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A Comparison of Oscar Wilde's Salome and Hugo von Hofmannsthal's Elektra

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INTRODUCTION

I

Hugo von Hofmannsthal, the Austrian poet, dramatist and essayist, was always intimately connected with literatures of many other countries and many other times. He delved not only into the myths and legends of antiquity, but also into the contemporary cultures of the entire Western world. He was interested in all the countries of Europe -- Austria, Germany, Spain, France, Italy, Rumania, the Scandinavian countries, England, and even America, which was not too highly esteemed culturally in the Europe of his time. In many ways, he could have been considered the mediator between his native Austria and its neighbors to the southeast, and the more Western countries, especially England and France.

Hofmannsthal read widely in many languages; he had studied the classical ones at his Gymnasium and was privately tutored in French and English. Many of his writings were either translations of original texts into German or adaptations. Thus, from the French, he translated Jules Renard's Poil de Carotte (Fuchs), Molière's Le mariage forcé (Die Heirat wider Willen), Le bourgeois gentilhomme (Der Bürger als Edelmann) and Les Facheux (Die Lästigen). From the Greek, he translated (with minor changes) Sophocles's Oedipus Rex (König Oedipus). From the Italian, he translated Gabriele d'Annunzio's Die Sirenetta. Often a transla-
tion would lead to an adaptation, which was more Hofmannsthal's creation than the original author's as in Der Bürger als Edelmann from Molière's *Le bourgeois gentilhomme*, *Alkestis* and *Elektra* from the plays of that name by Euripides and Sophocles, *Die Frau am Fenster* from d'Annunzio's *Sogno d'un Mattino di Primavera*, *Das grosse Welttheater* and *Der Turm* from Calderon's *El gran teatro del mundo* and *La vida es sueno*, *Jedermann* from the English morality play, *Everyman*, and *Das gerettete Venedig* from Otway's *Venice Preserved*. In some cases, his creative spirit, constantly at work, would progress from a simple translation to a completely different play of his own, as for example, Molière's *Le bourgeois gentilhomme* and Calderon's *La vida es sueno*, which were first translated, then adapted; and then utilized in entirely new plays such as *Ariadne auf Naxos* and *Der Turm*. He pursued a general literary trend, also seen in many other writers, of transforming old stories by his genius into ever new forms.

Of all the literatures that influenced and inspired the young Hofmannsthal, the most significant to him seemed that of England. In April, 1899, he wrote to a friend, Baron Felix Oppenheim, then living in London:

*London nimmt in meinem Vorstellungslachen einen Ungeheuren Raum ein: mehr Faden, als mir aufzuzählen möglich wäre, laufen von dort aus, und die wichtigsten Einfüsse für mein inneres Leben lassen sich mehr oder weniger auf englische Weltanschauung und das intensive und weltumspannende Gegenwartsleben, das sich dort konzentriert, zurückführen.*
Evidence can be found of the importance he attached all his life to English life, language and letters. He often gave friends advice about their reading in English literature, especially in poetry and the drama with which he was better acquainted than with the novels. Writing to Hermann Bahr, for example, in July, 1892, he states:

Was macht das Englische? Ich möchte Ihnen gern Bücher raten; ich habe selbst lauter wunderschones mit, aber nur Vers: Poe, Shelley, und Swinburne. Die moderne Literatur, das was hinter Swinburne steht, lässt sich vom Kontinent nicht übersehen. Ich kenne noch gar nichts eigentlich Modernes in englischer Prosa. Dafür ist Thackeray und das Bessere an Dickens noch immer sehr lebendig; mit George Eliot werden Sie gerade nichts anfangen können.

Among Hofmannsthal's earliest essays, are five dealing with English culture and life, published in the period from 1891 to 1896 under the nom-de-plume of "Loris", because, at that time, Gymnasium students were not permitted to publish their own works. The first, "Englisches Leben" (1891), is a review of the Memoir of the Life of Lawrence Oliphant. The second, "Algernon Charles Swinburne" (1893), concerns that poet, and bewails the fact that he had just been denied the poet laureateship of England after the death of Tennyson, because of Swinburne's association with the Aesthetic movement. Hofmannsthal felt that Swinburne was a far better poet than most of his associates, a "passionate pilgrim" at the shrine of the "allbelebende Venus"; and, because of the high quality of his poetry, should be recognized as England's greatest
living poet despite his aesthetic and erotic (poetically speaking) tendencies.

