kreuzweg" to atone through her blood is the sister. It is the power of her penitence which brings release for the protagonist, and the gift of song is returned. Yet there still seems to be an incestuous undercurrent to their redeemed state, in the dark rapture with which he now worships her:

Nächtlich tönt der Seele einsames Saitenspiel  
 Dunkler Verzückerung  
 Voll zu den silbernen Füßen der Büsserin  
 Im verlorenen Garten;  
 Und an dorniger Hecke knospet der blaue Frühling.  
 <394>

This, then, is the Fall of Adam and Eve redeemed; they have returned to the lost garden; there are signs of a new spiritual covenant in the blossoming thorn. Finally, the poem closes with an image of night overcome:

Unter dunklen Olivenbäumen  
 Tritt der rosige Engel  
 Des Morgens aus dem Grab der Liebenden. <394>

Here is restoration and forgiveness through penitence. One may also interpret this return to Eden as the dawning of a new age, where humankind is no longer male and female, but "ein Geschlecht", an androgynous fusion of the "Liebende" into one "rosiger Engel", without sexuality and therefore without sin.<sup>95</sup> The colour "rosig" is the red of sexual lust transformed into a purer condition. This is the first hint of an androgynous solution to the problem of sexuality.

'Abendländisches Lied' is the only poem where androgynous fusion of male and female is presented as a realizable solution to sinful sexuality. The poem opens with a sense of timelessness and impersonality, which suggests the poet's soul, as a representative of the entire human race, hovering before God: "O der Seele nächtlicher Flügelschlag" <119>. Thus he is involved in the re-enactment of human history, a complete picture

of the positive and the negative, from times of peace and piety to times of decline and war. Sexuality ("das rote Wild"; "Fallen purpurner Früchte" <119>) has always been present, but in idyllic times was held in control; blood has always been shed, but previously was accepted as a sacrifice or a zealous act of religious fervour.

This sense of harmony is broken by the "bittere Stunde des Untergangs". Reflection brings recognition of mutual sin and guilt: "Da wir ein steinernes Antlitz in schwarzen Wassern beschaun" <119>. There is already a hint of the fusion to come in the stress on the *mutual* recognition and acceptance of guilt, as two faces become one. This is the key; as in 'Passion', it is only through coming to terms with their guilt together that male and female protagonists can seek redemption. Here, from the downward movement of "Untergang", and the bowing of the head over dark waters, the poem turns around the conjunction "Aber" to conclude with a movement upwards, out of sin:<sup>96</sup>

Aber strahlend heben die silbernen Lider die  
Liebenden:  
 Ein Geschlecht. Weihrauch strömt von rosigen  
Kissen  
 Und der süße Gesang der Auferstandenen. <119>

The race which is "verflucht" because of its disparateness in *Traum und Umnachtung*, here finds salvation in unity. The implication here is undeniably of an androgynous union of "die Liebende", male and female, implicitly brother and sister.<sup>97</sup> It was this release from the torment of sexual desire which Trakl believed to be one of the essential doctrines of Christ: "Es ist unerhört ... wie Christus mit jedem einfachen Wort die tiefsten Fragen der Menschheit löst! Kann man die Frage der Gemeinschaft zwischen Mann und Weib restloser lösen, als durch das Gebot: *Sie sollen Ein Fleisch sein?*"<sup>98</sup> Trakl may have had in mind a passage from *Geschlecht und Charakter* which claims on the basis of an Apocryphal gospel that the resurrected body would be an androgynous being:

In diesem Sinne hat Christus, nach dem Zeugnis des Kirchenvaters Klemens, zur Salome gesprochen . . . : so lang werde der Tod wahren, als die Weiber gebären, und nicht eher die Wahrheit geschaut werden, als bis aus zweien eins, aus Mann und Weib ein drittes Selbes, weder Mann noch Weib, werde geworden sein.<sup>99</sup>

Without the burden of sexuality, sin and guilt are overcome; incense replaces the stench of decay, there are rosy cushions in the place of "blutige Linnen" and a "schmutzig Bette" <14> - one thinks too of the connotations of rosy as the red of lust transfigured - and there is sweet song where once was silence. Resurrection, the greatest triumph of all, has replaced the "bittere Stunde des Untergangs".<sup>100</sup>

*Traum und Umnachtung* portrays a drama of *Lustmord* and damnation. Guilt is again both personal and universal; the opening sentence sets the family within the context of the whole race: the father is old and ineffectual, the mother is uncaring and unloving, and the boy alone bears the burden of the guilt of generations.<sup>101</sup> This is far from the decadent concept of inherent degeneracy, such as is found in *Verlassenheit*; there is throughout a very real and anguished sense of sin. The cause of the guilt is traced in the following passage, which returns to the boy's childhood, characterized by disease, isolation, and an obsession with death and decay. Perhaps, too, there are hints at the incestuous relationship which will develop from the "verschwiegene Spiele im Sternengarten" <147>; this theme is expanded in the following sentence: "Aus blauem Spiegel trat die schmale Gestalt der Schwester und er stürzte wie tot ins Dunkel" <147>. Seeing her reflection, he recognizes the nature of his desire, the cause of his illness and suffering: "Fieberträume", while not specifically mentioned, are obviously symptoms of his "Krankheit".<sup>102</sup> Like Herbert, he tries to flee from his sinful sexuality in vain; he is already "wie tot", and

his very attempt to flee takes him deeper into the realm of darkness and night. His sinful desire is visible around his mouth: "Nachts brach sein Mund gleich einer roten Frucht auf und die Sterne erglänzten über seiner sprachlosen Trauer" <147>. With the awakening of sexuality comes the loss of innocence and the loss of the poetic voice; he is unable to give relief to his suffering through expression.

His childhood now becomes a time of transition, Herbert becomes Blaubart; he alternates between a state of arrogant, isolated piety, where creativity is possible, and growing sexuality, characterized by violent desires. The latter takes over, culminating in the crime in a garden: "Haß verbrannte sein Herz, Wollust, da er im grünenden Sommergarten dem schweigenden Kind Gewalt tat, in dem strahlenden sein umnachtetes Antlitz erkannte" <148>. This has been interpreted as rape of the sister, in whom the protagonist recognizes his own visage, as he had seen her in his own reflection in the opening passage; while this is certainly a possibility, one must not forget the motif of the murder of the innocent self as sexual awareness grows. The violation of the sister is also the death of his own innocent, passive self.<sup>103</sup>

The protagonist falls fully into the darkness of night at the end of the first section of the poem: "und die Schatten der Nacht fielen steinern auf ihn" <148>. The second section focuses on his guilt and sin. Images of violation of a female victim ("eine wilde Katze ... eine Taube ... ein Judenmädchen" <148>) and of a blasphemous, hedonistic religiosity which mocks his former "feuerige Frömmigkeit" <147> with its masochistic delight ("Süße Martern verzehrten sein Fleisch" <148>) reach a climax in the encounter with the sister and their mutual sin. The fact that she appears in a hair-shirt adds further blasphemy here, for she shows no signs of the penitence which is elsewhere associated with her. She appears rather in

the guise of *femme fatale*: "ein flammender Dämon" <149>. The final image of this section is of mutual fall: "Beim Erwachen erloschen zu ihren Häuptern die Sterne" <149>.

As in 'Passion' and elsewhere, the personal guilt of the brother and sister is universalized; following Adam and Eve, they become representatives of human sinfulness: "O des verfluchten Geschlechts" <149>. The body in the thorn-bush is a further reminder of his guilt; as in 'De profundis', this is the innocent victim of sexual crime, the child that was raped "im grünenden Sommergarten" <148> and, as such, a reminder of the violation to his own innocent self. This sight causes him the pain of recognition, but he is still incapable of overcoming this through poetic expression: "Er aber stand vergraben in sein stählernes Haar stumm und leidend vor ihr" <149>. Like the monk-Helian, his life becomes one of isolation and sexual guilt: "Nachtlang wohnte er in kristallener Höhle und der Aussatz wuchs silbern auf seiner Stirne" <149>. Towards the end of this section, however, the poet finds his song through his madness: "Ein umnachteter Seher sang jener an verfallenen Mauern und seine Stimme verschlang Gottes Wind" <149>. His song at the walls of Eden, the garden from which humankind has been banished, is as yet an ineffectual atonement, for the poet is still caught up in the evil of the human race.

This section closes with bleak images of universal guilt; the fate of the family is characterized by fear, horror, futility, violence, madness and evil. The "Wollust des Todes" holds sway over the degenerate race, who dwell in the dark and sinful realm of the night: "O ihr Kinder eines dunklen Geschlechts. Silbern schimmern die bösen Blumen des Bluts an jenes Schläfe, der kalte Mond in seinen zerbrochenen Augen. O, der Nächtlichen; o, der Verfluchten" <149>.

The final section of the poem opens with the temporary escape afforded by intoxication; this is,

however an ineffectual release, for death is the inevitable result of sin: "Bitter ist der Tod, die Kost der Schuldbeladenen" <150>. The conjunction "aber", however, seems to signify a different fate for the protagonist, who has now found his voice and is able to overcome his suffering through Orphic song: "Aber leise sang jener im grünen Schatten des Hollunders, da er aus bösen Träumen erwachte; süße Gespiele nahte ihm ein rosiger Engel, daß er, ein sanftes Wild, zur Nacht hinschlummerte; und er sah das Sternenantlitz der Reinheit" <150>. Where he was previously "ein flammender Wolf ... ein wildes Tier", he is now "ein sanftes Wild" who has survived the "bösen Träume" of the night, and the rosy angel which had fled from his presence now returns as a sign of spiritual harmony. A variant emphasizes divine grace as the source of his peace: "daß er versühnter in Gott hinschlummerte" <II.275>. This idyllic passage is separated from the general fate of humankind by the double use of the conjunction "aber"; yet there is also the suggestion that the harmony found by the mad seer is not so much based on reconciliation, but that it, too, might be simply the product of a narcotic vision: "Silbern blühte der Mohn auch, trug in grüner Kapsel unsere nächtigen Sternenträume" <150>.

Whether real or imaginary, this reconciliation is not the fate of humankind: "Aber stille trat am Abend der Schatten des Toten in den trauernden Kreis des Seinen..." <150>. The seer, now dead and purified through grace, returns to those he has left behind; but while his song was able to overcome his own guilt, it is powerless to atone for the guilt of the race. Incest is singled out as the crime in this travesty of the Last Supper: "Schweigende versammelten sich jene am Tisch; Sterbende brachen sie mit wächsernen Händen das Brot, das blutende. Weh der steinernen Augen der Schwester, da beim Mahle ihr Wahnsinn auf die nächtige Stirne des Bruders trat, der Mutter unter leidenden

Händen das Brot zu Stein ward" <150>. The sister again appears as the more active; here, too, is the motif of the suffering of the mother who must witness the sin of her children. She appears as a travesty of Christ, offering her son a stone when he asks for bread. Religion has lost all meaning, there is no hope of redemption either through grace or poetic expression; neither Christ nor Orpheus are effectual here.

The brother in his state of sin seeks peace in nature, but seeking this alone, without the help of the sister as in 'Passion', is futile. He cannot act as redeemer; unlike Christ, who is triumphant over sin in the desert and who is at home in his father's house, the brother cannot follow the path of redemption:

Steinige Öde fand er am Abend, Geleite eines  
Toten in das dunkle Haus des Vaters.  
Purpurne Wolke umwölkte sein Haupt, daß er  
schweigend über sein eigenes Blut und  
Bildnis herfiel, ein mondenes Antlitz;  
steinern ins Leere hinsank, da in  
zerbrochenem Spiegel, ein sterbender  
Jüngling, die Schwester erschien; die Nacht  
das verfluchte Geschlecht verschlang. <150>

He is granted neither the vision of recognition nor the voice of poetic expression. The purple cloud of his suffering descends as a travestied halo around his head. The final image is again one of fusion; but here is not the redemption of "Ein Geschlecht" in 'Abendländisches Lied', but rather mutual damnation. In attacking his own reflection, he recognizes the face of his sister as a dying youth. He is unable to destroy or overcome his incestuous, narcissistic desire; guilt leads here to eternal damnation.<sup>104</sup>

Within the profound and complex resonance of *Offenbarung und Untergang*, the theme of incest and the movement towards redemption are central. Here, the narrator is again a universal voice, representative of sinful humankind. The following examination of this prose poem will concentrate on these issues, showing



that the positive interpretation favoured by many critics is essentially flawed.<sup>105</sup>

The poem opens with the protagonist receiving a travesty of Christ's Revelation to St John. The protagonist, sleep-walking, passes stony rooms. One thinks here of the monk Helian in 'Lange lauscht der Mönch ...', returning to the monastic cells after his period of isolation in the "blaue Höhle der Schwermut" <421>.

The protagonist lies down in this cell in his attempt to find release from his sins ("und da ich frierend aufs Lager hinsank" <168>), but rather than a vision of Christ, he is haunted by the memory of the sister as a reminder of his sin: "stand zu Häupten wieder der schwarze Schatten der Fremdlingin" <168>. He bows his head to hide from this recognition, and to seek release in silent prayer; like the brother in *Traum und Umnachtung*, he does not have the freedom to give expression to his suffering: "und schweigend verbarg ich das Antlitz in den langsamen Händen" <168>. Although he is aware of the spiritual harmony of his surroundings - the blue hyacinth, the prayer, the tears of compassion wept for the sins of the world - he is equally aware of his own past and his own guilt - the death of his father, the lament of his mother, the "schwarze Hölle in meinem Herzen" <168>. This recognition is accompanied by a deep sense of timelessness, of universal and eternal guilt: "Minute schimmernder Stille" <168>.

If we are to accept the interpretation of his environment as a monastery, then it follows that the "unsägliches Antlitz" which protrudes from the wall is a statue of Christ, the one perfect man who died so that humankind might return to a relationship with God: "ein strahlender Jüngling - die Schönheit eines heimkehrenden Geschlechts" <168>.

The second section looks in more detail at the nature of his guilt. He appears as a dark, silent

figure of sin, one who is in desperate need of redemption, yet one for whom Biblical atonement seems inadequate: neither the "strahlender Leichnam" of Christ above him,<sup>106</sup> nor the "totes Lamm", perhaps his own innocence which he has slaughtered and which lies as a sacrifice at his feet has the power to release him from his dark isolation. Both the covenants of the Old and New Testaments seem inadequate here. It is against this background that the figure of the sister appears: "Aus verwesender Bläue trat die bleiche Gestalt der Schwester und also sprach ihr blutender Mund: Stich schwarzer Dorn" <168>. The fact that her mouth is bloody indicates the violation which has taken place; her cry is both masochistic and demanding of retribution. She appears then as both Maria and Johanna of the *Dramenfragment*. Blood flows from her feet; we think of Christ's feet nailed to the cross, but also, as we know from the *Dramenfragment*, of the stony path of the "dornige Wildnis". As in *Traum und Umnachtung* and 'Passion', this is the path where penitence is sought. Here the blood is "blühend", a sign that the sister's repentance is genuine. Her vision ends with the memory of the one who violated her, provoked no doubt by the confrontation with the brother: "Einbrach ein roter Schatten mit flammendem Schwert in das Haus, floh mit schneeiger Stirne. O bitterer Tod" <168>. This final admission of the pain of death suggests that her penitence is not yet complete, for she has not yet found peace and spiritual harmony.

The brother's dark reply shows his affiliation with Kermor, the brother-violator, in a speech sated with images of violence and violation: "Meinem Rappen brach ich im nächtigen Wald das Genick, da aus seinen purpurnen Augen der Wahnsinn sprang; die Schatten der Ulmen fielen auf mich, das blaue Lachen des Quells und die schwarze Kühle der Nacht, da ich ein wilder Jäger aufjagte ein schneeiges Wild; in steinerner Hölle mein Antlitz erstarb" <168-69>.

The blood which falls into his glass is that of the sister, who now replaces the radiant corpse of Christ above the brother, her blood replacing Christ's blood shed on the cross. Although the protagonist drinks this as a personal form of Communion, he finds no release. Its bitter taste has a quality of death, bitter because he is responsible for the sister's wounds, as humankind is responsible for Christ's shed blood. The universal resonance of the apparently subjective experience is obvious here.

Rather than provoking contrition, the blood from the sister's wound arouses the protagonist's sexual desire: "und fiel ein feuriger Regen auf mich" <169>. The variants ("Drache" and "Wurm" <II.316>) emphasize the phallic nature of his reaction. There is an echo of Blaubart's song here, which contains the variant line: "Ein Drach hat ein lustig Kindlein gefreit" <II.477>, and of Kermor's anguished cry in the *Dramenfragment*: "Laß ab - schwarzer Wurm" <459>. Like Blaubart, the sight of blood fires the protagonist's lust:

Lust peitschen Haß, Verwesung und Tod  
Entsprungen dem Blute, gellend und rot  
Komm zitternde Braut! <444>

The protagonist becomes an outcast, silent in his guilt, seeking not forgiveness but isolation and peace in nature: "Am Saum des Waldes will ich ein Schweigendes gehn ... Zur Seite geleitet stille die grüne Saat, begleitet auf moosigen Waldespfaden scheu das Reh" <169>. This uneasy alliance with nature is broken, however, when, like the protagonist of *Traum und Umnachtung*, he too descends the path of penitence: "Aber da ich den Felsenpfad hinabstieg, ergriff mich der Wahnsinn und ich schrie laut in der Nacht" <169>. In seeking the spiritual, he is forced to recognize his sin, a recognition which leads to madness. Here, there is no fusion of brother and sister in his reflection in the pond, but rather a complete loss of identity: "und da ich mit silbernen Fingern mich über die schweigenden Wasser bog, sah ich, daß mich mein Antlitz verlassen"

<169>. The relationship between brother and sister throughout this piece is far from one of unity; the sister, his alter-ego and object of his incestuous, narcissistic desire, has abandoned him after his crime of violation. She is only present in the disembodied voice which again calls for retribution: "Und die weiße Stimme sprach zu mir: Töte dich!" <169>. This is the cry of the abused Johanna in the *Dramenfragment*: "Mein Blut über dich - da du brachtest in meinen Schlaf!" <459>.

This split between sinful brother and assaulted sister is intensified by the apparent allegiance between the sister and the protagonist's innocent self, the figure of Abel who also returns from death to accuse Cain: "Seufzend erhob sich eines Knaben Schatten in mir und sah mich strahlend aus kristallinen Augen an" <169>. Where brother and sister had been one in guilt or one in redemption, they are now separated by the brother's guilt. In 'Passion', this parting "am Kreuzweg" led eventually to reconciliation; here, as we shall see, is a less fortunate conclusion.

Although the protagonist has been forced to confront his own guilt, he does not accept the truth of this "Offenbarung", and still attempts to ignore this insight: "Friedlose Wanderschaft durch wildes Gestein ferne den Abendweilern, heimkehrenden Herden" <169>. This cannot, however, bring peace, which only comes from recognition and renunciation of the violent, criminal nature of sexuality, and through poetic expression. He is visited for the third time by the sister (one remembers that Peter denied Christ three times, and was asked by his risen Lord three times to affirm his love); her appearance is at times quiet, but, more in keeping with her righteous anger, she appears "rasend im Frühlingsgewitter" <169>, demanding retribution:<sup>108</sup> "erschrecken schaurige Blitze die nächtige Seele, zerreißen deine Hände die atemlose Brust mir" <169>.

In a variant paragraph the protagonist, like Kermor, is taken in by the *Pächter*, and given bread by the Johanna-sister figure: "Edler Mann, der freundlich mich aufnahm in sein abendlich Haus, daß nicht des Friedlosen Schritt die sanften Tauben scheuche von deiner Schwelle. Stille brennet nun im kühlen Gemach das Licht und du teilst mit gebenden Händen das Brot <II.317>". Here is the reconciliation which could not be found in the sexual anguish of the *Dramenfragment*; here is not "das versteinerte Brot" <456> of damnation, but bread offered in love and forgiveness. Again, we see a parallel between the sister figure and Christ at the Last Supper.

The penultimate paragraph has generally been interpreted in a positive light which is entirely out of keeping with the tone of the poem.<sup>109</sup> Although a cursory reading might suggest this, closer analysis shows that this section irrevocably cuts the protagonist off from any hope of redemption. After the sister's third visitation, the protagonist has accepted his guilt. He himself plays no part in his journey into the spiritual realm; the fact that he is still closely associated with the twilight garden, silence and night warns of the "Untergang" which is to come. There is no indication of any penitence on his part; the avenging figure of the sister has driven the "schwarze Gestalt des Bösen" <170> from him, but his peace does not come from within, and is, therefore, only temporary: "und süßer Frieden rührte die versteinerte Stirne mir" <170>. Significantly, peace touches, but does not rest on, his forehead which still bears the stoniness of his sexual guilt. While in contemplation of this divine realm, he comes close to true peace, a momentary turning from his evil nature as he savours the peace and beauty of the spiritual realm: "und da ich anschauend hinstarb, starben Angst und der Schmerzen tiefster in mir" <170>.<sup>110</sup> Yet he remains silent throughout. The spiritual ascent at the end of this

paragraph is marked by its obvious exclusion of the protagonist: "und es hob sich der blaue Schatten des Knaben strahlend im Dunkel, sanfter Gesang; hob sich auf mordenen Flügeln über die grünenden Wipfel, kristallene Klippen das weiße Antlitz der Schwester" <170>. As previously, the innocent youth, who alone has the power of gentle song, and the sister are united, while the sinful protagonist is left outside. The sister is now released from the thorny paths of her penitential wandering and torment.

In stark contrast to this dual ascension, the protagonist descends: "Mit silbernen Sohlen stieg ich die dornigen Stufen hinab und ich trat ins kalkgetünchte Gemach" <170>. His is the path of suffering and penitence until he reaches a state of genuine contrition, when his guilt will be transfigured and his suffering silence will become song. Only the silver soles of his feet are reminder of his brief sojourn in the spiritual realm. Again, he chooses to ignore what has been revealed to him, denying it the power of expression, returning to the realm of his sexual guilt: "und ich verbarg in purpurnen Linnen schweigend das Haupt" <170>. A variant suggests that he has returned to the locus of his crime with its "blutigen Linnen" <II.319>.

The final image is a bleak, harsh depiction of stillbirth, even more so in the variants with their "stinkenden Leichnam" <II.319>. Far from being the birth of the spiritual in him, this is the death of all hope.<sup>111</sup> The broken arms remind of Christ on the cross, the soldiers in 'Im Osten', and the sister of the second paragraph: "Ach noch tönen von wilden Gewittern die silbernen Arme mir" <168>. But the arms are "zerbrochen", an imperfect atonement, which is rejected from the spiritual realm and descends amidst the snowy leprosy of sin: "und es warf die Erde einen kindlichen Leichnam aus, ein mordenes Gebilde, das langsam aus meinem Schatten trat, mit zerbrochenen Armen steinerne

Stürze hinabsank, flockiger Schnee" <170>. This is reminiscent of the negative imagery of bitterness and futility in 'Föhn':

... Nächte,  
Erfüllt von Tränen, feurigen Engeln.  
Silbern zerschellt an kahler Mauer ein kindlich  
Gerippe. <121>

The dead child is in stark contrast to the figure of Christ in 'Gesang einer gefangenen Amsel', whose arms stretch out in forgiveness attained through the acceptance of suffering:

So leise blutet Demut,  
Tau, der langsam tropft vom blühenden Dorn.  
Strahlender Arme Erbarmen  
Umfängt ein brechendes Herz. <135>

The arms which might have opened in redemption are broken; there is no God to take away the snow of leprosy and sin, as betokened Helian's release from madness. One remembers, too, that Dante, in his *Inferno*, compared the ashes of hell-fire to snow in his own revelation:

Herd upon herd I saw of naked souls  
whose tears declared the depth of their distress  
...  
Broad drifting flakes of fire rained slowly down  
across the whole expanse of sand, like snow  
in mountain places on a windless day!<sup>12</sup>

The bleak ending of *Offenbarung und Untergang* is more reminiscent of the divine judgement in the unpublished poem 'Gericht':

Tote Geburt; auf grünem Grund  
Blauer Blumen Geheimnis und Stille.  
Wahnsinn öffnet den purpurnen Mund:  
Dies irae - Grab und Stille. <316>

In *Offenbarung und Untergang* the situation of 'Passion' and 'Abendländisches Lied' is reversed. There the lovers find unity in mutual recognition of guilt and genuine repentance. Here, there is no indication whatsoever of union between brother and sister; the relationship is one of violation and vengeance. Where there is no unity, no mutual acceptance of guilt (here denied by the protagonist), there is no androgynous birth into spiritual freedom. The dead child has

characteristics of both the sister ("ein mondenes Antlitz") and the brother ("das langsam aus meinem Schatten trat"), but it is irredeemably doomed.

"Schwester stürmischer Schwermut": The Sister as Redeemer

There is little hope of redemption for the male protagonist who is still dominated by his sexual desires. Increasingly in the later lyric, the poet looks towards the figure of the sister, and the hope of hermaphroditic union to release him from his guilt. To what extent this is a realizable hope will be examined in this final section.

The sister appears at the end of 'Ruh und Schweigen' in the first of her hermaphroditic guises:

Ein strahlender Jüngling  
Erscheint die Schwester in Herbst und schwarzer  
Verwesung. <113>

Her radiance provides a direct contrast to the dark decay of the protagonist's sinful world; it may be that she appears to rescue him - this certainly must be his hope - but the close of the poem leaves that hope unrealized. The preceding stanzas focus on the protagonist's sinful sexuality and despair. His is a realm of darkness, where the light of the moon as male sexuality has replaced that of the female sun. Although he still maintains links with the spiritual, he is unable to pull himself out of his sin and the purple sleep of erotic dreams. As the death of the sun brought the birth of the moon from the pond, the locus of sexual violation, so the poem closes with the hope of a return of female light, this time in the guise of the sister as *Sonnenjüngling* over the moon-like stone. Certainly, the implication is that her radiance is a



sign of guilt transfigured, her hermaphroditism a sign that she has overcome the strife of sexuality;<sup>113</sup> whether or not this can redeem the male protagonist is uncertain.<sup>114</sup>

In the last poems before his death, Trakl repeatedly calls on the sister, or a related androgynous figure, in his hour of suffering. Yet the solution of 'Passion' remains unique; nowhere in the *Brenner*-publications is the suggestion that she can overcome guilt on his behalf. His desire is no longer to be saved, but simply to be released from a suffering which he sees as endless; an overwhelming anguish which is found in the testimony of his letters.

'Das Herz' is a bleak poem expressing utter desolation and the bitter fear of death. As we have seen before, the time of crisis is prophetically centred round "Novemberabend". There is no relief from suffering, no reconciliation with the spiritual; the hope in the opening line of the second stanza is crushed by the harsh statement of fact which follows:

Des Abends blaue Taube  
Brachte nicht Versöhnung. <154>

Yet through this darkness and decay comes the "goldne Gestalt/ Der Jünglingin" <154>. In the light of 'Ruh und Schweigen', we must assume that this is the transfigured sister, again, a hermaphroditic figure who has overcome sexuality, the cause of guilt. The sister, who was "ein sterbender Jüngling" at the end of *Traum und Umnachtung*, has, by dying to guilty sexuality, transfigured her incestuous love. For we can assume that if the brother's incestuous desire is narcissistic, then so too is that of the sister. Now the male and female elements of her desire have fused into one, removing the guilty passion for the brother as alter-ego. Her appearance is accompanied by the signs of her triumph over male sexuality and phallic aggression:

Umgeben von bleichen Monden,  
Herbstlicher Hofstaat,  
Zerknickten schwarze Tannen  
Im Nachtsturm, <154-55>

The final ambiguity of the poem lies in the point of reference of the closing lines:

O Herz  
Hinüberschimmernd in schneeige Kühle. <155>

Is this the *Jünglingin* making her final appearance in this world before fading into the realm of the shades and the spirits, where the protagonist will encounter her again in 'Grodek'? Or is it the protagonist's "wildes Herz" of the poem's title and opening, reconciled now, through the vision of the sister, if not to salvation, then at least to death, which he had feared? Certainly, there is no implication of salvation or release from sin in the image of "schneeige Kühle", attributes of sexual guilt throughout the oeuvre;<sup>15</sup> the suggestion here is rather of a release from suffering into oblivion, a wish which is expressed in the early cycle, *Gesang zur Nacht*:

Daß sich die letzte Qual an mir erfülle,  
Ich wehr' euch nicht, ihr feindlich dunklen  
Mächte.  
Ihr seid die Straße hin zur großen Stille,  
Darauf wir schreiten in die kühlest Nächte. <223>

A variant of 'Das Herz' ends with the drunken submission which we have seen in 'Unterwegs', again emphasizing release into oblivion rather than redemption: "Betrunken/Sank jener unter Sternen hin" <II.287>.

'Nachtergebung' is another testimony to the fact that he has accepted his fate; his only desire now is to be engulfed in oblivion, in the female womb of the night: "Mönchin! schließ mich in dein Dunkel!" <164>. Again, this is an echo of the *Gesang zur Nacht* of *Sammlung 1909*: "O Nacht, ich bin bereit!" <226>. For the poet, "die Mönchin" is surely the hermaphroditic sister, the female who has overcome the male lust of the monk, replacing Christ, as dew falls like blood to wash him; the Christian cross, by way of contrast,

stands at a distance, like the dark, foreboding church of other poems, a harsh reminder of divine judgement. The poet accepts his state of sin; he has eaten from the forbidden fruit which leads to death. His only hope of escape into the oblivion of the night is through narcotic intoxication, with the hope that this might lead to the death which he knows is inevitable, a haunting premonition of his death some months later in a hospital in Cracow:

Mondeswolke! Schwärzlich fallen  
 Wilde Früchte nachts vom Baum  
 Und zum Grabe wird der Raum  
 Und zum Traum dies Erdenwallen. <164>

The most harrowing expression of his anguish, however, is surely 'Klage', written in Galicia in September 1914. Out of the deepest, apocalyptic despair, he calls explicitly on his sister not to redeem, nor even to alleviate his suffering, but simply to witness his demise:<sup>116</sup>

Schwester stürmischer Schwermut  
 Sieh ein ängstlicher Kahn versinkt  
 Unter Sternen,  
 Dem schweigenden Antlitz der Nacht. <166>

The poet, who has come to see himself as a representative of the human race, here experiences the entire anguish of the annihilation which, although not yet complete, is inevitable:

Des Menschen goldnes Bildnis  
 Verschlänge die eisige Woge  
 Der Ewigkeit. <166>

The horror which Trakl experienced on the Eastern Front has given his poetry the nihilism towards which it had been slowly gravitating. There is still the universal sense of guilt and damnation, but this is no longer purely sexual; rather, as in most of the poetry written at the Front, it expresses the utter futility of the carnage of war and a real sense of apocalyptic destruction: "Alle Straßen münden in schwarze Verwesung" <167>. Had this line from 'Grodok' been the conclusion of his last poem then his despair would have been complete. Yet here, too, the sister is a source of

comfort, if somewhat ambiguous as a figure of redemption.

The poem oscillates between the wrathful male God and the palliative realm of the night. The hope of redemption through poetry, which has been sought and denied throughout the oeuvre, seems finally and irrefutably rejected, as gunfire replaces song: "Am Abend tönen die herbstlichen Wälder/ Von tödlichen Waffen" <167>. As the soldiers die, they are met, not by God, but by the female realm of the night: "Umfängt die Nacht/ Sterbende Krieger". The male God, on the other hand, is gathering not the soldiers, but their blood:

Doch stille sammelt im Weidengrund  
Rotes Gewölk, darin ein zürnender Gott wohnt  
Das vergoßne Blut sich, mondne Kühle <167>

Blood, since Old Testament times, has been regarded as a holy commodity, which has above all the power of atonement. Although the hope of redemption through this innocent bloodshed remains a tenuous one, it is there. Beyond the bleak view from the *Kreuzweg*, where all roads lead to black decay, is a release from suffering through death. Here it is the sister, already closely associated with the realm of the night, who is waiting to greet the dead heroes, a role which she has already performed in 'Die Schwermut':

Herbstesnacht so kühle kommt,  
Erglänzt mit Sternen  
Über zerbrochenem Männergebein  
Die stille Mönchin. <161>

Gretl, too, believed that she would be united with her brother in an afterlife, a wish which she expressed in a poem written shortly after his death:

Einst wird ein Tag voll Freude sein  
Da schreiten wir durch den trunkenen Hain  
- Einst wird ein Tag voll Freude sein  
An solchem Tag will ich Dich frei'n  
Und ward uns Freude aus tiefstem Leid  
Dann feiern wir unsere hohe Zeit...<sup>117</sup>

As in 'Das Herz', the transfigured sister exists for Trakl in a realm where male sexuality has been overcome, where the guilt which arises out of the



## CHAPTER FOUR: PERVERSE RELIGIOSITY AND BLASPHEMY

Eintönig ist das Gute, schal und bleich,  
Allein die Sünde ist unendlich reich!<sup>1</sup>

"In der Hölle selbstgeschaffener Leiden": The Suffering Saint

Trakl's adolescence was characterized by his pose as a *poète maudit*; during this time, although he affected to despise most of his peers, he formed a close friendship with a few like-minded young men, with whom he would meet to discuss literature and to recite poetry, including his own early works. Even within this literary circle Trakl was exceptional: "Jeder las sein Geschaffenes vor. Unter den sieben Teilnehmern war Trakl der fruchtbarste und sonderlichste."<sup>2</sup> Bruckbauer recalls only one poem which Trakl wrote whilst a member of this literary group: "ein Gedicht *Der Mönch* ... Es handelte von Brunst und Kasteiung. Eine etwas schwüle Angelegenheit, jedoch vornehmst gestaltet. Es schloß: *Exaudi me, o Maria*."<sup>3</sup> The title of the poem, the content and the final line make it clear that this was an early version of 'Der Heilige', a poem which was included in the planned 1909 collection of early poetry. The "saint" of the title is ensnared by his moral impotence; he is aware of his sin, yet is unable to stop himself. As in 'Blutschuld', this recognition heightens the sense of wrong-doing; the poem itself becomes an aesthetic enjoyment of his own predicament. This poem betrays the obviously decadent mixture of eroticism and religiosity which can be traced back through the French decadents to Baudelaire and Sade,

and yet it is a theme which can be traced throughout Trakl's poetry, as this chapter will show.<sup>4</sup>

Here is also the influence of Wagner: his operas, in particular *Parsifal* and *Tannhäuser* present a form of Christian mysticism with undeniably erotic tones, where there is both an awareness of sin and the hope of redemption. According to Basil, "Trakl hatte eine Vorliebe für die Musikromantik ... In den Pubertätsjahren schwärmte er, vielleicht angeregt durch das literarische Vorbild Baudelaire, für Richard Wagner".<sup>5</sup> Furness has pointed out the decadent element in many of Wagner's works, especially *Parsifal*:

It is this work above all, with its highly questionable fusion of Christian mysticism and blatant sexuality, its holy grail and gaping wound, its imagery of spear and chalice, its incense, castration, flower-maidens and cult of blood, which led Nietzsche to damn Richard Wagner as a 'décadent', as 'une névrose'.<sup>6</sup>

Baudelaire's acute awareness of the juxtaposition of man's attraction towards evil and his desire for salvation was one of the basic concepts of decadence: "Il y a dans tout homme, à toute heure, deux postulations simultanées, l'une vers Dieu, l'autre vers Satan. L'invocation à Dieu, ou spiritualité, est un désir de monter en grade; celle de Satan, ou animalité, est une joie de descendre."<sup>7</sup> The fusion of the religious and the satanic is most blatantly seen in the voluptuous monks and nuns of Sade's *Justine* and *Juliette*, which had their influence on Baudelaire and the decadents. This motif is found in the novels of Huysmans, in particular *Là-Bas*, which portrays in vivid and blasphemous detail the celebration of Black Mass: "un vent de folie secoua la salle. L'aura de la grande hystérie suivit le sacrilège et courba les femmes; pendant que les enfants de chœur encensaient la nudité du pontife, des femmes se ruèrent sur le Pain Eucharistique et, à plat ventre, au pied de l'autel, le griffèrent, arrachèrent des parcelles humides, burent et mangèrent cette divine ordure."<sup>8</sup>

Within the context of German literature, we find this blasphemous religiosity in the works of Przybyszewski, who himself believed that humankind is inherently evil: "Nicht das Böse, sondern das Gute ist Negation ... Das Gute ist die Negation des Lebens denn alles Leben ist böse. Satan ist das Positive, das Ewige an sich ... Denn Satan ist das ewig Böse, und das ewig Böse ist das Leben."<sup>9</sup> The erotic visions of *Androgyne* are characterized by blasphemous, satanic sexuality: "... vielleicht war er in einer verfallenen Katakombe, wo der Satan mit der Bifurka seines Phallus seine Geliebte in unmenschlicher Brunst verbluten ließ, oder einer Krypta einer mittelalterlichen Kapelle, wo gottesschänderische Priester auf dem nackten Leib der Schlossherrin die schwarze Messe feierten..."<sup>10</sup>

The figure of the lustful monk, then, is clearly part of the decadent tradition;<sup>11</sup> within Trakl's oeuvre we have already encountered this figure in its association with lascivious desire. The title figure of 'Lange lauscht der Mönch ...' is guilty of the crime of violation, and in 'Drei Blicke in einen Opal' we find the description of a Black Mass:

Aus Schwarzem bläst der Föhn. Mit Satyrn im Verein  
Sind schlanke Weiblein; Mönche der Wollust bleiche  
Priester,  
Ihr Wahnsinn schmückt mit Lilien sich schön und  
düster  
Und hebt die Hände auf zu Gottes goldenem Schrein.  
<66>

This connection between Christianity and perverse sexuality was not, however, exclusive to decadent literature. The German Romantic writer Novalis understood the relationship between religious zeal and eroticism: "Es ist sonderbar, daß nicht längst die Assoziation von Wollust, Religion, und Grausamkeit die Leute aufmerksam auf ihre innige Verwandtschaft und ihre gemeinschaftliche Tendenz gemacht hat."<sup>12</sup> This is also the subject of Karl Hauer's essay, 'Erotik der Keuschheit', which appeared in the *Fackel* of 5 January



1906, and with which Trakl may well have been familiar.<sup>13</sup> Here he establishes the increased desire for the erotic which results from the fact that it is forbidden:

Das Christentum hat die Sexualität geknechtet und verstümmelt, aber zugleich vergeistigt und so die *Erotik* - wenn auch nur im Hirne der Kranken und der Künstler - verfeinert und kompliziert. Die Idee der Sünde hob das Sexuelle in die Sphäre des Supranaturalen und verlieh ihm einen bisher ungekannten Glanz und Nimbus. In dem Worte 'Sünde' erklingt für den Menschen der christlichen Welt alles Verlockende und Verführerische, alles, wonach sein geheimstes Wünschen schreit. ... Unter Sünde schlechthin versteht nämlich der Christ die Sünde, die Sünde der Sünden, die Unkeuschheit.<sup>14</sup>

Satanism, Hauer argues, following Huysmans and others, is a product of the Christian Church, which is the source of "ungeheure erotische Phantasien ..., neben denen alle sexuellen Tatsächlichkeiten verblissen".<sup>15</sup> He believes that such perverse fantasy is most common among clerics who attempt to lead an ascetic, and therefore unnatural, life. Of importance to Trakl's poetry is in particular his emphasis on *Keuschheit* as a source of torment, as sinful humankind falls ever short of the standard set by the Church:

Es ist nämlich auch die Keuschheit im Grunde ein Apostolat der Sünde. Sie macht das Leben zu einem endlosen Zweikampf zwischen Gott und Satan. Sie fordert eine unablässige Achtsamkeit auf die Fallen und Schlingen des Bösen, die Phantasie des Keuschen ist fortwährend erfüllt von den Bildern der Sünde. Je strenger die Tugend geübt wird, desto mehr wachsen die Begierden, und in dem zerquälten Hirn des Heiligen tauchen von Zeit zu Zeit erotische Visionen auf, die in ihrer halluzinatorischen Kraft die *Erotik Neros* und *Heliogabals* beschämen. Der Heilige nennt es 'Versuchung'.<sup>16</sup>

Trakl's "saint", then, is very much a product of its time. But the reference here is not merely to the

torment of ascetic monks, but to his own emotional state:

Wenn in der Hölle selbstgeschaffener Leiden  
Grausam-unzüchtige Bilder ihn bedrängen <254>

Although this poem is the obvious exception to the highly personal lyric of the *Sammlung 1909*, written in the first person singular, it must be remembered that this poem was possibly written as early as 1904 whilst Trakl was still at school; he doubtless felt the need to distance himself in order to avoid incrimination. In using the figure of the saint to express his own torment, Trakl attempts one of the main stylistic features of literary decadence: the "Nervensymbolik" which was, in Bahr's opinion, perfected by Maeterlinck: "Die Gestalten, welche er formt, sind nur Zeichen seiner Sensationen, wie von seinen Stimmungen auf die Welt geworfene Schatten, und die Ereignisse, welche er häuft, sind nur Symbole vieler Geschichten in den Nerven."<sup>17</sup> So, too, the figure of Trakl's saint is an albeit crude expression of a somewhat stylized sado-masochism typical of the decadence.