The third essay, "Über moderne englische malerei" (1894), inspired by the International Art Exhibition in Vienna, treats the English Pre-Raphaelite painters. A comment about this essay in a letter written in 1894 to Elsa Bruckmann-Cantacuzene, shows how deeply English culture really penetrated the development of Hofmannsthal as a writer:

Dafür schick' ich ihnen heute...meinen gutgemeinten, schlechtgeschriebenen Aufsatz über die englischen Präraffaeliten, wo Sie spüren werden, wie ich von dem etwas leeren Ästhetismus, ins Menschlich-Sittliche hinüberzulenken suche. Denn es scheint mir sehr darauf anzukommen, dass die Kunst vom Standpunkt des Lebens betrachtet werde. 6

This idea was to be the mainspring of Hofmannsthal's entire work and it is significant, not only that he recognized it so early, but that it was in relationship to the contemporary English culture that he stated his problem.

The fourth essay is about "Walter Pater" (1894), whose ideas of the morality behind beauty helped Hofmannsthal to define more clearly his own feeling toward Aestheticism. Writing of Pater's Marius the Epicurean, a philosophical novel, he stated that it showed "die Unzulänglichkeit, so bald man auf der ästhetischen Weltanschauung die ganze Lebensführung aufbauen wollte". 7 He had already mentioned the dangers of Aestheticism as being "ein übernährtes und überwachsenes Element unserer Kultur und gefährlich wie
Opium". The fifth and last of these early essays about England is "Englischer Stil" (1896) which is about the appearance on the stage of the English Barrison sisters. In them he sees typical English girls with a quality; almost "knabenhaft" which is also characteristic of the typical English literary heroine, especially in Shakespeare (e.g. the many girls, disguised as boys). He also discusses the development of the English heroine in English literature and art, and English style in everything from picture books to Chippendale furniture.

The English authors with whom Hofmannsthal was especially familiar were Shakespeare ("Shakespeare nenne ich erst gar nicht, seinem Einfluss hat sich kein Deutscher entzogen"), Webster, Otway, and Ford, all Elizabethan dramatists; the English Romanticists, Coleridge, Keats and Shelley; Milton; the Victorian poets, Tennyson, Browning and Swinburne; the fin de siècle poets, Wilde and Rossetti; the novelists, Dickens, Eliot, Ouida, Oliphant, Smiles, Thackeray and Wetherell; and the essayists, Hazlitt, Lamb, Macaulay, and Ruskin.

Most of this attraction for England is found in the young Hofmannsthal. Even in his later years, at the outbreak of World War I, he still felt an intense enough admiration for England to write a protest against the boycott of foreign languages in the schools of Austria. His patriotism was an
outgrowth of his feeling that the poet cannot shut himself off from life but must participate in it. This was a poetic and moral patriotism rather than a chauvinistic one. He could see that the boycotting of foreign languages would do more to injure the Austrians than they would gain by revenge upon their enemies. Not only is there the cultural problem, but also the practical one of communication with one's enemies either in victory or defeat. One could not deny the existence or importance of England by denying the learning of English.

He writes:

England aber, wie immer es aus diesem Kriege hervorgeht, und vielleicht geht es nach harter Entscheidung als Deutsch-Allieter hervor, umspannt mit seiner Sprache die Welt; und seine Sprache wird der Schlüssel bleiben, mit dem man ihm Teile selber dieses Weltbesitzes abringen wird.\textsuperscript{12}

Not only did Hofmannsthal read and write about English letters; as a young man, he practiced many English habits and acted like an Englishman in a Vienna that had definite French leanings. He knew several members of the British embassy in Vienna, he sailed and played tennis at a time when these were considered primarily English sports. He offered Hermann Bahr, the German writer and one of Hofmannsthal's best friends, English recipes, used English letter headings, occasionally sent Christmas cards (a very English custom)\textsuperscript{13}, even used English words in his letters ("Ich war schon lange nicht so 'low'"\textsuperscript{14}).

He especially admired what he considered the "English
gentleman." All the qualities that were important to the young Hofmannsthal - good manners, self-control, nobility of action, were to be found in such a gentleman. These qualities were even more important to Hofmannsthal than intelligence. This is why he uses such a gentleman as a literary device to express the period of emotional shock that he sustained at the end of his adolescence when he felt he could no longer write at all, and that his creative genius, which had made his precocious verse so extraordinary and so successful, had vanished, leaving him in a cold bleak colorless world.

This English gentleman, Philip, Lord Chandos, experiences these very feelings. In "Ein Brief" (1902) to Francis Bacon, he expresses his inability to use words. He has suddenly felt that it is impossible to express an actual object or one's true feelings in words. Therefore, rather than endure this dilemma any more, he plans to give up writing forever. Hofmannsthal felt that an English gentleman of the sixteenth century could best express the problem which he himself overcame to some extent. Although he never wrote lyric poetry again, he started to write dramas, stories and essays, which do not depend so much upon the expression of one's impressions of the nature of the world, and which are more objective.

In the "Briefe des Zurückgekehrten" (1908), Hofmannsthal contrasts the English and the German character, rather to the
detriment of the latter. He considers as an important maxim for life an utterance of a dying twenty-five year old Scotsmen in a Montevideo hospital: "The whole man must move at once". He said about this young man: "Viel von dem Stoff war in ihm, woraus die Englische Rasse ihre Warren Hastings und Cecil Rhodes macht."  

Perhaps Hofmannsthal did not see England very clearly. He drew only upon those factors in literature and life which interested him, and he ignored many others: the commercialism, the growing bourgeois element and the rise of liberalism in politics and society. To him, England was essentially aristocratic and feudalistic with ideas based strongly on a religious basis. However, in whatever light he regarded England, there is no doubt that it had a tremendous influence on his work.

Oscar Wilde was prominent among the English writers in whom he was most interested. We find an early reference to Wilde in a letter written in 1894 to Elsa Bruckmann-Cantacuzene in which he mentions Wilde's "Intentions" among his readings. In July, 1896, he wrote to Hermann Bahr, saying he had found "anlässlich sonderbare tiefliegende Zusammenhänge zwischen der 'Aphrodite' von Louys und 'Dorian Gray' von Oscar Wilde." He had earlier intended to write a series of essays on contemporary English and French literature:
Ich werde übrigens nächstens versuchen, in Tageblättern die uns verwandten Erscheinungen fremder Literaturen (Verlaine, Swinburne, Oscar Wilde, die Präraffaeliten, etc.) zu besprechen.20

In 1893 and 1894, he wrote the essays on Swinburne and the Pre-Raphaelites, whom he considered England fortunate in possessing, although he could not approve of their aesthetic morality.

Die Englander sind sehr glücklich, sich hier nicht an sehr Fernes, sondern an die Belebung des Alchristli- chen durch die Präraffaeliten anlehnen zu können, sozu sagen eine aufgegossene Form des Stilisierten zu besitzen.21

He did not write the essay on Oscar Wilde until 1905, several years after Wilde's death. The shock of the trial and imprisonment of Wilde was still fresh in his mind, and the essay, "Sebastiaulu Melmoth", was more concerned with Wilde's life and personality than with his literary achievements.

It was not at all strange that Hofmannsthal should choose to write such an essay. Aside from his aforementioned interest in England and his contemporary English writers, Oscar Wilde's career had long held a special fascination for Hofmannsthal, the Austro-German poet. Hermann Bahr had introduced Wilde's works to the Viennese literary circles. Wilde was accepted as an important writer in Germany and Austria more than in England. His plays were produced more frequently in Germany than the plays of any English playwright except Shakespeare's. Wilde held a unique position in the minds of the
European intelligentsia. He was the most brilliant, most outspoken advocate of the cult of Aestheticism in Europe. Defiantly, he had stated the essential doctrine of this sect: the responsibility of the artist to nothing but art itself. Wilde's trial, therefore, seemed to put him on trial not only for homosexuality, but for his idea of the freedom of the artist to do what he pleases without regarding the conventional mores of his society.

Immediately after his trial, Wilde seemed especially to attract the attention of the Germans. Soon after his death in 1900, a large number of Wilde's works appeared for the first time in German translation. Max Meyerfeld, Wilde's chief partisan in Germany, wrote at this time:


Almost simultaneously with the publication of Hofmannsthal's essay on Wilde, another series of translations appeared. There definitely seemed to be a Wilde Renaissance at that time in Germany and Austria, and even England was forgetting the scandalous circumstances of Wilde's trial, im-
prisonment and death, and seemed to be reading his works again.