One wonders if Trakl in his youth considered himself a fallen saint; certainly later in his life, he was adamant that he neither could nor would lead an ascetic life, stating: "Ich habe kein Recht mich der Hölle zu entziehen".<sup>18</sup> A comparison between Trakl and St George was made later by Karl Röck in a planned introduction to the third edition of Trakl's *Dichtungen* (1938). He saw Trakl's name as the symbol of the duality of his personality - on the one hand, the saint, on the other, the bestial dragon:

Denn seine Wesenheit bestand ... in einem  
Doppelwesen und sein jederzeit todnahe  
Leben in einem furchtbaren Ringen beider: in  
dem Ringen des Noumenons seines Taufnamens  
mit dem Phänomenon seines Schreibnamens  
Trakl, den ich ihm selbst, und nicht nur  
wort- oder namendeutend, beim Weine einmal  
mit Drache in Verbindung brachte:- unter  
hinweis auf 'Sankt Georg ... und auf dessen  
Kampf mit dem Drachen des Abgrunds.<sup>19</sup>

One thinks, too, of the bleak self-portrait which Trakl painted, possibly after returning from Berlin, where he had visited Gretl, who was suffering from the aftermath of a miscarriage:

In Esterles Atelier soll nun, nach einer Mitteilung Fickers, Trakl den Pinsel ergriffen und sich so gemalt haben, wie er sich einmal, nachts aus dem Schlaf aufschreckend, im Spiegel gesehen hatte. Augen, Mund und Nase sind dunkle Höhlen, das Gesicht ist wie verwest, größtenteils blau-grün, mit scharlachenen Flecken auf den Wangen. Der Mund aufgerissen, wie lautlos schreiend. Braunrote Pinselstriche auf der Stirn. Das Haar und kuttenähnliche Gewand sind bräunlich, vor gelbgrünem Hintergrund. Es heißt, das Bild habe ursprünglich ein schmales Längsformat gehabt, das braune BÜßerhemd wäre da besser zu sehen gewesen.<sup>20</sup>

It is certainly possible to see in the "selbst-geschaffene Leiden" a reference to Trakl's drug consumption and the ensuing hallucinations ("Grausam-unzüchtige Bilder"): we know from his letters that Trakl regularly used drugs as early as 1905, due perhaps partly to the influence of Baudelaire; it was through the use of stimulants that the decadents retreated into their *paradis artificiels*, heightening their capacity for sensations and appreciation of art which was otherwise outwith normal human capacity. Trakl may here be describing a sensation which was the result of a narcotic stimulant, for the suffering he describes is raised beyond the boundaries of normal human experience.

It should be noted also that Hauer, in his essay 'Pornographie' (1908), drew a comparison between narcotic stimulants, escape through art, and Christianity: "Der christliche Mensch ist nüchtern wider Willen, immer von Bedenken, von seinem Gewissen gehemmt und neigt zu ekstatischen Zuständen, die ihn sich selbst vergessen lassen. Er liebt daher die Narkotika und den künstlichen Rausch."<sup>21</sup>

Beyond the obvious reference to hallucinogenic drugs, however, is the expression of a deeper torment: the guilt which arose from his incestuous relationship with his sister. There is not the overt reference here to incest such as we find in 'Blutschuld'; it is clear that the visions are threatening ("bedrängen") and of a sexually violent nature ("Grausam-unzüchtig"). This poem, then, also complies with the pattern which we have established: sexual guilt, which leads to the protagonist's fall and death, comes essentially from within, thus his suffering is "selbstgeschaffen". These are the visions of the "Fieberträume", such as torment Herbert. Nor can the "saint" escape the pain of his desires which interrupt his prayer and destroy his hopes of redemption. Like Herbert's sadistic alter-ego, Blaubart, he is also depicted as one who is tormented by God. This is the paradox of sexual suffering, which is both self-inflicted and imposed by a higher or divine power, emphasized here by the blasphemous juxtaposition of "Geilheit" and "Gott":

- Kein Herz ward je von lasser Geilheit so  
Berückt wie seins, und so von Gott gequält  
Kein Herz - <254>

The saint's attempts to seek release from his sexual (and possibly incestuous) torment are likewise doubly denied: there is no "Erlösung" from heaven, nor is there any relief through the expression of prayer. Poetic creativity as a solution to his suffering fails as his prayers cannot express his feverish desires.

The anguished saint, with emaciated hands stretched to the heavens, longing in vain for an answer to his prayers anticipates an image from a later, more successful poem:

Gottes Schweigen  
Trank ich aus dem Brunnen des Hains <46>

'De profundis', written in September/October 1912, is an example from Trakl's mature lyric of a poem dealing with a related theme. The imagery is more concise; the depiction of the protagonist tortured by criminal

sexual urges is less obtrusive and self-indulgent than in 'Der Heilige', and, as such, is more effective:

Auf meine Stirne tritt kaltes Metall  
 Spinnen suchen mein Herz.  
 Es ist ein Licht, das in meinem Mund erlöscht.

<46>

The motif of the tormented saint seeking relief and guidance from heaven forms the substance of Flaubert's *La Tentation de Saint Antoine*. Again, it cannot be assumed that Trakl knew this work, although his familiarity with Flaubert has been established. Saint Antoine's visions - a series of "grausam-unzüchtige Bilder" - are initiated by his realization that his religious ardour has faded: "A des heures réglées je quittais mon ouvrage; et priant les deux bras étendus je sentais comme une fontaine de miséricorde qui s'épanchait du haut du ciel dans mon coeur. Elle est tarie, maintenant. Pourquoi?..."<sup>22</sup> He is beset by visions of torment and sin, which culminate in the encounter between "La Mort" and "La Luxure", which join in hideous union before his eyes:

Une secousse, de temps à autre, lui fait entrouvrir les yeux; et il aperçoit au milieu des ténèbres une manière de monstre devant lui.

C'est une tête de mort, avec une couronne de roses. Elle domine un torse de femme d'une blancheur nacrée. En dessous, un linceul étoilé de points d'or fait comme une queue; - et tout le corps ondule, à la manière d'un ver gigantesque qui se tiendrait debout.<sup>23</sup>

Flaubert's saint, however, unlike that of Trakl's poem, survives the torment of his temptation; his visions of evil give way to a vision of creation, and the face of Christ in the sun. Saint Antony is released from his suffering, and returns to the devotions of his life of prayer.

In 'Der Heilige' the desire for salvation is linked with mysticism and Dionysian ecstasy; the religiosity of the "saint" is far removed from orthodox Christianity. The connection between the Dionysian

dithyramb and Christian prayer had already been made by Novalis: "Die christliche Religion ist die eigentliche Religion der Wollust. Die Sünde ist der große Reiz für die Liebe der Gottheit. Je sündiger man sich fühlt, desto christlicher ist man. Unbedingte Vereinigung mit der Gottheit ist der Zweck der *Sünde* und *Liebe*. Dithyramben sind ein echt christliches Produkt."<sup>24</sup>

The reference to the cult of Dionysus also shows the influence of Nietzsche, although the allusion is vague. It is probable that Trakl knew Nietzsche's 'Klage der Ariadne' from the *Dionysos-Dithyramben* which deals with a similar theme - that of a vassal of the gods subjected to suffering on the earth, but who, like Trakl's saint finds pleasure in her pain:

All meine Thränen laufen  
zu dir den Lauf  
und meine letzte Herzensflamme  
dir glüht sie auf.  
Oh komm zurück,  
mein unbekannter Gott! mein *Schmerz!*  
mein letztes Glück!...<sup>25</sup>

In 'Der Heilige', the cry of the Dionysian worshippers - "εβοί αβοί" - is used to heighten the sensation of pleasure and pain of the protagonist's dilemma. The inebriated, ecstatic celebrations of Dionysian worship sought to reach beyond the purely personal and to achieve mystic union with all things: "Unter dem Zauber des Dionysischen schließt sich nicht nur der Bund zwischen Mensch und Mensch wieder zusammen; auch die entfremdete, feindliche oder unterjochte Natur feiert wieder ihr Versöhnungsfest mit ihrem verlorenen Sohne, dem Menschen."<sup>26</sup> It is possible to see in this early poem then the central problem of sexuality within Trakl's oeuvre: the split between the self as Abel and Cain. Here, the poet seeks not so much to reunite himself with his fellow men or with nature, but with his own alienated self.

Such is the saint's capacity for sensations that the climax of his prayer is more ecstatic than Dionysian worship:

Und nicht so trunken tönt das Evox  
 Des Dionys, als wenn in tödlicher,  
 Wutgeifernder Ekstase Erfüllung sich  
 Erzwingt sein Qualschrei: Exaudi me, o Maria!

<254>

His desire is both animalistic and deadly, for it will cause his fall and damnation. Here is the decadent desire to encompass the extremest of sensations, to combine ecstasy with agony, culminating in a cry to the mother of Christ. Despite the cry to be heard (a cry which goes unanswered), the protagonist relishes his pain; his perverse ecstasy is all the greater because of his awareness that it is sinful and that his call for release is not answered. That he calls on Maria simply to hear him, and not to release him from his suffering, shows further his own recognition of his sexual desire; he realizes that his innocence has been lost and that his fall is inevitable. Like Blaubart and others, his fate is to bear the suffering of his sexually violent nature.

Since Trakl was a Protestant by faith, it is possible to see in this call to Maria the influence of the decadent penchant for the aestheticism of Catholicism rather than any genuine religious sentiment. The decadents often presented a fusion of Sadism and Catholicism in their writings - one thinks particularly of the French writers Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, Barbey d'Aurevilly, Baudelaire, Huysmans, Verlaine, Barrès. In his study of *The Romantic Agony*, Praz suggests that the decadents used religion "merely [as] a disguised form of morbid satisfaction: repentance may be nothing more than a mask for algolagnia."<sup>27</sup> This certainly seems an appropriate comment on Trakl's 'Der Heilige'. As an example of this Praz quotes a passage from Huysmans' *Trois Primitifs*, written in 1905, where Huysmans addresses the Virgin in terms reminiscent of Trakl's poem: "Cette Madone, si tendrement dolente, on peut lui prêter toutes les angoisses, toutes les trances, & c."<sup>28</sup>

In the decadents' attraction towards Catholicism is also an appreciation of the aesthetic qualities offered by this religion. This, too, may have appealed to the young Trakl growing up in Salzburg more than the less splendid atmosphere of Protestantism. In his *Roman aus der Décadence*, Kurt Martens expresses this aesthetic appeal:

Die hohen ästhetischen Werte, die den  
katholischen Glauben vor allem auszeichnen,  
hatten mich von jeher für ihn eingenommen,  
aber nicht sowohl die äußeren Formen und  
Gebräuche mit ihren Effekten für Auge und  
Ohr als vielmehr diejenige Schönheit, die  
wir jetzt überall vergeblich suchen, die  
huldvolle Würde und das stolze Gleichmaß der  
Macht gewordenen Ideen.<sup>29</sup>

This is an atmosphere which is found, for example, in the early poems of Stadler:

In Kapellen mit schrägen Gewölben' zerfallnen  
Verließen  
und Scheiben flammrot wie Mohn und wie Perlen grün  
und Marmoraltären über verwitterten Fliesen  
sah ich die Nacht wie goldne Gewässer verblühn:

...  
In dämmrigen Nischen die alten süßen Madonnen  
lächelten müd und wonnig aus goldrundem Schein.  
Rieselnde Träume hielten mich rankend umspinnen'  
säuselnde Lieder sangen mich selig ein.<sup>30</sup>

One must also recognize that a strong Catholic influence on Trakl came from his governess, Marie Boring, "eine strenggläubige, beinah fanatische Katholikin."<sup>31</sup>

It should be noted that whilst Trakl's "saint" appears to blame *God* for his suffering, he calls to *Maria* to hear his prayer. As a sinner, he believes that a woman will understand his predicament, rather than a distant male God; one thinks again of Weininger's association of woman and sexuality. It is also within this context that we should see the figure of the sister in the later poetry, a female figure who has transcended her inherent guilt to act as a redeemer, a mediator between the poet and a distant, wrathful God, as in 'Grodek'. Thus, the "saint" asks the human mother of God the Son to atone for the cruelty of God the



Father. The blasphemous parallel of "Gott"/"Geilheit" is intensified, not only by the further parallel of Maria and Dionysus, but by the association of his prayer with the sexual climax of his ecstasy.<sup>32</sup>

The cry to Maria is strongly reminiscent of Baudelaire's 'La Prière d'un Païen' from *Les Fleurs du Mal*. This poem does not, however, make the pretence of praying for relief from suffering; it is the unashamed expression of the protagonist's hope that the goddess Desire will torture his soul with sensuality, without which his heart is numb. It is possible that Trakl was directly influenced by Baudelaire's cry to the goddess: "Diva! supplicem exaudi".<sup>33</sup>

Many of the decadent themes which we have traced in 'Der Heilige' can be found in one work: Wagner's *Tannhäuser*. It was with this opera that Wagner caused a scandal in Paris, and which brought him the notoriety which linked him with decadence. Baudelaire's essay 'Richard Wagner et Tannhäuser à Paris' captures some of the ecstatic, rapturous passion of the performance:

Langueurs, délices mêlées de fièvre et  
coupées d'angoisses, retours incessants vers  
une volupté qui promet d'éteindre, mais  
n'éteint jamais la soif; palpitations  
furieuses du coeur et des sens, ordres  
impérieux de la chair, tout dictionnaire des  
onomatopées de l'amour se fait entendre  
ici...<sup>34</sup>

As Furness has pointed out, it is the fusion of sadism and love, "as well as the prurient dallying with thoughts of religious salvation during sexual abandonment" in Wagner's music which fascinated and excited the generation of decadents.<sup>35</sup>

In this opera, the contrasting worlds of pagan sensuality and Christian self-denial are embodied in the two women who seek Tannhäuser's love, Venus and Elisabeth, the familiar dualism of whore and madonna. Like Trakl's "saint", Tannhäuser sees the only way out of his sexual torment by calling on the Madonna:

Göttin der Wonn' und Lust!  
 Nein! ach, nicht in dir find' ich Frieden und  
Ruh'!  
 Mein Heil liegt in Maria!<sup>36</sup>

Tannhäuser's salvation lies, not in the hands of Maria, but in his former love, Elisabeth, who devotes her life to prayer for him, and, in her death, procures his salvation. It is Elisabeth's virtue alone which can save the sinful male, a theme which surely fascinated Trakl.

"In seelenlosem Spiel mit Brot und Wein": Catholicism

In Trakl's early lyric, the aesthetic appeal of Catholicism, which so fascinated the decadents, is present, yet always in a rather negative light. This is not so much the blasphemy of decadence which is directed against God, as a blasphemy against the church, exposing the meaninglessness that has crept into religious worship. This is true of the poem which closes *Sammlung 1909*, 'Die tote Kirche', which was probably written around the same time as 'Der Heilige'. Human sinfulness is characterized here, as elsewhere, by darkness and blindness:

Auf dunklen Bänken sitzen sie gedrängt  
 Und heben die erloschnen Blicke auf  
 Zum Kreuz. <256>

The costly trappings of Catholicism mock the simple suffering of Christ's sacrifice, expressing a genuine realization that aestheticism cannot replace humiliation. The church is no longer a place of piety, but is governed by the worldly values of Mammon; religious practice without an obedient, repentant soul becomes a meaningless game:

... Der Priester schreitet  
 Vor den Altar; doch übt mit müdem Geist er  
 Die frommen Bräuche - ein jämmerlicher Spieler,

Vor schlechten Betern mit erstarrten Herzen,  
In seelenlosem Spiel mit Brot und Wein. <256>

The poem turns around the sounding of a bell, a reminder of truth, an attempt to awake the lifeless sinners from their *ennui*. The stylistically crude evocation of an atmosphere of stifling threat emphasizes the lack of any real contrition; the reaction of the sinful church-goers is one of panic and desperation at the sudden certainty of their damnation. That Christ's head appears paler is an indication that their sin is in fact greater: they are as responsible for his death in the falseness of their worship as are those who crucified him. In the final, despairing cry is the undeniably decadent *frisson* at the knowledge of sin and the wrath of God:<sup>37</sup>

Und eine, die wie aller Stimmen klang,  
Schluchzt auf - indes das Grauen wuchs im Raum,  
Das Todesgrauen wuchs: Erbarme dich unser -  
Herr! <256>

There is much here of the atmosphere of Rimbaud's 'Les Pauvres à l'Eglise'. Although this poem contains an element of social criticism which is not found in Trakl, there is a similarity in the criticism of worship without piety and the wealthy facade of the Catholic Church. The poem opens with the evocation of the stifling atmosphere of the crowded church, where Christ is mocked by the hollowness of worship, a faith which is "mendicante et stupide"; it closes with a critique of the equally soul-less game of their worship:

Loin des senteurs de viande et d'étoffes moisis,  
Farce prostrée et sombre aux gestes repoussants;  
- Et l'oraison fleurit d'expressions choisies,  
Et les mysticités prennent des tons pressants,

Quand, des nefs où périt le soleil, plis de soie  
Banals, sourires verts, les Dames des quartiers  
Distingués, - ô Jésus! - les malades du foie  
Font baiser leurs longs doigts jaunes aux

bénitiers.<sup>38</sup>

In the poetry of *Sammlung 1909*, we again find the association of a sultry, sinful atmosphere with

religion in the decadent *Ave Maria* of 'Metamorphose'. As in 'Der Heilige', the protagonist contemplates Maria in his state of sin, transposing his own desire on to this figure of piety, thus tainting her with his sin. The poem opens with an expression of decadent delight in his state of sinful sexuality: "Ein Herz so rot, in Sündennot!" <252>.39 The image of Maria which is pale and lifeless only comes to life as he contemplates her as a sexual being, penetrating behind the cloak of pious other-worldliness:

Dein bleiches Bildnis ist erblüht  
Und dein verhüllter Leib erglüht,  
O Fraue du, Maria! <252>

The final stanza focuses on Maria as a mother; there is the familiar association of joy and pain, which reflects the fate of a mother who must bring her child into a world of sin and death, although here, too, is a hint that great things will come from this particular birth:40

In süßen Qualen brennt dein Schoß,  
Da lächelt dein Auge schmerzlich und groß,  
O Mutter du, Maria! <252>

Again, we can see in this poem an implicit attack on Roman Catholicism; by focussing on Maria's true nature as a woman and mother, the poet is stripping her of the veneration given her by the Catholic church, yet at the same time his sexual contemplation of her image is somewhat blasphemous, denying her any sense of integrity as a woman. Yet this is not the blasphemy against Maria found elsewhere in decadent art and literature. One thinks of Edvard Munch's *Madonna* (1895), which shows the mother of Christ as a naked *femme fatale*, with a frightened embryo cowering in a corner of the picture. As Praz points out, one of the temptations to plague Saint Antoine in the original version of Flaubert's novel was of the Madonna: "Il ouvre son missel et regarde l'image de la Vierge... 'Oh, que je t'aime!' Il contemple l'image de plus en plus ... La voix: 'Qu'elle est belle la mère du Sauveur! qu'ils sont doux ses longs cheveux blonds

épanchés le long de son pâle visage!..."<sup>41</sup> Kurt Martens' 'Stoßgebet' depicts a protagonist whose contemplation of Maria degenerates into an expression of physical desire, much like Trakl's 'Metamorphose', with its depiction of Maria as "schönste Fraue":

O Maria, schönste Fraue,  
O Madonnenbild von Stein.  
So gelangweilt, so allein  
Thronst du vor der bunten Aue!

Zürnst du, daß ich nach dir schaue?  
Wirf ihn ab den Heiligenschein,  
O Madonna, schönste Fraue,  
O Marienbild von Stein!

Wirf es ab das kalte graue  
Schleppgewand - tritt bei mir ein!  
Lustig soll der Himmel sein,  
Den ich dir und mir erbaue,  
O Madonna, schönste Fraue!<sup>42</sup>

Baudelaire's 'A une Madonne' expresses a sadistic, jealous passion. The poet desires in his torment to construct a bejewelled altar which will preserve the memory of his love; the sadistic sacrifice which he plans reflects the darker, jealous nature of his desire:

Enfin, pour compléter ton rôle de Marie,  
Et pour mêler l'amour avec la barbarie,  
Volupté noire! des sept Péchés capitaux,  
Bourreau plein de remords, je ferai sept Couteaux  
Bien affilés, et comme un jongleur insensible,  
Prenant le plus profond de ton amour pour cible,  
Je les planterais tous dans ton Coeur pantelant,  
Dans ton Coeur sanglotant, dans ton Coeur  
ruisselant!<sup>43</sup>

Maria again appears as the object of the poet's desire in the poem which was discovered in 1973, although here the female figure is more akin to the pale cousin in *Traumland*:

Grüngolden geht der Tag hervor  
Am Hügel über der Kapelle  
Marie schaut blütenweiß hervor  
So schön erglänzt die alte Schwelle.

...  
Dort sing' ich wohl den lieben Tag  
Vor die Marie, im weißen Kleide  
Mein töricht wunderliches Leide<sup>44</sup>

Weichselbaum sees in this poem evidence "daß Trakl

allen Formen kirchlicher Gläubigkeit immer hilfloser gegenüberstand. Beschrieben wird eine vage Stimmung, in der Naturhaftes und Religiöses problemlos ineinanderfließen".<sup>45</sup> Weichselbaum is wrong, however, in his assertion that Marie is called upon as a "schützende und verzeihende Macht".<sup>46</sup> Although both the content and the form of this poem are forced and artificial, we can see here evidence of hidden desire: Marie is "blütenweiß"; there is the "Schwelle", although it appears here in a positive light; the falling dew; the suffering of the boy's awakening sexuality; the call of a bird; and the sign of death in the silent graves. Seen in this light, the forced refrain "Freu dich!" takes on an ironic, even menacing tone, and we remember that Blaubart, too, sang to Elisabeth to cheer her up: "Ich sing dir ein Lied, das dich lachen macht" <442>.

In 'Die Kirche', an unpublished poem from 1911/1912, we also find Catholicism intermingled with decadent sexuality. As in 'Die tote Kirche', although here more successfully evoked, there is the atmosphere of the artifice of a religion that lacks real sentiment: "Gemalte Engel hüten die Altäre ... Gestalten schwanken jammervoll ins Leere. ... Ein Schein von weichen Säulen und Gerippen. ... diese Dämmerung voll Masken, Fahnen" <283>. There is again more to this poem than a decadent fusion of religion and sexuality; in a church where there is no real sense of *truth*, where all sexuality is regarded as sin, then repressed lust gives way to perversion and blasphemous desire; a whore is thus seen to be representative of the Madonna, the penitent Magdalena is seen as a sensual being:

Im schwarzen Betstuhl gleicht der Madonne  
Ein kleines Hürlein mit verblichenen Wangen.

...

Ein strömend Rot von Magdalenens Lippen. <283>

Here is the influence of Weininger, whose attack on the morality of the day included the double standards of regarding women as either madonna or whore; Weininger's

argument that all women are essentially sexual beings means that the idea of woman as a pure, asexual being is false, that prostitution is, therefore, true to woman's nature: "Ferne ist mir, die heroische Größe zu verkennen, welche in dieser höchsten Erotik, im Madonnenkulte liegt. ... Die Madonna ist eine Schöpfung des Mannes, nichts entspricht ihr in der Wirklichkeit. Der Madonnenkult kann nicht moralisch sein, weil er die Augen vor der Wirklichkeit verschließt..."<sup>47</sup>

Trakl is clearly against the hypocrisy which he saw in Catholicism. There is a further aspect to his comparison of the whore as Madonna, which goes beyond Weininger's misogynistic argument. Trakl felt genuine sympathy for prostitutes, whom he saw as social outcasts.<sup>48</sup> As in 'Metamorphose', the Madonna is here identified with a real woman rather than an idol. The implicit criticism of the Catholic Church is again that in their veneration of Maria they have denied her humanity and thus denied her very *being*: Maria is not so much the victim of sexual as *spiritual* violation.

The overall impression is that Trakl's sympathy, like that of Christ, lies with the women who are the victims of male exploitation. Thus the pregnant woman is constantly portrayed as one both oppressed and blessed, in her confusion here seeking a truth which she will not find in the hollow conventionality of the church. The poem closes with an indication of truth in simple piety and saintly martyrdom which is far from the decadent blasphemy which a cursory reading of this poem might suggest:

Ein schwangeres Weib geht irr in schweren Träumen  
 Durch diese Dämmerung voll Masken, Fahnen.  
 Ihr Schatten kreuzt der Heiligen stille Bahnen,  
 Der Engel Ruh in kalkgetünchten Räumen. <283>

In these early poems, then, although there is often an atmosphere of decadent sultriness associated with religion, which at times verges on blasphemy, this tends to go beyond the decadent *frisson* evoked by the

knowledge of sinfulness and the certainty of damnation. Even here, there is a deep awareness of sin that calls for a search for truth, beyond the aestheticism of Catholicism, and beyond the fascination with sin. This can be seen in the two pieces that appear under the title *Aus goldenem Kelch*, published in 1906; both deal with specifically religious themes, set in Jerusalem around the time of Christ's crucifixion. The first, *Barrabas*, is subtitled "Eine Phantasie", and describes a fictitious meeting between the murderer Barrabas, whose freedom was exchanged for Christ's, and an unnamed "Jüngling", a wealthy, hedonistic *Helicobabalus* figure.

Features of Christ's last days are parodied in this work: where Christ had previously ridden into Jerusalem on a donkey as the people scattered palm leaves before him, now Barrabas enters and the same crowd scatters roses; where Christ was crowned with thorns, Barrabas, like Herod in Wilde's *Salomé*, is crowned with roses; where Christ's path led to mockery, torture and the suffering of the cross, Barrabas is offered wine, comfort and luxurious worldly pleasures; Barrabas is given women who sing to him and bathe him in oils and perfumes, whilst Christ had previously redeemed the prostitute who anointed his feet with oil. Where Christ will eventually be welcomed by His Father into heaven in triumph over death, Barrabas is welcomed by the "Jüngling" and invited to indulge in the sexual desires of temporal, worldly pleasure. The final contrast is of the wine which the "Jüngling" offers Barrabas, for it is "wie glühendes Blut" (193), thus parodying the Last Supper, where Christ offered his disciples wine with the words: "Das ist mein Blut des neuen Testaments, welches vergossen wird für viele, zur Vergebung der Sünden" (Matthäus 26.28). There is nothing in Trakl's piece, however, which suggests the blasphemy which features in many of the works of literary decadence.



The roses, the wine, the jewels and pearls, the crystal and gold, the exotic perfumes, the women with painted faces and the drunken men are all stock features of the artificial and sensuous world of decadence that was rife in the literature of the late nineteenth century. One thinks in particular of Huysmans' *des Esseintes* and of the Heliogabalus/Alagabal figure of the Roman boy-emperor ("der Jüngling") who lived in an artificial world of jewels and palaces and is extolled by various writers of the *fin-de-siècle*, including Huysmans and Stefan George.

Like Baudelaire, however, Trakl is aware of the dangers of a totally aesthetic life-style and over-emphasis of the cult of beauty; sexual excesses are presented in a negative light: "Und um ihn waren aufgeputzte Dirnen mit rotgemalten Lippen und geschminkten Gesichtern und haschten nach ihm. Und um ihn waren Männer, deren Augen trunken blickten von Wein und Lastern. In aller Reden aber lauerte die Sünde ihres Fleisches, und die Unzucht ihrer Geberden war der Ausdruck ihrer Gedanken" (193). This is the same crowd that had praised Christ a few days before (their awareness of their sin and guilt is apparent when they attack the person in the crowd who cries "Hosiannah"), it is the same crowd that had called for Barrabas to be set free and for Christ to be crucified; so great is their sin that it is apparent in their speech and their gestures (one thinks of the later poetry where leprosy becomes an outer sign of man's inner guilt).

*Barrabas*, then, appears to extol Christ's triumph over the sensualists, at the same time as indulging in decadence which uses even religion for aesthetic effect. The passage is undeniably crude and immature in its means of expression, and the final lines have little effect as a simple statement of Christian truth. Rather, their hyperbole betrays the decadent *frisson* at the knowledge of sinfulness and damnation for those who reject Christ's salvation, which we will find also in

'Die tote Kirche'. Yet some praise for "das Werk der Erlösung" is there. Although Trakl was drawn towards hedonistic pleasures of life, one cannot deny that he realized that the abandonment and excess of decadence were not the ultimate goal of existence; in *Barrabas* we see the start of a development towards the contemplation of Christianity as an alternative to worldliness.

The decadent preoccupation with the *Salomé* theme, which we have examined in *Maria Magdalena* is balanced by a similar awareness of a greater spiritual value. Trakl's Mary Magdalene, desired by all men, encounters the one man who is not tempted by her sexual charms. But this man is not John the Baptist, as is the case with *Salomé*, and the power which he has to turn people from their sins is greater; such is the force of his authority, that his look is enough to command obedience from Maria. She subjects herself totally to his will; where she had once charmed men with her body, she now humbles herself at Christ's feet.

There is thus a strong distinction between Trakl's Maria and the *Salomé* figure of most *fin-de-siècle* literature. Like the entranced Elisabeth, her existence as a *femme fatale* is short-lived. Wilde's *Salomé*, like Maria, becomes besotted with a simple figure of truth, but where Maria's love is purified, *Salomé*'s is perverted. Unlike Maria, who humbles herself before Christ, *Salomé* takes no heed of Jokanaan's warning: "Daughter of adultery, there is but one who can save thee, it is He of whom I spake. Go seek Him ... Kneel down on the shore of the sea, and call unto Him by His name. When He cometh to thee ... bow thyself at His feet and ask of Him the remission of thy sins."<sup>49</sup> As a result of her evil, *Salomé* is put to death by her own father, whereas Maria follows Christ and gains redemption. Despite the decadent indulgence of Maria's dance, this passage is ultimately unambivalent in its

rejection of hedonism, Dionysian worship and perverse lust.

"Der flammende Sturz des Engels": The Struggle with Sin

Whether Trakl can be regarded as a Christian poet or not is an issue which has long occupied critics, for it is one to which there is no straightforward answer. The two poles of Trakl criticism find their extremes in the work of Lachmann and Killy. Where Lachmann forces an obviously contrived and simplistic Christian interpretation of the poetry,<sup>50</sup> Killy denies that the poems have any meaning whatsoever, least of all a Christian one.<sup>51</sup> Since then, most critics have agreed that there are Christian elements within the oeuvre, and one should not forget Trakl's own profession of faith, although this in itself cannot be the ground for a purely Christian interpretation of the lyric.<sup>52</sup> It is not the aim of this thesis to examine the question of Christian faith in Trakl's poetry; certainly, there is an undeniable *religious* element to his poetry in his awareness of sin and the fallen state of humankind. What we shall attempt to establish here is the extent to which the influence of decadent religiosity and blasphemy is to be found in the later poetry; in so doing, we will find that any claim that Trakl is a Christian poet is questionable. His awareness of his own sinfulness and his belief in humankind's fall show not only the influence of Christianity, but also a deep psychological struggle to come to terms with his own sexual guilt, caused by his incestuous desires. In the final analysis, his hope for redemption or release from

his suffering is far from that of orthodox Christianity.

Certainly, the atmosphere of perverse religiosity is not lacking from the later poetry, especially in the figure of the monk, who is often associated with evil lusts. In 'Traum des Bösen', the monk is implicitly involved in the scenario of evil, a subconscious perpetrator of sexual violation against the pregnant woman:

Ein Mönch, ein schwangeres Weib dort im Gedränge.  
Guitarren klimpern, rote Kittel schimmern. <29>

In 'Drei Blicke in einen Opal' we again find the fusion of Christianity and sensuous Dionysian worship of 'Der Heilige'. Here, the true representative of faith is the isolated outcast:

Des Einsamen Gestalt kehrt also sich nach innen  
Und geht, ein bleicher Engel, durch den leeren  
Hain. <66>

Religious worship has degenerated into sensuous ecstasy:

Aus Schwarzem bläst der Föhn. Mit Satyrn im Verein  
Sind schlanke Weiblein; Mönche der Wollust bleiche  
Priester  
Ihr Wahnsinn schmückt mit Lilien sich schön und  
düster  
Und hebt die Hände auf zu Gottes goldenem Schrein.

The variants set this scene more firmly in the context of Satanism: "Satanas der Wollust Priester" <II.123>.

The images of spirituality in decline, and the association with putrefaction and sin continue in the second section of the poem, and reach a climax with the depiction of a Black Mass at the opening of the third section:<sup>53</sup>

Die Blinden streuen in eiternde Wunden Weiherauch.  
Rotgoldene Gewänder; Fackeln; Psalmensingen;  
Und Mädchen, die wie Gift den Leib des Herrn  
umschlingen.  
Gestalten schreiten wächsernstarr durch Glut und  
Rauch. <67>

As in 'Die tote Kirche', the worshippers are blind, lifeless. The suggestion of sexual violation in the opening line is more blatant in the variant: "Dolche

und schwärende Wunden gaukeln im Weiherrauch" <II.124>. In their desperate attempt to procure their own salvation, they have created an atmosphere of false, obsessive religiosity. The deliberate ambiguity of the third line increases the element of satanism; not only do the girls desecrate the host which is the body of Christ, but there is also the suggestion that, as the "Heiliger" desired Maria, so they lust after the physical body of Christ, perhaps in the form of a statue. One thinks of Maria Magdalena here: "Und ich sah sie die Statue des Dionysos mit Blumen kränzen, sah sie den kalten Marmor umarmen, wie sie ihre Geliebten umarmte, sie erstickte mit ihren brennenden, fiebernden Küssen" <196>. It is an image which we also find in 'Romanze zur Nacht':

Die Nonne betet wund und nackt  
Vor des Heilands Kreuzespein. <16>

This verges, although less blatantly so, on the blasphemous description of the Black Mass in *Là-Bas*:

Et Durtal, épouvanté, vit, dans la fumée,  
ainsi qu'au travers d'un brouillard, les  
cornes rouges de Docre qui, maintenant  
assis, écumait de rage, mâchait des pains  
azymes, les recrachait, se torchait avec, en  
distribuait aux femmes; et elles les  
enfouissaient en bramant, ou se culbutaient,  
les unes sur les autres, pour les violer.<sup>54</sup>

Detsch has pointed out that this intermingling of the sacred and the sexual was a feature of the writers involved in *Der Brenner*<sup>55</sup>; he cites Ficker's 'Sacrileg', where a girl addresses her lover while wearing a wreath of roses which she has taken from the Crucifix, as an example:

Ich hab' ihn zagend auf das Mal geküßt,  
Aus dessen Tiefe blut'ge Tropfen rannen,  
Und schlich geduckt mit meinem Raub von dannen  
Nun hängt er nackt, der uns're Schuld gebüßt.<sup>56</sup>

In 'Drei Blicke in einen Opal', the midnight dance of the leprous is like some bizarre satanic ritual, and even nature seems to reflect the perversion of the human sphere: "Verzerertes; Blumenfratzen; Lachen; Ungeheuer". The sudden juxtaposition of the final

stanza is a reminder of the piety of the past, but the image of the grey heavens suggests that this exhortation to return to an existence of truth and simplicity will remain unheeded.

Such demonic visions are, however, balanced by depictions of pious idylls and spiritual harmony. These reflect the two extremes of the poet's nature, symbolic of the deep, personal struggle between his overwhelming sense of guilt and sin on one hand, and his faith and hope of redemption on the other. This inner struggle is the subject of much of the later poetry, most obviously in *Verwandlung des Bösen*, which, despite its optimistic title, shows little evidence that the evil of the poet's guilt has been transfigured. The variant title, *Verdammnis*, which reflects the pessimistic side of the inner struggle, seems more appropriate here.

The opening paragraph depicts images of decline, silence, darkness, violent sexuality, which are summed up in the final word: "Böse" <97>. This is a bleak depiction of the protagonist's emotional state; his forehead and leprosy show the signs of his sexual guilt; like the monk of 'Lange lauscht der Mönch ...', he is listening for the sound of redemption. But where this was once found ("Im Haselgebüsch/ Klängen wieder kristallne Engel" <46>),<sup>57</sup> now the village bells mock his state of sin. Again, the poet is a representative of sinful man; as in *Offenbarung und Untergang*, a sense of timelessness raises the poem above the level of the purely personal: "Minute stummer Zerstörung" <97> reduces the centuries of evil since the Fall to one eternal minute. In 'Abendländisches Lied', a similar identification with history leads to transfiguration; here, however, the necessary piety and humility are lacking, the blood does not blossom as does that of a sacrifice accepted by the divine, there is no sense of harmonious control over nature. As the forces of male sexuality take over, the spiritual disappears: "leise

löst sich eine goldene Wolke auf. Bei der Mühle zünden Knaben ein Feuer an" <97>.

The "Sternenweiher" is familiar as a locus of sexual violation. Here, it appears as the "Schwelle" which the protagonist ("jener") must cross in his journey towards sexuality and evil, significantly in a "rotem Kahn" and to the accompaniment of male voices. As such, it is a place of terror, where innocence must die: "Angst, grünes Dunkel, das Gurgeln eines Ertrinkenden" <97>. His initiation into evil is at the same time a reliving of the fate of fallen man since Adam, which the protagonist accepts with stony impassivity: "lebend in dunklen Sagen seines Geschlechts und die Augen steinern über Nächte und jungfräuliche Schrecken aufgetan. Böse" <97>.

The first version of this prose poem, *Erinnerung*, focuses on a more personal aspect of sexual guilt, where the protagonist is less a representative of male sexuality as one involved in incestuous desires in a family scenario reminiscent of *Traum und Umnachtung*: "Stille begegnet in feuchter Bläue das schlummernde Antlitz der Schwester, vergraben in ihr scharlachfarbenes Haar. Schwärzlich folgte jenem die Nacht" <382>. Here it is incestuous guilt which causes the protagonist to stand still in the house of his fathers. This is a scene which can be traced to 'In der Heimat' and 'Ballade II': "Was zwingt so still zu stehen auf verfallener Wendeltreppe im Haus der Väter ... Stunde einsamer Finsternis, stummes Erwachen im Hausflur im fahlen Gespinst des Mondes. O das Lächeln des Bösen traurig und kalt, daß der Schläferin rosige Wangen erbleicht. In Schauern verhüllte ein schwarzes Linnen das Fenster" <382>. In this moonlit scene, evil takes over, the sleeping woman is confronted with the forces of male sexuality, and the window is covered with the funereal cloth which symbolizes the death of their innocence.

Thus we see further evidence of the incestuous nature of the protagonist's guilt, which in *Verwandlung des Bösen* is portrayed as generic male sexuality. Unlike Christ, who entered his Father's house in righteousness and harmony, the protagonist is in a state of guilt, which has destroyed any relationship with figures of parental authority or religion. Again, there is the suggestion that he is controlled by forces outwith his control: "Aber durch die Mauer von Stein siehst du den Sternenhimmel, die Milchstraße, den Saturn; rot" <97>. The metamorphosis of 'Passion' is here: "Du auf verfallenen Stufen: Baum, Stern, Stein!" <97>. But while this process is associated with expiation in 'Passion', here it is one of recognition of guilt: the tree is "kahl", devoid of its spirituality, as in 'Elis'; the star, Saturn, symbolizes the forces of sexuality; and the stone is the lifeless, sinful face of 'Abendländisches Lied'.

The protagonist is both satanic priest and sacrificial lamb, a dualism which we have already identified in Cain and Abel, Blaubart and Herbert. The priest here is pale, a sign of his sinful sexuality, and the sacrifice is not the righteous offering of 'Abendländisches Lied', but a demonic Black Mass, where the innocent self is slaughtered in the name not of spirituality but of sexuality: "Du, ein blaues Tier, das leise zittert; du, der bleiche Priester, der es hinschlachtet am schwarzen Altar" <97>. This is an obvious echo of Baudelaire's 'L'Héautontimorouménos' from *Les Fleurs du Mal*:

Je suis la plaie et le couteau!  
 Je suis le soufflet et la joue!  
 Je suis les membres et la roue,  
 Et la victime et le bourreau!<sup>58</sup>

The smile which is "traurig und böse" is the protagonist's acceptance of his sexuality; like Blaubart, he will endure his evil fate. The child who pales is the sleeping woman of *Erinnerung* and the child



of *Traum und Umnachtung*, both of whom represent the sister, here the victim of male sexuality, with the image of the flame as murderous phallus.

The figure of the angel may be one of spirituality, seeking to turn him from his evil fate; in the image of the "kristallenem Finger" is an echo of "Kristus". Yet this is also a figure of evil, Azrael, the angel of death, who confronts the incestuous brother and sister in 'Amen'. Towards the end of the poem, a further identity of this angel becomes clear: Lucifer, the fallen angel. The crystal finger is at once a blasphemous reminder of Christ and an echo of the locus of sexual guilt elsewhere in the oeuvre: "In blauem Kristall/ Wohnt der bleiche Mensch" (<'Ruh und Schweigen': 113>).<sup>59</sup>

The protagonist is firmly in the realm of his evil dreams: "O die Hölle des Schlafs" <98>; the pale child is now dead, identified in variants as Sonja, the archetypal female victim. Here is not the mutual guilt of *Traum und Umnachtung*; that the female was violated in innocence is emphasized by the spiritual condition of her death: "Leise läutet im blauen Abend der Toten Gestalt" <98>. As in 'Die Verfluchten', the protagonist is visited by a vision of the one he has assaulted, which only serves to increase his sexual desire: "Anbetung, purpurne Flamme der Wollust" <98>. As he has not gone through the expiation of death, his male lust has not been purified. That the woman's face has left her may be a sign that she has been purified of her worldliness; yet it is significant also inasmuch as it denies the protagonist the recognition of the narcissistic and incestuous nature of his desire, such as he was afforded in *Traum und Umnachtung*: "Wollust, da er im grünenden Sommergarten dem schweigenden Kind Gewalt tat, in dem strahlenden sein umnachtetes Antlitz erkannte" <148>. Although this recognition in *Traum und Umnachtung* does not lead to redemption, here, even that hope is denied. The mirror of the truth of his desire

which is elsewhere seen in the sister's face, in water or in a broken mirror, is withheld; without this possibility of confronting his own guilt, he is forced further into the deathly realm of his own evil desire: "hinsterbend stürzte über schwarze Stufen der Schläfer ins Dunkel" <98>.

This retreat into sinful sexuality denies all hope of redemption: "Jemand verließ dich am Kreuzweg und du schaust lange zurück" <98>. The identity of this "jemand" is threefold. There is the obvious association of Christ on his *via dolorosa*, whose path is one of suffering and atonement which the protagonist cannot follow. Yet there is also the association of 'Passion', where it is the sister who leaves him to pursue her way of purification. Finally, remembering the identification of the innocent self with the violated child in *Traum und Umnachtung*, we can see here the irrevocable division of the self into Cain and Abel; as the "bleicher Priester" follows the path into darkness, the "blaues Tier" takes the way of Christ and the female victim, like the shadowy "Knabe" of *Offenbarung und Untergang*, into the realm of the spiritual.