There were two reasons why Hofmannsthal called his essay on Oscar Wilde "Sebastian Melmoth", a name under which Wilde had chosen to live in Paris, France, after his release from prison: Saint Sebastian was a Christian martyr, and Melmoth was taken from the novel, Melmoth the Wanderer by a relative of Wilde's mother, C. R. Maturin, a Dorian-Gray type of novel. By using this name for his essay, Hofmannsthal indicated that he was writing about a broken man and not the Oscar Wilde who had been the toast of Europe before his trial.

Hofmannsthal attempts to answer the question of why the elegant, witty Oscar Wilde, the darling of the literary circles of Europe should have become the broken Sebastian Melmoth of Paris. Hofmannsthal feels that these two figures are both aspects of Wilde, that from the beginning, like a figure in Greek tragedy, he carried the seeds of his destruction within himself:

Es hat gar keinen Sinn zu sprechen, als ob Oscar Wildes Schicksal und Oscar Wildes Wesen zweierlei gewesen wären und als ob das Schicksal ihn so angefallen hätte wie ein bissiger Köter ein ahnungsloses Bauernkind, das einen Korb mit Eiern auf dem Kopf trägt....Oscar Wildes Wesen und Oscar Wildes Schicksal sind ganz und gar dasselbe. Er ging auf seine Katastrophe zu, mit solchen Schritten wie Odipus, der Sehend-Blinde. 

For Hofmannsthal, it was not excuse to say that Wilde was
Hofmannsthal's aestheticism of necessity had to have discipline. All through life, he strove against the principle of "l'art pour l'art" within himself and for the ideals of Walter Pater, who believed in the morality underlying all art, and who represented Hofmannsthal's ideal of the perfect Aesthete. Oscar Wilde, and, indeed, most of the English and Continental aesthetic movement, lacked this discipline. This playing with reality without any controls, which is actually a denial of reality, was Wilde's fatal flaw, because in contrast to Wilde's view, the real world does not separate evil from good, beauty from ugliness, poetry from life. These seemingly contradictory concepts are intermingled, and an attempt to separate them is impossible and, therefore, in the end, fatal.

One can see from the following quotations from Wilde and Hofmannsthal the apparent dissimilarities in their aesthetic philosophies. From the preface to Dorian Gray, we find:

No artist has ethical sympathies. An ethical sympathy in an artist is an unpardonable mannerism of style...It is the spectator and not life that art really mirrors...All art is quite useless.

And in Hofmannsthal's "Ad me ipsum", the collection of his own
notes about his works, speaking of his play, *Der Abenteurer und die Sängerin*, he states:

"Verknüpfung mit dem Leben" is what Hofmannsthal was always seeking for his characters and for himself, from his first lyric drama, *Gestern* to his last play, *Der Turm*. He always felt that the artist is responsible to society, that he should live a normal life and be a man as well as an artist, subject to the restrictions imposed on any man. In as early a play as *Der Tor und der Tod*, (1893), Hofmannsthal emphasizes the point that the man, who, because of his aesthetic separation from life, considers himself released from all moral and human obligations, is eternally damned (unless he repents). It is difficult to see how so many critics have considered the young Hofmannsthal as a complete aesthete, since even his early works condemn the aesthete who shuts himself off from life.
Both Hofmannsthal and Wilde wrote voluminously and in a wide variety of forms. They both wrote lyric poetry, much of it impressionistic; essays; and fairy tales with moral undertones: It is in the latter that Wilde's ethical sympathies, however much he chose to ignore them, came forth, for these tales, ostensibly written for children, such as The Happy Prince or The Selfish Giant, clearly express the necessity for complete selflessness in order to gain true self-realization. These show a striking resemblance to Hofmannsthal's "Märchen", culminating in Die Frau ohne Schatten, where this necessity, expressed by the sacrifice of one's most essential desire and the gain of immeasurably more, is also shown. Both wrote novels that might be considered "Entwicklungsromane": The Picture of Dorian Gray, showing the development and education of the hero in the ways of evil, rather than the more usual ones of good, might certainly be considered such a novel; Hofmannsthal's Andreas, the story of an innocent young Austrian nobleman exposed to the ancient, beautiful but corrupt city of Venice, could have been very similar, although, like so many such "Romane", it was never completed. Whether Andreas would be drawn into evil as the equally innocent Dorian remains a matter for speculation. Both writers wrote social comedies although Wilde's are essentially a series of epigrams with a
feeble plot, while Hofmannsthal's are comedies of character. Both wrote lyric dramas.

Two of these lyric dramas and the extent to which they resemble each other are the subjects for this thesis. Salome is the only one-act drama Wilde wrote and one of his few serious plays. Elektra is a work that shows Hofmannsthal at his best in language, stagecraft and character analysis. Richard Strauss, used Hofmannsthal almost exclusively as his librettist, after discovering him. (Salome was composed before Elektra). But Elektra is the only one of the Hofmannsthal libretti that was written and presented (as a play first). (The other libretti were written as such). Since Elektra was the first Hofmannsthal libretto used and the opera composed immediately after Salome, one might surmise that Strauss found in Hofmannsthal the quality he had found before in Wilde. Certainly Strauss thought the two plays were very similar; in fact, he at first did not want to compose Elektra so soon after Salome because he felt that it would lead to a monotony of style in his music.

Hofmannsthal was in no way inclined, however, to admit that his play had any but very superficial resemblance to the Wilde play:

Nun muss ich schon sagen, dass ich, wie die Dinge mir nun zu liegen scheinen, allerdings sehr froh wäre, wenn Sie es möglich fänden, zunächst an der "Elektra" festzuhalten, deren "Ähnlichkeiten" mit dem Salomestoff mir bei näherer
Überlegung doch auf ein Nichts zusammenschrumpfen scheinen. (Es sind zwei Einakter, jeder hat einen Frauen­namen, beide spielen im Altertum und beide wurden in Berlin von der Eysoldt kreiert: ich glaube, darauf läuft die ganze Ähnlichkeit hinaus.) Denn die Farbenmischung scheint mir in beiden Stoffen eine so wesentlich verschiedene zu sein: bei der "Salome" so viel Purpur und Violett gleichsam, in einer schwulen Luft, bei der "Elektra" dagegen eine Gemenge aus Nacht und Licht, schwarz und hell. Auch scheint mir die auf Sieg und Reinigung hinauslaufende, aufwärtsstürmende Motivenfolge, die sich auf Orest und seine Tat bezieht – und die ich mir in der Musik ungleich gewaltiger vorstellen kann als in der Dichtung, in "Salome" nicht nur ihresgleichen, sondern nichts irgendwie Ähnliches sich gegenüber zu haben.31

Hofmannsthal might have gotten the idea of using colors to distinguish the two plays from Wilde's De Profundis, where the latter refers to "making beautiful coloured musical things such as 'Salome' ..."32

Thus the opinions of the plays seem to have been divided as to their similarity or difference even among those who knew them the most intimately. This makes it enlightening to probe deeply into the plays - into their sources, their language, their presentations, the changes finally made in them to meet the exigencies of the music and the operatic stage, and, of course, most significantly, the characters - and to find the points upon which they agree or differ. The critical consensus has been strongly in favor of their similarity. Similar as they are, they show the emerging questioning of artistic morality, a problem faced by all writers. This pro-
blem, which Wilde considered solved by aestheticism at the time of the writing of Salome and which, except for a few lapses, never seemed to trouble him much, was one with which Hofmannsthal struggled until his death.
Chapter I

The Sources and the Writing of the Plays

Both Salome and Elektra have in common the fact that they are based on very ancient source material. Salome's story is the younger. It is based on Mark 6:17-29, which follows:

For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold of John and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife: for he had married her.

For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife.

Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him and would have killed him; but she could not:

For Herod feared John, knowing he was a just man and holy, and observed him: and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly.

And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birthday made a supper to his lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee;

And when the daughter of the said Herodias came in and danced, and pleased Herod, and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee.

And he sware unto her, whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom.

And she went forth, and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist.

And she came in straightway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that thou give me, by and by, in a charger, the head of John the Baptist,

And the king was exceeding sorry; yet for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her.

And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought: and he went and beheaded him in the prison;

And brought his head in a charger, and gave it to the damsel; and the damsel gave it to her mother.
And when his disciples heard of it, they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb.

A briefer, similar version appears in Matthew 14:1-11.

It is obvious that there was more to the source of Salome than merely the simple, bare facts of the story related above. Much more was needed to transform this story of an incestuous marriage, a denunciatory prophet, an enraged woman, an obedient daughter and an indulgent step-father into the bloody, sensuous and lyrical play of Wilde.