Again, the protagonist is depicted as a man standing in the shadow of Adam: "Purpurn leuchtet die Frucht im schwarzen Geäst und im Gras häutet sich die Schlange" <98>. He is left alone in darkness and sexual guilt; the locus of the solitary figure is now that of *Offenbarung und Untergang*, where the brother ruminates on his act of incestuous violation: "O! das Dunkel; der Schweiß, der auf die eisige Stirne tritt und die traurigen Träume im Wein, in der Dorfschenke unter schwarzverrauchtem Gebälk" <98>. He knows his state of sin, realizes that he has lost all hope of redemption - whether through Christ, the female victim or his innocent self -, and is overcome by a desire to seek his own salvation through song, to justify his guilt with poetic expression: "Du, ein grünes Metall und innen ein feuriges Gesicht, das hingehen will und

singen vom Beinerhügel finstere Zeiten und den flammenden Sturz des Engels" <98>. This song, then, is to express every aspect of his guilt, which is the entire guilt of mankind, from the Fall of Lucifer, the beloved angel who challenged God, to the sins of the world which necessitated Christ's death on the cross. The protagonist also sees in these two extremes of perfect innocence and defiant evil a reflection of his own dual nature, Abel and Cain, the innocent child and the fallen saint. This recognition of his own situation as a helpless representative of sinful man throughout the ages, and that his own inner struggle is merely part of the eternal struggle between evil and innocence causes him to collapse in despair: "O! Verzweiflung, die mit stummem Schrei ins Knie bricht" <98>.<sup>60</sup> This is the recognition which caused Blaubart to collapse at the foot of the cross; like Blaubart, the protagonist's response is neither to recognize Christ's sovereignty nor to hope for redemption, but simply one of utter despondency. There is no hope now even of overcoming his crime through song, for this revelation of the magnitude of his guilt is inexpressible.

The final meeting with the "Toter" has again the threefold significance of "jemand". There is an obvious reference to Christ here, whose blood was spilt for the sins of the world, and is "selbstvergossen" in that he willingly sacrificed himself. His appearance under the olive tree has Biblical echoes; yet here is no salvation, no perfect atonement to replace his own imperfect silence. The final paragraph merely confirms what the poet has already recognized: this is a "dunkle Begegnung", taking place, in a variant, at the "Kreuzweg" <II.172>. Yet at the same time, this is also a meeting with the murdered child, the dead woman who has, like the sister as "sterbender Jüngling", been released from sexuality and achieved androgyny in death. In the violated child is also the innocent self, the victim of *Lustselbstmord*, the third aspect of the

dead visitor, the ghost of Abel come to haunt Cain. This then is the full significance of the "unsäglicher Augenblick", the entire sum of human evil, particularly male sexuality. In his despair come this final recognition and confrontation with his own guilt, but there is no reconciliation here; the protagonist cannot turn from his nature as "purpurner Mond".<sup>61</sup>

As in *Offenbarung und Untergang*, the protagonist's unredeemed sinfulness has repercussions for his innocent self. The "Knabe" of the later prose poem is rejected from the spiritual realm as "einen kindlichen Leichnam" <170>; here, too, the dead one is condemned to an existence of eternal darkness: "Dem folgt unvergängliche Nacht" <98>. This poem, then, like the other prose poems, is far from positive;<sup>62</sup> evil is not transformed, there is no hope in Christian redemption. The protagonist's inner struggle between faith and despair, between hope in Christ's salvation and identification with Lucifer's fall, can be summed up in the one word variant of the title: "Verdammnis".

In the later lyric, any hope of salvation through Christian love is increasingly denied. If there is to be any hope of release from suffering, then it is towards the sister-figure that Trakl turns. In his final poems, God is no longer called upon. Instead, it is an attitude of "Härte, Hochmut und allerlei Verbrechertum"<sup>63</sup> which characterizes his last 'religious' poem, 'Die Nacht'. This is a projection of the poet's own emotional state on to the night and the storm of his environment. The rock fissure which he addresses in the opening line is symbolic of the gulf between God and man, with the mountainous terrain reflecting the human condition since the Fall as one of arrogance and defiance:

Dich sing ich wilde Zerklüftung,  
Im Nachtsturm  
Aufgetürmtes Gebirge <160>

Yet this state of sinfulness is also one of horror,

torment and violent sexuality; the phallic landscape of 'Das Herz' is here untamed:

Ihr grauen Türme  
Überfließend von höllischen Fratzen,  
Feurigem Getier,  
Rauhen Farnen, Fichten,  
Kristallinen Blumen. <160>

The reason for this "Zerklüftung" and violent landscape is made clear at the end of the stanza:

Unendliche Qual,  
Daß du Gott erjagtest  
Sanfter Geist, <160>

Here is the spirit of humankind, in an eternal state of damnation for disobeying God. Yet the appellation "sanfter Geist" seems an odd one; Trakl recognizes that behind this violence is a deeper spiritual need. Certainly, there is a profound expression of sympathy for and an identification with the spirit.

In the first stanza, the poet projects his male ego on to the phallic landscape; in the second stanza, the female is seen in the image of the tempest.<sup>64</sup> She is the female victim, the bride assaulted by the sexually violent *Föhn*; her fall from the cliffs is reminiscent of that of Herbert in *Blaubart*, yet, like Herbert, she is also a victim of her own sexuality, which forces her into a fatal state of drunken ecstasy like that of Elisabeth in her trance:

Über schwärzliche Klippen  
Stürzt todestrunken  
Die erglühende Windsbraut, <160>

Bells ring out, as so often, to remind of the spiritual; yet here there is no sense of peace or harmony, but a violent, apocalyptic warning of humankind's sinful state, aptly expressed in three concise lines:

Flammen, Flüche  
Und die dunklen  
Spiele der Wollust, <160>

This warning, however, is not heeded; the poem does not end with recognition or transfiguration, but with further evidence of human defiance of God.<sup>65</sup> The stony

face of 'Abendländisches Lied' does not bow down in humility, but rebels in anger:

Stürmt den Himmel  
Ein versteinertes Haupt. <160>

As Detsch has pointed out, there are similarities here with the views expressed by Hauer in his essay 'Heilig ist die Leidenschaft' (1909).<sup>66</sup> He argues that Christianity should be a religion which is motivated by passionate emotion: "Keines der Worte Christi dünkt mich tiefer als dieses: 'Das Reich Gottes wird gestürmt, und die Stürmer reißen es an sich.' Der Sohn des Menschen wußte es, daß man ins Himmelreich nicht bei Windesstille gelangen kann, sondern nur im Sturm."<sup>67</sup> Trakl's later poetry, however, suggests that his defiance of God is entirely at odds with any form of Christianity.

Blasphemy, then, is still evident in the later poems, although this is far removed from the immature decadence of 'Der Heilige', *Don Juans Tod*, *Blaubart* and the early poetry. In Trakl's last poems published in the *Brenner*, there is nothing of Christian sentiment.<sup>68</sup> Humankind is shown to be in a state of hostility with God; there is no hope of release through Christian salvation; this is replaced by a desire for utter oblivion in death, or the hope of some kind of redemption from the hermaphroditic sister-figure. At the peak of his poetic maturity, Trakl's outlook becomes increasingly bleak, departing further and further from Christian hope. Although some poems in Trakl's oeuvre express an undeniably Christian sentiment, others express its opposite. Trakl cannot therefore be regarded in any way as an orthodox Christian poet.

## CHAPTER FIVE: ISOLATION AND THE SOUL

Nothing can cure the soul but the senses,  
just as nothing can cure the senses but  
the soul.<sup>1</sup>

"Mich däucht', ich träumte ...": Introspective  
Subjectivity

Much of the literature of decadence is based on the belief expressed by Ernst Mach that "Das Ich ist unrettbar".<sup>2</sup> In his 'Antimetaphysische Bemerkungen' (1885), he expresses the theory that the individual is purely the sum of the impressions and sensations which he receives: "Nicht das Ich ist das Primäre, sondern die Elemente (Empfindungen). ... Die Elemente bilden das Ich. ... Das Ich ist keine unveränderliche, bestimmte, scharf begrenzte Einheit."<sup>3</sup>

It was Bahr who popularized this idea; in his essay 'Das unrettbare Ich' (1904) he writes of Mach's theory as a revelation of a truth which he himself had been seeking:

Hier habe ich ausgesprochen gefunden, was mich die ganzen drei Jahre her quält: 'Das Ich ist unrettbar.' Es ist nur ein Name. Es ist nur eine Illusion. Es ist ein Behelf, den wir praktisch brauchen, um unsere Vorstellungen zu ordnen. Es gibt nichts als Verbindungen von Farben, Tönen, Wärmen, Drücken, Räumen, Zeiten, und an diese Verknüpfungen sind Stimmungen, Gefühle und Willen gebunden. Alles ist in ewiger Veränderung.<sup>4</sup>

This, then, can be seen as a philosophical basis for the subjectivity of decadence, which Bahr elsewhere calls "Ichlosigkeit".<sup>5</sup> Art was no longer the depiction of objective reality, but an evocation of *Stimmungen*.

What distinguished the decadents from other Impressionist writers was the emphasis on the nerves as the means through which the outside world was experienced:

Die Formel der Decadence stammt von Naturen, in welchen das Nervöse jede andere Potenz ausgetilgt und alle Triebe unterworfen hat, welche überhaupt bloß Nerven sind ... Diese begehren eine Kunst, die ist wie sie selbst, die nur aus den Nerven kommt und nur auf die Nerven geht, die allen Erwerb aller bisherigen Kunst verwendet, um Nervöses auszudrücken und Nervöses mitzuteilen.<sup>6</sup>

Neurosis became a means of experiencing new sensations and thus a stimulus to art, producing the over-refined poetry of such works as Dörmann's *Neurotica* and *Sensationen*. The fashionability of this desire is aptly summed up by Hofmannsthal: "Modern sind alte Möbel und junge Nervositäten."<sup>7</sup> It was a fashion to which the young Trakl himself succumbed: "Seit acht Tagen bin ich krank - in verzweifelter Stimmung. Ich habe anfangs viel, sehr viel gearbeitet. Um über die nachträgliche Abspannung der Nerven hinwegzukommen habe ich leider wieder zum Chloroform meine Zuflucht genommen. Die Wirkung war furchtbar. Seit acht Tagen leide ich daran - meine Nerven sind zum Zerreißen."<sup>8</sup> In 1910, although perhaps with more than a hint of irony, he wrote to Morwitz: "Ich habe in der letzten Zeit um 5 Kilo abgenommen, es geht mir aber dabei recht gut, die allgemeine Nervosität des Jahrhunderts abgerechnet."<sup>9</sup>

The following chapter will examine this decadent trait within Trakl's oeuvre, with particular reference to the figure of the poet as an isolated, introspective individual, the expression of the poet's *Seelenstände*, and the desire to flee *ennui*.



"Das Schweigen der Verlassenheit": The Poet's Isolation

The last of Trakl's early prose works, *Verlassenheit*, is arguably the one most steeped in the atmosphere of decadence with its stagnant ponds, decaying trees, crumbling walls and the unmistakably Baudelairean leitmotif of *ennui*. A mood of desolation prevails throughout the three sections of this piece, concentrated in the figure of an unnamed count, the last member of a degenerate, aristocratic race. The literary forebears here are numerous and include des Esseintes, Roderick Usher, and Claudio in *Der Tor und der Tod*.

The isolation of the count is emphasized by his exclusion from the description in the first two sections of the piece; in an atmosphere which is satiated in death and decay, it is not until the final section that we realize that one man remains alive amongst the ghosts of the past in the "Todesschlaf" of the park. This is intensified by his physical position: "Und droben in einem rissigen Turmgemach sitzt der Graf" <200>. The irony of his situation is unmistakable: far from being in a position of power, the count is more akin to a helpless prisoner, unable to assert himself over his destiny: "Auf alles, was ihn da sterbend umgibt, blickt der arme Graf, wie ein kleines, irres Kind, über dem ein Verhängnis steht, und das nicht mehr Kraft hat, zu leben, das dahinschwindet, gleich einem Vormittagsschatten" <201>. Where the tower elsewhere in literature figures as a symbol of male power (one thinks, for example of *Mörder, Hoffnung der Frau*), here the tower is old and crumbling, a further sign of the loss of vitality in the degenerate race.

The count himself is a nameless figure, one who has lost his identity, and who does not exist in his own right. His is a timeless existence, whose monotony is emphasized by the repetition of "Tagein, tagaus". As

the last member of an aristocratic race, he is the sum and the product of centuries of degeneration: "Auf seiner jahrhundertalten, müden Seele lastet das Verhängnis" <201>. Surrounded by dead and dying things, he finds spiritual harmony in the hour of decline: "Er sieht es gern, wenn die Sonne in den Wolken glüht, am Abend, da sie untersinkt" <200-01>. His isolation is further emphasized by his awareness of life outside the park, symbolized by the clouds which are "leuchtend und rein" <200>.

Utter passivity characterizes his life: "Er sieht ... Er horcht ... Er liest ..." He is incapable of any action; it is only in reading books about the past that he finds some kind of energy. Yet this aesthetic, vicarious participation in life only serves to emphasize his passivity, for it is not in the contemplation of his own past that he finds life, but rather in reading of the life of his ancestors: "Er liest mit fieberndem, tönendem Herzen, bis die Gegenwart, der er nicht angehört, versinkt. Und die Schatten der Vergangenheit steigen herauf - riesengroß. Und er lebt das Leben, das herrlich schöne Leben seiner Väter" <201>. It is significant that of all the objects which surround him, these books alone possess vitality: "er ... liest in mächtigen, vergilbten Büchern von der Vergangenheit Größe und Herrlichkeit" <201>.

This vitality of the past is contrasted to an outer vitality in the present, in the form of the wind which threatens the tower and the count's sheltered existence: "In Nächten, da der Sturm um den Turm jagt, daß die Mauern in ihren Grundfesten dröhnen und die Vögel angstvoll vor seinem Fenster kreischen, überkommt den Grafen eine namenlose Traurigkeit" <201>. The count's isolation is emphasized by the depiction of his face at the window, and his vision of reality as "riesengroß traumhaft, gespensterlich" <201>; for him, the ghosts of his ancestors have more substance than the storm outside. Yet this danger is not the reason

for the count's "namenlose Traurigkeit"; the storm which threatens to destroy his existence, "als wollte er alles Tote hinausfegen und in Lüfte zerstreuen" <201>, would be a welcome release from the monotony of his isolation, yet it proves to be a "Trugbild". The "Verhängnis" which torments the count's soul is one of decadent *ennui*, rather than the apocalyptic vision of later works, such as *Traum und Umnachtung*.

There is much in *Verlassenheit* which is reminiscent of Poe's *The Fall of the House of Usher*.<sup>10</sup> The count's acceptance of his fate is not unlike that of Roderick Usher: "'I shall perish,' said he, 'I must perish in this deplorable folly.'"<sup>11</sup> The sensitive descendant of a degenerate race, he, too, is surrounded by death and decay: "... an influence which some peculiarities in the mere form and substance of his family mansion had, by dint of long sufferance, he said, obtained over his spirit - an effect which the *physique* of the gray walls and turrets, and of the dim tarn into which they all looked down, had, at length, brought about upon the *morale* of his existence."<sup>12</sup>

The similarities end, however, at the conclusions of the two tales. In Poe, the violent storm, the blood-red moon, the appearance of the enshrouded sister, and the destruction of the house are, as Furness points out, more akin to *Traum und Umnachtung*.<sup>13</sup> Here one finds the relationship with the sister, the resulting sense of guilt, the terror, the corpses covered in mould, the fall of the degenerate race. There are, indeed, interesting parallels to be drawn between these two very different pieces of prose, written eight years apart. Although the vitality of the style and much of the imagery of *Traum und Umnachtung* bears no relation to *Verlassenheit*, here, too, we find the curse on the degenerate family being visited on the last male member of the race, the preoccupation with death, graveyards, dreams of the past, the deserted castle, evenings spent looking out the window, the silent woods, the bats, the

doves, the fountain, the feverish atmosphere of decay. In *Traum und Umnachtung*, however, the protagonist is active, unlike the passive count, and the passage has the dynamism of Expressionism rather than the *fin-de-siècle* weariness of decadence.

The isolation of the artist, and the retreat into a private realm of aesthetic contemplation forms the substance of two of Hofmannsthal's early dramas: *Der Tod des Tizian* and *Der Tor und der Tod*. For Claudio in *Der Tor und der Tod*, reflective thinking replaces active participation in life; he is aware of his isolation and his inability to understand the world around him; he is aware, too, that art is only a replacement for life and not life itself. This recognition, however, only comes in the hour of his death:

Ich hab mich so an Künstliches verloren,  
 Daß ich die Sonne sah aus toten Augen  
 Und nicht mehr hörte als durch tote Ohren:  
 Stets schleppte ich den rätselhaften Fluch,  
 Nie ganz bewußt, nie völlig unbewußt,  
 Mit kleinem Leid und schaler Lust  
 Mein Leben zu erleben wie ein Buch,  
 Das man zur Hälfte noch nicht und halb nicht mehr  
 begreift,  
 Und hinter dem der Sinn erst nach Lebendgem  
 schweift - 14

The poet as a figure of isolation occurs again in the poetry of *Sammlung 1909*. 'An einem Fenster' contrasts a positive view of the world as a place of harmony in both the natural and spiritual realms with the poet's sense of alienation. As in *Verlassenheit*, the poet's relationship to the outside world is one of passive and incomprehending contemplation; he cannot partake in the joy and vitality which he sees outside his window:

Das Leben da draußen - irgendwo  
 Mir fern durch ein Meer von Einsamkeit!  
 Es fühlt's ein Herz und wird nicht froh! <236>

As the count in *Verlassenheit* comes alive in the contemplation of his ancestral past, so the poet here

escapes the ennui of reality in dreams: "Ich träume und träum' und das Leben flieht" <236>. This is the criticism levelled by Bahr against the dilettantism of the decadents in his essay of 1894: "Das Leben fliehen, durch Laune, Wahn und Traum verdrängen, in sich vergessen - das ist der Sinn dieser Décadence."<sup>15</sup>

The poet as a figure isolated from the rest of society is frequently encountered in the literature of decadence. Hofmannsthal's 'Allein' expresses the poet's sense of relish at his own sorrow:

Wie rührend ist's allein zu sein  
Vor dem Auf-immer-Scheiden  
Mit all der süß verträumten Pein  
Mit all dem jungen Leiden.<sup>16</sup>

This sense of decadent pleasure in solitary pain is found to an even greater extent in the poetry of Dörmann:

Wie ferner Brandung  
Schütterndes Tosen Verklang  
Der Lärm des Lebens,  
Einsam bin ich geworden,  
Köstlich einsam ...<sup>17</sup>

Although apparently denied in the poet's lament, "Es fühlt's ein Herz und wird nicht froh", this sentiment is clearly evident in 'An einem Fenster'.

This early poem, which was published in the *Salzburger Volksblatt* on 1st April 1909, depicts a rather banal pose; the crude contrast of harmony and isolation, the over-use of exclamation marks, the trite imagery of "ein Meer von Einsamkeit" give a somewhat stylized image of the suffering, misunderstood poet. Yet beyond this pose we may trace something of a very real sense of alienation, which plagued Trakl throughout his life. This is the sentiment which he expressed to Buschbeck in 1912: "Wozu die Plage. Ich werde endlich doch immer ein armer Kaspar Hauser bleiben."<sup>18</sup>

A similar sense of isolation is expressed by Poe in his poem, 'Alone', which examines the reason for this feeling which has plagued him since childhood, and which is the source of his art:

From childhood's hour I have not been  
 As others were - I have not seen  
 As others saw ...

...  
 ... in my childhood - in the dawn  
 Of a most stormy life was drawn  
 From ev'ry depth of good and ill  
 The mystery which binds me still -

...  
 From the thunder, and the storm -  
 And the cloud that took the form  
 (When the rest of Heaven was blue)  
 Of a demon in my view.<sup>19</sup>

In 'Nachtlied', the poet seeks to break out of his isolation by using the poetic expression of his suffering not only as a means of release from pain, but as a means of communication. By crafting this suffering into poetry, he finds a way to ease his anguish, as a wound lets blood flow, yet this in itself is not enough. The poem also expresses a need for the songs to be heard, such as we have already encountered in Herbert's desire to ring the "Sturmglöcken" in *Blaubart*. No such companionship in suffering is found, however:

Doch kein Herz trägt sie mir wieder  
 Durch das Dunkel her. <235>

The poet's situation is one of utter isolation, without solace or comfort; the only reply is the echo of his own sorrow, which serves to increase his pain, as his songs, rather than acting as wounds to release his pain, become themselves tainted with that pain: "Lieder, die von Wunden bluten" <235>.

Beer-Hofmann's poem 'Der einsame Weg', dedicated to Schnitzler, and inspired by his play of the same title, with its depiction of life as one of spiritual isolation for the artist balanced against an affirmation of bourgeois stability and affection, also depicts the poet as one whose fate is isolation:

Alle Wege, die wir treten,  
 Münden in die Einsamkeit  
 Nimmermüde Stunden jäten  
 Aus, was wuchs an Lust und Leid.<sup>20</sup>

The pain of isolation was for Trakl, however, more profound than the decadent pose of the early prose and poetry. In his later lyric, the figure of "der Einsame" can be seen as the development of the early decadent pose, one who is isolated from the rest of society, unable to understand or be understood, yet who seeks to express his suffering through poetry:

Stille in nächtigem Zimmer.  
 Silber flackert der Leuchter  
 Vor dem singenden Odem  
 Des Einsamen <131>

"Und dich zermalmt des Alltags grauer Gram": *Ennui*

The decadent love of the artificial is typified in the pose of the dandy. The role of the refined aristocrat, elegant in dress and manners, seems to have little in common with Trakl, who felt ill at ease with the superficial, fashionable aesthetes of the Viennese coffee-houses.<sup>21</sup> Yet the elegant exterior of the dandy was merely a sign of an inner arrogance, a sense of superiority to the mundane world of bourgeois society. In his essay on 'Le Peintre de la Vie moderne', Baudelaire writes: "Ces choses ne sont pour le parfait dandy qu'un symbole de la supériorité aristocratique de son esprit."<sup>22</sup> This was indeed a pose which the young Trakl assumed, if not in Vienna, then in the earlier days of the "Apollo" group, as Schneditz reports:

Er liebte in jenen Tagen nämlich, sein Haar als 'Dichtermähne', wohlgescheitelt und geschniegelt, in den Nacken hängen zu lassen ... Die Anzüge waren nach der neuesten Mode geschnitten, die Manschetten mußten ein beträchtliches Stück aus den Ärmeln hervorgucken. ... Großen Wert soll der jugendliche Dichter zu jener Zeit seinen wirklich schön geformten Händen zugemessen haben.<sup>23</sup>

This outer pose was a sign of his inner attitude: "Mit einem Mal aber trat die erschreckende Zäsur ein. Sein Gemüt wurde umdüstert, brütend geradezu. Eine unglaubliche Verachtung allen Daseins stieg ihm empor."<sup>24</sup>

This change in personality is reflected in two poems, 'Confiteor' and 'Ermatten', which testify to Bruckbauer's description of Trakl's character at the time as "mürrisch, zänckisch, arrogant, selbstbewußt und lebensüberdrüssig".<sup>25</sup> 'Confiteor' is centred on the suffering of the poet whose vision penetrates beyond the superficiality of life. As in 'An einem Fenster', the positive opening is contrasted to the poet's own vision, stressing the gulf which separates him from the rest of humankind. In the poet's view of the world, colour is turned into darkness, harmonious image into disorder, life into death. His awareness of the transience of all things plagues his existence:

Die bunten Bilder, die das Leben malt  
 Seh' ich umdüstert nur von Dämmerungen,  
 Wie kraus verzerrte Schatten, trüb und kalt,  
 Die kaum geboren schon der Tod bezwungen. <246>

This view of beauty as a facade behind which the decadent soul can penetrate is frequent; one thinks of Erwin, in Andrian's "Narcissenbuch", *Der Garten der Erkenntnis*, whose vision oscillates between wonder at the rich beauty of Vienna's churches, palaces and gardens, and an awareness of desolation and futility:

Zwischen diesen Stunden des Reichtums kamen  
 andere der Öde, die so unerträglich für  
 seine Seele waren, wie fürs Auge ist, ins  
 Leere zu schauen. Einmal in Schönbrunn  
 überkam ihn diese Öde besonders stark, indem  
 ihm nicht bloß die Dinge nichtssagend  
 erschienen, sondern auch seine Gedanken von  
 sonst an ihm abglitten, auseinanderliefen  
 und ihn allein ließen.<sup>26</sup>

The hyperbole of the second stanza is more comic in its effect than indicative of any genuine sensitivity to the transience of life. This is the decadent view of the world; as Rasch points out: "Alles Natürliche, das heißt alles Gegebene, Vorhandene,







quintessential Austrian decadent, Dörmann: "Auch meine Seele wurde krank geboren:/ Ihr fehlt die Lust, die Kraft, der Mut zum Leben."<sup>32</sup> In the early poetry of Schnitzler we also find the depiction "eines Nervösen", one whose apathy is such that he can feel neither intoxication, nor happiness, nor love:

Vom süßen Wein trank ich Glas um Glas -  
Die trüben Sinne konnt ich nicht berauschen;  
Ein holdes Kind an meiner Seite saß, -  
Doch ihren Worten wußt ich nicht zu lauschen.

Ein lustig Singen schallte um mich her, -  
Mir war es nichts als ein Gewirr von Tönen,  
Mein Auge, tauchend in ein Lichtermeer,  
War allzumüd sich daran zu gewöhnen.

Und alles lebte, alles freute sich,  
Manch Herzenskranken sah ich neu gesunden,  
Das Kind an meiner Seite küßte mich,  
Ich schaute auf und hatte nichts empfunden.<sup>33</sup>

In 'Ermatten', the poet seeks to escape from what Hofmannsthal refers to as "diesem Sumpf von öden, leeren Tagen"<sup>34</sup> through narcotic intoxication as a means of stimulating tired nerves. The poet must realize, however, that even this is no solution; the sweetness of narcotic visions leaves behind only a feeling of disgust and pain, as hope turns to despair, and ecstasy turns to shame. Rather than providing a release from his melancholic torpor, this has only served to intensify his awareness of the universal pain of existence. As Weinhold has pointed out, this oscillation between ecstatic escape and the despair of reality is a fundamental aspect of the decadent mentality:

Weil der Zusammenhang zwischen Welt und Ich nur als Illusion existiert, die dem Dekadenten nicht verborgen bleiben kann, wird er (immer wieder) mit der Bestandlosigkeit dieser Illusion und der Sinn- und Wertlosigkeit der Realität, d.h. mit dem Nichts konfrontiert. ... die Erkenntnis der Lebensillusion [treibt] den Dekadenten vom Rausch in die Ernüchterung, die Ernüchterung mit ihrer nihilistischen Erfahrung ihn jedoch wieder in den Rausch zurück.<sup>35</sup>

The poet's *ennui* is intensified by an awareness of sin and guilt, a consequence perhaps not merely of his intoxication, but also of his incestuous desires; one thinks of the associations of "ermatten" in 'Blutschuld' ("Ermattend unterm Hauch der schwülen Lüfte/ Wir träumen: Verzeih uns, Maria, in deiner Huld!") and in 'Sabbath' ("Und eine schlingt - o rasende Mänade -/ Mein Fleisch, ermattet von den schwülen Dünsten). As in these two poems, 'Ermatten' shows none of the profound distress of the later poetry; guilt here is simply a *frisson* which heightens the poet's sense of *ennui*:

Vom Rausch der Wohlgerüche und der Weine  
 Blieb dir ein überwach Gefühl der Scham -  
 Das Gestern in verzerrtem Widerscheine -  
 Und dich zermalmt des Alltags grauer Gram. <242>

The decadent pose of the arrogant, suffering soul, however immature and superficial it may be in contrast with the later poetry, is a guise which is clearly assumed in the *Sammlung 1909*; there is little to differentiate between the poet's view of the world in 'Confiteor' and 'Ermatten' and the attitude of a decadent 'hero' such as the young painter in Bahr's *Die gute Schule*: "... jedesmal, sobald er sich nur besann, nahm er eilig die Absicht, sich zu bessern, des Grübelns zu entwöhnen und glücklich zu werden, mit Reue zurück und verharnte in der Gewohnheit. Schmerz, Ekel, Verzweiflung - was lag daran, wenn es für seine Kunst war?"<sup>36</sup>

"In meiner Seele dunklem Spiegel": *Seelenstände*

That Trakl himself adhered to the decadent precept of poetry as an expression of the poet's soul can be seen from the letters in which he writes about his own

creativity. In 1906, he described his writing as a means of expressing an emotional state which he could not otherwise put into words. Two years later, he wrote to his sister Minna of his poetry as an alternative to the harshness of the world around him, which afforded him a means of escape from reality.

Following in the footsteps of his early mentor, Streicher, and such literary forebears as Maeterlinck, Trakl's first attempts to express the suffering of his soul took the form of dramas as well as short prose pieces. *Totentag*, subtitled "Dramatisches Stimmungsbild", was written clearly in the style of decadent drama, with the intent to create the melancholic atmosphere of a "Spätherbsttag" to the detriment of the content and action of the play, as reviews of the play confirm: "Neben den Mängeln, die sein dramatisches Stimmungsbild enthält, wie das Fehlen jedweder Handlung, die teilweise nicht sehr glückliche Charakteristik der handelnden Personen, Unklarheiten in der logischen Entwicklung des Stoffes, besitzt es doch einen Vorzug, und das ist die Sprache, die Trakl führt."<sup>37</sup> Trakl's second drama, *Fata Morgana. Tragische Szene* enjoyed less success: "Es wäre zu wünschen, daß Georg Trakl aus dem symbolischen Reich den Weg in das Leben fände ... seine Stimmungsbilder sind zu zart und blutarm, um das grelle Licht der Lampen oder den Geschmack der breiten Öffentlichkeit zu vertragen."<sup>38</sup>

Trakl took this advice to heart, and abandoned all attempts at drama until 1914. Yet he still sought to express the state of his soul in prose and poetry. The highly subjective piece *Traumland* concerns the protagonist's memories of a childhood stay in a small village. In this "Episode", Trakl attempts to assimilate himself to the new style of art as proclaimed by Bahr: "Die Natur des Künstlers sollte nicht länger ein Werkzeug der Wirklichkeit sein, um ihr Ebenbild zu vollbringen; sondern umgekehrt, die

Wirklichkeit wurde jetzt wieder der Stoff des Künstlers, um seine Natur zu verkünden, in deutlichen und wirksamen Symbolen."<sup>39</sup> Trakl clearly moves in the direction of this new art. The "Episode" is an expression, not merely of an event from the protagonist's past, but rather it is the expression of a yearning for a past idyll, an attempt to convey the innocence of childhood which is contrasted with the *ennui* and meaninglessness of the present. Like the count in *Verlassenheit*, the protagonist only finds vitality in his memories of the past: "Aber die Erinnerung an jene stillen Tage voll Sonnenschein sind in mir lebendig geblieben, lebendiger vielleicht als die geräuschvolle Gegenwart" <192>.

The preoccupation with a childhood idyll as an expression of the restlessness of the poet's soul, and his inability to find happiness in the present is found in Dörmann's 'Verlorene Spuren':

Und wenn ich frage, was mich dann und wann  
Ganz lind und leise noch bewegen kann,

Was meiner Seele stillen Gleichmut stört,  
Scheinbares Leben aus dem Nichts beschwört -

Erinnerung ist's - ein Duft, ein Bild, ein Klang,  
Der unvermutet an die Seele drang

Und mich an jene ferne Zeit gemahnt,  
In der ich alles Leben scheu geahnt,<sup>40</sup>

What Trakl depicts is a *Traumland*; for the decadents, dream often took precedence over reality as an aesthetic realm which offered a way of escape from mundane life. In 1891, Bahr hailed the new art thus: "und wieder wurde die Kunst ... der 'Tempel des Traumes'".<sup>41</sup> This tendency is found throughout *fin-de-siècle* literature: one thinks of Rilke's *Traumgekrönt*, Beer-Hofmann's *Jaakobs Traum*, Schnitzler's *Traumnovelle*, the "Traumreich" of Kubin's *Die andere Seite*, and the unity of "Leben, Traum und Tod" in Hofmannsthal's poetry. In Trakl's early piece, the dream world is clearly given greater substantiality than the narrator's present situation in the "Großstadt".

The poem which opens *Sammlung 1909*, 'Drei Träume', again presents the decadent fascination for the world of dreams. In the poet's vision of the world, dreams have greater significance than empirical reality, for it is within these visions that the poet glimpses a higher universal order, a poetic truth open to the artist and the genius alone.

The first poem presents the poet's reality as a world of dreams and impressions where there is neither certainty nor clear understanding of their significance:

Mich däucht', ich träumte von Blätterfall,  
 Von weiten Wäldern und dunklen Seen,  
 Von trauriger Worte Widerhall -  
 Doch konnt' ich ihren Sinn nicht verstehn. <215>

The symbolism of falling leaves and stars reminds of the essentially downward movement that is implied by the word 'decadence' ('de-cadere', to fall away). The pathos of this poem is crass and ineffective; the poet stylizes himself as the isolated, melancholic decadent, so detached from reality that he is an eternal echo of his own pathos-laden dreams, misunderstood, not only by the vulgar crowds, but also by himself:

Wie Blätterfall, wie Sternenfall,  
 So sah ich mich ewig kommen und gehn,  
 Eines Traumes unsterblicher Widerhall -  
 Doch konnt' ich seinen Sinn nicht verstehn. <215>

In the second poem, the poet seeks an escape from the *ennui* of this futile and incomprehensible existence in the creation of fantastic visions intended to reflect the depth of his soul. These visions are, as one would expect in the poetry of decadence, characterized by a propensity towards extremes: "Bilder niegeseh'ner Meere, / Verlass'ner, tragisch phantastischer Länder ... gigantische[], prasselnde[] Sonnen ... seltsam belebte, schimmernde Gärten" <215>. One is reminded here of Andrian's 'Noch liebt' ich nie ...', which also expresses the poet's lethargic desire to overcome the *ennui* of life:

Oft sehnt' ich mich nach Dingen, die ich nie  
 gekannt,

Um ihnen meine Zärtlichkeit zu geben,  
 Nach fernen Ländern längst erstorbner Zeiten,  
 Nach Sünden, Leiden, Qualen - nach dem Leben.<sup>42</sup>

Trakl's poem is far from an effective depiction of the poet's soul, which is regarded as dark and mysterious, for it is so nebulous and fantastic as to lose all meaning. The hint of mystery and threat which underlies his existence is in no way transformed into appropriate imagery, and thus the attempt to convey the enormity of the poet's soul, its transcendence of human limits, achieves little success. We are reminded here of the third poem in Dörmann's *Sensationen*:

In grauer Flut ist mir die Welt versunken,  
 Ein nebeltrübes, ödes Traumgebild,  
 Und farbenjauchzend, schwere Düfte trunken  
 Die neue Welt aus meiner Seele quillt. -43

Elsewhere in the literature of decadence we find a more successful evocation of the profundity of the poet's soul. In Hofmannsthal's 'Psyche' the sensuous description of the world of dreams achieves a poignancy far beyond the immature hyperbole of 'Drei Träume', despite the use of decadent topoi:

Mit wunderbar nie vernommenen Worten  
 Reiß ich dir auf der Träume Pforten:  
 Mit goldenglühenden, süßen lauen  
 Wie fiebernde Blumenkelche bebenden,  
 ...  
 Mit vielerlei solchen verzauberten Worten  
 Werf ich dir auf der Träume Pforten:  
 Den goldenen Garten mit duftenden Auen  
 Im Abendrot schwimmend, mit lachenden Frauen,  
 Das rauschende violette Dunkel  
 Mit weißleuchtenden Bäumen und Sterngefunkel,  
 Den flüsternden, braunen, vergessenen Teich  
 Mit kreisenden Schwänen und Nebel bleich,<sup>44</sup>

One thinks, of course, too, of Rimbaud's 'Le bateau ivre', which may have been a direct influence on Trakl's poem; in Ammer's translation, the parallels suggest themselves, although Trakl's poem remains at best a weak echo of the original:

Nun sah ich Himmel in Blitzen zerreißen,  
 sah Strömungen, Wasserhosen, tote Seen,  
 sah Morgendämmern, in Aufruhr wie das Kreisen  
 erschreckter Tauben, sah, was noch keiner gesehn.  
 ...



Ich war in Sternenwelten und Inselreichen,  
sah offene Himmel, fiebernd und riesenhaft -  
schläfst du in diesen Nächten ohnegleichen,  
Mutter des Lebens, künftige Kraft?<sup>45</sup>

The final poetic vision of 'Drei Träume' is apocalyptic and nihilistic. Again, the poet's vision is emphasized: "Ich sah...". Isolated from humankind by his acute awareness of the futility of the endless cycle of life and death, he sees beyond reality, and his vision encompasses the cosmic scale of suffering which has existed from the beginning of creation:

Ich sah viel Städte als Flammenraub  
Und Greuel auf Greuel häufen die Zeiten,  
Und sah viel Völker verwesen zu Staub,  
Und alles in Vergessenheit gleiten. <216>

Such is the power of his visionary nature that he sees not only the meaningless and endlessly repetitive existence of humankind, but also that divine powers, too, are powerless elements in this futile existence:

Ich sah die Götter stürzen zur Nacht,  
Die heiligsten Harfen ohnmächtig zerschellen,  
Und aus Verwesung neu entfacht,  
Ein neues Leben zum Tage schwellen. <216>

The nebulous, symbolist landscape of the soul is found in the short poem 'Schweigen':

Über den Wäldern schimmert bleich  
Der Mond, der uns träumen macht,  
Die Weide am dunklen Teich  
Weint lautlos in die Nacht.

Ein Herz erlischt - und sacht  
Die Nebel fluten und steigen -  
Schweigen, Schweigen! <247>

The silence of the night, the mist, the willow, and the dark pool stand as symbols of the souls of the poet and his unnamed companion, an expression of their sorrow, of their alienation from society, and of the darkness of their sin. The motif of "Schweigen", and the moon as a symbol of sexuality lead to the speculation that the companion here, as in 'Ballade III', is the sister; the unspeakable, and therefore unatonable, crime being that of incest.

This poem uses with little originality the standard topoi of *fin-de-siècle* poetry, as is found even in the poetry of Richard Dehmel:

Weich küßt die Zweige  
der weiße Mond.  
Ein Flüstern wohnt  
im Laub, als neige,  
als schweige sich der Hain zur Ruh:  
Geliebte du -

Der Weiher ruht, und  
die Weide schimmert.  
Ihr Schatten flimmert  
in seiner Flut, und  
der Wind weint in den Bäumen:  
wir träumen - träumen -46

One thinks too of Rilke's early poetry:

Eine alte Weide trauert  
dürr und fühllos in den Mai, -  
eine alte Hütte kauert  
grau und einsam hart dabei.<sup>47</sup>

One of Heym's earliest poems depicts a mood of nebulous melancholic emotion:

Letztes Herbstestrauern  
In rotem Abendscheine.  
Und tot die alten Mauern.  
Ich weine, weine, weine.

Leise Nebel schleichen  
Wohl um den finstern Tann  
Und weiß verhüllte Leichen  
Schweben zu mir heran<sup>48</sup>

The first version of 'Die drei Teiche in Hellbrunn', published in the *Salzburger Volksblatt* in April 1909, presents three visions of the poet's soul. The first, and most blatantly decadent, is shrouded in an atmosphere of stagnation and prurience:

Um die Blumen taumelt das Fliegengeschmeiß,  
Um die bleichen Blumen auf dumpfer Flut,  
Geh fort! Geh fort! Es brennt die Luft!  
In der Tiefe glüht der Verwesung Glut!  
Die Weide weint, das Schweigen starrt,  
Auf den Wassern braut ein schwüler Dunst.  
Geh fort! Geh fort! Es ist der Ort  
Für schwarzer Kröten ekle Brunst. <238>

This is the dark side of the poet's soul; any beauty of nature is in a state of decay; the flowers are pale and

ridden with flies, the pool is stagnant. Although the poet hints of an unknown danger from the depths of the pool, this is not realized in any effective or concrete imagery.

The second stanza emphasizes the brighter, more vivacious side to his nature. The stark contrast between these two stanzas verges on the ridiculous:

Bilder von Wolken, Blumen und Menschen -  
Singe, singe, freudige Welt! <238>

There is a strong sense of the superficiality of this side of the poet's soul, with the emphasis on "Bilder". This is a reflection on the surface of the water, which fails to penetrate or adequately symbolize the poet's soul. There is no substantiality to the reflection of childish innocence; indeed, the poet is aware of the contrast of his own dark nature and the brightness of his reflection: "Dunkles wandelt sie freundlich in Helle" <238>. The appellation with which he addresses himself ("O Freudiger du") is filled with a sense of irony and self-alienation. He sees his own reflection in the pond mingled with the reflection of the sun and the clouds; any sense of spiritual peace, then, is insubstantial and temporary, a mere reflection which lacks any reality.

The first two stanzas may be an attempt by the poet to express the extremes of his nature (one remembers that Trakl was diagnosed as a schizophrenic), yet they fail to go beyond the superficiality of appearance. The third stanza more successfully evokes the depths of the poet's soul. The pool here is mysterious and unfathomable; it contains neither the grotesque putrefaction nor the simplistic harmony of the natural and the spiritual, but rather a profundity which is immeasurable, a symbol of the puzzle of existence which still plagues the poet, but which he contemplates in peace.