The historical Salome was the daughter of Herod Philip and Herodias. Herod Antipas, Herod Philip's half-brother, became her step-father by his marriage to his cousin, Herodias. Salome was not killed by the order of Antipas, as indicated in the play, but lived to have two husbands (the first, another half-uncle of hers, Philip) and to bear three sons to the second of these, her cousin, Aristobolus. Her name has come down to us through the writings of Flavius Josephus, a contemporary Jewish historian. A coin bearing her profile still exists.²

The story of Salome has fascinated writers, artists and musicians ever since her time and Daffner emphasizes the modern interest in her, Herodias, and John, as a subject for modern artists of all types.³ Starting with Flaubert's *Herodias* (1877) and going past the Wilde play (1891) to 1912, the number of poems, plays, stories, pictures, sculptures and musi-
cal compositions centered around this theme is amazing.

The above-mentioned Herodias, a short story by Gustave Flaubert, was to become one of the two main sources for Wilde's play, although the two writers treated their Biblical material quite differently. Wilde had first become interested in Flaubert's story upon seeing an engraved illustration of Salome upon the wall of a friend's house. Apparently this influenced him to read the story. But Flaubert's story is "a sedate narrative perturbed by no sharp conflicts or suddenly precipitated crises." It presents the tale as "a stately and silent haut-relief on the frieze of some ancient palace." This, as we shall see, is far from the atmosphere of Salome, which, as Hofmannsthal states, is a highly "colorful" play. The addition of the love of Salome for John is another facet that exists neither in the Bible nor in "Herodias". The strong fate-element in Salome is another motive not found in "Herodias". The basic difference has been expressed by Boris Brasol, who states that "in his L'Herodias, Flaubert is a sober realist. Wilde in his Salome, is a fervent mystic: to him, there is a curious accord between external phenomena and the inner world of man's soul." The main influence that Herodias did have on Salome is in the Oriental atmosphere, which was an addition of Flaubert's to the original story.

The other main source for Salome was Maurice Maeterlinck's
Les Sept Princesses. It was the style of this play, which appeared a year before Salome, that particularly appealed to Wilde. The repetition of phrases, which is such a characteristic feature of Salome, is a direct result of the same repetition of phrases in the Maeterlinck drama. This point will be further developed in the chapter on the language of the plays. Daffner also mentions Stephen Mallarmé as a strong influence on Wilde without much evidence to support his statement.

There are several interesting, highly-colorful versions of how Wilde finally wrote the play. The consensus among his friends is as follows:

Wilde, after encountering the two aforementioned French literary works, contemplated a play of his own about Salome. While in Paris, he entertained his friends at a luncheon by reading passages of dialogue from the proposed play. When he returned to his hotel room after lunch, he found a blank notebook lying on a table, and, in a sudden burst of inspiration, sat down and wrote the whole play in approximately nine hours. When he was almost finished, he felt tired and went to a cafe for some food. He called the orchestra leader to him and said, "I am writing a play about a woman dancing in her bare feet in the blood of a man she has craved for and slain. I want you to play something in harmony with my thoughts." Apparently the orchestra leader produced the right type of music, shocking
as it was to the other patrons of the restaurant, for Wilde finished the play that night.

Sources differ on whether this play was or was not written for Sarah Bernhardt, the great French actress. At one time, she was certainly anxious to play such a part, but the play had already been written when Wilde read it to her, at her own request. Wilde himself said in a letter to the "Times" on March 2, 1893, after the play had been reviewed in that paper:

The fact that the greatest tragic actress of any stage now living saw in my play such beauty that she was anxious to produce it, to take herself the part of the heroine, to lend to the entire poem the glamour of her personality, and to my prose the music of her flute-like voice - this was naturally and will always be, a source of pride and pleasure to me, and I look forward with delight to seeing Mme. Bernhardt present my play in Paris, that vivid centre of art, where religious dramas are often performed. But my play was in no sense of the words written for this great actress. I have never written a play for any actor or actress, nor shall I ever do so. Such work is for the artisan in literature - not for the artist.