This pool is a mixture of the green of decay and the blue of the spiritual: "Die Wasser schimmern grünlich-blau" <238>. The poet's existence consists of

a fusion of both extremes. This is a world of night, governed by the moon, in Trakl's early poetry almost invariably the symbol of male sexuality. Yet this moon is placed firmly within the blue night sky, surely symbolic of the female realm. Seen within this context, the poet's inability to understand his own nature (his reflection is "Ein rätselvolles Sphinxgesicht" <238>) is caused by his incomprehension of sexuality. Here again is the sense of self-alienation which accompanies sexual maturation, such as we have found in 'Das Grauen' and elsewhere.

While an obsession with decay and death is not confined to the literature of decadence, the depiction of prurient scenes as an expression of the poet's morbid nature, such as we have seen in 'Die Drei Teiche in Hellbrunn', is very much part of the *fin de siècle*. Maeterlinck's 'Serres Chaudes' is the prime example of poetry satiated with depictions of putrefying nature as a symbol of the poet's *état d'âme*:

Sous l'eau du songe qui s'élève,  
 Mon âme a peur, mon âme a peur!  
 Et la lune luit dans mon coeur,  
 Plongé dans les sources du rêve.

Sous l'ennui morne des roseaux,  
 Seuls les reflets profonds des choses,  
 Des lys, des palmes et des roses,  
 Pleurent encore au fond des eaux.

Les fleurs s'effeuillent une à une  
 Sur le reflet du firmament,  
 Pour descendre éternellement  
 Dans l'eau du songe et dans la lune.<sup>49</sup>

"So spielt um kranke Blumen noch die Sonne": The  
Aestheticism of Death and Decay

"Tu m'as donné ta boue et j'en ai fait de l'or ..."<sup>50</sup> Baudelaire's words underlie one of the major principles of decadent aestheticism: that the act of poetic creation is in some way able to transfigure the transience which the poet depicts. Although he cannot halt the process of decay, by creating beauty out of this awareness, the poet creates something which is permanent and free from the physical process of dissolution. Baudelaire's 'Une Charogne' is one of the earliest and best example of this aestheticism of decay:

Les mouches bourdonnaient sur ce ventre putride,  
D'où sortaient de noirs bataillons  
De larves, qui coulaient comme un épais liquide  
Le long de ces vivants haillons.<sup>51</sup>

Out of this putrefaction, however, there sounds "une étrange musique" which purifies and cleanses, for by describing the most vivid details of the rotting carcass, the poet can conquer its horror. Memory and poetic expression can transfigure decay into something of beauty: "... j'ai gardé la forme et l'essence divine/ De mes amours décomposés!".

In their attempt to aestheticize death, the writers of decadence often focused on the beauty of the *femme fragile*. While this theme is far from exclusive to the decadent movement - one thinks of Poe's admission in 'The Philosophy of Composition' that "the death of a beautiful woman is, unquestionably, the most poetical topic in the world"<sup>52</sup> -, it is, nonetheless, an essential aspect of decadence, and one which the young Trakl, although briefly, touched on. Trakl's *femme fragile* is Maria in *Traumland*. Suffering is obviously the important theme of this piece: "Deine Seele geht nach dem Leiden, mein Junge" <192>. The protagonist is not only aware of the girl's suffering,

he is sexually attracted by it; suffering and death are associated with beauty. Indeed, Maria gains her true beauty in death: during her illness she is "leidend" and "krank", but in death she is lit by sunbeams and her golden hair is loosened by the wind: "Sonnenstrahlen huschten über ihre lichte, zarte Gestalt hin; ihr gelöstes Goldhaar flatterte im Wind" (192). There is no sense of pain or loss at the death, for it is seen in the context of a heightened, transfigured reality, typical of the decadents' affirmation of decline; one is reminded of Verlaine's statement that the essence of decadence was "... l'art de mourir en beauté ..." 53

Trakl's attempts to aestheticize death and decay within *Sammlung 1909* are varied in their effect. The hyperbole of poems such as 'Die drei Teiche in Hellbrunn' has already been examined; yet three poems rise above the mediocrity of this volume in their attempt to objectify and thus transfigure the process of dissolution. Of the poems in this volume, Trakl only considered two - 'Herbst' and 'Farbiger Herbst' - worthy of redemption; one other poem, however, also overcomes the limitations of the early poetry.

'Von den stillen Tagen' is an expression of a *fin-de-siècle* world-weariness through the symbolism of disease, decay and death:

So geisterhaft sind diese späten Tage  
Gleichwie der Blick von Kranken, hergesendet  
Ins Licht. Doch ihrer Augen stumme Klage  
Beschattet Nacht, der sie schon zugewendet. (217)

These are autumnal days, possibly the final days of humankind; vitality has departed and all that remains is an unreal reminder of the past. We who live at this time (who are implicit in the first line) are like ill people looking towards the light in search of health, as we seek meaning in our lives. The image connects the days in which we live and the look of ill people, for the look of the ill has a similar ghost-like quality,

as their life has lost its purpose and vitality. There is an interesting shift of perspective in lines 3 and 4; the ill people, who had existed only in the context of a simile, now become a reality within the poem. That the ill are beyond recovery is clear from two images; firstly, in the tension of light and dark: although they look towards the light, their eyes are covered by the darkness of the night, a traditional symbol of death, to which they have already turned. Transferring this image back to the original simile, the implication is that for those who are alive in the end-days implies that the poet and his reader are alive at this time) it is also too late; we may cast a look back to the times when life had meaning but we, too, are turned towards death. The second image is a synaesthetic union of sight and speech: "ihrer Augen stumme Klage". In their weakness they have lost the power of speech and can only articulate with their eyes; human faculties have lost their meaning: the lament is dumb and the eyes, covered by the shadow of the night, will soon fall prey to blindness. So, too, will the faculties of those who live in the end-days inevitably lose the ability to articulate and thus overcome their state of disease, fallenness, decline. This is an image which is developed in the mature lyric; one thinks of 'De profundis', which describes the protagonist in such a state of sin that he loses the power of poetic expression in an image which similarly fuses sight and speech: "Es ist ein Licht, das in meinem Mund erlöscht" (46).

The second stanza appears to add little to the poem other than making explicit that which has already been implied in the imagery of the first stanza. On closer examination, however, one realizes that a further, more subtle shift in perspective has taken place:

Sie lächeln wohl und denken ihre Feste,  
Wie man nach Liedern bebt, die halb vergessen,

Und Worte sucht für eine traurige Geste,  
Die schon verblaßt in Schweigen ungemessen. <217>

The experience of ill people remembering a past of health and joy is likened to a common experience with which everyone can identify: "Wie man nach Liedern bebt, die halb vergessen, / Und Worte sucht für eine traurige Geste". Thus the specific situation is universalized: we relate directly to the ill people because of our own, similar experience. The imagery of the poem has come full circle: the end-days (and implicitly we who live in them) are like ill people, who are in turn like us when we try to remember a half-forgotten tune or word. Through these shifts in perspective and the relationship between the different elements in the poem, the universality of transience is conveyed in a far more effective way than in many of the other poems of the volume, such as 'Drei Träume III'.

In the first tercet Trakl creates a subtle comparison with the natural sphere through the hypotactic connective, "So". Here also is the tension between past vitality and present decay:

So spielt um kranke Blumen noch die Sonne  
Und läßt von einer todeskühlen Wonne  
Sie schauern in den dünnen, klaren Lüften. <217>

Flowers that were once things of beauty and health have fallen victim to decay, Baudelairean *fleurs du mal*, mocked by the same life-giving sun which shone on them when they were healthy. Yet even this sun which appears impervious to their fate is prey to the transience of nature, for it is no longer a sun of warmth and health, but one which brings coolness and death. Paradoxically, it is only in death that there is an escape from the meaninglessness of life; there is a long poetic tradition here, yet it is also typical of the perversity of the decadence that death, the ultimate sensation, should be associated with bliss, causing the flowers to shudder in anticipation. Through the series of associations already set up in the poem, the



implication is that we who are alive in the end-days can only gain meaning through death.

The description of the signs of the decay of the end-days within the natural sphere continues in the final tercet. Again, the theme is of the transience of vitality. Nature's power of articulation is silenced, and that which is vibrant fades:

Die roten Wälder flüstern und verdämmern,  
Und todesnächtiger hallt der Spechte Hämmern  
Gleichwie ein Widerhall aus dumpfen Grüften. <217>

Birds, traditional harbingers of death in folklore, also feature as such in Trakl's poetry intensify the warning of their hammering; Trakl effectively varies the iambic pentameter with an anapest as an onomatopoeic recreation of the sound of the birds. The final simile of the poem draws us back to the human sphere, but this time firmly in the realm of the dead: the sound of the birds which harbingers death is like a menacing echo from the tombs, suggestive of corpses trying to escape from the grave. This is a perversely decadent and Poe-esque treatment of the theme of the cycle of life and death: a grotesque image of the new life found in death. The desire to escape from the grave is inextricably linked with decay and nature's call to the grave. This image takes us full circle to the opening line of the poem, as the corpses echoing from the grave may be the ghosts who haunt the end-days.

The first stanza of 'Farbiger Herbst' presents a series of positive images: the well, both a source of life and a symbol of human control over the chaotic realm of nature, reflects the joy of humankind, as the clouds form an aesthetically pleasing contrast with the clear blue sky, symbolic of the harmony between the spiritual realm, nature and human civilization:

Der Brunnen singt, die Wolken stehn  
Im klaren Blau, die weißen, zarten;  
Bedächtig, stille Menschen gehn  
Da drunten im abendblauen Garten. <237>

The implication is, however, that the poet is not part of this harmony, separated from the majority of people by his awareness of the transience inherent in all spheres:

Der Ahnen Marmor ist ergraut  
 Ein Vogelflug streift in die Weiten  
 Ein Faun mit toten Schatten schaut  
 Nach Schatten, die ins Dunkel gleiten.

Das Laub fällt rot vom alten Baum  
 Und kreist herein durch offne Fenster,  
 In dunklen Feuern glüht der Raum,  
 Darin die Schatten, wie Gespenster. <237>

The greyness of decay on statues reminds of the inevitable collapse of all civilizations, for even their works of art, with which they hope to preserve their immortality, will decompose; the flight of the birds signifies the departure of spiritual values; the leaves falling from the trees are an indication of the inevitability of decay in nature, and, as the dead foliage enters the sphere of the poet through the open window, so it serves as a reminder that transience in nature encroaches upon the human world.

In the final stanza of the poem, the images of the first stanza are presented in a more negative, threatening way:

Opaliger Dunst webt über das Gras,  
 Eine Wolke von welken, gebleichten Düften,  
 Im Brunnen leuchtet wie grünes Glas  
 Die Mondessichel in frierenden Lüften. <237>

The well is no longer seen as part of the human sphere, but has come under the control of the cold, threatening force of nature: "Im Brunnen leuchtet wie grünes Glas/ Die Mondessichel in frierenden Lüften." The moon is the symbol of male sexuality, the darker force behind nature; its sickle shape serves as a mocking reminder of the inevitable presence of death, the grim reaper.

Without doubt the most successful poem of the volume is 'Herbst', which is included almost unchanged in the 1913 volume of *Gedichte*. Here, our senses of sight, sound and smell are united with those of the

poet and we are invited to share his vision of transience. The presence of the poet is not intrusive, however: his vision of decay is conveyed simply, through objective, concrete images. Here, we are far from the over-refinement of decadence, but are reminded of another aspect of decadent and Symbolist writing: the stress on the appeal to the nerves of the reader, described by Bahr in his essay on 'Symbolismus': "Sondern er will die Nerven in jene Stimmungen zwingen, wo sie von selber nach dem Unsinnlichen greifen, und will das durch sinnliche Mittel."<sup>54</sup>

The poem creates an awareness of disharmony from the outset, through the use of sound and structure:

Am Abend, wenn die Glocken Frieden läuten,  
 Folg' ich der Vögel wundervollen Flügen,  
 Die lang geschart, gleich frommen Pilgerzügen  
 Entschwinden in den herbstlich klaren Weiten.

<219>

Partial rhyme (läuten/Weiten, Geschicken/rücken) lends the poem a haunting quality, an expression of the dissonance between the spiritual and the worldly. On reading the poem, one is aware of a subtle creation of a lack of harmony, initially intangible and imprecise, which is made explicit only in the sestet.

An examination of the poem shows that there is no simple division between peace and harmony in the octet, decay and death in the sestet, as would at first appear. The images of both parts of the poem symbolize the endless cycle of life and death. The euphony of the opening line conveys a real sense of peace and harmony, yet the hints of approaching decay are undeniable: the very fact that it is evening introduces a note of transience to this positive picture, and the sound of the bells is only a sensory and impermanent invocation of peace (there is an awareness that they can also be rung to communicate disaster, as in *Blaubart* and 'Die Nacht': "Und es dröhnt/ Gewaltig die Glocke im Tal:/ Flammen, Flüche/ Und die dunklen Spiele der Wollust" <160>).



over nature is prey to rust. The final image is a somewhat complex simile which uses anticipation to heighten its effect:

Indess' wie blasser Kinder Todesreigen,  
Um dunkle Brunnenränder, die verwittern  
Im Wind sich fröstelnd fahle Astern neigen. <219>

The image of pale asters bent in the wind like the death-rounds of pallid children around dark, weather-beaten wells is a powerful symbol of transience. Asters traditionally symbolize death, as in Goethe's *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* and Keller's *Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe*.<sup>55</sup> One may also detect the influence of Verlaine and Mahler, whose *Kindertotenlieder* were composed in 1902; but the complete image is original and effective. It is in three parts, all inextricably linked by a state of death and decay, and by the tension of light and dark which connects the signifier and the signified and contrasts them to the darkness of the wells, symbolic of the threat of fate. This is a potent picture of the death of innocence at the hands of impervious powers and of the passivity with which that death is accepted. As the asters are victims of the harsh wind of autumn, so, too, children will inevitably die. That life and death are all part of the same endless cycle is expressed through the association of youth and death, through the symbol of the well, which is normally considered a source of life, but is here connected with death, and through the seasonal imagery, for although autumn and winter bring death and decay, spring and summer, the seasons of vitality, are part of the same cycle. The weathering process which affects even the impassive wells emphasizes the passing of time and the endless recurrence of this circle of transience.

Unlike most of the poems in *Sammlung 1909*, this deals with concrete objects; the poet's immediate experience is presented with a universal appeal, rather than the vague, abstract notions of eternity and infinity which form the subject of much of the volume.

It is in this simple, immediately recognizable and identifiable approach that the effect of the poem lies. This is not to say, however, that the poem is outwith the scope of decadence; it escapes its over-refinement, but with its theme of decay and death and its appeal to the nerves, it is rooted firmly in the tradition of decadence.

Trakl's use of the autumnal landscape to evoke a melancholic mood is reminiscent of Verlaine, whose autumn poems, such as the 'Chanson d'Automne', achieved their effect through an emotional, rather than intellectual appeal:

Et je m'en vais  
 Au vent mauvais  
 Qui m'emporte  
 Deçà, delà,  
 Pareil à la  
 Feuille morte.<sup>56</sup>

Within the literature of the German *fin de siècle*, one finds a similar preoccupation with things autumnal in the early poetry of Rilke and Heym. Heym's 'Im Herbst', written in 1906, expresses the decadent love of decline and the beauty of transience:

Wir lieben das Vergehende und Müde,  
 Den letzten Glanz im Abendlande,  
 Den Traurigen und Schönen,  
 Als verschiede  
 Mit ihm auch unsre Jugend ewig.  
 Und manche Blätter von den Zweigen gleiten  
 Dir auf das Haar, noch zitternd leise,  
 Als wollten sie in Golde sich bereiten  
 Ein Grabtuch und in Schönheit sterben.<sup>57</sup>

This atmosphere is found, too, in the poetry of Dörmann, whose 'Herbstschauer', with its comparison between the bleak sky and the face of a dying child, its description of bare trees, and withering flowers dancing in the wind, bears remarkable similarities to the topoi of Trakl's 'Herbst':

Hinter fernen dunklen Häusermassen,  
 Versinkt die Sonne,

...

Der Himmel aber leuchtet  
 Aus schwarzen Wolkenbänken  
 Matt und fahl,

Schier wie ein totenblasses Menschenkind,

...  
 Es klingt so schaurig  
 Wie Krankenstöhnen  
 Durch kahle Bäume  
 Das Ächzen des Windes,  
 Und gelbe, dürre, verfaulende Blätter  
 Sie tanzen mit ihm einen taumelnden Reigen  
 Und flüstern und rauschen  
 Gesichten sich zu,  
 Sterbenstraurig,  
 Verwesungsdürstig  
 Und totentanzlustig.<sup>58</sup>

This poetry of decline and transience is found throughout Hofmannsthal's early writing, as in 'Sünde des Lebens':

Wie die Ahnung des Verlorenen,  
 Die um blasse Kinderwangen  
 Und um frühverwelkte Blumen  
 Traurig und verklärend webt.<sup>59</sup>

Surely the prime example is 'Ballade des äußeren Lebens':

Und Kinder wachsen auf mit tiefen Augen,  
 Die von nichts wissen, wachsen auf und sterben,  
 Und alle Menschen gehen ihre Wege.

Und süße Früchte werden aus den herben  
 Und fallen nachts wie tote Vögel nieder  
 Und liegen wenig Tage und verderben.<sup>60</sup>

This poem is an extremely effective depiction of the cycle of life and death, the futility and incomprehensibility of existence, against which is yet balanced a profound awareness of the beauty of decline and the power of language:

Was frommt's, dergleichen viel gesehen haben?  
 Und dennoch sagt der viel, der 'Abend' sagt,  
 Ein Wort, daraus Tiefsinn und Trauer rinnt

Wie schwerer Honig aus den hohlen Waben.

"O Nacht, ich bin bereit": The Poet's Longing for Death

For the decadents, the ultimate escape from *ennui*, the sensation which surpassed all others, was death. The closing poem of *Les Fleurs du Mal*, 'Le Voyage', balances the *ennui*-ridden view of 'Au Lecteur' with the invitation to find new life in death. The poem looks back over the whole book, which has examined "Le spectacle ennuyeux de l'immortel péché"<sup>61</sup> in all its guises, and presents the only solution to the unsatiated appetite for new sensations:

O Mort, vieux capitaine, il est temps! levons  
l'ancre!  
 Ce pays nous ennuie, ô Mort! Appareillons!  
 Si le ciel et la mer sont noirs comme de l'encre,  
 Nos coeurs que tu connais sont remplis de rayons!

Verse-nous ton poison pour qu'il nous réconforte!  
 Nous voulons, tant ce feu nous brûle le cerveau,  
 Plonger au fond du gouffre, Enfer ou Ciel,  
qu'importe?  
 Au fond de l'Inconnu pour trouver du nouveau!<sup>62</sup>

Trakl's obsession with death, especially in his later lyric, cannot be separated from a profound psychological malaise and sense of guilt, which led to his eventual suicide in 1914. Yet in the early poetry, we find a yearning for death which goes little beyond the decadent *frisson*, which is substantiated by evidence that in his adolescence, Trakl frequently threatened to commit suicide.<sup>63</sup> *Gesang zur Nacht* is a cycle of twelve poems addressed to death, expressed in the image of the night. Kleefeld has pointed out the psychological significance of the night as an essentially female element, through its association with the womb ultimately a mother-substitute.<sup>64</sup> While much of *Gesang zur Nacht* is clearly more general in its imagery, this interpretation is relevant to the fifth poem of the cycle, where the night is addressed as "Süße Schmerzensmutter du", and to the fourth and twelfth poems, where the night is associated specifically with "Schoß".



Although a cycle of poems, *Gesang zur Nacht* presents no obvious progression or logical order; death is portrayed not only as an inscrutable force, but also as the only means of escape from the pain and *ennui* of life, at times it is a peaceful and aesthetic experience; elsewhere, it is a nihilistic void.

The first poem in the cycle presents a negative view of death which stresses the insubstantiality of human existence:

Vom Schatten eines Hauchs geboren  
Wir wandeln in Verlassenheit  
Und sind im Ewigen verloren,  
Gleich Opfern unwissend, wozu sie geweiht. <223>

The breath of God, in giving life to Adam, has also given an existence dominated by the shadow of the valley of death. Now this God himself is seen as a nebulous being who has abandoned his own creation. The following two stanzas of the poem consists of a series of similes and metaphors which verge on the tautological in their description of the human condition as one of powerlessness, incomprehension, and inevitable doom. Even the human senses have lost their meaning, offering a means neither of communication nor companionship to ease the pain of utter isolation:

Wie Blinde lauschen wir ins Schweigen,  
In dem sich unser Flüstern verlor. <223>

This is a bleak view of a godless, futile existence, where the only certainty is death:

Wir sind die Wanderer ohne Ziele,  
Die Wolken, die der Wind verweht,  
Die Blumen, zitternd in Todeskühle,  
Die warten, bis man sie niedermäht. <223>

The images are typical of decadent poetry; one thinks, for example of Ernest Dowson's 'Spleen': "In the dull, dark days of our life/ We wander without a goal."<sup>65</sup>

The suggestion in the final stanza that humankind is the passive victim of an inscrutable higher power (the distant God? Death as the Grim Reaper?) is expanded in the third poem of the cycle. This "fremder Feind" is impervious to human pain and joy, an evil

power beyond the human realm which mocks human inferiority:

Und steht vor uns ein fremder Feind,  
Der höhnt, worum wir sterbend ringen,  
Daß trüber unsre Lieder klingen  
Und dunkel bleibt, was in uns weint. <224>

This knowledge of mortality and the futility of the incessant struggle against fate intensifies human awareness of the incomprehensible nature of existence; even the songs which might ease some of the pain are turned into dark laments; there is no light of recognition, no release from sorrow. The influence of Schopenhauer's philosophy is clear here. In *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* he describes life as a process of continual and inevitable death:

Jeder Atemzug wehrt den beständig ein-  
dringenden *Tod* ab, mit welchem wir auf diese  
Weise in jeder Sekunde kämpfen, und dann  
wieder, in größeren Zwischenräumen, durch  
jede Mahlzeit, jeden Schlaf, jede Erwärmung,  
usw. Zuletzt muß er siegen: denn ihm sind  
wir schon durch die Geburt anheimgefallen,  
und er spielt nur eine Weile mit seiner  
Beute, bevor er sie verschlingt.<sup>66</sup>

Only these two poems of the cycle use the first person plural, in the poet's attempt to find some comfort and companionship in appealing to the reader to share his view of the incomprehensibility of life. This is his only hope of escaping the utter isolation which the poetry suggests is human fate.

While the first and third poems of the cycle view death as a hostile and inscrutable certainty in human existence, three poems (II, V, and IX) express a longing for death more akin to the sentiment of Baudelaire's 'Le Voyage'; death here becomes a welcome escape from the pain of human existence, a new experience to overcome *ennui*.

In the second poem, death is admittedly still viewed as threatening and unknowable; the poet recognizes, however, that this is the only way to peace, a final pain to end all suffering. It is this

hope of peace - not a conventional heaven, but a nihilistic, dreamless void - which gives rise to a sense of impatient longing within the poet:

Es macht mich euer Atem lauter brennen,  
Geduld! Der Stern verglüht, die Träume gleiten  
In jene Reiche, die sich uns nicht nennen,  
Und die wir traumlos dürfen nur beschreiten. <223>

The fifth poem expresses a desire for death which is blatantly sensuous. Here, night as a female/maternal element is most obvious, and the longing here is clearly to return to a pre-natal state in the womb. The poet anticipates death with a yearning for both pleasure and pain: "Süße Schmerzensmutter du" <224>. Again, the peace described here is far from orthodox Christianity ("Keine fromme Glocke läutet" <224>); it is a healing which will not stop the bleeding wounds of his pain, but which will soothe and turn his bleeding inwards:

Schließ mit deinen kühlen, guten  
Händen alle Wunden zu -  
Daß nach innen sie verbluten -  
Süße Schmerzensmutter - du! <225>

Rather than allowing the blood of his wounds to flow out and ease his pain, the poet chooses to internalize his suffering; this abandonment to torment and death produces an aesthetic enjoyment which may be associated with poetic creativity.

In the ninth poem, the poet actively solicits night for a release from his suffering, although night is again depicted as impervious to the poet's plea. Here is the decadent expression of death as the crowning experience of life:

O Nacht, du stummes Tor vor meinem Leid,  
Verbluten sieh dies dunkle Wundenmal  
Und ganz geneigt den Taumelkelch der Qual!  
O Nacht, ich bin bereit! <226>

The desire for death is also the desire for oblivion: "O Nacht, du Garten der Vergessenheit" <226>. This is the sphere where the poet belongs; he has no place in either the joyful vitality ("das Weinlaub") or the suffering ("der Dornenkranz") of this world, for these

elements are in a state of decay. His need is intensified by the use of exclamation and direct invocation of the night, especially in the climactic final line: "O komm, du hohe Zeit!" <226>.

This motif of decadence is one which we find elsewhere in German literature. The climax of Martens' *Roman aus der Décadence* is the "Sterbefest", a *fin-de-siècle* orgy organized by Erich von Lüttwitz to celebrate his own death (which in the end does not take place, Lüttwitz preferring a wealthy marriage to oblivion). Towards the end of Holitscher's *Der vergiftete Brunnen*, death is hailed as the most ecstatic of sensations:

Erste, hehre, anbetungswürdige Kraft der  
 auserwählten Kräuter! Vollste Gewährung  
 tiefsten Willens, einziges Heil der Kranken,  
 der allzu Gesunden dieser Welt, Entrückung,  
 Entzückung, Glück! Eines ist nur, das höher  
 als der Rausch, der Tod. ... Nicht die  
 Betäubung, den kleinlichen Tod suche in den  
 mächtigen Kräften, sondern die Siegespforte  
 zum höheren Sein.<sup>67</sup>

More typical of the decadence than this almost Dionysian call to vitality in death is the notion of death as a release from *ennui*; Dörmann, like the poetic voice of *Gesang zur Nacht IX*, is one who is young, yet already weary of the pain and the pleasures of this world:

Dem Kelch der Leiden hab' ich viel enttrunken,  
 Obwohl ich jung,  
 Der Traum von Erdenglück ist mir versunken,  
 Obwohl ich jung.

Ich sah genug von Menschenlos, dem herben,  
 Obwohl ich jung,  
 Und ich bin müde, müde bis zum Sterben,  
 Obwohl ich jung.<sup>68</sup>

In Hofmannsthal's *Der Tor und der Tod*, Claudio, having gained final recognition of the senselessness of his aesthetically experienced existence at the end of his life, now seeks death with anticipation and joy as his first real experience:

Erst, da ich sterbe, spür ich, daß ich bin.  
 Wenn einer träumt, so kann ein Übermaß  
 Geträumten Fühlens ihn erwachen machen,  
 So wach ich jetzt, im Fühlensübermaß  
 Vom Lebenstraum wohl auf im Todeswachen.<sup>69</sup>

This is clearly not a theme which is exclusive to decadence; death is one of the great themes of all literature. A longing for death as the greatest sensation, a release from *ennui*, is, however, without doubt a poetic motif which has its place in the decadent tradition; yet even this aspect is one which we encounter elsewhere. Lenau's 'Bitte', written some fifty years before *Sammlung 1909*, bears a striking resemblance to *Gesang zur Nacht*:

Weil' auf mir, du dunkles Auge,  
 Übe deine ganze Macht,  
 Ernste, milde, träumerische,  
 Unergründlich süße Nacht!

Nimm mit deinem Zauberdunkel  
 Diese Welt von hinnen mir,  
 Daß du über meinem Leben  
 Einsam schwebest für und für.<sup>70</sup>

In much *fin-de-siècle* poetry, death is seen as an aesthetic experience; gone are the motifs of suffering and pain; in their place is the association of death and beauty, such as we have already encountered in *Traumland*. Hofmannsthal's *Das Mädchen und der Tod*, written in 1892, is a fine example of the decadent ornamentation of death:

Dies flüssig grüne Gold heisst Gift und tödtet.  
 Wie gut es riecht: wie wenn der wilde Wind  
 In den Akazienbäumen irr sich fängt,  
 Dann geht man still im Mond auf weichen Blüten..  
 Vielleicht ist Todtsein solch ein lautlos Wandern  
 Durch fremde leere Länder ohne Schlaf,  
 Auf stillen Brücken über grüne Wasser  
 Durch lange schwarze, schweigende Alleen  
 Durch Gärten, die verwilden. ..<sup>71</sup>

While such floridness is extremely rare in Trakl's poetry (it is only found to any great extent in *Barrabas*), one does find in *Gesang zur Nacht* the concept of death as an aesthetic experience. In the fourth poem, a series of images depicts the idea of

death as an enjoyable, intoxicating, aesthetic experience:

Du bist der Wein, der trunken macht,  
Nun blut ich hin in süßen Tänzen  
Und muß mein Leid mit Blumen kränzen!  
So will's dein tiefster Sinn, o Nacht! <224>

The first line perhaps seems banal, as wine has the tendency to intoxicate, yet one remembers reports that alcohol had little effect on Trakl;<sup>72</sup> here, too, is an obvious contrast with 'Ermatten', where the "Rausch der Wohlgerüche und der Weine" leaves only an "überwach Gefühl der Scham" <242>. Death, then, is the only effective narcotic; as Schneditz reports, Trakl "sagte ... zu wiederholten Malen, daß er sich den Tod im Chloroformrausch ... herrlich vorstellte."<sup>73</sup> The recognition that the futility of life can be transfigured, through the acceptance of death, into a beauty which embellishes his sorrow is seen as a profound truth. It is in acceptance of death and identification with the night that the poet finds freedom from the limitations of human existence. He enters eternity not as an active force (a singer, as he has tried with little success elsewhere - *Gesang zur Nacht* III), but as the passive lyre, bending his will to that of the powers which rule his fate. The association of eternity with musical harmony emphasizes the beauty of this realm; by accepting the song of the night within him, internalizing the dark and inscrutable force, the poet is released from his human condition:

Ich bin die Harfe in deinem Schoß,  
Nun ringt um meine letzten Schmerzen  
Dein dunkles Lied in meinem Herzen  
Und macht mich ewig, wesenlos. <224>

The poem which immediately follows *Gesang zur Nacht*, 'Das tiefe Lied', betrays the obvious influence of Nietzsche in its re-iteration of the theme of death as a harmonious, eternal realm, where the soul is freed from all constraints of human existence of space and time, joy and sorrow:

Aus tiefer Nacht ward ich befreit.  
Meine Seele staunt in Unsterblichkeit,

Meine Seele lauscht über Raum und Zeit  
Die Melodie der Ewigkeit! <228>

It is indicative of the many influences on the young Trakl (and indeed the complexity of the literary traditions of the *fin de siècle*) that balanced against this Nietzschean vitality is a nihilistic view of death as a void. Three of the poems in *Gesang zur Nacht* (VIII, X, and significantly XII, the final poem of the cycle) present this view.

The eighth and tenth poems contrast the joy and sorrow of life with the silent oblivion of death. Where the poet had once experienced laughter and tears, all facets of human life being associated with light, he is now a shadow in a desolate void:

Doch nun mein Dämon nicht weint noch lacht,  
Bin ich ein Schatten verlorener Gärten  
Und habe zum todesdunklen Gefährten  
Das Schweigen der leeren Mitternacht. <226>

The poem which closes the cycle depicts death as a silent, godless void; any meaning which his previous life had ("Der Himmel, in dem du als Stern geglüht" <227>) is denied in the desolate depths of midnight ("Ein Himmel, aus dem kein Gott mehr blüht./ Du bist in tiefer Mitternacht" <227>). Indeed, death brings the realization for the poet that his life has been so meaningless that it is as if he never existed; in this nihilistic view, the reality of eternity is oblivion, a total loss of existence:

Du bist in tiefer Mitternacht  
Ein Unempfänger in süßem Schoß,  
Und nie gewesen, wesenlos!  
Du bist in tiefer Mitternacht. <227>

One must not forget, however, that Trakl felt the need to balance the *Gesang zur Nacht* cycle with 'Das tiefe Lied', which goes beyond this midnight void and replaces the silence of midnight with the "Melodie der Ewigkeit". Trakl's depiction of death, then, presents two very different pictures, both firmly rooted in the *fin-de-siècle* traditions which so obviously influenced him. It is only in his later poetry that he deals in

any depth with the concept of death as a release from his suffering, based on very real suicidal tendencies; in June 1913 he wrote to Ficker: "Ich sehne den Tag herbei, an dem die Seele in diesem unseeligen von Schwermut verpesteten Körper nicht mehr wird wohnen wollen und können..."<sup>74</sup> Behind the decadent pose of *Gesang zur Nacht* lies perhaps a sign of the despair which was to increase as the poet became more and more convinced that he would not find his place in this world; there are indeed echoes of *Gesang zur Nacht* in 'Nachtergebung', written in 1914: "Mönchin! schließ mich in dein Dunkel..." <164>. One of Trakl's final poems is a haunting recapitulation of his desire for oblivion:

Schwester stürmischer Schwermut  
 Sieh ein ängstlicher Kahn versinkt  
 Unter Sternen,  
 Dem schweigenden Antlitz der Nacht. <166>



## CHAPTER SIX: LANGUAGE AND STYLE

Darum handelt es sich: um eine neue Sprache, welche Nervenstände ausdrücken und mitteilen soll, indem sie die an ihnen charakteristischen Farben und Klänge giebt, welche von ihnen unzertrennlich sind.<sup>1</sup>

"Car nous voulons la Nuance encor": Decadence as a Literary Style

Stylistic, as well as thematic, characteristics were established and recognised by both the writers and critics of decadence. The style seeks above all to force language into new areas in order to express the hitherto inexpressible. The first definition of literary decadence - Gautier's preface to Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du Mal* - hails this development in literature as a sign of art having reached extreme maturity. He lists the important stylistic elements of decadence thus:

style ingénieux, compliqué, saveant, plein de nuances et de recherches, reculant toujours les bornes de la langue, empruntant à tous les vocabulaires techniques, prenant des couleurs à toutes les palettes, des notes à tous les claviers, s'efforçant à rendre la pensée dans ce qu'elle a de plus ineffable, et la forme en ses contours les plus vagues et les fruyants, écoutant pour les traduire les confidences subtiles de la névrose, les aveux de la passion vieillissante qui se déprave et les hallucinations bizarres de l'idée fixe tournante à la folie.<sup>2</sup>

The language of decadence is seen here as the culmination of all previous literary styles, as the only fitting response to the need for a literature

appropriate to the mood of the *fin-de-siècle*, driving language to its utmost limits in the search for new expression.

Writers of this style cultivate ingenuity, intricacy and learnedness, they paint in subtle shades and draw upon deliberate elegance and affectation in the move away from the literature of Naturalism and Realism. Poetry is no longer a simple, objective portrayal of nature or human society, it no longer uses bright, straightforward, distinctive colours, it is loaded with meaning and subtle differences. Verlaine expresses the desire for this type of poetry in 'Art Poétique':

Car nous voulons la Nuance encor,  
Pas la Couleur, rien que la nuance!<sup>3</sup>

The poet becomes obvious by his intrusion into the poem, by the conscious effort of his style, itself a decadent pose which must be studied and assumed. Nothing is clear cut or well defined; as a result it requires more effort to understand this poetry, and its appeal is only to the enlightened few. The aim of its subtlety is to reflect the kaleidoscope of emotions and sensations which made up the life of the decadents at the end of the nineteenth century; here, too, is surely a reflection of the desire to *épater le bourgeois* by presenting a new and apparently unfathomable type of art. Decadence is again a *perversion*, this time of conventional language and poetry.

Taken to its extreme, as it often was, the style of literary decadence comes to outweigh content. In his study of Baudelaire, Bourget, the first theoretician of decadence, emphasizes the fragmentary nature of his writing, which he sees as a result of the refinement of language: "Un style de décadence est celui où l'unité du livre se décompose pour laisser la place à l'indépendance de la page, où la page se décompose pour laisser la place à l'indépendance de la phrase, et la phrase pour laisser la place à l'indépendance du mot."<sup>4</sup>

This is an aspect of decadence which is re-emphasized by Nietzsche, who, clearly familiar with Bourget's writing, used a strikingly similar choice of words in his 1888 essay, 'Der Fall Wagner': "Womit kennzeichnet sich jene *literarische décadence*? Damit, daß das Leben nicht mehr im Ganzen wohnt. Das Wort wird souverän und springt aus dem Satz hinaus, der Satz greift über und verdunkelt den Sinn der Seite, die Seite gewinnt Leben auf Unkosten des Ganzen - das Ganze ist kein Ganzes mehr."<sup>5</sup>

The decadent is not content with the language of the nineteenth century, which he believes has become stale, and cannot adequately express the complexity of a society in decline, he pushes back the boundaries of expression, changes the language itself in order to suit the times, to articulate new sensations and desires. This is a continuous process; the writers must be masters of language, not slaves to its limitations. Nor are they limited by previous conventions of poetry, for they are to become masters over *all* language, encouraged to use all styles to express themselves. This opens the way for experimentation with syntax, form and vocabulary; the invention of neologisms, the use of rare words and the revival of archaisms are features of the poetry of decadence.

We find this idea emphasized repeatedly in Baju's journal, *Le Décadent*:

La Décadence littéraire n'a qu'un but: faire exprimer à la langue toutes les idées, toutes les sensations, toutes les nuances, si atténuées soient-elles, créer des vocables nouveaux, capables de serrer l'idée dans ses reflets les plus fugitifs. ... Notre but consiste à éveiller le plus grande nombre de sensations possible avec le moindre quantité de mots. Notre style doit être rare et tourmenté ..., et nous devons rajeunir des vocables tombés en désuétude ou en créer de nouveaux pour noter l'idée dans la complexité de ses nuances les plus fugaces.<sup>6</sup>

Bahr, too, recognizes the need for new developments in language. In his 1891 essay on Maeterlinck, he claims that conventional language is inadequate for the expression of the Belgian poet's "Nervensymbolik": "Die alte Sprache, welche logische und allenfalls sentimentale Reihen vermittelte, kann dafür nicht genügen".<sup>7</sup>

In their drive beyond the limitations of language, the decadents make a conscious effort to force language to express the hitherto inexpressible. They couch their already obscure language in tortuous - often elliptical - syntax, which is used, along with sound and rhythm, to evoke the emotional response of music. In France, this is a feature above all of the poetry of Verlaine and of *La revue Wagnérienne*, which, as has been seen in the Introduction, attempts to produce the effect of Wagner's music through mystical, obscure poetry.

The goal behind the decadents' experimentation with language is the expression, not of the everyday, the natural or the healthy, but of emotions and experiences not yet conveyed through poetry, but which are appropriate to the times: the neurotic, the degenerate, the insane. These are not expressed objectively or critically as they are by the Naturalists; rather, the poet conveys the *inner state* of such people. In giving expression to the subtleties of their secrets, their confessions, their hallucinations, both the writer and the reader have to assume similar - and sympathetic - mental states. This is an aspect of the literature of the decadence which brought severe criticism from Nordau:

Die klare Rede dient dem Zwecke der Mittheilung von Wirklichem. Sie hat deshalb für den Entarteten keinen Werth. Er schätzt nur die Rede, bei der er nicht dem Denken des Sprechenden aufmerksam folgen muß, sondern ohne Zwang seinem eigenen schweifenden Traum-Denken nachhängen kann, wie ja seine eigene Rede auch nicht den Zweck hat,

bestimmtes Denken mitzutheilen, sondern nur der blasse Widerschein seines Gedanken-Dämmers sein soll.<sup>8</sup>

This development towards a symbolism of the nerves - which forms an essential aspect of literary decadence - is fully realized, in the opinion of Bahr, by Maeterlinck: "Die Gestalten, welche er formt, sind nur Zeichen seiner Sensationen, wie von seinen Stimmungen auf die Welt geworfene Schatten, und die Ereignisse, welche er häuft, sind nur Symbole vieler Geschichten in den Nerven."<sup>9</sup>

The entire stress of this art is not only that the writer concentrates on his own nerves and sensations, but that through symbolism and imagery the work appeals also to the reader's nerves and sensations: "eine Kunst, ... die nur aus den Nerven kommt und nur auf die Nerven geht, die allen Erwerb aller bisherigen Kunst verwendet, um Nervöses auszudrücken und Nervöses mitzuteilen."<sup>10</sup> Bahr recognizes that the decadents differed from their Romantic forebears in their attempts to evoke *moods*: "Nicht Gefühle, nur Stimmungen suchen sie auf .... Das Denken, das Fühlen und das Wollen achten sie gering und nur den Vorrat, welchen sie jeweilig auf ihren Nerven finden, wollen sie ausdrücken und mitteilen."<sup>11</sup> This fascination for the totality of nervous experience led to a synaesthetic quality in art: "Diese neuen Nerven sind feinfühlig, weithörig und vielfältig und teilen sich untereinander alle Schwingungen mit. Die Töne werden gesehen, Farben singen und Stimmen riechen."<sup>12</sup>

Decadence and Symbolism are closely related; Bahr recognizes as part of decadence the mysticism which will be developed by such as Mallarmé into the Symbolist movement: "Sie suchen Allegorieen und schwüle, dunkle Bilder. Jedes soll einen geheimen zweiten Sinn haben, der sich nur dem Eingeweihten ergibt".<sup>13</sup> In as much as this symbolism expresses moods, nerves and sensations, it can be seen as part of the style of literary decadence.

"Meine ganze, schöne Welt, voll unendlichen Wohllauts":  
 The Escape in Aestheticism

Throughout his mature life, Trakl sought a release from his mental torment through poetic expression. This is the emphasis which Trakl placed on his creativity from the very beginning; in 1906 he referred to a prose piece - possibly *Verlassenheit* - as a means by which to communicate the pain and suffering which he could not otherwise articulate: "Du weißt, mein Lieber, daß ich mich am besten im geschriebenen Wort anderen zu äußern vermag. Ich habe nie die Gabe des Redens besessen. Und so glaube ich am besten zu tun, Dir eine kleine Arbeit aus letzten Tagen zu übersenden. Vielleicht liest Du daraus, was zu sagen mir so leicht nicht möglich ist."<sup>14</sup> He writes of his need to seek refuge from his awareness of the violence of human nature within his inner world of poetic harmony, where aesthetic values replace the horror of reality:

Ich glaube, es müßte furchtbar sein, immer  
 so zu leben, im Vollgefühl all der  
 animalischen Triebe, die das Leben durch die  
 Zeiten wälzen. Ich habe die fürchterlichsten  
 Möglichkeiten in mir gefühlt, gerochen,  
 getastet und im Blute die Dämonen heulen  
 hören, die tausend Teufel mit ihren  
 Stacheln, die das Fleisch wahnsinnig machen.  
 Welch entsetzlicher Alp!