Nevertheless, in spite of Wilde's protestation, the hope that such a vibrant personality might play the leading role when the play had its premiere probably did affect the play to some extent, especially in his use of French, her native language. This is Wilde's only play in that language. Although Salomé was originally written in French, almost all the modern editions of Wilde's works contain the English trans-
lation without even an explanatory note to the effect that this translation was originally by Wilde's friend, Lord Alfred Douglas (at Wilde's request and extensively corrected by him). The first English version appeared with a dedication by Wilde to Douglas, "whose name appeared as translator, though he never considered the published version his work."10

The theories concerning the original French version range from one that Wilde felt that such a controversial subject could be better presented in France than in England [which was true] to Lord Alfred's claim that Wilde wrote the play in English first and then translated it into French with the aid of Pierre Louys and André Gide. The first theory, however, ignores the fact that the first production was planned for the Palace Theatre in London, even though the French Sarah Bernhardt was to play the part. The second theory seems more tenable since the English-writing Wilde might have felt that a French translation of his play would appeal more to Madame Bernhardt. He himself claimed that he had always wanted to test his ability to write in French:

"My idea of writing the play was simply this; I have one instrument that I know I can command, and that is the English language. There is another instrument to which I had listened all my life, and I wanted once to touch this new instrument to see whether I could make any beautiful thing out of it."
The illustrations by Aubrey Beardsley for the original English version deserve at least a comment, since their depravity, although differing considerably in quality from the sensuality of the actual play, caused the play to receive even more criticism than it otherwise would have, according to Lewis Broad, "Beardsley's were not pictures that illustrated the text, they were productions of his own imaginings. There was an evil about them, but it was the evil of Beardsley's conception, not of Wilde's Salomé, an evil of sophistication. Wilde's characters are lustful in their evil; Beardsley's figures are degenerate."
The sources of Hofmannsthal's *Elektra* are far more ancient. The story dates back to the legends centered around the "Trojan War" which authorities have attempted to date at various times during the twelfth century B.C. (The story of Salome, on the other hand, dates back only to the first century A.D.) These legends were to influence Greek literature for many centuries and to provide much of the material for the plays of the three great tragedians of the Golden Age, Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. It was Sophocles (c. 495-406 B.C.) who wrote the *Electra* from which Hofmannsthal adapted his play.

There is some source material on the writing of *Elektra* in the letters and the diaries of Hofmannsthal himself. First there is an excerpt from his diary, dated July 17, 1904:

"Elektra."-Der erste Einfall kam mir anfangs September 1901. Ich las damals, um für die "Pom-pilia" [this was to be a play based on Robert Browning's *The Ring and the Book* which was never completed] gewisses zu lernen, den "Richard III" und die "Elektra" von Sophokles. Sogleich wandelte sich die Gestalt dieser Elektra in eine andere. Auch das Ende stand sogleich da: dass sie nicht weiterleben kann, dass, wenn der Streich gefallen ist, ihr Leben und ihr Eingeweide ihr entstürzen muss, wie die Drohe, wenn sie die Königin befruchtet hat, mit dem befruchtenden Stachel zugleich Eingeweide und Leben entstürzen. Die Verwandtschaft und der Gegensatz zu Hamlet waren mir auffallend. Als Stil schwebte mir vor, etwas Gegensätzliches zur "Iphigenie" zu machen, etwas worauf das Wort nicht passe: "dieses gräciesierende Produkt erschien mir beim erneuten Lesen

In this passage, it is interesting to note the connection Hofmannsthal found between Hamlet and Elektra, since this is an idea from the principle of modern psychoanalysis. Many psychoanalysts, including Freud, think of Hamlet as the perfect example of the Oedipus complex, the female version of which Freud was later in his Abriss der Psychoanalyse (1938) to call the Elektra complex. This idea will be explored in greater detail in the analysis of Elektra's character in Chapter III.

An undated letter written to Dr. Ernest Hladny, who was writing an article about Hofmannsthal's Greek plays, gives more information about the conception of Elektra:

..Die Fassung der "Elektra" ist die ursprüngliche. Das Ganze, ohne starke Korrekturen, in drei oder vier Wochen hingeschrieben, August-September, 1903.... Mein Ausgangspunkt war der Elektra Charakter, das erinnere ich mich ganz genau. Ich las das sophokleische einmal im Marten und im

A following letter to Dr. Hladny, who had inquired about other books that might have been possible influences on Hofmannsthals particular treatment of this play, brought the following reply:

The reference to the psychological theories of Sigmund Freud again appears. Another just as interesting reference is the one to the Old Testament, which is so important to the language of both Elektra and Salome. This will be further discussed in Chapter IV. The English influence comes to light once more in the reference to Hofmannsthal's reading of Swinburne and the latter's linguistic relation to Elektra.