Vorbei! Heute ist diese Vision der  
 Wirklichkeit wieder in Nichts versunken,  
 ferne sind mir die Dinge, ferner noch ihre  
 Stimme und ich lausche, ganz beseeltes Ohr,  
 wieder auf die Melodien, die in mir sind,  
 und mein beschwingtes Auge träumt wieder  
 seine Bilder, die schöner sind als alle  
 Wirklichkeit! Ich bin bei mir, bin meine  
 Welt! Meine ganze, schöne Welt, voll  
 unendlichen Wohllauts.<sup>15</sup>

In a review of Streicher's *Monna Violanta*, which Trakl wrote in 1908, he expresses further the idea that poetry can express otherwise inexpressible thoughts, not just through the power of language and symbolism, but through the very sound of the word:

Es ist seltsam, wie diese Verse das Problem durchdringen, wie oft der Klang des Wortes einen unaussprechlichen Gedanken ausdrückt und die flüchtige Stimmung festhält. In diesen Versen ist etwas von der süßen, frauenhaften Überredungskunst, die uns verführt, dem Melos des Wortes zu lauschen und nicht zu achten des Wortes Inhalt und Gewicht; der Mollklang dieser Sprache stimmt die Sinne nachdenklich und erfüllt das Blut mit träumerischer Müdigkeit.<sup>16</sup>

His life was a constant struggle to control in his poetry the visions which plagued him, a struggle which was not always successful. He wrote to Buschbeck in 1910: "Aber ich bin derzeit allzu viel (was für ein infernalisches Chaos von Rhythmen und Bildern) bedrängt, als daß ich für anderes Zeit hätte, als dies zum geringsten Teile zu gestalten, um mich am Ende vor dem was man nicht überwältigen kann, als lächerlicher Stümper zu sehen, den der geringste äußere Anstoß in Krämpfe und Delirien versetzt."<sup>17</sup>

He continuously revised and corrected his poetry in his attempt to express the universal truth which he believed he could perceive through this suffering. To Buschbeck in 1911 he confided: "Du magst mir glauben, daß es mir nicht leicht fällt und niemals leicht fallen wird, mich bedingungslos dem Darzustellenden unterzuordnen und ich werde mich immer und immer wieder berichtigen müssen, um der Wahrheit zu geben, was der Wahrheit ist."<sup>18</sup>

From what little evidence we have of the motivation and intention behind Trakl's poetic creativity, we can discern one undeniable aspiration: Trakl sought in his poetry to express his psychological torment, in the hope that, through this process of aestheticization, his torment could be somehow transfigured. It seems that he further believed that in this torment he glimpsed not only the horror of his own base nature but also some universal truth which he also sought to express.

It will now be appropriate to turn to the early poetry of Trakl to see to what extent - if any - he uses the style of literary decadence. It is reasonable to assume that Trakl was familiar with the writings of Baudelaire, Gautier and Bahr: we know that he and his contemporaries met regularly to discuss the recent developments in literature, and we know that Trakl met Bahr in Vienna. This chapter will look at the areas of decadent style defined above - over-refinement, invention of new language, musicality and syntactical freedom - and will analyse the relation of the poetry of *Sammlung 1909* to this style, and in particular to the contemporary literature of Austrian and German decadence. The use of symbolism and imagery to express nerves and sensations has been examined in Chapter Five.

#### "Style ingénieux, compliqué, saveant": Over-refinement

Much of Trakl's early poetry is far from subtle. In its immature attempt to evoke a decadent atmosphere of sin and perversion it is often crass and ridiculous in the exaggerated attitude assumed. Trakl's poetry is not endowed with the intricacy or ingenuity of Baudelaire, and his poetry - like that of many of the decadents - is characterized by over-refinement. There is an attempt at professed learnedness in the references to classical mythology, which can be found in this volume. In 'Sabbath', the poet refers to his vision as a "Mänade" - one of the female followers of Dionysus; there is a reference to the god himself in 'Der Heilige', where the cry of Dionysian worshippers - εὐοὶ ἄβοι - is used to heighten the sensation of pleasure and pain which characterizes the poet's



dilemma. The connotations of inebriated, ecstatic celebrations of Dionysian worship in both these poems shows a knowledge of classical culture, gleaned perhaps from his schooling in the humanities in the *Staats-gymnasium*, perhaps from his fascination with Nietzsche's work. Other classical references are to be found in 'Die drei Teiche in Hellbrunn': "Ein rätselvolles Sphinxgesicht" and 'Blutschuld': "Doch lauter rauscht der Brunnen der Sirenen,/ Und dunkler ragt der Sphinx vor unsrer Schuld" <249>. This tendency towards Classical name-dropping is found throughout the literature of the *fin de siècle*; one thinks, of course, of George's Algabal, yet there are countless references within other works of German decadence: Charon in Heym's 'Herbsttag', Endymion, Dionys and their train of dryads and maenads in Martens' 'Endymion', and Astarte, the Phoenician goddess of love and fertility in Ouckama Knoop's 'Astartetage', and in Hofmannsthal we find references to "Mänaden ... Dryaden ... Bacchus und die Musen" in 'Leben', and to Hephästos in 'Gedankenspek'. .

The "unersättlicher Zug ins Ungeheure und Schrankenlose"<sup>19</sup> which is fundamental to both the content and the style of literary decadence has already been seen in the excesses of the early dramas, *Blaubart* and *Don Juans Tod*; stylistically, this often leads to a plethora of meaningless plurals and hyperbole. Even a cursory glance at the volume shows that it is characterized by the use of plural nouns. 'Drei Träume II' uses superlatives and abstract concepts to such an extent that the poem becomes devoid of meaning: "Bilder niegeseh'ner Meere,/ Verlass'ner, tragisch phantastischer Länder,/ Zerfließend ins Bläue, Ungefähre ... gigantische[n], prasselnde[n] Sonnen ... Bilder ungeheurer Nächte,/ Bewegt von namenlosen Gesängen" <215-16>. This crude attempt to portray new sensations is too abstract to act as a concrete symbol of the poet's soul, and achieves very little success.

In 'Der Heilige', Trakl's earliest poem, the description of the "mystische Unendlichkeiten" <254> is a crass attempt to portray the atmosphere of the decadents' "fieberische Sucht nach dem Mystischen".<sup>20</sup> This immature use of hyperbole is ineffective, for the very nature of the word "Unendlichkeit" renders its plural senseless. Trakl's use of plurals is at times unnecessary (often occasioned by the rhyme scheme): one thinks not only of 'Der Heilige', but also of the second line of 'Sabbath': "in mondnen Dämmerungen" <222>; 'Einklang': "in Paradiesesschweigen" <244>; and *Gesang zur Nacht VI*: "Und meiner Schläfe trunkner Mohn" <225> - here, Trakl makes a plural out of the noun "Schlaf" where no plural exists.

This stylistic excess is found elsewhere in contemporary decadent literature, although rarely with such banality as is found in Trakl's early work. In Beer-Hofmann's 'Der einsame Weg', the plural "Einsamkeiten" appears necessitated by the rhyme scheme; in Rilke's early work we find the invention of "Düftequalmen", where no plural exists ('Traumgekrönt XI'); this is a feature also of Stadler's *Praeludien*, although here the plurals tend to be of concrete objects rather than abstract concepts, such as in 'Spiel im Dämmer': "Schwüle Sommernächte ... In goldnen Gärten ... Fiebernde Hände ... traumdunkler Haare ... dunkle Wasser".<sup>21</sup> It is the poetry of Dörmann which displays the most striking similarity to that of Trakl in the use of bombastic hyperbole, as is found in 'Madonna Lucia' (II. Teil): "In rasenden Wollustkrämpfen ... in wilden Kaskaden ... verbissene Qualen ... kochende Lavaströme ... Die schranklosesten Freuden ... in wilden Stößen ... Von qualengeborenen Wonnen ... seine verheerenden Gluten".<sup>22</sup>

The use of tautology is a feature of the early lyric. One thinks, for example of 'Dämmerung': "Zerwühlt, verzerrt", "den Feind, den Mörder", "kraus

zerrißnem, seelenlosem Klang"; here one even finds the use of three attributes: "Zur Hure, häßlich, krank, verwesungsfahl" <218>. Other examples are found in 'Ermatten' ("dies trauervolle, müde Herz" <242>) and 'Confiteor' ("Seh ich nur Angst, Verzweiflung, Schmach und Seuchen", "auf Gräbern, Leichen" <246>). Again, Dörmann's poetry offers the most obvious comparison here:

O sieh meine Seele verfaulen  
 In Elend, Sünd' und Qual,  
 ...  
 Aus Elend, Not und Sünde  
 Schrei' ich empor zu Dir.<sup>23</sup>

In 'Madonna Lucia' (II. Teil) we find: "Mein Hoffen, mein Träumen, mein Sehnen ... Um Herzen, verdorrt und versteint ... Ich weiß, Du kannst genießen, / Unfaßbar, riesenhaft stark ... Die wüsteste, tollste Begier ...",<sup>24</sup> and in 'Ein Souvenir': "In raubtierwild- rasenden Küssen ... Den heißesten, höchsten Genuß ... Der brennenden fiebernden Wunde / Wollustdurchfolterte Qual".<sup>25</sup>

In his attempt to include as much as possible in the poetry, Trakl also uses the prepositional genitive in his over-refined and artificial style. In 'Drei Träume I' he writes: "Von trauriger Worte Widerhall", "Von blasser Augen weinendem Flehn", "Eines Traumes unsterblicher Widerhall" <215>; in 'Das Grauen': "Aus eines Spiegels trügerischer Leere" <220>; in *Gesang zur Nacht* VII: "Und der Bronnen trunkne Klage" <225>; in 'Verfall': "verlorner Sinn vergangner Zeiten", "Ver-sunkner Gärten kranke Düfte" <233>. One is reminded here of Nietzsche's criticisms of literary decadence in 'Der Fall Wagner': "Das Wort wird souverän und springt aus dem Satz hinaus ... Erstarrung ... Chaos ... zusammengesetzt, gerechnet künstlich, ein Artefakt".<sup>26</sup> This is a stylistic feature which is found repeatedly in Stadler's *Praeludien*, as in 'Spiel im Dämmer' and 'Aus der Dämmerung':

Des wirbelnden Frühlings leise girrendes Locken'  
der Sommernächte Duftrausch weckte mich nicht<sup>27</sup>

Dörmann's poetry, too, makes use of the prepositional genitive, for example: "Der Wollust berauscher Opiumwein" ('Liebe!');<sup>28</sup> "Der Sünden schlummernde Brunst" ('Intermezzo').<sup>29</sup>

### "Notre style doit être rare et tourmenté": Linguistic Experimentation

The poetry is rich in linguistic experimentation: neologism, archaism, revival of rare words. Although at times effective, these often attempt to go too far beyond the boundaries of language and achieve little success.

Not all of Trakl's compounds are successful; some do not work because the concepts brought together are so disparate as to form no new creation of any meaning. Such a neologism is "Dornenall" in 'Drei Träume III' <217>, which attempts to convey the notion that in our present suffering, Christ's crown of thorns has become universal. Another example is in *Gesang zur Nacht V*: "[Deinen Frieden] todgeweitet" <224>. Its intention, one assumes, is to suggest the poet's openness to death, perhaps also a deliberate pun on the word "todgeweiht", but, again, the compound makes little sense.

Some of the neologisms used by Trakl are simple compounds which work because the two words brought together are compatible even within the boundaries of conventional language: "erinnerungsdunkel", "verwesungsfahl", "abendblau", "traumgeschaffen", "Paradiesesschweigen", "Mörderschande". Others, however, are more successful, both in reaching beyond the boundaries of conventional language and in

achieving an effective image through the union of two concepts not normally associated. In 'Sabbath' we find the description of "Flammenbrünste" <222>, a word which conveys the fusion of uncontrollable lust and stifling, sinful pain which forms the theme of this poem. Here, too, Trakl is successful in inventing a neologism which achieves a union of opposites: "schmerzverzückt" <238> effectively encapsulates the paradox of his delight in sin and pain. The compound "glockentief" in 'Die drei Teiche in Hellbrunn' conveys the depth of spirituality in the bells' tones which pervade the evening; its connotations are of the more profound questions which plague the poet as he considers the third pool, a profundity which remains mysterious and unfathomable, but which explores spiritual depth far beyond the superficial extremes of decay and harmony of the first two pools.

The use of compound nouns and adjectives to combine and convey various nuances is a standard feature of *fin-de-siècle* literature. In her recent study of contemporary reception of Trakl's work, Klettenhammer has drawn comparisons between Trakl's use of *Kompositabildungen* in *Sammlung 1909* and their frequent occurrence in *Jugendstil* poetry.<sup>30</sup> This must, however, be seen in the general context of the *fin de siècle*, of literary decadence as well as *Jugendstil*, with its basis in the first definition of "décadence", Gautier's preface to *Les Fleurs du Mal*, which called for a style which was "reculant toujours les bornes de la langue".<sup>31</sup>

We find this use of ornate compounds in the early writing of Heym ("Herbstestrauern" in 'Nebelschauer'; "In blütenschweren Düften" in 'Pfingsten'), Stadler ("Das blütenheiße Märchenlicht ... im pupurgoldnen Schein" in 'Erfüllung'; "Aus purpurtiefen Märchenquellen" in 'Märchen'; "traumdunkle[] Haare ... im dämmerschweren Schweigen" in 'Spiel im Dämmer') and Rilke ("des Himmels abendblasse Scheiben" in 'Auf dem

Wolschan'; "in Kerkereinsamkeiten" in 'Trotzdem'; "Blätterleichenschau" in 'Herbststimmung'). Once more, however, it is in the poetry of Dörmann that we find this stylistic device used to excess, with compounds which verge on the pleonastic: "Mit stürmischer Glutengewalt ... qualengepeitschte, / Wildschmerzliche Tränen" in 'Madonna Lucia'; "Im Wahnwitzgejauchz' dionysischer Gier" in 'Liebe!'; in 'Was ich liebe' the overwrought style attempts to convey as many sensations as possible:

Ich liebe die glutendurchtränkten,  
Die Düfte berauschen und schwer;  
Die Wolken, die blitzendurchsenkten,  
Das graue wutschäumende Meer.<sup>32</sup>

Trakl's early poetry is also full of archaisms and rare or poetic words in an attempt to cultivate a deliberately artificial style: "indes'", "für und für", "todeswund", "Fliegengeschmeiß", "Bronnen", "Gebrest", "Gestade".

#### "De la Musique avant toute chose": The Musicality of Poetry

There is an attempt to render a musical quality to the lyric, as can be seen in titles of some early poems - *Gesang zur Nacht*, 'Das tiefe Lied', 'Nachtlied', 'Das Morgenlied', 'Musik im Mirabell', 'Rondel', 'Geistliches Lied', 'Kleines Konzert' - and the use of refrain - in *Gesang zur Nacht XII*: "Du bist in tiefer Mitternacht" <227>, in 'Ballade II': "Es weint die Nacht an einer Tür" <230>, in 'Blutschuld': "Verzeih uns, Maria, in deiner Huld" <249>.

Most of the early poems follow regular rhyme schemes and the tendency is for the poems to be end-stopped. The majority of poems contain a regular

pattern of mixed masculine and feminine rhymes (twenty) or of only masculine rhymes (nineteen); only nine poems have purely feminine rhymes. The rhyme schemes are, on the whole, uninteresting and characterized only by their regularity. This regularity is put to good effect in 'Drei Träume I', where the invariability of the rhyme emphasizes the monotonous echoes of the poet's visions, as does the regular parallel structure and the internal assonance, and in 'Das tiefe Lied', where the single rhyme reflects the simplistic harmony and optimism of the poem. The use of partial rhyme in 'Herbst' (läuten/Weiten, Geschicken/rücken) lends the poem a haunting quality, an expression of the dissonance between the spiritual and the worldly.

The regularity of the rhyme schemes within this volume is intensified by the use of assonance. Here, Trakl imitates the attempts of Verlaine and others to recreate the effect of music. As has been seen in the Introduction, Verlaine's call: "De la musique avant toute chose" ('Art Poétique') was imitated more or less successfully by a host of minor decadents in France. In *Sammlung 1909*, one of the more successful poems of the volume, 'Farbiger Herbst' achieves a true musical quality. Here, the rhyme at the end of each line is reinforced by repetition within the line and the rest of the poem and by the assonant relation between the rhymes of the first and fourth, and the second and third stanzas, giving the effect of the monotonous, eternal recurrence of the scene depicted:

Der Brunnen singt, die Wolken stehn  
Im klaren Blau, die weißen, zarten;  
Bedächtig, stille Menschen gehn  
Da drunten im abendblauen Garten.

Der Ahnen Marmor ist ergraut  
Ein Vogelzug streift in die Weiten  
Ein Faun mit toten Augen schaut  
Nach Schatten, die ins Dunkel gleiten.

Das Laub fällt rot vom alten Baum  
Und kreist herein durchs offene Fenster,  
In dunklen Feuern glüht der Raum,  
Darin die Schatten, wie Gespenster.

Opaliger Dunst webt über das Gras,  
 Eine Wolke von welken, gebleichten Düften,  
 Im Brunnen leuchtet wie grünes Glas  
 Die Mondessichel in frierenden Lüften. <237>

Such musicality is also found in the early poetry of Hofmannsthal. In 'Leben, Traum und Tod', the repetition of the consonants and vowels of the titular refrain lends a mysterious, chant-like quality to the poem:

*Leben, Traum und Tod ...*  
 Wie die Fackel loht!  
 Wie die Erzquadrigen  
 Über Brücken fliegen,  
 Wie es drunten saust,  
 An die Bäume braust,  
 Die an steilen Ufern hängen,  
 Schwarze Riesenwipfel aufwärts drängen,

*Leben, Traum und Tod ...*  
 Leise treibt das Boot ...  
 Grüne Uferbänke  
 Feucht im Abendrot  
 Stiller Pferde Tränke,  
 Herrenloser Pferde ...  
 Leise treibt das Boot ...

*Treibt am Park vorbei*  
 Rote Blumen, Mai,  
 In der Laube wer?  
 Sag wer schläft im Gras?  
 Gelb Haar, Lippen rot?  
*Leben, Traum und Tod.*<sup>33</sup>

Elsewhere in *Sammlung 1909*, the repetition of the 'u'-sound throughout 'Nachtlied' expresses both the poet's suffering and the echo which is his only reply; the melancholic effect of 'ei' and 'a' in 'Ausklang' culminates in the last two lines: "So schattengleich, wie welker Blätter Fall/ Auf ein verlaßnes Grab in Herbstesnacht" <243>. In 'Blutschuld', the 'u' of both syllables of the title dominates the poem, emphasizing the nature of their crime; the repeated rhyme of "Schuld" and "Huld" stresses both the contrast and the relationship of sin and grace; the protagonists cannot escape their guilt and so grace is in many ways impotent, yet all the more necessary; still they seek forgiveness and it is with the stress on "Huld" that



the poem closes. Consonance, too, is used, especially to achieve an effect of harshness - as in the repetition of 'k' in 'Von den stillen Tagen', 'z' in 'Dämmerung' and 'Ermatten', 'w' in 'Das Grauen' - but also to convey the gentleness of decline in 'Herbst' with the fricative 'f' which pervades both the octet and the sestet.

Trakl's earliest poem, 'Der Heilige', is true to one of the principal features of decadence in that it both stresses and appeals to the nerves. There is an undeniably threatening aspect to the images which plague him; the use of alliteration creates an atmosphere of impending danger, which resounds like an ominous drum-beat, evoking a subconscious sense of menace: "Bilder ... bedrängen". This is emphasized, too, by the harshness which punctuates the poem: "Grausam ... Geilheit ... gequält ... Glut"; that "Gott" and "Gebet" are also associated with this consonant is indicative of the dissolution of the boundaries between religion and sin, for they, too, form an intrinsic part of the threat to the protagonist. In contrast to this harshness is the use of the soft "h" which echoes the protagonist's hopes for redemption: "Herz ... hebt ... Hände ... Himmel"; in the end, however, it is the harsh "g" which is dominant. The final alliteration of the poem, "Evoe ... Ekstase ... Erfüllung ... Erzwingt ... Exaudi" reflects the poet's ecstasy at the climactic end. This sensuousness was, in Bahr's opinion, one of the main characteristics of the decadent artist: "Alles, was er nur jemals empfindet, immer gleich zu Kunst zu gestalten und was er nur jemals berührt, immer in Kunst zu verwandeln ...".<sup>34</sup>

In this collection, too, is the use of the tortuous, elliptical style and the syntactical obscurity which form an integral part of the poetry of the decadence, creating deliberate esotericism and

complexity, rendering an understanding of the poems at times difficult. Many of the poems omit conjunctions or verbs in an attempt to tighten the syntax, such as can also be seen in Hofmannsthal's 'Leben, Traum und Tod', as well as the use of the prepositional genitive which has been examined earlier in this chapter. At times, the syntax appears intentionally obscure; in 'Drei Träume III', for example, the grammatical construction of the final two stanzas is abstruse:

Zum Tage schwellen und wieder vergehn,  
Die ewig gleiche Tragödia,  
Die also wir spielen sonder verstehn,

Und deren wahnsinnsnächliche Qual  
Der Schönheit sanfte Gloria  
Umkränzt als lächelndes Dornenall. <216>

"Und deren wahnsinnsnächliche Qual" refers back to "Die ewig gleiche Tragödia"; one must assume that there is the omission of a comma or a colon at the end of this line, so that "Der Schönheit sanfte Gloria/ umkränzt als lächelndes Dornenall" stands as an expansion of what this "Qual" is: "Die sanfte Gloria der Schönheit, die als lächelndes Dornenall umkränzt ist". The syntax of this poem reflects the chaotic and apocalyptic nature of the poet's vision and the relentlessness of his suffering in this world. In 'Sabbath', the frenzy of the poet's vision is reproduced in the omission of some punctuation, the use of inversion and the intricacy of the syntax in the first two stanzas:

Und seh' gleich einem Sabbath toller Hexen  
Blutfarbne Blüten in der Spiegel Hellen  
Aus meinem Herzen keltern Flammenbrünste,  
Und ihre Lippen kundig aller Künste  
An meiner trunknen Kehle wütend schwellen. <222>

By far the most effective, yet also the most simple modification of normal word order occurs in 'Herbst': "Da macht ein Hauch mich von Verfall erzittern" <219>. The slight change from the grammatical norm both intensifies the regular iambic pentameter and draws attention to this line which is the turning-point of the poem, stressing through anticipation the word "Verfall". Here, in the

irregularity of the syntax and in the predominant sounds - 'a' and the fricatives 'ch' and 'f' - is true achievement of a musical quality in the poetry, a minor key which will haunt Trakl's mature lyric and which is far more effective than the flirtation with the elaborate and tortuous style of decadence.

In his attempt to express some kind of truth in his poetry, Trakl soon realized the limitations of decadent style. It became the aim of his poetry to move away from the personal and the subjective towards a more objective and universal appeal. In 1911 he wrote to Buschbeck of his conscious efforts to introduce this element into his poetry:

Anbei das umgearbeitete Gedicht. Es ist umso viel besser als das ursprüngliche als es nun unpersönlich ist, und zum Bersten voll von Bewegung und Gesichten.

Ich bin überzeugt, daß es Dir in dieser universellen Form und Art mehr sagen und bedeuten wird, denn in der begrenzt persönlichen des ersten Entwurfes.<sup>35</sup>

Although the poem Trakl is here referring to ('Klagelied') is far from objective, it does mark a transitional phase in Trakl's poetry, and a clear move towards the universality which his later lyric achieves. It is beyond the scope of this work to examine Trakl's development away from the style of decadence; his poetic maturation, and in particular the shift from subjectivity to objectivity has been examined in detail elsewhere.<sup>36</sup>

Certainly, the poetry of *Sammlung 1909* bears evidence of the fact that Trakl was influenced by the literature of decadence and sought in his own poetry to assume this style. Kleefeld's claim that the poetry betrays "die charakteristischen Merkmale psychotischer Sprachschöpfungen" fails to place Trakl within a literary context.<sup>37</sup> True, most of the early work is immature and epigonic, and shows little evidence of the greatness which the 'mature' lyric (written only a few years later) will achieve. Alfred Gold's criticism of

Dörmann could equally apply to the Trakl of *Sammlung*  
1909:

[Es mag] lehrreich sein, gerade den Geist Baudelaires neben den Geist Dörmanns zu halten, nicht als Maßstab, nur als Gegenbild. Baudelaire ist der Dichter der blassen, gedämpften Gefühle. Er hat die subtilen, manchmal undeutlichen Worte des Gehirnmenschen, der seine Instinkte zersetzt und geschwächt hat. Es ist Überkultur in ihm. ... Dörmann ist anders. Er ist zuviel ungeschwächter Instinktmensch, um geistreich zu sein, um seine Worte zu suchen. Er ist derb und deutlich, überdeutlich. Man kann fast sagen, es ist Unkultur in ihm.<sup>38</sup>

## CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

Anbei das umgearbeitete Gedicht. Es ist umsoviel besser als das ursprüngliche als es nun unpersönlich ist, und zum Bersten voll von Bewegung und Gesichten.<sup>1</sup>

## "Das lebendige Fieber": The Conquest of Decadence?

Inzwischen habe ich den 'Sebastian im Traum' bekommen und viel darin gelesen: ergriffen, staunend, ahnend und ratlos; denn man begreift bald, daß die Bedingungen dieses Auftönens und Hinklingens unwiederbringlich einzige waren, wie die Umstände, aus denen eben ein Traum kommen mag. Ich denke mir, daß selbst der Nahstehende immer noch wie an Scheiben gepreßt diese Aussichten und Einblicke erfährt, als ein Ausgeschlossener: denn Trakls Erleben geht wie in Spiegelbildern und füllt seinen ganzen Raum, der unbetretbar ist, wie der Raum im Spiegel. (Wer mag er gewesen sein?).<sup>2</sup>

Rilke's words, written in 1915, refer to the esoteric nature of Trakl's later poetry as both familiar and unreachable, a hermetic dream-world as impenetrable as the world within a mirror. It has been the aim of this work to move further towards an understanding of this mirror-world by examining Trakl's earliest writing, confronting "eines Spiegels trügerischer Leere" <220> which is presented therein, and seeking themes and motifs which recur throughout his oeuvre.

This work has attempted to show that the early prose, poetry and drama are not merely the results of a fashionable dalliance with decadence, little other than "a tribute to his time and place, a tribute he soon ceased to pay";<sup>3</sup> many critics, indeed, have failed

entirely to come to terms with Trakl's earliest writing, rejecting it, as did the poet himself, as inconsequential juvenilia.<sup>4</sup> Others have acknowledged its existence, but given it little serious attention, other than as a "Vorbereitungsphase" for the later poetry; this is the view represented by Wölfel and Esselborn, amongst others, who have indicated four distinct stylistic stages in the development of Trakl's lyric poetry.<sup>5</sup>

Since the 1950's, however, when literary scholarship turned its attention in earnest to Trakl's poetry, a small but significant number of critical works have stressed the importance of the earliest poetry for an understanding of Trakl's entire work. In 1955, Simon claimed:

So sehr diese frühen Gedichte der Sammlung 'Aus goldenem Kelch' gegenüber dem Spätwerk dichterisch abfallen, so muß doch dem Herausgeber Erhard Buschbeck gedankt werden, daß er sie, die vom Trakl später 'verstoßen' wurden, in der neuen Ausgabe als eigenen Band erschienen ließ; sind sie doch nicht nur als Stufen der stilistisch formalen und thematischen Entwicklung des Dichters bedeutsam, sondern auch für die Forschung des eigentümlichen Traumcharakters der 'Dichtungen' unentbehrlich.<sup>6</sup>

Lindenberger, in the same year, published an analysis of the early poems which sought to emphasize both "the thematic continuity between the early and late poems and the more notable differences between them".<sup>7</sup> This unity of mood or tone has been the subject of studies by Uhlig, Wölfel, Falk and Furness, who stress the thread of melancholy ("der schwermütige Ton", "sein Hang zum Dunklen, Nächtigen, zum Leiden").<sup>8</sup>

The early writing has been the subject of detailed examination in only a few critical works. Goldmann's Jungian psychological interpretation in *Katabasis* analyses the significance of *das Symbol* throughout Trakl's work in its attempt to reveal "die latenten, unbewußten Elemente . . . , welche im psychischen Erleben und im Schaffen des Dichters wirksam waren".<sup>9</sup> In her

study of "Unmittelbarkeit und Reflexion", Blaß devotes most of her attention to the early work, which she claims is essential for an understanding of the later poetry, based on "die Einsicht, daß die hochqualifizierte Dichtung der Spätzeit nur aus ihrer Genese zu verstehen ist".<sup>10</sup> More recently, Kleefeld, in his psychoanalytical study, looks at the thematic unity throughout the entire oeuvre, stressing the themes of sadism and violence;<sup>11</sup> Webber, too, has focused on much of the early writing in his examination of sexuality in the works of Trakl and Musil.<sup>12</sup>

While some critics have stressed that thematic unity is at the centre of Trakl's work, there is no doubt that stylistically there is a wide gulf between the poetry written before and after 1909/10. This is a gulf which Trakl himself sought to bridge. As has been seen, it was the aim of his poetry to overcome his own psychological torment, to try to express some kind of universal truth;<sup>13</sup> he soon realized that the ornamental and over-indulgent style of decadent poetry was insufficient to communicate or transfigure the depth of his suffering. Decadent poetry is characterized by its flight from reality, as Bahr had pointed out in his essay on dilettantism. The young Hofmannsthal, too, stressed the difference between poetry and life: "Die Worte sind alles, die Worte, mit denen man Gesehenes und Gehörtes zu einem neuen Dasein hervorrufen und nach inspirierten Gesetzen als ein Bewegtes vorspiegeln kann. Es führt von der Poesie kein direkter Weg ins Leben, aus dem Leben keiner in die Poesie."<sup>14</sup>

Trakl himself described his poetic experimentation as the development of a style which was "unpersönlich ... und zum Bersten voll von Bewegung und Gesichtern".<sup>15</sup> 'Klagelied', the poem to which Trakl is referring, moves away from the structural regularity which characterized most of *Sammlung 1909* towards irregular rhythms, yet the poem is still epigonic and reveals

little of the dynamism which is found in the later poetry. This conscious change of style can better be seen in the stanzas which close the first and second versions of 'Musik im Mirabell'. The *Sammlung 1909* poem, 'Farbiger Herbst', concludes with a mysterious and nebulous vision which is similar to much that is found in the literature of decadent symbolism:

Opaliger Dunst webt über das Gras,  
Eine Wolke von welken, gebleichten Düften,  
Im Brunnen leuchtet wie grünes Glas  
Die Mondessichel in frierenden Lüften. <237>

Three years later Trakl replaced this static imagery with a more dynamic vision, in which the poet, distanced by the disguise of the third person, plays an active role:

Ein weißer Fremdling tritt ins Haus.  
Ein Hund stürzt durch verfallene Gänge.  
Die Magd löscht eine Lampe aus,  
Das Ohr hört nachts Sonatenklänge. <18>

The development of "das lyrische Ich" has been the focus of many of the works which trace the development of Trakl's literary style.<sup>16</sup> Of particular interest here is Esselborn's study, which examines "das Schicksal des traditionellen lyrischen Ich bei Georg Trakl" as a reflection of his poetic development; it is one of the main characteristics of the highly subjective early poetry, but removed almost entirely from the volume of *Gedichte*, where "du" and "man" are used to create distance between the poet and the poetic personae, and *Sebastian im Traum*, which also uses "du", "wir" or a third person (Elis, Sebastian) with whom the poet identifies; only in the final poems does the lyrical "Ich" return, yet here it has moved beyond the boundaries of *Sammlung 1909*, a more dynamic, universal voice: "Dich sing ich wilde Zerklüftung ..." < 160> It is this impersonal quality which characterizes Trakl's last prose poem:

Erst in *Offenbarung und Untergang* scheint die richtige Balance von erzählerischer Distanz und realer Interdependenz zwischen dem aktuellen, protokollierenden einerseits und dem früheren, handelnden Ich anderer-



seits gefunden zu sein, was sich sowohl in der Ich-Perspektive des Berichts als auch in der Verklammerung der vergangenen Ich-Figuren mit dem gegenwärtigen Subjekt zeigt.<sup>17</sup>

Trakl's later style undeniably displays greater dynamism, objectivity and universal appeal (the three qualities which he outlined in his letter to Buschbeck) than can be found in his early prose and poetry. It is this which has led many critics to regard Trakl as an Expressionist poet,<sup>18</sup> an association initiated by Kurt Pinthus, who included Trakl in the famous Expressionist anthology of 1920, *Menschheitsdämmerung*. Certainly, Trakl's style has much in common with Expressionism: the "arbitrary concentration of images derived from contemporary life"<sup>19</sup> typified in van Hoddiss' 'Weltende' was a literary device which Trakl claimed as early as July 1910 to be his own: "meine bildhafte Manier, die in vier Strophenzeilen vier einzelne Bildteile zu einem einzigen Eindruck zusammenschmiedet".<sup>20</sup> His use of colour and independent imagery, too, can be seen as essentially Expressionist; Sokel compares him to Kandinsky: "Just as Kandinsky creates pure compositions of colors and lines, so Trakl creates pure compositions of autonomous metaphors. . . . Trakl's poetry is not a system of communication of ideas, but a flight of images, or autonomous metaphors, resembling an incoherent dream."<sup>21</sup> It is this obscure esoteric element, which characterizes both Trakl's and much Expressionist writing in general, which led Schneditz to claim: "jene großen Verse der Reife wollen und sollen nicht verstanden, sondern nur geahnt sein";<sup>22</sup> this claim had its logical conclusion in the critical work of Killy: "als eine dunkle Flut von Klängen und Bildern ziehen die Verse ebenso schön wie unbegreiflich vorüber".<sup>23</sup>

Thematic, as well as stylistic, similarities exist between Trakl's poetry and that of Expressionism; one thinks of the criticism of the city, as in 'Der Abend':

So bläulich erstrahlt es  
 Gegen die Stadt hin,  
 Wo kalt und böse  
 Ein verwesend Geschlecht wohnt,  
 Der weißen Enkel  
 Dunkle Zukunft bereitet. <159>

The rebellious stance of 'Die Nacht', with its landscape reminiscent of a van Gogh painting, is typical of the "new vision, ... new energy and ... new restlessness" <sup>24</sup> of Expressionism:

Stürmt den Himmel  
 Ein versteinertes Haupt. <160>

The despair of *Verwandlung des Bösen* - "O! Verzweiflung, die mit stummem Schrei ins Knie bricht" <98> - has a clear affinity with the "Sturz und Schrei" of *Menschheitsdämmerung* and Edvard's Munch's lithograph of 1894. The deep sense of horror which underlies much of Trakl's later poetry, and which he described in a letter to Ficker in November 1913,<sup>25</sup> has much in common with the mood of the new generation of writers: "The soul under stress, racked and burning in fearful incandescence - this preoccupation may be called expressionist."<sup>26</sup>

Yet many critics rightly express a sense of unease at labelling Trakl as an Expressionist.<sup>27</sup> True, some of his later work springs, stylistically and thematically, from common soil, just as his early writing betrays its affinities with the literature of decadence and Impressionism, yet Trakl's voice is unique, and ill fits into any strict categorization. He lacks the optimistic belief in programmatic literary rebirth, often expressed in bombastic rhetoric, such as is found in Pinthus' introduction to *Menschheitsdämmerung*, as well as the tendency towards political activism. As Schneditz, who produced one of the first critical studies of Trakl's life and work, indicated: "Trakl aber kennt kein Zeitbedingtsein. Sein Sprachklang ist neu, oft fremd, ja, befremdend, weil er in neue Sprachbezirke mit seinem Gedicht vorgedrungen ist, in

die zu folgen schwer fällt. Das aber hebt ihn über jeden Ismus, jedes bestimmte Zeitangekränkeltsein."<sup>28</sup>

Perhaps the greatest difference between the poetry of *fin-de-siècle* decadence and Expressionism, which is also true of the early and later poetry of Trakl, is the contrast between passivity and active involvement in one's art. Hofmannsthal, like many writers of the *fin de siècle*, believed "daß das Material der Poesie die Worte sind, daß ein Gedicht ein gewichtloses Gewebe aus Worten ist, die durch ihre Anordnung, ihren Klang und ihren Inhalt ... einen genau umschriebenen, traumhaft deutlichen, flüchtigen Seelenzustand hervorrufen, den wir Stimmung nennen."<sup>29</sup> Twelve years later, in 1915, Pinthus unambiguously rejected this concept of art: "Diesem Mischgefühl von Entzücken, Enttäuschung und Abscheu des Menschen in der neuen Wirklichkeit entströmte die jüngste Dichtung. Wenige Dichter nur flüchteten überhaupt aus der Realität hinweg, und das Motto 'l'art pour l'art' blieb stets mehr ein Schlagwort Mißgünstiger als ein praktisches poetisches Rezept."<sup>30</sup>

Muschg's comparison of Hofmannsthal and Trakl is certainly true of Trakl's later poetry, although not, as this thesis has shown, of his early writing: "Trakls Themen und Motive sind weitgehend die gleichen wie Hofmannsthals. Aber er lebt, was Hofmannsthal nur dichtet."<sup>31</sup> Indeed, this can be seen as an equally valid comparison of Trakl's early and late poetry; themes of death, decay, isolation, religion, sexual guilt, violence pervade Trakl's lyric, from the earliest writing in 1904/6 to the last poetic utterances in 1914, but the treatment of these themes changes from that of the decadent pose to the fraught despair which was at the core of the poet's soul.

It has been the aim of this thesis to examine the themes which Trakl's poetry has in common with the literature of decadence, which form the content of much



metallenes Herz" <128>; "Gottes Zorn züchtigte seine metallenen Schultern" <147>.

Throughout Trakl's poetry, as indeed throughout his life, sexuality remains problematic; in the early poems, such as 'Blutschuld', this awareness of sin and guilt adds a *frisson* of decadent delight to the depiction of incest, a delight which retreats more and more into the background as the poet attempts to confront the reality of sexual guilt. This decadent transgression is rarely transfigured in the poetry, and at best it finds a temporary and unreal solution, as in the androgynous ideal of 'Abendländisches Lied'. In the last poems, written in 1914, the poet contemplates his crime with a sense of horror, and a desperate desire for salvation which rises far above the delight of the decadent pose:

Schwester, deine blauen Brauen  
Winken leise in der Nacht.  
Orgel seufzt und Hölle lacht  
Und es faßt das Herz ein Grauen;  
Möchte Stern und Engel schauen. <163>

Closely associated with the theme of sexual guilt is the motif of sexual murder, both as *Lustmord* and *Lustselbstmord*. *Don Juans Tod*, written in 1906, first deals with this theme, which has its most graphic treatment in *Blaubart*. As has been shown, this theme can be traced throughout the poetry, and it remains one of unresolved and uncontrollable violence in the *Dramenfragment* of 1914. In most of the pieces which treat this theme, the female victim has also a male counterpart, a representative of the poet's innocent self, who is encountered again in the scenarios of *Lustselbstmord* in 'Das Grauen' and 'Kaspar Hauser Lied'. The male as murderer and victim represents in each case not so much an antithesis of evil and innocence as two extreme stages of the one cycle of sexual awareness; Bluebeard was once Herbert, and Herbert, in order to prevent his degeneration into rapist and murder, preserves his innocence in death.

Trakl sought in his poetry to escape the awareness of violence and evil which plagued his existence; he sought, too, to craft some kind of poetic atonement for his own overwhelming sense of guilt. The decadent echoes which reverberate throughout his work show that he was not entirely successful, as he himself was forced to realize: "Gefühl in den Augenblicken toten-ähnlichen Seins: Alle Menschen sind der Liebe wert. Erwachend fühlst du die Bitternis der Welt; darin ist alle deine ungelöste Schuld; dein Gedicht eine unvollkommene Sühne."<sup>33</sup>

## FOOTNOTES

## EPIGRAPH

1. Georg Trakl in a letter to his sister Minna, written 5 October 1908. In Trakl, Georg, *Dichtungen und Briefe. Historisch-Kritische Ausgabe*, ed. by Walther Killy and Hans Szklener, 2 vols, 2nd edition, Salzburg, 1987, vol. I, p.472. All references to Trakl's works will be taken from this edition; page references to volume I will be indicated in brackets in the text; references to the variants, included in volume II of the historical-critical edition will be indicated in brackets in the text, preceded by a Roman numeral II; in the footnotes, the abbreviation HKA is used for the historical-critical edition.

## CHAPTER ONE: LITERARY DECADENCE

1. *Freistatt. Kritische Wochenschrift für Politik, Literatur und Kunst*, VI. Jahrgang, Heft 33, 13 August 1904
2. Paul Verlaine, *Selected Poems*, ed. by R C D Perman, Oxford, 1965, p.113
3. Cited by Koenraad W Swart, *The Sense of Decadence in nineteenth-century France*, The Hague, 1964, p.44
4. Mario Praz, *The Romantic Agony*, 2nd edition, London, 1951, pp.97-195

5. Théophile Gautier, *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, Paris, 1883, vol.I, p.46
6. Cited by Louis Maignon, *Le Romantisme et les Moeurs: Essai d'étude historique et sociale*, Paris, 1910, p.220
7. Maignon, p.128
8. Maignon, p.96
9. From a letter to J F de la Harpe, 23 April 1770. *Voltaire's Correspondance*, vol. 75, pp.38-39, ed. by Theodore Besterman, Geneva, 1962
10. Cited by Erwin Koppen, *Dekadenter Wagnerismus*, Berlin, 1973, p.21
11. Charles Baudelaire, *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. II, ed. by Claude Pichois, Paris, 1976, p.319
12. Baudelaire, vol. II p.330
13. Baudelaire, vol. II, p.328
14. Baudelaire, vol. II, p.334
15. 'Fusées XI', Baudelaire, vol. I, p.659
16. Baudelaire, vol. I, p.11
17. Baudelaire, vol. II, p.322
18. 'Mon coeur mis à nu XI', Baudelaire, vol. I, pp.682-683
19. Cited by Koppen, p.30
20. Baudelaire, vol. II, p.794
21. Koppen, and Raymond Furness, *Wagner and Literature*, Manchester, 1982
22. Hermann Frodl, *Die deutsche Dekadenzdichtung der Jahrhundertwende: Wurzeln. Entfaltung. Wirkung*, dissertation, University of Vienna, 1963, p.58
23. Ulrike Weinhold, *Künstlichkeit und Kunst in der deutschsprachigen Dekadenz-Literatur*, Frankfurt am Main, Bern and Las Vegas, 1977, p.224
24. Arthur Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* I. Cited by Frodl, p.58
25. Frodl, p.59
26. Frodl, p.61
27. Paul Bourget, *Essais de Psychologie Contemporaine*, vol. I, Paris, 1899, p.10 and p.13



28. Literary decadence in France has been the subject of much study, in particular its relationship to both Romanticism and Symbolism. For a detailed analysis of the movement see: Jennifer Birkett, *The Sins of the Fathers: Decadence in France 1870-1914*, London, 1986; Eric C Hansen, *Disaffection and Decadence: A Crisis in French Intellectual Thought 1848-1898*, Washington, 1982; Koppen; Louis Marquèze-Pouey, *Le mouvement décadent en France*, Paris, 1986; Guy Michaud, *Message poétique du symbolisme*, Paris, 1947; Noël Richard, *Le Mouvement Décadent*, Paris, 1968; Swart.
29. Koppen, pp.32f
30. Koppen, p.35
31. See Richard, p.257
32. Verlaine, p.56
33. This label was first attached to *A Rebours* by Arthur Symons, *The Symbolist Movement in Literature*, 2nd edition, London, 1911, p.139
34. Rodenbach's words, cited by Swart, p.163
35. Oscar Wilde, *Complete Works*, London and Glasgow, 1966, p.101
36. Cited by Michaud, p.261
37. See Michaud, pp.343f, and Marquèze-Pouey, pp.177f
38. Literary decadence in Germany and Austria has been the subject of much critical literature. Koppen's study of *Dekadenter Wagnerismus* examines the evolution of the term as a literary epithet in France, Germany, and England, and singles out the motifs of literary decadence, in particular as a "Kunst der Nerven und der Entartung", but concentrates on the role played by Wagner and Wagnerian motifs in the European literature of the *fin de siècle*. This is not, however, an exhaustive study of German literary decadence; indeed, the only author to be studied in any detail is Thomas Mann, the only writer of German decadence in whom Wagnerian motifs play a significant role.

Jens Malte Fischer's study, *Fin de Siècle: Kommentar zu einer Epoche*, Munich, 1978, looks at the wider issue of German literature at the turn of the century. He examines the importance of Vienna as the literary centre of the day, and the role played by Bahr as an intermediary of French Decadence. He argues that the reception of decadence in Austria and Germany always remains to some extent ambiguous ("halbherzig akzeptiert", p.84), and thus prefers the broader concept of *fin de siècle*, although many of the literary *motifs* which he examines can be categorized as decadent: "dekadente Sexualität (Sadismus, Masochismus, Nekrophilie, Flagellantismus, usw) ... die 'femme fatale' ... Okkultismus ... Dilettantismus und Dandysmus ... Ich-Seele-Nerven-Stimmung"; the main exception here is his study of "Sozialismus und Anarchismus". Fischer balances his historical view with a detailed study of literature of the time, including two of the major works of German decadence, Bahr's *Die gute Schule* and Felix Dörmann's *Sensationen*.

Wolfdietrich Rasch's recent study of *Die literarische Décadence um 1900*, Munich, 1986, deals with more established writers, including Rilke, Hofmannsthal, Thomas Mann and Arthur Schnitzler, examining the decadent aspects of their early work. Rasch defines decadence in literature as the "Darstellung von Verfall und Untergang" (p.13). While this is undeniably a central concept of decadence, the stress of this study is, especially in its analysis of individual authors, perhaps too much on this affirmation of decline. Rasch does, however, acknowledge the perverse nature of decadence, in particular in his study of decadent eroticism, brutality and horror.

39. Koppen, p.51
40. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Werke in drei Bänden*, ed. by Karl Schlechta, Munich, 1954; vol. II, p.903
41. Nietzsche, vol. II, p.905
42. Nietzsche, vol. II, p.913
43. Nietzsche, vol. II, pp.1091-92: *Ecce Homo*, 'Warum ich so klug bin' 6
44. Nietzsche, vol. II, p.1072: *Ecce Homo*, 'Warum ich so weise bin' 2
45. Nietzsche, vol. II, p.753: *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* 293
46. Nietzsche, vol. II, p.1004: *Götzen-Dämmerung*, 'Streifzüge eines Unzeitgemässen 24'
47. Nietzsche, vol. III, p.784: *Aus dem Nachlaß der Achtzigerjahre*
48. Hermann Bahr, *Selbstbildnis*, Berlin, 1923, pp.256-257
49. *Das Junge Wien: Osterreichische Literatur- und Kunstkritik 1887-1902*, ed. by Gotthard Wunberg, Tübingen, 1976, pp.20-21
50. *Das Junge Wien*, p.146
51. *Das Junge Wien*, p.150
52. *Das Junge Wien*, p.150
53. *Das Junge Wien*, p.156
54. *Das Junge Wien*, p.423
55. *Das Junge Wien*, p.423
56. *Das Junge Wien*, p.425
57. *Das Junge Wien*, p.426
58. *Das Junge Wien*, p.427
59. *Das Junge Wien*, p.313
60. *Das Junge Wien*, p.462
61. *Das Junge Wien*, p.158
62. Nordau, *Entartung*, 3rd edition, Berlin, 1896, p.215
63. Nordau, p.307
64. In a letter to Arthur Schnitzler, 19 March 1893. Cited by Ursula Heckmann, *Das verfluchte Geschlecht: Motive der Philosophie Otto Weiningers*

- im Werk Georg Trakls*, Frankfurt am Main, 1992, p.54
65. See Bernhard Böschstein, 'Wirkungen des französischen Symbolismus auf die deutsche Lyrik der Jahrhundertwende', in *Euphorion*, 58, 1964, p.375
66. Cited in *Impressionismus, Symbolismus, Jugendstil*, ed. by Ulrich Karthaus, Stuttgart, 1977, p.128
67. *Impressionismus, Symbolismus, Jugendstil*, p.124
68. *Impressionismus, Symbolismus, Jugendstil*, p.130
69. *Impressionismus, Symbolismus, Jugendstil*, p.130
70. The issue of what exactly is understood by literary decadence is often obscured, as it was during the 1890's, by the plethora of literary trends which sprang up in Austria and Germany at the turn of the century, and which include Symbolism, Impressionism, and *Jugendstil*. Decadence is in particular often confused with Symbolism. In France, this movement is based on the aestheticism of Mallarmé's "poésie pure". In an article in *La Vogue*, he described a new aestheticism which stressed the importance of poetic language, musicality and rhythm, and the sanctitude of poetry. The emphasis is on the sacred role of the poet as diviner of some mysterious hidden reality (an idea based on Baudelaire's correspondences). While for the decadent, symbolism was unable to rise above the sphere of the purely personal, Symbolism sought to reveal another spiritual dimension, a transcendental ideal realm that lies behind the physical reality of this world. The influence of Symbolism on German literature can best be seen in the poetry of George. It is the subject of Manfred Gsteiger's study, *Französische Symbolisten in der deutschen Literatur der Jahrhundertwende (1869-1914)*, Bern, 1971, and Böschstein's article,

'Wirkungen des französischen Symbolismus auf die deutsche Lyrik der Jahrhundertwende'.

Bahr, in his transmission of decadence from France to Germany, deals, too, with the issue of 'Symbolismus', although he confuses the issue between decadence and Symbolism, so intent was he on transmitting 'die Moderne' to Austria; for him, they were both part of modernism in art. In his essay, he defines his concept of the new Symbolism, which differed from the symbolism of writers such as Goethe, Byron, Wagner, and Hugo in that it appealed directly to "die Nerven". It is clear, however, that Bahr himself is confused by the use of symbols in the literature of decadence and Symbolism. What he describes in this essay is the obscure area between decadence, which uses symbols to express the writer's own feelings, and Symbolism, which uses symbols as representations of a higher reality. This aspect of Symbolism is entirely lacking from Bahr's description, as is the affinity between Symbolism and music.

Koppen rightly stresses the difference between decadence and Symbolism: "Symbolismus und Décadence sind zwar in der französischen Literaturgeschichte zwei so eng benachbarte Phänomene, daß man nicht von dem einen handeln kann, ohne das andere wenigstens im Auge zu behalten. Dennoch bezieht sich der Terminus 'Décadence' auf eine grundsätzlich andere semantische Ebene als die Bezeichnung 'Symbolismus': bezieht sich diese vorwiegend auf sprachliche und poetologische Erscheinungen, die sich im Stil und Form eines literarischen Werks manifestieren, so umreißt Décadence eine Haltung dem Leben und der Gesellschaft gegenüber, deren literarische Phänomene weniger in der Sprache als in bestimmten gehaltlichen Charakteristika

(Motiven, Charakteren, usw.) in Erscheinung treten." (p.46)

Less complex is the relationship between decadence and Impressionism, which, based on Mach's philosophy, finds its literary expression in the subjective evocation of *Stimmung*, such as is found in the prose sketches of Peter Altenberg.

Literary *Jugendstil*, while extolling virtues of youth and the affirmation of life, apparently alien to decadence, paradoxically must be seen very much in the same context as the literature of decline, as Hartmut Scheible points out: "Die Gleichzeitigkeit von Verneinung des Willens zum Leben und Verherrlichung des élan vital, von Aufbruchsstimmung und Dekadenz, von Jugendkult und Endzeitstimmung ist Ausdruck der tiefgreifenden Verstörung darüber, daß Dynamik und Stagnation einander nicht ausschließen und daß Bewegung nicht unbedingt, wie das wissenschaftsgläubige Jahrhundert als selbstverständlich annahm, sich in der Bahn des Fortschritts vollzieht."

(*Literarischer Jugendstil in Wien, Munich and Zurich*, 1984, p.11)

71. *Freistatt*, pp.60-1

While literary decadence found its most prolific analyst and exponent in Bahr, and while many of the writers of decadence could be found in the literary circles of *fin-de-siècle* Vienna, *Jung-Wien* should not be equated with decadence.

Habsburg Vienna and the literary world of Bahr, Hofmannsthal, Andrian, Altenberg, Beer-Hofmann and Schnitzler have been examined in detail by William M Johnston, *The Austrian Mind: An Intellectual and Social History 1848-1938*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1972; Carl E Schorske, *Fin de Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture*, London, 1980; Erika Nielson (ed.), *Focus on Vienna 1900*, Munich, 1982;

and Bruce Thompson, *Schnitzler's Vienna: Image of a Society*, London and New York, 1990.

Trakl arrived in Vienna in October 1908, and, although at the instigation of his friend Erhard Buschbeck he briefly met Bahr, he was never part of the Viennese *Kaffeehaus* literary circles. Although Bahr was responsible for the publication of three of Trakl's poems ('Einer Vorübergehenden', 'Vollendung' and 'Andacht') in the *Neues Wiener Journal*, he showed no further interest in the young poet.

#### CHAPTER TWO: CRIME AND HORROR

1. Edgar Allan Poe, *Tales of Adventure, Mystery and Imagination*, London, New York and Melbourne, 1890, p.443
2. Novalis, *Politische Aphorismen 1798*, 46: *Werke*, ed. by Gerhard Schulz, 3rd edition, Munich, 1987, p.368
3. Regine Blass, *Die Dichtung Georg Trakls. Von der Triviasprache zum Kunstwerk*, Berlin, 1968: within the context of her study of *Reflexion* and *Unmittelbarkeit* in the early poetry, Blass examines the question of subjectivity and the "allmähliche Entfesselung der Natur des Blaubart". Gunther Kleefeld, *Das Gedicht als Sühne. Georg Trakls Dichtung und Krankheit. Eine psychoanalytische Studie*, Tübingen, 1985: Kleefeld rightly sees *Blaubart* within the context of sadism and points out the importance of the *Lustmord* theme for an understanding of Trakl's poetry; see pp.137f

Richard Detsch, *Georg Trakl's Poetry. Toward a Union of Opposites*, University Park, 1983: although Detsch claims to give "special attention" to *Blaubart* (Introduction, p.5), his somewhat scant analysis of the piece fails to justify his claim that in *Blaubart* "good and evil are joined in a most intimate way."

Andrew Webber, *Sexuality and the Sense of Self in the Works of Georg Trakl and Robert Musil*, London, 1990: in his perceptive study, Webber points to the significance of the *Lustmord* theme in Trakl's three extant dramatic torsos as "symptomatic of a tension, which obtains throughout the corpus, between lyrical form and the deforming forces of aggression and decay" (p.57). He pays particular detail to the association of sexuality, guilt and death, and Trakl's relation to Weininger.

4. See Charles Perrault, *The Evergreen Tales, or Tales for the Ageless*, translated by Arthur Quiller-Couch, New York, 1952, Introduction to "The Whimsical History of Bluebeard"
5. Ludwig Tieck, *Schriften, 9. Band. Arabesken*, Berlin, 1828: *Die sieben Weiber des Blaubart*, p.94
6. See Karl Hauer, 'Spiegel sterbender Welten', *Fackel* 23 July 1906, vol. 12, ed. Karl Kraus, Munich, 1965, pp.1-21
7. Joris-Karl Huysmans, *Là-Bas*, Paris, 1891, p.59
8. Huysmans, pp.73-76
9. Huysmans, p.357
10. See Herbert Lindenberger, 'The Early Poems of Georg Trakl', in *The Germanic Review*, 32, 1957, pp.45-61; pp.59-60  
Lindenberger is wrong, too, in his claim that "a murder occurs on stage as climax to the piece" (p. 53).
11. Lindenberger, p.60
12. See Béla Balázs, *Prince Bluebeard's Castle*, a



- libretto adapted from the Hungarian by Thomas Land, Tern Press, 1978
13. This is the central theme of the Bluebeard myth, which Vizetelly traces back throughout western culture: "Taking 'Bluebeard' then, as typical of curiosity in women, one may trace it back to the very beginning of the world, according to the Mosaic view. Eve and her apple, Lot's wife and her backward glance, immediately suggest themselves; while the key which Bluebeard hands to his wife reminds one irresistibly of Pandora's box, Psyche's lamp, and Elsen's question to the Knight of the Swan." (Ernest Alfred Vizetelly, *Bluebeard. An Account of Comorre the Cursed and Gilles de Rais*, London, Chatto and Windus, 1902, p.15)
  14. Otto Basil, *Georg Trakl mit Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten*, Hamburg, 1965, p.67
  15. Basil, p.68
  16. Basil, p.69
  17. In his study of 'The Forbidden Chamber', Hartland stresses the significance of the setting: "This gloom seems an essential part of the myth lying at the root of the tale: it is the gloom of cloud, of night, of winter, the outward and visible sign and vesture of the fiend who inhabits it." (*The Folklore Journal*, Vol III, 1885, p.204)
  18. See Maurice Maeterlinck, *Ariane et Barbe-bleue*, in *Théâtre III*, Paris, 1918, p.187
  19. See Balázs, p.8
  20. Within the context of Maeterlinck's theatre for marionettes, and the trend which it set at the turn of the century, it is clear why Trakl chose this genre, despite Schneditz's incomprehension ("Warum der Dichter dieses hinreißende, kleine Drama als Puppenspiel sah, weiß ich nicht." 'Georg Trakl. Versuch einer Deutung des Menschen und des Dichters', Georg Trakl, *Nachlaß und Biographie*, Salzburg, 1949, p.120), and Blass's scepticism

("Keineswegs hatte Trakl das Stück für das Marionettentheater bestimmt." p.67). Blass sees the concept of *Puppenspiel* simply as symbolic of man's lack of control over his own fate; this is the very symbolism of Maeterlinck's concept. See Bettina Knapp, *Maurice Maeterlinck*, Boston, 1975: "At this juncture in his career, Maeterlinck felt that human actors ... were not appropriate vehicles to portray the archetypal figures with which he peopled his stage. Since wooden dolls were complex and ambiguous forces, they infused a super- or extrahuman dimension into the stage happenings. Inhabitants of two worlds, the real and the unreal, they could be transformed into anything at any time: god or man, saint or sinner. ... What impressed Maeterlinck in particular was the passive, remote, impersonal and automatonlike nature of the marionette as it fruitlessly confronted the forces of destiny. He saw an analogy between man and marionette: both are manipulated by outer forces, both are unaware of this control over their lives. The marionette is directed by the puppeteer; man is the plaything of the gods. The stage is a microcosm of the macrocosm." (pp.77-78)

Lindenberger fails to point out this major influence of the Belgian dramatist on Trakl.

21. Sieglinde Klettenhammer, 'Unbekanntes Puppenspiel *Kaspar Hauser* von Georg Trakl', *Mitteilungen aus dem Brenner-Archiv*, Nr 1, 1982, pp.50-56
22. Klettenhammer, p.50. Klettenhammer adds: "Der Vergleich Trakls mit dem Maler Carl Anton Reichel zeigt, daß die Zeitgenossen sein frühes Werk in die literarische Tradition des sogenannten 'Jung-Wien' einordneten. Carl Anton Reichel ... beschäftigte sich mit den Grenzwissenschaften Hypnose, Suggestion und Spiritismus. Seine Graphiken stellen mythisch-mystische, in Träumen

- und Selbstreflexion versunkene Gestalten dar..."  
(p.55)
23. See Webber, p.60
24. Webber sees here a presage of Elisabeth's death:  
"Even as he sacrifices himself in an effort to prevent the unutterable crime of the wedding night, his infected blood it is that replaces the fantasied blood of "der Fackeln flackernde Glut" (I 439) where Elisabeth will kneel, and so prefigures the orgy of blood-letting to come."  
(p.61)
25. Letter 4, to Hermine von Rauterberg, 5 October 1908, HKA I, p.471
26. It is this union of good and evil which Detsch claims is portrayed in Trakl's *Blaubart*: "*Blaubart* ... appears to have assumed some of the qualities of saintliness. In him, good and evil are joined in a most intimate way." (p.90). Detsch gives no evidence to support his claim, however, and there is little evidence of *Blaubart*'s "saintliness" in Trakl's text.
27. Hermann Bahr, *Die gute Schule. Seelenstände*, Berlin, 1890, p.132
28. Bahr, *Die gute Schule*, p.134
29. Bahr, *Die gute Schule*, pp.66-67
30. Stanislaw Przybyszewski, *De Profundis und andere Erzählungen*, Paderborn, 1990, pp. 65-66
31. The song, and its variants, crudely reiterate *Blaubart*'s fate; it is hard to concur with Schneditz's praise that the song has "die Tragik seines besessenen Schicksals zum Grundton" (p.121). There is little of tragedy or pathos in the affected lyric of the song.
32. Webber, p.62
33. The imagery of blood as "two simultaneous but contradictory tendencies of *attraction and repulsion*", especially in relation to the sister, incestuous desires, and the concept of evil, has

- been examined by Michel-François Demet in his article on 'Blood, the Mirror, the Sister' in *The Dark Flutes of Fall: Critical Essays on Georg Trakl*, ed. by Eric Williams, Camden House, 1991
34. Marquis de Sade, *Justine*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, Paris, 1963, vol.III, pp.198-199
  35. Sade, vol. III, p.188
  36. Otto Weininger, *Geschlecht und Charakter*, Munich, 1980, p.338
  37. Weininger, pp.331-332
  38. Weininger, pp.400-401
  39. In a conversation with Carl Dallago, recorded by Hans Limbach, 'Begegnung mit Georg Trakl', in *Erinnerung an Georg Trakl*, 3rd Edition, Salzburg, 1966, p.125
- Weininger's views on sexuality and androgyny will be discussed in a later chapter.
40. Cited by Kleefeld, p.137
  41. Huysmans, pp.238-239
  42. Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, Harmondsworth, 1979, p.441.
- Interesting in this context is the dual role of Mina as victim and redeemer, as Furness points out: "... after the gruesome episode when the Count forces her to drink of his blood ... The angelic Mina restrains her distraught husband by reminding him that, although the Count must be destroyed, it must not be a work of hatred. ... Count Wampyr/Dracula, then, has found peace, ... killed by men but pitied by a woman...",
- 'Redemption and Degeneration: Wagner and Nordau in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*', *Connections: Essays in Honour of Eda Sagarra on the Occasion of her 60th Birthday*, Stuttgart, 1993, p.92
43. Bahr, *Die gute Schule*, p.67
  44. Przybyszewski, pp.27-30
  45. Przybyszewski, p.30
  46. Felix Dörmann, *Neurotica*, Munich and Leipzig, 1914, pp.93-95

47. Dörmann, p.96
48. Dörmann, p.98
49. See Oskar Kokoschka, *Mörder, Hoffnung der Frau*, in *Das schriftliche Werk. Band I. Dichtungen und Dramen*, ed. by Heinz Spielmann, Hamburg, 1973, pp.44-51
50. Blass sees this as Blaubart's recognition of sin and a humble petitioning of God: "... so stürzt Blaubart in einer verzweifelten Bewegung der Demut im vollen Bewußtsein seiner selbst als eines Sünders unter das Kreuz. Der Sturz unter das Kreuz geschieht nicht in einem plötzlich einbrechenden Glaubensvollzug, sondern meint erst das Suchen Gottes..." (p.86). Detsch also sees "the dawning of a religious yearning and a hope for redemption" in the conclusion of *Blaubart* (p.90). If it is to be interpreted as "das Suchen Gottes" or "the dawning of a religious yearning", then it must be admitted that this is a very short-lived search.
51. *Erinnerung an Georg Trakl*, p.125
52. It is hard to concur with Doppler that Blaubart has fulfilled some kind of divine function in destroying female sexuality. See Alfred Doppler, *Die Lyrik Georg Trakls: Beiträge zur poetischen Verfahrensweise und zur Wirkungsgeschichte*, Vienna, Cologne and Weimar, 1992, p.89
53. Huysmans, *Là-Bas*, pp.245-246
54. If we are to take Blaubart's second variant song as a reference to Elisabeth's own fate, then this is confirmed: "Am Abend kam der Freier / Den sie noch nie geschaut." (HKA II, p.478)
55. Heinrich, Elisabeth's sweetheart, is not to be identified with Herbert, Blaubart's servant, as Webber suggests (p.62)
56. Both Doppler (p.88) and Ursula Heckmann (p.187) have pointed out the significance of Weininger's philosophy of female sexuality here.

57. Weininger, p.116
58. Weininger, p.400
59. Richard von Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia sexualis*, Munich, 1993, p.74
60. Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, *Venus im Pelz*, Frankfurt am Main, 1968, p.57
61. Bahr, *Die gute Schule*, p.189
62. Weininger, pp.400-1
63. Schneditz, p.120
64. Basil, p.68
65. *The Independent*, 22 July 1992
66. See *Bühne*, May 1991, pp.47-48, 'Vorschau: Alptraum eines jungen Mannes'
67. Dörmann, p.105
68. Wilde, p.561
69. See Webber, p.62: "Elisabeth's solicitation of Bluebeard's aggression is symptomatic of an involvement which can be traced in their relationship to the moon. Elisabeth imitates the moon as 'besoffene Dirne' ... Similarly Bluebeard is the moon as voyeur." This interpretation does not, however, take into account the fact that the appellation of the moon as "besoffene Dirne" comes from Blaubart, not Elisabeth; he is casting her in the role of lascivious female, a role which she will only assume towards the end of the scene, perhaps under the influence of his presence.
70. Janet McCrickard, *Eclipse of the Sun. An Investigation of Sun and Moon Myths*, Glastonbury, 1990, p.41
- The association of menstruation and the moon has been examined also by Penelope Shuttle and Peter Redgrove in their detailed study of *The Wise Wound*, more, however, within the context of the cults and moon-goddesses of ancient cultures than the concept of the moon as male violator. In Chapter Three, "Animus, Animal, Anima", however, there is a reference to cultures who believe that

the moon is "the dream or 'other husband'" who has sexual intercourse with the woman during her period. *The Wise Wound: Menstruation and Everywoman*, Harmondsworth, 1980, p.103

- 71 In 'Abendmuse' we find the only indirect reference to the moon as female:

Endymion taucht aus dem Dunkel alter Eichen  
Und beugt sich über trauervolle Wasser nieder.

Although the moon is not depicted, the connotation of Endymion as the lover of Selene cannot be forgotten.

In her otherwise perceptive analysis of moon symbolism in Trakl's poetry, Iris Denneler fails to point out the association of the moon and male sexuality in the early lyric: "In der Jugenddichtungen erscheint das Motiv des Mondes relativ selten und stets in umgangssprachlicher Bedeutung ... Wie schon erwähnt, verändert sich das Mond-Motiv allmählich und erfährt seit Mitte 1913 eine Fixierung auf den sexuellen Bereich."

(*Konstruktion und Expression: Zur Strategie und Wirkung der Lyrik Georg Trakls*, Salzburg, 1984, pp.119-120) Denneler sees the moon as both male and female sexuality ("Jagdmotiv" and "Höhlenmotiv"), but fails to point out its association with renunciation of sexuality.

72. Letter 4, to Hermine von Rauterberg, 5 October 1908, HKA I p.471
73. Letter 85, to Ludwig von Fischer, 26 June 1913, HKA I, p.519
74. In his biography Schneditz claims: "Trakl war damals ein, grotesk ausgedrückt, platonischer Verbrecher. Er, dem nicht einmal ein ausschweifendes Geschlechtsleben in diesen Jahren nachzuweisen ist, kein übermäßiges Trinken, höchstens die stärkere apothekenbedingte Befreundung mit den ihm später immer verderblicheren Narkotika, gerade er entwickelt eine bluttriefende

abwegige Phantasie, die in Mordlust und perversen Gedanken geradezu schwelgt." (p.79)

75. Basil, p.79
76. The uncertainties of location and identity give the fragment a dream-like quality entirely in keeping with its themes; Webber comments on this as a process of Freudian *Entstellung*: "the spatio-temporal continuity of conventional theatrical forms is superseded here by the radical dislocation which characterises the economy of dreams." (see p.58) One can see here, too, traces of the use of puppets in *Blaubart*, as helpless automata at the mercy of greater forces.
77. What we have here is a radical interpretation of the inter-relationship of the characters in *Blaubart*, who are connected by common motifs of genuflection and blood.
78. "Die steinerne Stadt"; although stoniness is a quality of sinfulness and guilt throughout the poetic oeuvre, one is tempted here to see it also as a specific reference to Berlin. This line is absent from the first two variants of this poem, written before Trakl's visit to his sister.
79. In his perceptive analysis of the *Dramenfragment*, Webber demonstrates that Trakl's treatment of sexuality in his poetry is more than an attempt to atone for personal guilt over the alleged crime of incest: "Guilt is recognised as original and so general; the self is made to encompass internally both the perpetration of violence and its suffering, that is, to be fundamentally split as both subject and object, male and female." (p.65) This explains the shifting identities within the play: "... all three figures bear the mark of lesions which are both sexual and penitential: Johanna in her bleeding mouth, the apparition in the wounded heart (summoning up at once the wound in the side of the 'Schmerzensmann' and the



- suffering of the 'Schmerzensmutter'), and the murderer in an even clearer imitation of the Madonna. He takes on the suffering of the mother's (i.e. Maria's) 'Wehen', with his 'zerbrochne Schwerter im Herzen'. ... There is thus a complex subversion of sexual roles at work here." (p.69)
80. Webber sees in the relationship of the father to Johanna and Kermor evidence of the father's own guilt. He interprets the image of Johanna's visage in the "Sternenweiher" as: "the anima in its alienated condition: 'des Vaters Fremdlingin'. As a victim of violence she has become estranged from the father, and yet remains in an ambivalent relationship of identity with him." (p.66) Similarly, "It is the guilty memories of the Pächter, estranged because repressed, that are figured in Kermor, just as they were stirred by Johanna." (p.71) The Pächter, too, then, is bound up in the complex relationship of universal guilt.
81. Reported by Basil, p.67
82. Nikolaus Lenau, *Don Juan: Sämtliche Werke*, Band II, Leipzig, 1883, p.460
83. Ilse Demmer, *Georg Trakl*, dissertation, University of Vienna, 1933, p.51f. Published also in HKA II, p.489
84. Bahr, 'Die Décadence', in *Das Junge Wien*, p.427
85. Baudelaire, vol I, p.20
86. Baudelaire, vol. I, p.20
- Baudelaire also wrote the plan of a drama *La Fin de Don Juan*, which was to have portrayed the hero, like that of the Lenau play, "arrivé à l'ennui et à la mélancholie" (vol. I, p.627).
87. Nietzsche, vol. II, p.1250
88. George Bernard Shaw, *Man and Superman. A Comedy and a Philosophy*, 2nd edition, London, 1931, pp.x-xi

89. In the second version of the scene, Trakl has intensified the contrast: "in einem hellerleuchteten Zimmer".
90. Doppler, p.89
91. Webber, p.64
92. Cited by Webber, p.64
93. Baudelaire, vol. I, p.107
94. Otto Rank, *The Don Juan Legend*, translated and edited by David G Winter, Princeton, 1975, p.51
95. Hofmannsthal, *Ein Brief, Prosa II*, Frankfurt am Main, 1951, p.13
96. What we have here, of course, is a weak version of "Anmutiger Gegend" in *Faust II*. The opening of Don Juan's speech ("Weg, schreckliches Gesicht!") also echoes Faust's cry at the appearance of the *Erdgeist* (*Faust I*, 1.483: "Schreckliches Gesicht!"; Goethe, *Werke*, vol. III, Hamburg, 1949, p.23)
97. Nietzsche, vol. III, p.784: *Aus dem Nachlaß der Achtzigerjahre*
98. Letter 4, to Hermine von Rauterberg, 5 October, 1908, HKA I, p.472
99. Rank, p.120
100. J W Smeed, *Don Juan: Variations on a Theme*, London and New York, 1990, p.111
101. Smeed, pp.111-2
102. In *Impressionismus, Symbolismus, Jugendstil*, p.160
103. Francis Michael Sharp, *The Poet's Madness. A Reading of Georg Trakl*, Ithaca and London, 1981, p.52  
Kleefeld expands on the psychological significance of the inner struggle as one motivated by paranoia, pp.162-163
104. Seen within the context of Trakl's decadent lyric, the cause of horror here is clearly sexual. Peter Cersowsky fails to identify this motivation in his study of an 'Ästhetik des Schreckens' which relies on its inexpicability for its effectiveness. See

Cersowsky, 'Das Grauen: Georg Trakl, Oscar Wilde und andere Ästhetiker des Schreckens', in *Sprachkunst. Beiträge zur Literaturwissenschaft*, 1985, pp.232-4

More recently, Eric Williams has looked at the narcissism of self-reflection in Trakl's poetry and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. See Williams, 'Georg Trakl and the Blindness of Poetry' in *The Dark Flutes of Fall*, pp.85-114

105. Webber points out the function of the star as an erotic motif, with specific reference to Weininger, who sees the star's fall as the fate of the fallen angel, a symbol of the fall from grace: 'Der Fall des Sternes ist der Sündenfall'." (Webber, p.32)
106. Cited by Reinhold Grimm, 'Zur Wirkungsgeschichte Maurice Maeterlincks in der deutschsprachigen Literatur', in *Revue de Litterature Comparée*, 33, 1959, pp.535-544; p.538
107. F W Leakey stresses the significance of the title *Les Fleurs du Mal*: "Baudelaire's pun on 'fleurs' is rather more subtle than the obvious one on 'mal', but on reflection it seems clear that the two senses he has in mind can only be the following: his poems may be considered as a *product* of evil, and in that sense to 'flower' from it; at the same time, like flowers, they are *adornments* of evil. Or, to put it more fully, his poems are 'flowers of evil' first of all by virtue of their depiction or illustration of the evil from which they derive; but secondly also, by showing that even a product of evil may be beautiful, *like a flower*, and that true poetry, by definition, beautifies whatever it may come into contact with." *Baudelaire. Les Fleurs du Mal*, Cambridge University Press, 1992, p.48
108. Letter 14, to Erhard Buschbeck, July 1910, HKA I, p.478

109. Letter 15, to Erhard Buschbeck, July 1910, HKA I, p.479
110. Kleefeld, however, sees in this image "eine Sühnehandlung" of major significance in Trakl's poetry: "Aus dem Baum fällt Tau - er weint, singt ein Klagelied. ... Der Baum, aus dessen Geäst Tau tropft, wie Blut aus einer Wunde, tritt ein für den Dichter, der sein Blut, seine Tränen als Sühneopfer darbringt." (p.332)
111. Interesting within the context of sexual guilt is Otto Rank's observation that some versions of the Cain-Abel story focus on incestuous desire for their sister as the cause of rivalry. See Rank, *The Incest Theme in Literatur and Legend: Fundamentals of a Psychology of Literary Creation*, translated by Gregory C Richter, Baltimore and London, 1992, p.370
112. Cersowsky makes a comparison between 'Das Grauen' and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* here: "da ist der schöne kostbare Vorhang vor Dorians deformiertem Bild - ein Modell für Trakls 'samtene Portiere'?" (p.237)
113. In his Introduction, Webber explores at some length Otto Rank's concept of the *Doppelgänger* as a figure of self-alienation and suicide. See Webber, p.8
114. Walter Gorgé, *Auftreten und Richtung des Dekadenzmotivs im Werk Georg Trakls*, Bern and Frankfurt am Main, 1973, p.138ff  
 K L Schneider, *Der bildhafte Ausdruck in den Dichtungen Georg Heyms, Georg Trakls und Ernst Stadlers. Studien zum lyrischen Sprachstil des deutschen Expressionismus*, Heidelberg, 1968  
 Heinz Rölleke, *Die Stadt bei Stadler, Heym und Trakl*, Berlin, 1966  
 Hans Weichselbaum, 'Die "Zivilisation" bei Georg Trakl', in *Londoner Trakl Symposion*, ed. by

Walther Methlagl and William E Yuill, *Trakl-Studien X*, Salzburg, 1983, pp.60-71

115. The motif of sexuality in 'Kaspar Hauser Lied' has been examined by Ernst Erich Metzner in 'Die dunkle Flamme des Gerechten - Poésie Pure?', *Germanisch-romanische Monatsschrift*, 24, 1974, pp.446-472
- Most recently, this theme has been dealt with in Gunther Kleefeld's perceptive and detailed psychoanalytical reading of incestuous desire and sexual guilt in 'Kaspar Hauser and the Paternal Law', in *The Dark Flutes of Fall*, pp.38-84
116. Kleefeld's Freudian interpretation, based on the inter-relationships of imagery within Trakl's oeuvre, reveals the sexual desire expressed in the desire to be a "Reiter". See 'Kaspar Hauser and the Paternal Law', pp.62-4
117. This is the suggestion made by Kleefeld in *Das Gedicht als Sühne*, pp.163-164
118. Killy's assertion thus takes on a new meaning: "Kaspars Schicksal ist schon bereitet, ohne daß er was weiß. Während er ahnungslos, ein Gerechter, Frühling, Sommer und Herbst durchläuft, sucht der Mörder schon sein Opfer." (*Wandlungen des lyrischen Bildes*, Göttingen, 1964, p.119) Kaspar Hauser's fate is "schon bereitet" in that it lies within himself.
119. Kleefeld's interpretation is that of punishment for Kaspar's repressed incestuous desire, the *Mörder* as an agent of the superego: "a homosexual persecutor - the punishing father is, as Freud has shown in his analysis of moral masochism, the loved father as well." 'Kaspar Hauser and the Paternal Law', p.80
120. *Dokumente und Zeugnisse* 165: letter from the *Garnisonsspital* in Cracow to Wilhelm Trakl, 15 November 1914 in HKA II, p.736

121. *Dokumente und Zeugnisse 155: Vormerkblatt mit der Krankengeschichte* in HKA II, p.730
122. Letter 29, to Erhard Buschbeck, April 1912, HKA I, p.487
123. For a detailed comparison of 'Das Grauen' and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* see Cersowsky. Cersowsky further mentions E T A Hoffmann, Poe and Dostoyevsky as possible influences (p.239). Heinz Rölleke in his recent study has looked at the similarities between 'Das Grauen' and Heine's 'Die Heimkehr' from *Buch der Lieder*. See Rölleke, 'Das Grauen: Georg Trakl and Heinrich Heine?', *Wirkendes Wort*, 2, 1991, pp.163-165
124. Hofmannsthal, *Gedichte und lyrische Dramen*, Stockholm, 1946, pp.11-12
125. The function of the mirror in Trakl's poetry has been examined by Esselborn, Webber and Williams. Hans Esselborn examines the mirror as a place of "Selbstbegegnung" and "Selbsterkenntnis", revealing a predominantly threatening aspect of the ego. See Esselborn, *Georg Trakl: Die Erlebnislyrik*, Cologne and Vienna, 1981, pp.127-38 In his chapter on the "Poetic Mirror", Webber examines its function as providing "a space at once for sexual encounter, for 'reflection' on the self, and for textual figures. Sexual desire, the desire for an integral sense of self, and the desire for poetic authenticity are all at stake when the mirror is under threat." See Webber, pp.36f Williams analyzes the mirror as an image of both alienation and redemption in relation to the motifs of sight, blindness, and Orphic poetry. See Williams, pp.85-114
126. Webber notes the significance of the pool as "the locus for attempts at sexual engagement". (p.38)
127. Basil, p.70
128. In a letter to Ludwig von Ficker, 27 December

1914. Ludwig von Ficker. *Briefwechsel 1914-1925*, Innsbruck, 1988, p.72

Another artist acquaintance of Trakl's, Oskar Kokoschka, must have been mistaken when writing his autobiography, *Mein Leben*, which contains the strange assertion that "Georg Trakl trug Trauer um seine verstorbene Zwillingschwester, der er in mehr als brüderliche Liebe verbunden gewesen ist." (*Mein Leben*, Munich, 1971, p.137)

129. Pausanias, *Guide to Greece. Volume I: Central Greece*, translated by Peter Levi, Harmondsworth, 1971, p.376

Kleefeld thus sees the sister-mirror-image as one which is essentially narcissistic: "Die Schwester ist für Georg Trakl zwar auch als libidinöses Objekt von Bedeutung, zuerst jedoch als ein Objekt, in dem er sich narzißtisch spiegeln kann ... 'Die Inzestproblematik Schizophrener', so resümiert Neumann-Schönwetter, 'erweist sich als narzißtisches Problem'." (*Das Gedicht als Sühne*, pp.60-61)

130. Weininger, p.322

131. Stefan George, *Sämtliche Werke II: Hymnen, Pilgerfahrten, Algabal*, Stuttgart, 1987, p.71

132. Kleefeld, *Das Gedicht als Sühne*, p.61

133. Webber sees this rather as a "simulated murder" along the lines of the fratricide in 'Das Grauen' (p.39)

134. Webber sees only negative connotations here (pp.53-54)

135. Letter 85, to Ludwig von Ficker, 26 June 1913, HKA I, p. 519

136. Wilde, p.27

137. Wilde, p.31

138. Wilde, p.34

139. Wilde, p.34

140. Wilde, pp.87-88

141. Wilde, p.97

142. Wilde, p.167
143. Wilde, p.166
144. While most critics have looked at the theme of decline and redemption in 'Helian', none have adequately examined the nature of Helian's guilt.
145. Letter 53, to Erhard Buschbeck, January 1913, HKA I, p.501
146. Of significance here is Kleefeld's interpretation of the garden as "a symbolic representation of the female object" ('Kaspar Hauser and the Paternal Law', p.71)
147. While I agree with Lachmann about the process of divine forgiveness in the final section of 'Helian', his suggestion that this image is that of "eine bleiche Mönchshand, die mit entweltlicher Zärtlichkeit über das zu Berührende hingeleitet" (Lachmann, *Kreuz und Abend: Eine Interpretation der Dichtungen Georg Trakls*, Salzburg, 1954, p.80) fails to take account of the obviously sexual connotations of this passage.
148. Reinhold Grimm, 'Die Sonne: Bemerkungen zu einem Motiv Georg Trakls', in *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift*, 35, 1961, pp.224-246; p.236
149. Sharp, p.89
150. It is not within the scope of this study to look at the wider issues of the 'Elis'-poems, such as the identity of the boy.
151. This inability to question the assumption that Elis is a figure untainted by sexual fall is found in most critical works which deal with these poems. Thus Lachmann regards him as "ein Wesen, das nicht in Menschenschuld verstrickt ist, ein Kind der Reinheit" (p.90); Heselhaus views Elis' demise as "Sinnbild des Zaubers der blauen Nacht und des schönen Hingangs" ('Die Elis-Gedichte Georg Trakls', in *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift*, 1954, p.413); Focke interprets his existence as "Ein ungemein tröstliches Leuchten der Ruhe, des



Geborgenseins, des inneren Friedens" (Alfred Focke, *Georg Trakl - Liebe und Tod*, Vienna and Munich, 1955, p.68); Goldmann sees Elis as a hermaphroditic Christ-figure (Heinrich Goldmann, *Katabasis: Eine tiefenpsychologische Studie zur Symbolik der Dichtungen Georg Trakls*, Salzburg, 1957, p.92); Lindenberger sees the poem as a "the poet's attempt to invoke a world of lost innocence which he can never quite capture in its purity ... a love lyric" (*Georg Trakl*, New York, 1971, p.86); Hamburger sees an "obvious connection with Christ ... a mode of existence unthreatened by death and decay" (Michael Hamburger, *Reason and Energy*, p.260).

152. Lachmann overcomes his obvious difficulties in reconciling his one-sided view of Elis with the bizarre claim that the second half of the poem refers not to Elis (despite all textual evidence) but to the poet: "... daß Elis nur ein Seelenaugenblick des Dichters ist. Die Erscheinung hat dem Dichter den Namen zurückgelassen wie einen verlorenen Klang." (p.92)
153. Again, Lachmann has no doubts that this image is "ein anderes Zeichen der göttlichen Nähe, ... aus dem Gott zu dem Menschen gesprochen." (p.90)
154. Webber has isolated this image as an example of the "wilful neglect of the sexual thematic" of much Trakl scholarship, in particular the Christian interpretations of Focke, Lindenberger, Heselhaus, and Lachmann. See Webber, p.3

## CHAPTER THREE: WOMEN AND SEXUALITY

1. Weininger, p.328
2. Maurice Maeterlinck, *Poésies complètes*, Brussels, 1965, pp.93-94
3. Hugo von Hofmannsthal, *Die Erzählungen*, Stockholm, 1946, p.25
4. Hofmannsthal, *Die Erzählungen*, pp.27-28
5. Thomas Mann, *Die Erzählungen*, Frankfurt am Main, 1986, p.496
6. Huysmans, *A Rebours*, Paris, 1920, p.89
7. Przybyszewski, pp.110-111
8. Novalis, p.284
9. Richard Wagner, *Parsifal. Ein Bühnenfestspiel*, Mainz, 1894, p.33
10. Huysmans, *A Rebours*, pp.97-98
11. Stoker, pp.51-52
12. Dörmann, *Sensationen*, Vienna, 1892, p.22
13. Maeterlinck, *Poésies complètes*, pp.99-100
14. Octave Mirbeau, *Le Jardin des Supplices*, Paris, 1901, pp.213-214
15. Dörmann, *Neurotica*, p.59
16. Ernst Stadler, *Dichtungen, Schriften, Briefe*, ed. Klaus Hurlbusch and Karl Ludwig Schneider, Munich, 1983, p.79
17. Krafft-Ebing, p.13
18. The influence of Weininger on Trakl has been examined by Doppler, 'Georg Trakl und Otto Weininger', in *Die Lyrik Georg Trakls*, pp.84-93, and Heckmann, *Otto Weininger and Georg Trakl*. While Doppler concentrates on Trakl's early work, Heckmann's detailed study examines traces of Weininger's philosophy in all areas of Trakl's lyric.
19. Weininger, p.112
20. Weininger, p.398
21. Weininger, p.116

22. Sacher-Masoch, p.17
23. Rasch, p.76
24. Franz Wedekind, *Erdegeist*, Munich, 1921, p.9
25. Wedekind, p.10
26. Cited by Fischer, p.62
27. Blass, p.79
28. *Das Junge Wien*, p.163
29. Dörmann, *Neurotica*, p.105
30. Wilde, p.561
31. Wilde, p.78
32. Gustave Flaubert, *Trois Contes*, ed. by Colin Duckworth, London, 1959, p.164
33. Huysmans, *A Rebours*, p.56
34. Stéphane Mallarmé, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. by Barbier and Millan, Paris, 1983, p.450
35. Peter Hille, *Gesammelte Werke*, 2nd edition, Berlin, 1916, p.384
36. Felix Brunner, *Der Lebenslauf und die Werke Georg Trakls*, dissertation, University of Vienna, 1932, pp.18-19
37. George Bernard Shaw, *Three Plays for Puritans*, London, 1931, p.102
38. Théophile Gautier, *Une Nuit de Cléopâtre*, Paris, 1894, pp.15-16
39. Gautier, *Une Nuit de Cléopâtre*, pp.75, 80
40. Dörmann, *Neurotica*, p.104
41. Dörmann, *Neurotica*, pp.82-83
42. Goethe, *Torquato Tasso*, Act V scene 4, 11.32: *Werke*, vol. V, p.161
43. Hofmannsthal, *Gedichte und lyrische Dramen*, p.13
44. Hofmannsthal, *Gedichte und lyrische Dramen*, p.13
45. Letter 76, to Ludwig von Ficker, May 1913, HKA I, p.514
46. This is the view of Lachmann, Falk and Casey, amongst others. See Lachmann, p. 146: "Ein schützender blauer Mantel ist bei Trakl stets der Ausdruck des Beistands aus der Sphäre des Reinen." Falk cites several examples of blue as a colour

associated with the spiritual and the soul (Walter Falk, *Leid und Verwandlung: Rilke, Kafka, Trakl und der Epochenstil des Impressionismus und Expressionismus*, Salzburg, 1961, pp.274-278), while I would not deny that this is frequently the association, there are equally examples, some of which Falk cites as positive, which show the negative associations of this colour. Therefore it is hard to agree with Casey that "blue is the primary spiritual colour ... it would be very misleading to conclude that blue is an ambivalent colour value" (T J Casey, *Manshape that Shone: An Interpretation of Georg Trakl*, Oxford, 1964, pp.77-78)

With specific reference to 'Nachts', Lachmann claims: "die Begegnung führt hier zur Stille, zum Frieden der Seele ... die ewige Nacht ... bringt Frieden und Stille. Ihr 'blauer Mantel' umfängt der Sinkenden. Sie ist Trösterin, Helferin. Mit ihren Armen stützt sie den Hinsinkenden und sie küßt ihn mit dem Kuß himmlischer Liebe." (pp.162-163) Falk, too, setting out from the premise that blue is the colour of spirituality, interprets this rather disturbing poem in positive light (p.276

47. Praz, p.111
48. Koppen, p.145
49. Fischer, p.239
50. Otto Rank, *The Incest Theme*. This extensive Freudian study looks at incest as a motif in German literature, including Grillparzer's *Die Ahnfrau*, Goethe's *Die Geschwister* and Schiller's *Die Braut von Messina*.
51. Furness, 'Trakl and the Literature of Decadence', in *Londoner Trakl Symposium*, p.91
52. Basil, p.76: "Auch berichten seine Jugendfreunde übereinstimmend, daß er die Inzestverherrlichung in Wagners 'Walküre' eindeutig befürwortete."

53. Thomas Mann, *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen*, Berlin, 1918, p.170.  
This relationship to decadence, and Mann's attempt to overcome it, are the focus of Rasch's chapter on 'Thomas Mann und die Décadence', pp.159-169, which fails, however, to look in any detail at either *Wälsungenblut* or *Tristan*.
54. Mechthild Curtius looks at incest as a recurring, but not necessarily decadent, theme in Mann's work: *Erotische Phantasien bei Thomas Mann*, Königstein, 1984, Erster Teil, "Inzest als eine der unausgeträumten Zuneigungen der Welt". James Northcote-Bade examines Mann's fascination with Wagner in this context: *Die Wagner-Mythen im Frühwerk Thomas Manns*, Bonn, 1975, Chapter Four, "'Die Walküre' und 'Wälsungenblut'"
55. It has been pointed out on more than one occasion that this degeneracy is also a critique of bourgeois triviality. See Koppen, p.150, Fischer, p.237, and Curtius, p.15
56. Mann, *Die Erzählungen*, p.455
57. Koppen, p.153.  
Both Koppen and Northcote-Bade dwell on the element of parody and travesty between the twins and the figures in Wagner's opera. See Koppen, pp.146f and Northcote-Bade, pp.54f
58. Koppen, p.160. See also Fischer, p.238
59. Rank, *The Incest Theme*, pp.548-573; p.549
60. Webber, pp.150-182
61. Przybyszewski, p.157
62. Przybyszewski, p.160
63. Przybyszewski, p.163
64. Spoerri, *Georg Trakl, Strukturen in Persönlichkeit und Werk: Eine psychiatrisch-anthropographische Untersuchung*, Bern, 1954, p.41
65. Spoerri, p.39
66. Spoerri, p.111

67. Ficker, *Briefwechsel 1926-1939*, Innsbruck, 1991, p.244
68. See, for example, Hamburger, p.242: "Much has been made of Trakl's attachment to this sister, for critics of the literal persuasion insist on identifying her with the sister who appears in his poems; but neither the references to incest in Trakl's early work nor the personage of the sister in his later poems permit any biographical deductions."
69. Eberhard Sauermann, *Zur Datierung und Interpretation von Texten Georg Trakls. Die Fehlgeburt von Trakls Schwester als Hintergrund eines Verzweiflungsbriefts und des Gedichts 'Abendland'*, Innsbruck, 1984
70. Brunner, p.12
71. HKA II, p.511
72. It is another of Detsch's erroneous claims that "Blutschuld" is "a term which can be used as a synonym for "Blutschande", p.9. Grimms' dictionary of 1860 states clearly that "Blutschuld" is "facinus capitale, mord".
73. Again, I find it hard to concur with Detsch, who claims that it shows "the tremendous feeling of guilt associated with incest" which "connects it with the many appearances of the incest theme in Western literature beginning with Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*" (p.10).
74. Przybyszewski, p.174
75. Sharp points out that: "The refrain, the regular alternating rhyme with the recurring identical rhyming words in each stanza, and the strongly punctuated iambic rhythm give the poem a chantlike quality which does not match the emotional dilemma." (pp.60-61)
76. Nietzsche, vol. II, p.603: *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, 'Zweites Hauptstück, der Freie Geist' 40

77. Przybyszewski, pp.166-167
78. In his article "Die Verwandlung des Gartens. Das Weiterwirken eines Motivs", Doppler looks at the development of the garden motif in Trakl's poetry within the context of its wider cultural and social symbolism in Austrian literature. He rightly stresses the garden as a Decadent motif of the *paradis artificiel* in *Sammlung 1909*, but makes no mention of its significance as a locus of sexual crime. (pp.112-119)
79. See HKA I, p.466: *Widmung* 14
80. There is further evidence of sexual violation in the variants, in particular the *Gedichtkomplex* 'Lange lauscht ...', where the female figure is identified as Ophelia (II 449), a victim of sexual abuse, whose death is by drowning. Here, too, the brother's melancholy is associated with sexual guilt: "Der Angstschweiß der auf die wächserne Stirne tritt" (II 450) A variant of 'Nähe des Todes' also links the poet's suffering to the "verruchte Schauer" and "verruchter Wollust Süße" which characterized the portrayal of incest in the early poetry: "Der Purpur seiner verruchten Tage" (II 111)
81. Lachmann, however, sees in these poems a process of pious rejection of sin: "Die Hände sind zum Gebet 'gewölbt'. Ihre Haltung spricht Trauer über die Schuld des Menschen aus ... Das Weiße ist ein Ausdruck dafür, daß das rote sündhafte Leben zurückgewichen ist ..." (p.116)
82. One wonders if Trakl knew of the healing property associated with the reseda, which he places at the "krankes Fenster". The noun "reseda" has its origin in the latin verb *resedare*, to heal, "nach dem bei Anwendung der Pflanze gebrauchten Zauberspruch: *reseda, morbus, reseda! Heile die Krankheiten, heile!*" (Duden)

83. Lachmann is clearly wrong in his interpretation, which denies any reference to incest: "Vielleicht hat eine Erkrankung der Schwester den Bruder heimgelufen. Sie liegt fiebernd mit zerwühltem Haar im Bett. Der Bruder bewacht ihren Schlaf." (pp.70-71)
84. Kleefeld sees this poem as a scene of sadistic *Lustmord*, where the brother's relationship to the sister is one of violation, symbolized by the sunflower and the wind, as well as the cat and the candle. See *Das Gedicht als Sühne*, p.313
85. I disagree here with Detsch, whose study of Trakl's poetry as a "Union of Opposites" attempts to trace a "new world of oneness ... the union of subject and object" (Introduction, p.3)  
My own interpretations are largely in accord with Webber's recent work, which demonstrates how the "tripartite quest for sense (by the poet, his poetic personae, and his reader) is confounded by the exigencies of sensuality, and particularly the desire for the other which arises out of sexual difference" (p.19)
86. Gautier, *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, vol.11, p.332
87. Przybyszewski, p.147
88. See Heckmann, pp.20f and pp.205f
89. Weininger, pp.456-7
90. See Lachmann, p.96; Simon, *Traum und Orpheus: Eine Studie zu Georg Trakls Dichtungen*, Salzburg, 1955, p.14; Killy, *Über Georg Trakl*, Göttingen, 1960, pp.21f; Kleefeld, *Das Gedicht als Sühne*, pp.360f; Detsch, pp.11f
91. Incest is far from the only theme in this poem; it is not the purpose of the present study, however, to look at such issues as the relationship of Orphic and Christian elements, which have been the focus of other critical works.
92. Kleefeld sees this image as further evidence of his claim that Oedipus, along with Orpheus and



Christ, is central to this poem: "Der Knabe tritt der Mutter als ein ödipaler Blaubart gegenüber." (*Das Gedicht als Sühne*, p.361)

93. "Er ... pflückt die blaue Blume - und wird <zum klingenden Baume> ein Stein. ... Er wird ein goldner Widder. ... Er wird ein Mensch." Novalis, pp.289-290

While Killy has concentrated on the Orphic significance of this transformation (*Über Georg Trakl*, pp.32-33), and Lachmann on the Christian interpretation (p.98), Kleefeld points out both elements here (*Das Gedicht als Sühne*, p.367). Sharp emphasizes the fact that this metamorphosis is regressive, a "reverse evolutionary transit through nature's forms" (p.168)

94. I would challenge Detsch's view that this strophe refers to the sister (p.21), whose guilt has already been transfigured in ll.43-47. The associations of leprosy with male guilt, the snow, the festering wound and the silence already mentioned in ll.48-51, as well as reference to such poems as 'Helian' and 'Rosiger Spiegel' show quite clearly that it is the male protagonist who is cleansed here.
95. Kleefeld sees this as the fulfillment of an "inestuöse Verschmelzungsphantasie" (*Das Gedicht als Sühne*, p.376)
96. Lachmann sees this in an unambiguously Christian context: "Aus dem Untergang, aus dem irdischen Tod errettet die Gnade des barmherzigen Gottes." (p.110)
97. Kleefeld, who interprets all male/female images as oedipal/incestuous, has no doubts here: "Der Gegensatz der Geschlechter, der die ganze inestuöse Dramatik heraufbeschwor, ist aufgehoben; im Mutterschoß sind Bruder und Schwester friedlich vereint als 'sanfte Gespielen'." (*Das Gedicht als Sühne*, p.284)

Lindenberger suggests the interpretation of Christian worshippers as well as lovers, although this seems less likely (p.252)

98. *Erinnerung an Georg Trakl*, p.124. It should be noted that the three occasions where Trakl seems to accept the possibility (this conversation, the Brenner version of 'Passion' and 'Abendländisches Lied') all occurred around the same time, the turn of 1913/1914.
99. Weininger, p.457  
For possible influences on Trakl's concept of androgyny see Detsch, 'Unity and Androgyny in Trakl's Works and the Writings of Other Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Authors', *The Dark Flutes of Fall*, pp.115-133
100. Webber stresses here the fact that this union is only momentary (p.75), yet his contention that this resolution needs to be seen in the context of the dissolution of other poems fails to give weight to the fact that this poem is unambiguously positive.
101. Kleefeld again sees this as a problem of oedipal desire (*Das Gedicht als Sühne*, p.204 and p.216)
102. Webber fails to take account of the significance of the self as murderer in the scenario of awakening sexuality, when he claims that it is the sister who here takes over the role of the fratricide in 'Das Grauen' (p.39)
103. This unity in violation is noted by Sharp, p.153 and Webber, p.40
104. Sharp's suggestion that the appearance of the sister here signifies redemption for herself and the brother, if not the whole race, is not supported by the poem as a whole; it is difficult to read a 'Passion'-solution here where there is no indication of guilt overcome. (p.158)
105. I shall challenge the views of Lachmann, Sharp and Detsch, amongst others. Lachmann sees the final

two sections of the poem as "Eine Auferstehung der unsterblichen Seele" and "Grablegung des sterblichen Körpers" (p.232) Sharp asserts that "In 'Offenbarung und Untergang', the opposition of forces acting on the main figure is brought to a resolution. The taboo against incest and the guilt surrounding its transgression fall away, leaving him able to affirm the long and painfully suppressed truth of the tie to his sister" (p.157). Detsch concurs with Sharp that this poem is "more optimistic in tone", displaying "a kind of buoyancy, an intimation of release and fulfillment" (*Georg Trakl's Poetry*, p.28). This last prose poem is, however, one of neither resolution nor fulfillment, but a despairing recognition, as is intimated in its very title, of decline. Webber alone has analysed the negative nature of this piece (pp.96-99)

106. Both Sharp (p.154) and Detsch (p.28) interpret the "strahlender Leichnam" as the protagonist himself.
107. Seen in the light of the variants, this image is obviously one of phallic aggression and not, as Detsch suggests, "a wild, almost orgiastic wish for self destruction ... the gateway to a kind of transfiguration" (*Georg Trakl's Poetry*, p.30).
108. Webber rightly points out the significance of the grammatical structure here: "while the twin gerunds seem to encourage a reading of 'wachend' and 'rasend' as alternative states of being for the subject, 'rasend' could equally be opposed to 'leise'." (p.97)
109. See Sharp, p.157, Kleefeld, *Das Gedicht als Sühne*, p.314, and Detsch, *Georg Trakl's Poetry*, p.29
110. Webber indicates the paradox of rise and decline here, and its significance for the split persona of the protagonist as sinner and innocent. (p.98)
111. Lachmann sees here the "Grablegung": "Das ewige Licht leuchtet über der Bahre und die Grabkammer

schließt sich hinter dem Menschen, der Frieden gefunden hat. Der Erdenrest löst sich in flockiger Schnee auf, er zerstäubt." (p.233)

Both Sharp (pp.156-157) and Detsch (*Georg Trakl's Poetry*, p.30) interpret the birth as a process of purification. Webber, however, rightly questions this assumption (p.99)

112. Dante, *Inferno. The First Part of the Divine Comedy*, translated by Tom Phillips, Thames and Hudson, 1985, XIV. 15-19, 27-29, p.114
113. The fact that the sister appears as *Jüngling* shows that she has completed the first stage of the metamorphosis into a sex-less being; what Lachmann here sees as the whole process ("Wenn ... die Schwester als Jüngling erscheint, ... so zeigt dies an, daß sie in solcher Eigenschaft ihr irdisch Weibliches bereits abgestreift hat", p.110), is only the first step; it is only when she has overcome both the female and the male elements of sexuality, when she has fused them into a *Jünglingin* that this process is complete.
114. Detsch's cursory reference to the ending of this poem (*Georg Trakl's Poetry*, p.42) fails to examine its essential ambivalence, and does not question the "increasingly numinous quality" of the sister.
115. Lachmann's interpretation that the heart is released into "das Reich des ewigen Friedens" does not stand up here. (pp.173-174)
116. Again, the interpretations of Lachmann and Detsch are unjustifiably positive: Lachmann goes so far as to interpret the image of "Schwester stürmischer Schwermut" as the *opposite* of melancholy, that is "Friedenshoffnung" (p.177). Detsch's language is naively optimistic: "Indeed, the sister seems to be the only bright spot of an otherwise disconsolate universe..." (*Georg Trakl's Poetry*, p.42)

117. Cited by Detsch, 'Unity and Androgyny in Trakl's Work', p.132

#### CHAPTER FOUR: PERVERSE RELIGIOSITY AND BLASPHEMY

1. Hofmannsthal, *Gestern*, in *Gedichte und lyrische Dramen*, p.226
2. HKA II, p.518
3. HKA II, p.518
4. Although this poem is an admittedly immature piece of work, its thematic significance should not be ignored. Thus Basil is wrong to dismiss it as nothing other than "eine pubertäre Leseblüte aus 'Les Fleurs du Mal' und allem möglichen", (p.48). Kleefeld acknowledges this thematic unity of Trakl's entire oeuvre: "Mit seiner Thematik und seinem Tonfall steht dieses Gedicht bei Trakl keineswegs allein; ein solches Neben- und Ineinander von Religiösem und Sexuellem bleibt ein Charakteristikum der dichterischen Phantasie Trakls...", (*Das Gedicht als Sühne*, pp.134-135)
5. Basil, p.42
6. Furness, *Wagner and Literature*, p.32
7. *Mon coeur mis à nu XI*, Baudelaire, vol. I, pp.682-683
8. Huysmans, *Là-Bas*, p.378
9. Przybyszewski, *Die Synagoge des Satan. Ihre Entstehung, Einrichtung und jetztige Bedeutung. Ein Versuch*. Cited by Kafitz, *Dekadenz in Deutschland: Beiträge zur Erforschung der Romanliteratur um die Jahrhundertwende*, Frankfurt am Main, Bern and New York, 1987, p.85
10. Przybyszewski, *De profundis*, p.120
11. This *frisson* is not confined to the writings of

the decadents; we find it, too, in Schnitzler's *Traumnovelle*, conceived in the 1890's and written in 1907. Here we find a description of a dream-like black mass, not unlike that which we have already encountered in Huysmans and Przybyszewski.

12. Novalis, p.533: *Fragmente und Studien 1799-1800*, 90
13. Basil believes that Trakl would have come into contact with *Die Fackel* in his years spent as an apprentice in Salzburg (1905-1908): "auch dürften im Künstlerzirkel die roten 'Fackel'-Hefte von Hand zu Hand gegangen sein, in denen Karl Kraus die Fahne der sexuellen Revolution entrollte und dabei in wahrhaft apokalyptische Hymnen der Geistesverachtung und Leibesverklärung ausbrach.", p.54  
Detsch has, in his recent study, *Georg Trakl and the Brenner Circle*, New York, 1991, examined the possible influences of *Brenner* authors on Trakl. His chapter 'Bluebeard Comes to the *Brenner*' (pp.9-63) examines the relationship between sexuality and religion in the writings of both Hauer and Trakl.
14. Hauer, 'Erotik der Keuschheit', *Die Fackel* Nr 192, p.9, in vol. 11 (Nr 179-200), Munich, 1969
15. Hauer, 'Erotik der Keuschheit', p.10
16. Hauer, 'Erotik der Keuschheit', p.10
17. Bahr, 'Maurice Maeterlinck', in *Das junge Wien*, p.162
18. *Erinnerung an Georg Trakl*, p.123
19. See Szklenar, 'Beiträge zur Chronologie und Anordnung von Gedichten Georg Trakls auf Grund des Nachlasses von Karl Röck', *Euphorion*, 60, 1966, p.228
20. Basil, p.141
21. Hauer, 'Pornographie', *Die Fackel*, Nr 253, p.9, in vol. 14 (Nr 250-278)

22. Flaubert, *La Tentation de Saint Antoine*, Paris, 1983, p.52
23. Flaubert, *La Tentation de Saint Antoine*, p.224
24. Novalis, p.550: *Fragmente und Studien 1799-1800*, 151
25. Nietzsche, vol. II, p.1259
26. Nietzsche, vol. I, p.24, *Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik*
27. Praz, p.307
28. Praz, p.308
29. Martens, *Roman aus der Décadence*, Berlin, 1898, p.79
30. Stadler, p.58: 'Aus der Dämmerung'
31. Basil, p.38
32. Kleefeld interprets this as an act of sexual aggression against Maria, whom he sees as a representative of the mother. See *Das Gedicht als Sühne*, p.135. This is hardly justified by the text, however, as it is in the case of 'Metamorphose'.
33. Baudelaire, vol. I, p.139
34. Baudelaire, vol. II, p.794
35. Furness, *Wagner and Literature*, p.34. Furness further points out that the dualism of woman as *femme fragile* and *femme fatale* in the literature of Decadence originates from Wagner.
36. Wagner, *Tannhäuser*, London and New York, 1988, p.67
37. The hyperbolic, affected language renders Detsch's reading of the close of the poem implausible: "the scene takes on a new immediacy. The bleeding head of the Savior seems to come alive for an instant, instilling all present with a mortal dread ... Here, in this vision, the congregation senses the true mark of the sacred and reacts with a genuine plea for mercy." *Georg Trakl and the Brenner Circle*, p.75

38. Arthur Rimbaud, *Complete Works. Selected Letters*, ed. by Wallace Fowlie, Chicago and London, 1966, p.80
39. The heart here clearly belongs to the protagonist, the one who greets Maria, and not, as Detsch suggests, to the figure of Maria herself. See *Georg Trakl and the Brenner Circle*, p.11
40. Heckmann reads this stanza as further proof of the perversion of "christliche Marienverehrung". (pp.190-191)
41. Praz, pp.188-189
42. Kurt Martens, *Verse*, Munich, 1914, p.9
43. Baudelaire, vol. I, p.59
44. First published in *Literatur und Kritik*, vol. 93, Salzburg, April 1975, p.129. Also in HKA II, p.834
45. Weichselbaum, 'Zu einem bisher unbekanntem Gedicht Georg Trakls', *Literatur und Kritik*, 93, p.131
46. Weichselbaum, p.131. Weichselbaum also sees this as the function of Maria in 'Der Heilige'.
47. Weininger, pp.333-34
48. See *Erinnerung an Georg Trakl*, p.35
49. Wilde, p.560
50. Throughout his study, Lachmann follows the assumption that: "Trakl ist ein Christ gewesen und seine Dichtung ist die einer verhüllten Christlichkeit." (p.23)
51. Killy sees little meaning at all in Trakl's poetry; on the question of a possible Christian interpretation he is, however, quite adamant: "Die Verlassenheit ist ganz, auch Gott schweigt. Gott, der für Trakl nicht nur deus absconditus ist, sondern incredibilis deus absconditus, ein doppelt verborgener, doppelt schweigender Gott, welcher nicht geglaubt wird und ohne den doch der Mensch nicht sein kann." (*Über Georg Trakl*, p.14)
52. T J Casey sums up the debate on the Christian interpretation in the 50's and 60's, pp.114f. He also points out that those who had close contact



with Trakl during his lifetime all believed him to be a Christian poet.

Within recent criticism, this issue has largely been ignored by scholars who, following Killy, have focused on a stylistic approach, or have limited it within the confines of a particular interpretation, such as Kleefeld's claim: "Wenn Trakl in seiner Dichtung den Christus mit Ödipus gleichsetzt . . . , die ödipale Dramatik, die seine Phantasie beherrscht, projiziert auf die Passion Christi, so zieht seine dichterische Einbildungskraft genau die Parallele, die auch Freuds Analyse aufgedeckt hat." (pp.359-360) Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis has, in his metaphysical study of Christian form in the work of art, *The Blossoming Thorn. Georg Trakl's Poetry of Atonement*, attempted to reconcile the stylistic and Christian interpretations by showing that in the act of poetic creation the poet exhibits a religious depth beyond the level of poetic symbolism (*The Blossoming Thorn. Georg Trakl's Poetry of Atonement*, Associated University Presses, 1987, pp.32-34

In his most recent study, Detsch has returned to the question of religious interpretation with the aim of showing: "that the earlier critics were indeed moving in the right direction when they seized upon the religious aspect of Trakl's work." (*Georg Trakl and the Brenner Circle*, p.1.) Without confining himself to the narrowly Christian interpretations of Lachmann and Focke, he examines the relationship between Trakl and the somewhat unorthodox Christians of the *Brenner Circle*, Ficker, Hauer, Dallago, Röck, and Heinrich, looking at much useful and hitherto unpublished material from these writers.

53. Even Lachmann has to admit the irreligious significance of this verse: "Ein Hexensabbath von

- Bildern des Bösen. Eine unheilige Prozession. Die hier gesungenen Psalmen sind keine Bußpsalmen. Der 'dürrenknöcherne Gauch' ist überall, wo er in den Gedichten auftritt, ein Herold des Bösen." (p.142)
54. Huysmans, *Là-Bas*, p.379
55. See Detsch, *Georg Trakl and the Brenner Circle*. For the parallels between Trakl's poetry and the writing of Ficker, see Chapter II, 'Bluebeard molds the Brenner', pp.65f
56. Detsch, *Georg Trakl and the Brenner Circle*, p.76
57. 'De profundis', HKA I, p.46
58. Baudelaire, vol. I, p.79
59. In his study of *Katabasis*, Goldmann classifies "kristallen" with the colours in Trakl's poetry: "Es steht für Geklärtes, für gewachsene, feste und dennoch zerbrechbare Form, für 'sublimatio', geläuterte, reine Substanz." Although he points out the element of "Abgeschlossenheit" and "Abkapselung" associated with this adjective, he gives no attention to the connotations of sinful sexuality. See Goldmann, pp.47-48
60. Detsch sees this downward, despairing gesture as one of "remorse and penance, coupled with a wild, desperate zeal". *Georg Trakl and the Brenner Circle*, p.151
61. Although Detsch acknowledges the threefold significance of "Ein Toter", he relates this also to the present state of the protagonist, claiming that all form stages in the process of the transformation of evil indicated in the title: "The poet proceeds from the murderer, the brother, to the victim, the sister, who then merges with the murderer and finally with Christ. A transformation has taken place which raises the ritual of evil into the Christian realm without changing its character as evil. Christ appears at the end of this prose-poem as the murderer-victim and thus as the main figure of this ritual." (*Georg Trakl*

- and the *Brenner Circle* p.26) This interpretation, however, takes no account of the emphasis on the irreconcilability between the protagonist and the "Toter".
62. The prose poem ends in disparity and damnation, rather than unity as Detsch suggests (*Georg Trakl and the Brenner Circle*, p.152. See also *Georg Trakls Poetry*, p.94).  
Lachmann's Christian interpretation of the poem forces a positive interpretation on the negative close of the poem: "Da wird ihm die Erscheinung des Herrn zuteil. Es ist eine Begegnung im Zeichen Gethsemanes, getaucht in die Purpurfarbe des Leidens. Sie schenkt dem Einsamen die Gewißheit der unvergänglichen Nacht. Der Tod als Erlösung vom Erdenleid ins Ewige." (p.219)
63. Letter 85, to Ludwig von Ficker, 26 June 1913, HKA I, p.519
64. The identification of "Die Windsbraut" as a female figure must be seen also in connection with Kokoschka's painting of the same name: "Trakl hat das merkwürdige Gedicht 'Die Nacht' vor meinem Bild geformt ... Mit der bleichen Hand hat er auf das Bild gezeigt und es 'Die Windsbraut' genannt." (*Mein Leben*, p.137)
65. This defiance is characteristic of Trakl's later poetry, and not, as Lachmann suggests, the exception: "Trakls Haltung ist die demütig sich neigende. Ihm ist die 'stürmende' im Grunde nicht gemäß." (p.175)  
Detsch sees this assault on the divine as sexual (see *Georg Trakl and the Brenner Circle*, p.53)
66. Detsch, *Georg Trakl and the Brenner Circle*, p.53
67. Hauer, 'Heilig ist die Leidenschaft', *Die Fackel*, Nr 287, p.26, in vol.15 (Nr 279-300)
68. A reading of the poems published in *Der Brenner* shows the extent to which Trakl has departed from Christian hope; I find it impossible to agree with

Hamburger that Trakl's Christian faith is beyond question on the grounds that "poetry is not prayer" (see p.264); nor can I agree with Detsch that the despair of his later poems may be interpreted as Christian: "... the sister herself had become for Trakl a kind of Christ figure ... in great distress even orthodox Christians have been known to call on the Blessed Mother rather than Christ." (*Georg Trakl's Poetry*, p.35)

#### CHAPTER FIVE: ISOLATION AND THE SOUL

1. Wilde, p.31
2. Ernst Mach, 'Antimetaphysische Bemerkungen', in *Die Wiener Moderne: Literatur, Kunst und Musik zwischen 1890 und 1910*, ed. by Gotthardt Wunberg and Johannes J Braakenberg, Stuttgart, 1981, p.142
3. *Die Wiener Moderne*, p.141
4. Bahr, 'Das unrettbare Ich', *Die Wiener Moderne*, p.147
5. Bahr, 'Wahrheit! Wahrheit!', cited by Fischer, p.72
6. Bahr, 'Maurice Maeterlinck', in *Das Junge Wien*, p.163
7. 'Gabriel d'Annunzio' (1), *Prosa I*, Frankfurt am Main, 1950, p.173
8. Letter 1, to Karl von Kalmär, probably written August / September 1905, HKA I, p.469
9. Letter 16, to Anton Moritz, 29 August 1910, HKA I, p.480
10. The tenuous links between Trakl and Poe have been examined by Furness in his articles 'Trakl and the Literature of the Decadence' and 'E A Poe et la poésie française dans l'oeuvre de Trakl' in *Sud*.

*Revue Litteraire Bimestrielle*, 73/74, pp.115-136. As is the norm with attempts to establish Trakl's knowledge of literature, it is impossible to claim with any certainty that Trakl knew the writings of Poe. Furness puts forward the theory that he may have come across the tales and poetry in the translations of Baudelaire and Mallarmé, claiming: "Roderick Usher seems to be the model for Trakl's count, brooding on his end and the extinction of his race." ('Trakl and the Literature of Decadence', p.89)

11. Poe, p.417
12. Poe, p.417
13. Furness, 'Trakl and the Literature of Decadence', p.89
14. Hofmannsthal, *Gedichte und lyrische Dramen*, p.274
15. Bahr, 'Décadence', in *Das Junge Wien*, p.462
16. Hofmannsthal, *Sämtliche Werke. Kritische Studienausgabe: Band II: Gedichte 2*, ed. by A Thomasberger and E Weber, Frankfurt am Main, 1988, p.56
17. Dörmann, *Sensationen*, p.46
18. Letter 29, to Erhard Buschbeck, 21 April 1912, HKA I, p.487
19. Poe, *The Complete Poetry and Selected Criticism*, ed. by Allan Tate, New York, London and Scarborough, Ontario, 1981, p.141
20. Richard Beer-Hofmann, *Verse*, Stockholm and New York, 1941, pp.16-17
21. See Basil, p.94f
22. Baudelaire, vol. II, p.710
23. Schneditz, p.75
24. Schneditz, p.76
25. Cited by Basil, p.56
26. Leopold von Andrian, *Der Garten der Erkenntnis*, ed. by Walter H Perl, Frankfurt am Main, 1970, p.31

27. Rasch, p.54.
28. See Blass, p.57 and Sharp, p.55
29. Hofmannsthal, *Gedichte und lyrische Dramen*, pp.290-91
30. Baudelaire, vol. I, p.6
31. Hofmannsthal, *Gedichte und lyrische Dramen*, p.39
32. Dörmann, *Neurotica*, p.18
33. Schnitzler, 'Apathie', in *Frühe Gedichte*, ed. by Herbert Lederer, Berlin, 1969, p.40
34. Hofmannsthal, *Gedichte und lyrische Dramen*, p.63 ('Frage')
35. Weinhold, p.143
36. Bahr, *Die gute Schule*, p.53
37. *Salzburger Volksblatt*, 2 April 1906, HKA II, p.514
38. *Salzburger Volksblatt*, 17 September 1906, HKA II, p.517
39. *Impressionismus, Symbolismus und Jugendstil*, p.122
40. Dörmann, *Tuberosen. Ausgewählte Verse*, Vienna and Berlin, 1920, p.85
41. Bahr, 'Die Überwindung des Naturalismus', in *Das Junge Wien*, p.156
42. Andrian, *Frühe Gedichte*, ed. by Walter H Perl, Hamburg, 1972, p.23
43. Dörmann, *Sensationen*, p.25
44. Hofmannsthal, *Gedichte und lyrische Dramen*, pp.78-79
45. *Arthur Rimbaud: Gedichte*, translated by K L Ammer, Frankfurt am Main, 1989, pp.52-54
46. *An Anthology of German Poetry 1880-1940*, ed. by Jethro Bithell, London, 1945, p.37
47. Rilke, *Erste Gedichte*, Leipzig, 1928, p.112
48. Heym, *Dichtungen und Schriften. Gesamtausgabe*, ed. by Karl Ludwig Schneider, Hamburg and Munich, 1964, pp.519-520
49. Maeterlinck, 'Reflets', *Poésies complètes*, pp.151-12
50. Baudelaire, vol. I, p.192; from a planned epilogue to *Les Fleurs du Mal*

51. Baudelaire, vol. I, p.31
52. Poe, *Selected Writings*, ed. by D Galloway, Harmondsworth, 1967, p.486
53. In conversation with Ernest Raynaud and Anatole Baju; cited by Koppen, p.35
54. *Das Junge Wien*, p.330
55. In *Die Wahlverwandschaften*, Otilie plants asters in the garden (Chapter Nine), which are then used to decorate her dead body. Vrenchen's posy in *Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe* consists of rosemary, roses and asters.
56. Verlaine, pp.28-29
57. Heym, pp.622-3
58. Dörmann, *Neurotica*, pp.115-6
59. Hofmannsthal, *Gedichte und lyrische Dramen*, p.70
60. Hofmannsthal, *Gedichte und lyrische Dramen*, p.17
61. Baudelaire, vol. I, p.132
62. Baudelaire, vol. I, p.134
63. See Schneditz, pp.74, 76.
64. Kleefeld, *Das Gedicht als Sühne*, p.294
65. Ernest Dowson, *The Poetical Works*, ed. by Desmond Flower, London, 1967, p.157
66. Cited by Frodl, p.59
67. Arthur Holitscher, *Der vergiftete Brunnen*, Paris, Leipzig and Munich, 1900, p.345
68. Dörmann, *Neurotica*, p.20
69. Hofmannsthal, *Gedichte und lyrische Dramen*, p.292
70. Lenau, vol.II, p.25
71. Hofmannsthal, *Sämtliche Werke. Kritische Ausgabe II: Gedichte 2*, p.79
72. See Basil, p.104
73. Schneditz, p.74
74. Letter 85, to Ludwig von Ficker, 26 June 1913, HKA I, p.519

## CHAPTER SIX: LANGUAGE AND STYLE

1. Bahr, 'Maurice Maeterlinck', in *Das Junge Wien*, p.162
2. Gautier, preface to *Les Fleurs du Mal*, cited by Koppen, p.30
3. Verlaine, p.110
4. Bourget, p.20
5. Nietzsche, vol. II, p.917
6. Pradet, 'Décadence', cited by Marquèze-Pouey, p.170
7. Bahr, 'Maurice Maeterlinck', in *Das Junge Wien*, p.162
8. Nordau, pp.213-214
9. Bahr, 'Maurice Maeterlinck', in *Das Junge Wien*, p.162
10. *Das Junge Wien*, p.163
11. Bahr, 'Die Décadence', *Das Junge Wien*, p.423
12. *Das Junge Wien*, p.423
13. *Das Junge Wien*, p.426
14. Letter 3, to Karl von Kalmár, 30 September 1906, HKA I, p.471
15. Letter 4, to Hermine von Rauterberg, 5 October 1908, HKA I, p.472  
 Kleefeld refers to this letter as "ein Schlüsselbrief ... von zentraler Bedeutung für das Verständnis der psychischen Problematik des Dichters und für das Verständnis seines poetischen Schaffens." He views Trakl's creativity as having "den Charakter eines seelischen Überlebenskampfes; das Gedicht ist ein Ort der Selbstbehauptung des Ich gegenüber den destruktiven Gewalten des Es, die Burg, die dem 'infernalischen Chaos', der Macht der verschlingenden Mutter standzuhalten vermag." See *Das Gedicht als Sühne*, pp.110f



16. HKA I, p.208
17. Letter 15, to Erhard Buschbeck, July 1910, HKA I, p.479
18. Letter 26, to Erhard Buschbeck, Autumn 1911, HKA I, p.486
19. Bahr, 'Die Décadence', in *Das Junge Wien*, p.427
20. *Das Junge Wien*, p.426
21. Stadler, p.75
22. Dörmann, *Neurotica*, pp.104-108
23. Dörmann, *Neurotica*, pp.99-100
24. Dörmann, *Neurotica*, pp.104-106
25. Dörmann, *Neurotica*, p.59
26. Nietzsche, vol. II, p.917
27. Stadler, p.58
28. Dörmann, *Neurotica*, p.63
29. Dörmann, *Neurotica*, p.101
30. Sieglinde Klettenhammer, *Georg Trakl in Zeitungen und Zeitschriften seiner Zeit: Kontext und Rezeption*, Innsbruck, 1990, pp.67f. Although her study does not go beyond a superficial comparison of vocabulary, her conclusion acknowledges the context within which Trakl's early writing must be set: "Das poetische Vokabular der frühen Gedichte Trakls kann somit gleichfalls als zeittypisch bezeichnet werden. Es knüpft an die literarische Tradition der Epoche an und unterwirft sich den Normen des dichterischen Sprachsystems des späten 19. Jahrhunderts." (p.69)
31. Gautier, preface to *Les Fleurs du Mal*, in Koppen, p.30
32. Dörmann, *Sensationen*, p.23
33. Hofmannsthal, *Gedichte und lyrische Dramen*, pp.190-191
34. Bahr, 'Kunst und Kritik', in *Das Junge Wien*, p.150
35. Letter 26, to Erhard Buschbeck, Autumn 1911, HKA I, p.485
36. See, for example, Lindenberger, *Georg Trakl*, Chapter Two: 'Toward the Objective Image: Poems

Through 1912'; Sharp, Chapter Two: 'The Poetry until Late 1912'; Detsch, *Georg Trakl's Poetry*, Chapter Seven: 'Trakl's "Symbolic Style"'.  
 37. Kleefeld, *Das Gedicht als Sühne*, p.5.  
 38. Alfred Gold, 'Dörmann und Baudelaire', in *Die Wiener Moderne*, p.363

### CONCLUSION

1. Letter 26, to Erhard Buschbeck, Autumn 1911, HKA I, p.485
2. Rilke, in a letter to the editor of the *Brenner*, February 1915; *Erinnerung an Georg Trakl.*, p.9
3. Casey, p.3
4. This is particularly true of early scholarship. As Lindenberger pointed out: "It seems remarkable that nearly all serious discussions of Trakl's poetry have ignored his early work." ('The Early Poems of Georg Trakl', p.45)  
 Trakl himself regarded the collection of poetry as "diese verfluchten Manuskripte", and asked Buschbeck to return them to him. (See letter 20, to Erhard Buschbeck, June 1911, HKA I, p.483)
5. See Wölfel, 'Entwicklungsstufen im lyrischen Werk Georg Trakls', *Euphorion*, 52, 1958, pp.50-81 and Esselborn, *Georg Trakl: Krise der Erlebnislyrik*. This is also the view of Henrikas Nagys, *Georg Trakls Weg vom Impressionismus zum Expressionismus*, dissertation, University of Innsbruck, 1949, who examines the shift from Impressionism to Expressionism within Trakl's oeuvre, and Eyckmann, *Die Funktion des Häßlichen in der Lyrik Georg Heyms, Georg Trakls und Gottfried Benns: Zur Krise der*

*Wirklichkeitserfahrung im deutschen  
Expressionismus*, Bonn, 1965.

6. Simon, p.31
7. Lindenberger, 'The Early Poems of Georg Trakl'.
8. See Helmut Uhlig, 'Vom Asthetizismus zum Expressionismus' in *Expressionismus: Gestalten einer literarischen Bewegung*, ed. by Hermann Friedmann and Otto Mann, Heidelberg, 1956, pp 107f: "... der schwermütige Ton ist bereits [in dem Zyklus *Gesang zur Nacht*] angeschlagen. Er hat bis in die späten Gedichte, bis in die dunklen Prosastücke der letzten Zeit nicht gewechselt." (p.107); Wölfel, p.52: "Was in diesen ersten Gedichten immerhin schon deutlich wird, ist das besondere Temperament des Dichters, sein Hang zum Dunklen, Nächtigen, zum Leiden."; Falk, pp.313-314: "Doch war schon in der Frühphase für Trakl das Leiden zwar durch das Ich, aber zugleich auch durch die Verbindung mit der Welt bestimmt. Daran änderte sich in den späteren Phasen nichts. ... Das Leiden an der Unseligkeit menschlicher Gemeinschaft bezeichnete er mit dem Wort '*Schwermut*'; Furness, 'Trakl and the Literature of Decadence', p.84: "although the poems of 1910 are regarded as marking the watershed in his oeuvre the themes to be found in the earlier work will also be present in the later utterances, albeit hauntingly transfigured."
9. Goldmann, p.7
10. Blass, p.5
11. See Kleefeld, *Das Gedicht als Sühne*.
12. Webber has examined in particular the early dramas, *Don Juans Tod* and *Blaubart*, in his chapter on 'The "Lustmord" Dramas'.
13. See above, Chapter Six
14. Hofmannsthal, 'Poesie und Leben. Aus einem Vortrage', *Prosa I*, p.307

15. Letter 26, to Erhard Buschbeck, Autumn, 1911, HKA I, p.485
16. See Wölfel, p.62; Walter Sokel, *The Writer in Extremis: Expressionism in Twentieth Century German Literature*, Stanford, 1959, p.50; Esselborn, pp.145f, 'Das Schicksal des traditionellen lyrischen Ich bei Georg Trakl'.
17. Esselborn, p.201
18. See, for example, Nagys, p.267: "Wir möchten sogar behaupten, daß die expressionistische Gestaltung für Georg Trakl *Natur* war."; Muschg calls Trakl "der erste expressionistische Autor, der einer kritischen Gesamtausgabe gewürdigt wird" (Walter Muschg, *Von Trakl zu Brecht: Dichter des Expressionismus*, Munich, 1961, p.100); Eyckmann examines the Expressionist motif of "das Häßliche" in Trakl's poetry, along with that of Heym and Benn; Schneider categorizes Trakl with Heym and Stadler as "Frühexpressionisten", p.12; Detsch ranks Trakl, along with Heym, Benn and Stadler, as "one of the great poets of the early, most creative period of German Expressionism", *Georg Trakl's Poetry*, p.1
19. Hamburger, p.222
20. Letter 14, to Erhard Buschbeck, July 1910, HKA I, p.478
21. Sokel, p.49
22. Schneditz, p.99
23. Killy, *Über Georg Trakl*, p.21
24. Furness, *Expressionism*, London, 1973, p.3
25. Letter 106: "Es ist ein so namenloses Unglück, wenn einem die Welt entzweibricht. O mein Gott, welch ein Gericht ist über mich hereingebrochen. sagen Sie mir, daß ich die Kraft haben muß noch zu leben und das Wahre zu tun. Sagen Sie mir, daß ich nicht irre bin. Es ist ein steinernes Dunkel hereingebrochen. O mein Freund, wie klein und unglücklich bin ich geworden." (HKA I, p.530)

26. Furness, *Expressionism*, p.9
27. See Falk, pp.403f: "Trakls Spätgedichte sind weder impressionistisch noch expressionistisch." (p.403); Lindenberger, *Georg Trakl*, pp.138f: "Yet Trakl has always fit uncomfortably within the various definitions and self-definitions of Expressionism." (p.139); Furness, 'Trakl and the Literature of Decadence', p.93: "From an inauspicious beginning a small group of poems arise which may be called surrealist, or even expressionist: yet even these titles are unsatisfactory. It is the vision of an order, however rarely glimpsed, beyond the disjointed world which gives Trakl's poetry its unique merit...".
28. Schneditz, p.109
29. Hofmannsthal, 'Poesie und Leben', *Prosa I*, pp.306-307
30. Pinthus, 'Zur jüngsten Dichtung', in *Expressionismus: Der Kampf um eine literarische Bewegung*, ed. Paul Raabe, Zurich, 1987, pp.68-79; p.73
31. Muschg, p.113
32. Furness, 'Trakl and the Literature of Decadence', p.84
33. Written by 24 August 1914; HKA I, p.463

## SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

## TRAKL

Trakl, Georg, *Dichtungen und Briefe, Historisch-kritische Ausgabe*, ed. by Walther Killy and Hans Szklener, 2 vols, 2nd edition, Salzburg, 1987

\*

Arnold, Heinz Ludwig (ed.), *Text + Kritik 4/4a: Georg Trakl*, Munich, 1973

Basil, Otto, *Georg Trakl in Selbstzeugnissen und Bild-dokumenten*, Hamburg, 1965

Blass, Regine, *Die Dichtung Georg Trakls: Von der Trivialsprache zum Kunstwerk*, Berlin, 1968

Brunner, Felix, *Der Lebenslauf und die Werke Georg Trakls*, Dissertation, University of Vienna, 1932

Casey, T J, *Manshape that Shone: An Interpretation of Georg Trakl*, Oxford, 1964

Cersowsky, Peter, 'Das Grauen. Georg Trakl, Oscar Wilde und andere Ästhetiker des Schreckens', in *Sprachkunst. Beiträge zur Literaturwissenschaft*, XVI, 1985, pp.231-245

Demmer, Ilse, *Georg Trakl*, dissertation, University of Vienna, 1933

Denneler, Iris, *Konstruktion und Expression: Zur Strategie und Wirkung der Lyrik Georg Trakls*, Salzburg, 1984

Detsch, Richard, *Georg Trakl's Poetry: Toward a Union of Opposites*, University Park, 1983  
----- *Georg Trakl and the Brenner Circle*, New York, 1991

Dietz, Ludwig, *Die lyrische Form Georg Trakls, Trakl-Studien V*, Salzburg, 1959

Doppler, Alfred, *Die Lyrik Georg Trakls: Beiträge zur poetischen Verfahrensweise und zur Wirkungsgeschichte*, Vienna, Cologne and Weimar, 1992

Esselborn, Hans, *Georg Trakl: Die Krise der Erlebnislyrik, Kölner germanistische Studien*, 15, Cologne, 1981

- Eykman, Christoph, *Die Funktion des Häßlichen in der Lyrik Georg Heyms, Georg Trakls und Gottfried Benns: Zur Krise der Wirklichkeitserfahrung im deutschen Expressionismus*, Bonn, 1965
- Falk, Walter, *Leid und Verwandlung: Rilke, Kafka, Trakl und der Epochenstil des Impressionismus und Expressionismus, Trakl-Studien VI*, Salzburg, 1961
- Finck, Adrien, *Georg Trakl: Essai d'Interpretation*, Universitaire de Lille, 1974  
-----, and Weischselbaum, Hans, (ed.), *Antworten auf Georg Trakl, Trakl Studien XVIII*, Salzburg, 1992
- Focke, Alfred, *Georg Trakl - Liebe und Tod*, Vienna and Munich, 1955
- Fühmann, Franz, *Der Sturz des Engels: Erfahrungen mit Dichtung*, Hamburg, 1982
- Furness, Raymond S, 'E A Poe et la poésie française dans l'oeuvre de Trakl', in *Sud. Revue Litteraire Bimestrielle 73/74. Georg Trakl*, pp.115-136
- Goldmann, Heinrich, *Katabasis: Eine tiefenpsychologische Studie zur Symbolik der Dichtungen Georg Trakls, Trakl-Studien IV*, Salzburg, 1957
- Gorgé, Walter, *Auftreten und Richtung des Dekadenzmotivs im Werk Georg Trakls*, Bern and Frankfurt am Main, 1973
- Grimm, Reinhold, 'Georg Trakls Verhältnis zu Rimbaud', in *Germanisch-romanische Monatsschrift*, N F 9, 1959, pp.288-315  
----- 'Die Sonne: Bemerkungen zu einem Motiv Georg Trakls', *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, 35, 1961, pp.224-46
- Habecker, Sonja, *Frauenbild und Liebe in Georg Trakls Werk*, dissertation, University of Munich, 1957
- Hamburger, Michael, 'Georg Trakl', in *Reason and Energy*, London, 1957, pp.239-71
- Hanisch, Ernest, and Fleischer, Ulrike, *Im Schatten berühmter Zeiten. Salzburg in den Jahren Georg Trakls 1887-1914, Trakl-Studien XIII*, Salzburg, 1986
- Heckmann, Ursula, *Das verfluchte Geschlecht: Motive der Philosophie Otto Weiningers im Werk Georg Trakls*, Frankfurt am Main, 1992
- Heidegger, Martin, 'Georg Trakl: Eine Erörterung seines Gedichtes', in *Merkur*, March 1953, pp.226-258

- Heselhaus, Clemens, 'Die Elis-Gedichte von Georg Trakl', in *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, 28, 1954, pp.384-413
- Kemper, Hans-Georg, *Georg Trakls Entwürfe: Aspekte zu ihrem Verständnis*, Tübingen, 1970
- Killy, Walther, *Über Georg Trakl*, Göttingen, 1960  
----- *Wandlungen des lyrischen Bildes*, Göttingen, 1964
- Kleefeld, Gunther, *Das Gedicht als Sühne: Georg Trakls Dichtung und Krankheit: Eine psychoanalytische Studie*, Tübingen, 1985
- Klettenhammer, Sieglinde, 'Unbekanntes Puppenspiel Kaspar Hauser von Georg Trakl', *Mitteilungen aus dem Brenner-Archiv* 1, 1982, pp.50-56  
----- *Georg Trakl in Zeitungen und Zeitschriften seiner Zeit: Kontext und Rezeption*, Innsbruck, 1990
- Kossat, Ernst, *Wesen und Aufbauformen der Lyrik Georg Trakls*, Hamburg, 1939
- Lachmann, Eduard, *Kreuz und Abend: Eine Interpretation der Dichtungen Georg Trakls*, *Trakl-Studien* I, Salzburg, 1954
- Leitgeb, Josef, 'Die Trakl-Welt', *Wort im Gebirge*, III, 1951, pp.7-39
- Leiva-Merikakis, Erasmo, *The Blossoming Thorn: Georg Trakl's Poetry of Atonement*, Associated University Presses, 1987
- Lindenberger, Herbert, 'The Early Poems of Georg Trakl', in *Germanic Review*, 32, 1957, pp.45-61  
----- 'The Play of Opposites in Georg Trakl's Poetry', in *German Life and Letters*, N S 11, 1958, pp.193-204  
----- 'Georg Trakl and Rimbaud. A Study in Influence and Development', in *Comparative Literature*, 10, 1958, pp.21-35  
----- *Georg Trakl*, Twayne's World Author Series, 171, New York, 1971
- Marson, E L, 'Whom the Gods Love - A New Look at Trakl's Elis', in *German Life and Letters*, 29, 1975-76, pp.369-81
- Methlagl, Walther, and Yuill, William E, (ed.), *Londoner Trakl-Symposion*, *Trakl-Studien* X, Salzburg, 1983
- Metzner, Ernst Erich, 'Die dunkle Flamme des Gerechten - Poésie Pure?', in *Germanisch-romanische*



*Monatsschrift*, 24, 1974, pp.446-472

Morris, Irene V, *Das Verfallsproblem bei Georg Trakl*,  
dissertation, University of Munich, 1936  
----- 'Georg Trakl', in *German Life and  
Letters*, II, 1948-49, pp.12-137

Müller, Heidi M, and de Vos, Jaak, *Aporie und Euphorie  
der Sprache: Studien zu Georg Trakl und Peter Handke.  
Akten des Internationalen Europalia-Kolloquiums Gent  
1987*, Leuven, 1989

Muschg, Walter, *Von Trakl zu Brecht: Dichter des  
Expressionismus*, Munich, 1961

Nagys, Henrikas, *Georg Trakls Weg vom Impressionismus  
zum Expressionismus*, dissertation, University of  
Innsbruck, 1949

Pamp, Friedheim, 'Der Einfluß Rimbauds auf Georg  
Trakl', in *Revue de Littérature Comparée*, 32, 1958,  
pp.396-406

Ritzer, Walter, *Neue Trakl-Bibliographie, Trakl-Studien  
XII*, Salzburg, 1983

Rölleke, Heinz, *Die Stadt bei Stadler, Heym und Trakl*,  
Berlin, 1966  
----- '"Das Grauen": Georg Trakl und Heinrich  
Heine?', in *Wirkendes Wort*, 1991, pp.163-5

Saas, Christa, *Georg Trakl*, Stuttgart, 1974

Sauermann, Eberhard, 'Unbekanntes Telegramm Else Lasker-  
Schülers an Georg Trakl', in *Mitteilungen aus dem  
Brenner-Archiv*, 1982, pp.57-58  
----- *Zur Datierung und Interpretation  
von Texten Georg Trakls: Die Fehlgeburt von Trakls  
Schwester als Hintergrund eines Verzweiflungsbriefts und  
des Gedichts 'Abendland'*, Innsbruck, 1984

Schier, Rudolf Dirk, *Die Sprache Georg Trakls*,  
Heidelberg, 1970

Schneditz, Wolfgang, 'Versuch einer Deutung des  
Menschen und des Dichters', in *Georg Trakl, Nachlaß  
und Biographie*, Salzburg, 1949, pp.66-126

Schneider, Karl Ludwig, *Der bildhafte Ausdruck in den  
Dichtungen Georg Heyms, Georg Trakls und Ernst  
Stadlers: Studien zum lyrischen Sprachstil des  
deutschen Expressionismus*, Heidelberg, 1968

Sharp, Francis Michael, *The Poet's Madness: A Reading  
of Georg Trakl*, Ithaca and London, 1981

Simon, Klaus, *Traum und Orpheus: Eine Studie zu Georg  
Trakls Dichtungen, Trakl-Studien II*, Salzburg, 1955

- Spoerri, Theodor, *Georg Trakl, Strukturen in Persönlichkeit und Werk: Eine psychiatrisch-anthropographische Untersuchung*, Bern, 1954
- Strelka, Joseph P, (ed.), *Internationales Georg Trakl-Symposion: Albany/ New York, Jahrbuch für internationale Germanistik A 12*, Bern, 1984
- Szklenar, Hans, 'Beiträge zur Chronologie und Anordnung von Georg Trakls Gedichten auf Grund des Nachlasses von Karl Röck', in *Euphorion*, 60, 1966, pp.222-262
- Webber, Andrew, *Sexuality and the Sense of Self in the Works of Georg Trakl and Robert Musil*, University of London, 1990
- Weichselbaum, Hans, (ed.), *Trakl-Forum 1987, Trakl-Studien XV*, Salzburg, 1987
- Weiss, Walter, and Weichselbaum, Hans, (ed.), *Salzburger Trakl-Symposion, Trakl-Studien IX*, Salzburg, 1978
- Williams, Eric, (ed.), *The Dark Flutes of Fall. Critical Essays on Georg Trakl*, Columbia, 1991
- Wölfel, Kurt, 'Entwicklungsstufen im lyrischen Werk Georg Trakls', in *Euphorion*, 52, 1958, pp.50-81
- Zangerle, Ignaz. (ed.), *Erinnerung an Georg Trakl: Zeugnisse und Briefe*, 3rd edition, Salzburg, 1966
- Zuberbühler, Johannes, '*Der Tränen nächtige Bilder*': *Georg Trakls Lyrik im literarischen und gesellschaftlichen Kontext seiner Zeit*, Bonn, 1984
- Zwerschina, Hermann, *Die Chronologie der Dichtungen Georg Trakls*, Innsbruck, 1990

## BACKGROUND LITERATURE

### Contemporary and Primary Sources

- Andrian, Leopold, *Der Garten der Erkenntnis*, ed. by Walter H Perl, Frankfurt am Main, 1970  
 ----- *Frühe Gedichte*, ed. by Walter H Perl, Hamburg, 1972
- Bahr, Hermann, Die gute Schule. Seelenstände*, Berlin, 1890  
 ----- *Selbstbildnis*, Berlin, 1923
- Balázs, Béla, *Prince Bluebeard's Castle*, adapted by

Thomas Land, Tern Press, 1978

Barbey d'Aurevilly, Jules, *Les Diaboliques*, Paris, 1967

Barrès, Maurice, *L'Oeuvre de Maurice Barrès*, ed. by  
Philippe Barrès, Paris, 1965

Baudelaire, Charles, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. by Claude  
Pichois, Paris, 1975-76

----- *Correspondance Générale*, ed. by  
Jacques Crépet, Paris, 1948

Beer-Hofmann, Richard, *Gesammelte Werke*, Frankfurt am  
Main, 1963

----- *Verse*, Stockholm and New York,  
1941

Benn, Gottfried, *Gesammelte Werke I: Gedichte*, ed. by  
Dieter Wellershoff, Wiesbaden, 1960

Bithell, Jethro, (ed.), *An Anthology of German Poetry  
1880-1940*, London, 1945

Bourget, Paul, *Essais de Psychologie Contemporaine*,  
Paris, 1899

Dante, *Inferno. The First Part of the Divine Comedy*,  
translated by Tom Phillips, Thames and Hudson, 1985

Dehmel, Richard, *Hundert ausgewählte Gedichte*, Berlin,  
1920

Dörmann, Felix, *Sensationen*, Vienna, 1892

----- *Das Unverzeihliche. Novellen*, Berlin,  
1903

----- *Neurotica*, Munich and Leipzig, 1914

----- *Tuberosen. Ausgewählte Gedichte*, Vienna  
and Berlin, 1920

Dostoevsky, Fyodor, *Crime and Punishment*, translated by  
Constace Garnett, London, 1964

Dowson, Ernest, *The Poetical Works of Ernest Dowson*,  
ed. by Desmond Flower, London, 1967

Eckermann, Johann Peter, *Gespräche mit Goethe in den  
letzten Jahren seines Lebens*, Berlin and Weimar, 1982

Ehrenstein, Albert, *Wie bin ich vorgespannt den  
Kohlenwagen meiner Trauer*, ed. by Jörg Drews, *Frühe  
Texte der Moderne*, Munich, 1986

Eulenberg, Herbert, *Ritter Blaubart. Ein Märchenstück  
in fünf Aufzügen*, Berlin, 1905

*Die Fackel*, ed. by Karl Kraus, Munich, 1965-1970

Ficker, Ludwig von, *Denkzettel und Danksagungen*.

- Aufsätze. Reden*, ed. by Franz Seyr, Munich, 1967  
 ----- *Briefwechsel. Band I: 1909-1914*,  
 ed. by Ignaz Zangerle, Walther Methlagl, Franz Seyr and  
 Anton Unterkircher, Salzburg, 1986  
 ----- *Briefwechsel. Band II: 1914-1925*,  
 ed. by, Zangerle, Methlagl, Seyr and Unterkircher,  
 Innsbruck, 1988  
 ----- *Briefwechsel. Band III: 1926-1939*,  
 ed. by Zangerle, Methlagl, Seyr and Unterkircher,  
 Innsbruck, 1988
- Flaubert, Gustave, *Trois Contes*, ed. by Colin  
 Duckworth, London, 1959  
 ----- *La Tentation de Saint Antoine*,  
 Paris, 1983
- Freistatt. Kritische Wochenschrift für Politik,  
 Literatur und Kunst*, VI. Jahrgang, Heft 33, 13 August  
 1904
- Gautier, Théophile, *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, Paris, 1883  
 ----- *Une Nuit de Cléopâtre*, Paris, 1894  
 ----- *Nouvelles*, Paris, 1923
- George, Stefan, *Sämtliche Werke II: Hymnen,  
 Pilgerfahrten, Algalal*, Stuttgart, 1987
- Ghil, René, *Traité du Verbe. Etats successifs (1885-  
 1886-1887-1888-1891-1904)*, ed. by Tiziana Goruppi,  
 Paris, 1978
- Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von, *Werke*, Hamburg: *Band III,  
 Dramatische Dichtungen, erster Band*, 1949; *Band V,  
 Dramatische Dichtungen, dritter Band*, 1952; *Band VI,  
 Romane und Novellen, erster Band*, 1951
- Hartland, E Sidney, "The Forbidden Chamber", in *The  
 Folk-lore Journal*, vol III, 1885 pp.193-242
- Hauer, Karl, 'Erotik der Keuschheit', in *Die Fackel*,  
 192, pp.8-14  
 ----- 'Spiegel sterbender Welten', in *Die  
 Fackel*, 207, pp.1-21  
 ----- 'Pornographie', in *Die Fackel*, 253, pp.7-  
 13  
 ----- 'Heilig ist die Leidenschaft', in *Die  
 Fackel*, 287, pp.20-26
- Heym, Georg, *Dichtungen und Schriften. Gesamtausgabe*,  
 ed. by Karl Ludwig Schneider, Hamburg and Munich, 1964
- Hille, Peter, *Gesammelte Werke*, 2nd edition, Berlin,  
 1916
- Hofmannsthal, Hugo von, *Die Erzählungen*, Stockholm,  
 1946  
 ----- *Gedichte und lyrische Dramen*,  
 Stockholm, 1946

- Prosa I, Frankfurt am Main,  
1950
- Prosa II, Frankfurt am Main,  
1951
- *Sämtliche Werke. Kritische  
Ausgabe II: Gedichte 2*, ed. by A Thomasberger and E  
Weber, Frankfurt am Main, 1988
- Holitscher, Arthur, *Der vergiftete Brunnen*, Paris,  
Leipzig and Munich, 1900
- Holz, Arno, *Werke*, ed. by Wilhelm Emrich and Anita  
Holz, Neuwied am Rhein and Berlin-Spandau, 1962
- Huysmans, Joris Karl, *Là-Bas*, Paris, 1891  
----- *A Rebours*, Paris, 1920
- Karthaus, Ulrich (ed.), *Impressionismus, Symbolismus,  
Jugendstil*, Stuttgart, 1977
- Keller, Gottfried, *Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe*,  
Stuttgart, 1949
- Knoop, Gerhard Ouckama, *Gedichte*, Leipzig, 1914
- Kokoschka, Oskar, *Das schriftliche Werk. Band I:  
Dichtungen und Dramen*, ed. by Heinz Spielmann, Hamburg,  
1973  
----- *Mein Leben*, Munich, 1971
- Krafft-Ebing, Richard von, *Psychopathia sexualis*,  
Munich, 1893
- Kraus, Karl, *Die demolirte Literatur*, Steinbach, 1972
- Lenau, Nikolaus, *Sämtliche Werke*, Leipzig, 1883
- Loewenson, Erwin, *Die Schriften des Neuen Clubs*, ed. by  
Richard Sheppard, Hildesheim, 1980
- Luther, Martin, *Die Bibel oder ganze Heilige Schrift  
des alten und neuen Testaments, nach deutscher  
Übersetzung Dr Martin Luthers*, London, 1855
- Maeterlinck, Maurice, *Poésies Complètes*, ed. by Joseph  
Hanse, Brussels, 1965  
----- *Marie-Magdaleine*, Paris, 1913  
----- *Ariane et Barbe-bleue*, in *Théâtre  
III*, Paris, 1918
- Maignon, Louis, *Le Romantisme et les Moeurs: Essai  
d'étude historique et sociale*, Paris, 1910
- Mallarmé, Stéphane, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. by H Mondor  
and G Jean-Aubry, Editions Gallimard, 1945
- Mann, Thomas, *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen*,  
Berlin, 1918

- *Die Erzählungen*, Frankfurt am Main, 1986
- Martens, Kurt, *Roman aus der Décadence*, Berlin, 1898  
----- *Verse*, Munich, 1914
- Mirbeau, Octave, *Le Jardin des Supplices*, Paris, 1901
- Montesquieu, *Oeuvres Complètes*, ed. by Roger Caillois, Paris, 1951
- Moréas, Jean, *Oeuvres*, Geneva, 1977
- Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Werke in drei Bänden*, ed. by Karl Schlechta, Munich, 1954
- Nordau, Max, *Entartung*, 3rd edition, Berlin, 1896
- Novalis, *Werke*, ed. by Gerhard Schulz, 3rd edition, Munich, 1987
- Pausanias, *Guide to Greece. Volume I: Central Greece*, translated by Peter Levi, Harmondsworth, 1971
- Perrault, Charles, *The Evergreen Tales, or Tales for the Ageless*, translated by Arthur Quiller-Couch, New York, 1952
- Pinthus, Kurt, 'Zur jüngsten Dichtung', in *Expressionismus: Der Kampf um eine literarische Bewegung*, ed. by Paul Raabe, Zurich, 1987
- Poe, Edgar Allan, *Tales of Adventure, Mystery and Imagination*, London, New York and Melbourne, 1890  
----- *Selected Writings*, ed., D Galloway, Harmondsworth, 1967  
----- *The Complete Poetry and Selected Criticism*, ed. by Allan Tate, New York, London and Scarborough, Ontario, 1981
- Przybyszewski, Stanislaw, *De profundis und andere Erzählungen*, Paderborn, 1990
- Rilke, Rainer Maria, *Erste Gedichte*, Leipzig, 1928  
----- *Briefe*, Wiesbaden, 1950
- Rimbaud, Arthur, *Complete Works. Selected Letters*, ed. by Wallace Fowlie, Chicago and London, 1966  
----- *Gedichte. Aus dem Französischen von K L Ammer*, Leipzig, 1907
- Rousseau, Jean Jacques, *Oeuvres Complètes*, ed. by Gagnebin and Raymond, Paris, 1964
- Sacher-Masoch, Leopold von, *Venus im Pelz*, Frankfurt am Main, 1968
- Sade, Marquis de, *Oeuvres complètes*, Paris, 1963

- Sainte-Beuve, *Correspondance Générale de Sainte-Beuve*, ed. by Bonnerot, Paris, 1947
- Sand, George, *Correspondance*, Paris, 1964
- Schnitzler, Arthur, *Die erzählenden Schriften*, Frankfurt am Main, 1961  
 ----- *Der einsame Weg*, Stuttgart, 1962  
 ----- *Frühe Gedichte*, ed. by Herbert Lederer, Berlin, 1969  
 ----- *Anatol. Anatols Größenwahn. Der grüne Kakadu*, Stuttgart, 1970  
 ----- *The Letters of Arthur Schnitzler to Hermann Bahr*, ed. by Donald G Daviau, The University of North Carolina Press, 1978  
 ----- *Briefe 1875-1912*, ed. by Therese Nickl and Heinrich Schnitzler, Frankfurt am Main, 1981  
 ----- *Jugend in Wien. Eine Autobiographie*, ed. by Therese Nickl and Heinrich Schnitzler, Frankfurt am Main, 1986
- Shakespeare, William, *Works*, London, 1905
- Shaw, George Bernard, *Three Plays for Puritans*, 2nd edition, London, 1931  
 ----- *Man and Superman. A Comedy and a Philosophy*, 2nd edition, London, 1931
- Stadler, Ernst, *Dichtungen, Schriften, Briefe. Kritische Ausgabe*, ed. by Klaus Hurlebusch and Karl Ludwig Schneider, Munich, 1983
- Stefan, Paul, *Max Reinhardt: Eines Künstlers Heimweg nach Wien*, Vienna and Leipzig, 1923
- Hermann Stehr, *Leonore Griebel*, Berlin (no date)
- Stifter, Adalbert, *Bunte Steine. Erzählungen*, ed. by Max Stefl, Darmstadt, 1963
- Stoker, Bram, *Dracula*, Harmondsworth, 1979
- Streicher, Gustav, *Die Macht der Toten: Monna Violanta. Hofnarr und Fürst. Zwei Versspiele*, Salzburg, 1910
- Swinburne, Algernon Charles, *Selections from Algernon Charles Swinburne*, ed. by Edmond Gosse and Thomas James Wise, London, 1919  
 ----- *Cleopatra*, Leeds, 1924
- Tieck, Ludwig, *Schriften*, Berlin, 1928
- Verlaine, Paul, *Selected Poems*, ed. by R C D Perman, Oxford, 1965
- Vizetelly, Ernest Alfred, *Bluebeard. An Account of Comorre the Cursed and Gilles de Rais*, London, 1902

- Voltaire, *Voltaire's Correspondance*, ed. by Theodore Besterman, Geneva, 1962
- Wagner, Richard, *Parsifal. Ein Bühnenfestspiel*, Mainz, 1894  
 ----- *Tannhäuser*, London and New York, 1988
- Wassermann, Jakob, *Caspar Hauser oder die Trägheit des Herzens*, Munich, 1983
- Wedekind, Franz, *Erdgeist*, Munich, 1921
- Weininger, Otto, *Geschlecht und Charakter: Eine prinzipielle Untersuchung*, Munich, 1980
- Wilde, Oscar, *Complete Works*, London and Glasgow, 1966
- Wunberg, Gotthardt (ed.), *Das Junge Wien: Österreichische Literatur- und Kunstkritik 1887-1902*, Tübingen, 1976  
 ----- and Braakenberg, Johannes J (ed.), *Die Wiener Moderne: Literatur, Kunst und Musik zwischen 1890 und 1910*, Stuttgart, 1981
- Zola, Emile, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. by Henri Mitterand, Lausanne, 1968
- Zweig, Stefan, *Briefe an Freunde*, ed. by Richard Friedenthal, Frankfurt am Main, 1978  
 ----- *Stefan Zweig. Paul Zech. Briefe 1910-1942*, ed. by Donald G Daviau, Frankfurt am Main, 1986  
 ----- *Die Welt von Gestern: Erinnerung eines Europäers*, London, 1941

#### Secondary Literature

- Balakian, Anna, *The Symbolist Movement: A Critical Appraisal*, New York, 1967
- Balfour, Arthur James, *Decadence. Henry Sidgwick Memorial Lecture*, Cambridge, 1908
- Barry, Rev W F, 'Realism and Decadence in French Fiction', in *Quarterly Review*, 171, July 1890, pp.57-90  
 ----- 'The French Decadence', in *Quarterly Review*, 174, April 1892, pp.479-504
- Bennett, E K, *Stefan George*, Cambridge, 1954
- Birkett, Jennifer, *The Sins of the Fathers: Decadence in France 1870-1914*, London, 1986
- Böschenstein, Bernhard, 'Wirkungen des französischen Symbolismus auf die deutsche Lyrik der



- Jahrhundertwende', in *Euphorion*, 58, 1964, pp.375-395
- Briese-Neumann, Gisa, *Ästhet - Dilettant - Narziss: Reflexion der fin de siècle-Phänomene im Frühwerk Hofmannsthal's*, *Tübinger Studien zur deutschen Literatur, Band 10*, ed. by Gotthard Wunberg, Frankfurt am Main, 1985
- Butler, John Davis, *Jean Moréas: A Critique of his Poetry and Philosophy*, The Hague and Paris, 1967
- Calinescu, Matei, *Five Faces of Modernity: Modernism. Avant-Garde. Decadence. Kitsch. Postmodernism*, Durham, 1987
- Carr, G J and Sagarra, Eda (ed.), *Fin de Siècle Vienna*, Dublin, 1985
- Chadwick, Charles, *Symbolism*, London, 1971
- Cornell, Kenneth, *The Symbolist Movement*, New Haven, 1951
- Curtius, Mechthild, *Erotische Phantasien bei Thomas Mann*, Königsten (Taunus), 1984
- Daviau, Donald G, *Hermann Bahr*, Boston, 1985
- Dowling, Linda C, *Aestheticism and Decadence: A Selective Annotated Bibliography*, New York and London, 1978
- Eibl, Karl, 'Expressionismus', in *Geschichte der deutschen Lyrik vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. by Walter Hinderer, Stuttgart, 1983
- Fairlie, Alison, *Baudelaire: Les Fleurs du Mal*, London, 1960
- Fischer, Jens Malte, *Fin de Siècle: Kommentar zu einer Epoche*, Munich, 1978
- Fischer, Wolfgang G, 'Oskar Kokoschka als Seher des Untergangs oder Die Bühne der Verwesung', in *Oskar Kokoschka Symposion*, ed. by Erika Patka, Salzburg and Vienna, 1986, pp.43-71
- Fletcher, Ian, *Decadence and the 1890's*, London, 1979
- Friedrich, Hugo, *Die Struktur der modernen Lyrik: Von der Mitte des neunzehnten bis zur Mitte des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts*, 7th edition, Hamburg, 1975
- Fritsche, Alfred, *Dekadenz im Werk Arthur Schnitzlers*, Bern and Frankfurt am Main, 1974
- Frodl, Hermann, *Die deutsche Dekadenzdichtung der Jahrhundertwende: Wurzeln. Entfaltung. Wirkung*,

dissertation, University of Vienna, 1963

Furness, Raymond S, 'The Androgynous Ideal: Its Significance in German Literature', in *Modern Language Review*, 60, 1965, pp.58-64

----- *Expressionism*, London, 1973

----- *The Twentieth Century 1890-1945*,  
London, 1978

----- *Wagner and Literature*, Manchester,  
1982

----- 'Redemption and Regeneration:  
Wagner and Nordau in Bram Stoker's "Dracula"', in  
*Connections: Essays in Honour of Eda Sagarra on the  
Occasion of her 60th Birthday*, Stuttgart, 1993, pp.89-  
95

Furst, Lilian, *Counterparts: The Dynamics of Franco-  
German Literary Relationships 1770-1895*, London, 1977

Gilman, Richard, *Decadence: The Strange Life of an  
Epithet*, London, 1979

Goff, Penrith, 'Impressionism and Expressionism', in  
*The Challenge of German Literature*, ed. by Horst S  
Dämmrich and Diether H Hänicke, Detroit, 1971

Grimm, Reinhold, 'Zur Wirkungsgeschichte Maurice  
Maeterlincks in der deutschsprachigen Literatur', in  
*Revue de Litterature Comparée*, 33, 1959, pp.535-544

Gsteiger, Manfred, *Französische Symbolisten in der  
deutschen Literatur der Jahrhundertwende (1869-1914)*,  
Bern, 1971

Hajek, Edelgard, *Literarischer Jugendstil:  
Vergleichende Studien zur Dichtung und Malerei um 1900*,  
Bertelsmann Universitätsverlag, 1971

Halls, W D, *Maurice Maeterlinck: A Study of his Life  
and Thought*, Oxford, 1960

Hansen, Eric C, *Disaffection and Decadence: A Crisis in  
French Intellectual Thought 1848-1898*, Washington, 1982

Hartmann, Elwood, *French Literary Wagnerism*, New York  
and London, 1988

Hermann, Jost, *Der Schein des schönen Lebens: Studien  
zur Jahrhundertwende*, Frankfurt am Main, 1972

Hillbrand, Bruno (ed.), *Nietzsche und die deutsche  
Literatur. Band I: Texte zur Nietzsche-Rezeption 1873-  
1963*, Tübingen, 1978

Hinderer, Walter (ed.), *Geschichte der deutschen Lyrik  
vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart*, Stuttgart, 1983

Iggers, Wilma Abeles, *Karl Kraus: A Viennese Critic of*

*the Twentieth Century*, The Hague, 1967

Johnson, R V, *Aestheticism*, London, 1969

Johnston, William M, *The Austrian Mind: An Intellectual and Social History 1848-1938*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1972

Kafitz, Dieter (ed.), *Dekadenz in Deutschland: Beiträge zur Erforschung der Romanliteratur um die Jahrhundertwende*, Frankfurt am Main, Bern and New York, 1987

Knapp, Bettina, *Maurice Maeterlinck*, Boston, 1975

Koppen, Erwin, *Dekadenter Wagnerismus*, Berlin, 1973

Kovach, Thomas A, *Hofmannsthal and Symbolism: Art and Life in the Work of a Modern Poet*, New York, 1985

Leakey, F W, *Baudelaire: Les Fleurs du Mal*, Cambridge, 1992

Marquèze-Pouey, Louis, *Le mouvement décadent en France*, Paris, 1986

McCrickard, Janet, *Eclipse of the Sun: An Investigation of Sun and Moon Myths*, Glastonbury, 1990

Mennemeier, Franz Norbert, *Literatur der Jahrhundertwende II: Europäisch-deutsche Literaturtendenzen 1870-1910*, Bern, Frankfurt am Main, New York and Paris, 1988

Michaud, Guy, *Message poétique du symbolisme*, Paris, 1947

----- *La doctrine symboliste (documents)*, Paris, 1947

Milner, John, *Symbolists and Decadents*, London, 1971

Morwitz, Ernst, *Kommentar zu dem Werk Stefan Georges*, Munich and Düsseldorf, 1960

Müller, Karl Johann, *Das Dekadenzproblem in der österreichischen Literatur um die Jahrhundertwende, darlegt an Texten von Hermann Bahr, Richard von Schaukal, Hugo von Hofmannsthal und Leopold von Andrian*, Stuttgart, 1977

Natan, Alex (ed.), *German Men of Letters. Volume II*, London, 1963

Nielsen, Erika (ed.), *Focus on Vienna 1900*, Munich, 1982

Northcote-Bade, James, *Die Wagner-Mythen im Frühwerk Thomas Manns*, Bonn, 1975

- Paglia, Camille, *Sexual Personae: Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson*, London and New Haven, 1990
- Pasley, Malcolm (ed.), *Nietzsche: Imagery and Thought*, London, 1978
- Pick, Daniel, *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder, c.1848-1918*, Cambridge, 1989
- Pierrot, Jean, *The Decadent Imagination 1880-1900*, Chicago and London, 1981
- Prater, Donald, *A Ringing Glass: The Life of Rainer Maria Rilke*, Oxford, 1986
- Praz, Mario, *The Romantic Agony*, 2nd edition, London, 1951
- Quinn, Patrick F, *The French Face of Edgar Allan Poe*, Carbondale, 1957
- Rank, Otto, *The Don Juan Legend*, translated by David G Winter, Princeton, 1975  
 ----- *The Incest Theme in Literature and Legend: Fundamentals of a Psychology of Literary Creation*, translated by Gregory C Richter, Baltimore and London, 1992
- Rasch, Wolfdietrich, *Die literarische Décadence um 1900*, Munich, 1986
- Richard, Noël, *Le Mouvement Décadent*, Paris, 1968
- Ridgway, R S, *Voltaire and Sensibility*, Montreal and London, 1973
- Rieckmann, Jens, *Aufbruch in die Moderne: Die Anfänge des Jungen Wien. Österreichische Literatur und Kritik im Fin de Siècle*, 2nd edition, Frankfurt am Main, 1986
- Ruprecht, Erich and Bänisch, Dieter (ed.), *Literarische Manifeste der Jahrhundertwende 1890-1910*, Stuttgart, 1970
- Ryan, Lawrence, 'Jahrhundertwende', in *Gechichte der deutschen Lyrik vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart*, ed., by Walter Hinderer, 2nd edition, Stuttgart, 1983
- Scheible, Hartmut, *Literarischer Jugendstil in Wien*, Munich and Zurich, 1984
- Schorske, Carl E, *Fin de Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture*, London, 1980
- Shuttle, P and Redgrove, P, *The Wise Wound: Menstruation and Everywoman*, Harmondsworth, 1980

- Smeed, J W, *Don Juan: Variations on a Theme*, London and New York, 1990
- Sokel, Walter H, *The Writer in Extremis: Expressionism in Twentieth Century German Literature*, Stanford, 1959
- Stern, J P, *Re-interpretations: Seven Studies in Nineteenth Century German Literature*, London, 1964  
 ----- *Idylls and Realities: Studies in Nineteenth Century German Literature*, London, 1971
- Swales, Martin, *Arthur Schnitzler: A Critical Study*, Oxford, 1971
- Swart, Koenraad W, *The Sense of Decadence in nineteenth-century France*, The Hague, 1964
- Symons, Arthur, *The Symbolist Movement in Literature*, 2nd edition, London, 1911
- Tegtmeier, Ralph, *Okkultismus und Erotik in der Literatur des Fin de Siècle*, Königswinter, 1983
- Thompson, Bruce, *Schnitzler's Vienna: Image of a Society*, London and New York, 1990
- Timms, Edward, *Karl Kraus: Apocalyptic Satirist. Culture and Catastrophe in Habsburg Vienna*, Newhaven and London, 1986
- Uhlig, Helmut, 'Vom Ästhetizismus zum Expressionismus' in *Expressionismus: Gestalten einer literarischen Bewegung*, ed. by Hermann Friedmann and Otto Mann, Heidelberg, 1956
- Waissenberger, Robert (ed.), *Wien 1870-1930: Traum und Wirklichkeit*, Salzburg and Vienna, 1984
- Weinhold, Ulrike, *Künstlichkeit und Kunst in der deutschsprachigen Dekadenz-Literatur*, Frankfurt am Main, Bern and Las Vegas, 1977
- Williams, W D, *Nietzsche and the French: A Study of the Influence of Nietzsche's French Reading on his Thought and Writing*, Oxford, 1952
- Zohn, Harry, *Karl Kraus*, New York, 1971