The last letter to be mentioned in connection with the writing of Elektra is one written to Otto Brahm between August and October of 1903, which includes the following passages:

...Ich bin, um es kurz zu sagen, mit den mir vorschwebenden Umarbeitungen des zweiten und dritten Aktes des "Geretteten Venedig" nicht fertig, und habe in der Zwischenzeit (im August) eine einaktige freie Bearbeitung der "Elektra" des Sophokles vollendet, welche durchaus im Hinblick auf die schauspielerische Person der Eysoldt verfasst ist, welche Bearbeitung sich seit zehn Tagen in den Händen Reinhardts befindet, der sie früher oder später (Oktober? Dezember?) spielen wird.

Jahr im Dezember den vierten und fünften Akt des "Geretteten Veledig" schrieb, welcher fünfte Akt, und welches Stück im ganzen wohl weitaus das Beste und Stärkste ist, was ich je zusammengebracht habe und die einzige Sache, auf der in besseren Stunden mein gesteigertes Selbstvertrauen ruht,-schrieb also die "Elektra", ohne bestimmt zu wissen, ob ich sie fertig bringen oder weglegen würde: deshalb auch konnte ich Ihnen so wie niemanden während des Schreibens darüber Mitteilung machen, sondern erst jetzt, nachdem ich das Fertigwerden einer sehr unverlässlicher Stimmung abgezwungen habe.17

Perhaps one could consider Elektra a play that never really was finished, since there was to be a second part to it--that is, Elektra itself forms the first part of a two-part play, the second part of which was to be a two-act play, Orest in Delphi, which Hofmannsthal started but never completed.18 He himself did not like to consider Elektra by itself since, as he stated in a letter to Oskar Bie, in October 1903:

Mir wäre das Stuck [Elektra] selbst in seiner fast krampfhaften Eingeschlossenheit, seiner grässlichen Lichtlosigkeit ganz unerträglich, wenn ich nicht daneben immer als innerlich untrennbaren zweiten Teil den "Orest in Delphi" im Geist sehen wurde, eine mir sehr liebe Konzeption, die auf einem ziemlich apokryphen Ausgang des Mythos beruht und von keinem antiken Tragiker vorgearbeitet ist.19
III

It is seen now that there are the following similarities and differences in the writing and the sources of Elektra and Salome. It is true that both are based on very ancient sources, although that of Elektra predates that of Salome by more than a thousand years. Both stories come from the same area: The cultures of the Jews and the Greeks around the Mediterranean Sea: They are myths, based on historical happenings and historical persons. The historians and authors of their time then had written about before Hofmannsthal and Wilde found them.

But the original stories were not the only materials used for the writing of the two modern plays. In each case, several other works had as much influence as the original story. Flaubert's "Herodias" influenced the background of Wilde's play and Maeterlinck influenced his style: Freud, Breuer and Rohde influenced Hofmannsthal's psychology and Swinburne his style - or, one might say that Goethe's Iphigenie influenced Hofmannsthal's style in a reverse fashion, since Hofmannsthal wanted to write a play based on a classic Greek theme that would be diametrically opposed in atmosphere to the essentially humanistic, calm, Apollonian sanity that pervaded Goethe's play. Essentially, in the matter of the style of both Elektra and Salome, one finds that the influence of the Old Testament is very strong.
Both Wilde and Hofmannsthal were not only writing a play as literature, but had a definite theatrical production and probably a definite actress in mind at the time of the writing. This could not avoid having a strong effect on the plays. The relationship of Sarah Bernhardt to the writing of Salome, and Adele Sandrock and Gertrud Eysoldt to the writing of Elektra, has already been demonstrated.

A difference appears, however, in the method of writing of the plays that reflects the difference in the personalities of the writers. Salome was dashed off at great speed [in nine hours, if this frequently repeated story can be believed] in an impulsive moment, [granted that the impulse had been there before and that it had already been much contemplated], although it was later revised. Elektra was the product of a long, slow process which took the writer considerable time and effort. There is an odd compulsion in the writing of Elektra, since we have seen from the previously quoted letter to Otto Brahm that Hofmannsthal had not actually planned to work on this play at just that time, but had planned to finish Das gerettete Venedig, and was almost forced by the Elektra play to write it.
CHAPTER II

The Plots

Before investigating thoroughly the characters, language and performances of *Salome* and *Elektra*, a brief plot summary of each and a comparison of these plots with each other and with the original is presented.

I

The plot of *Salome* is as follows:

It is night in the country of Judea. A young Syrian, captain of the guard of the Tetrarch Herode’s palace, is standing in front of the palace talking to a page of Herodias’s. The captain is in love with Salome, daughter of Herodias, who is the wife of the Tetrarch. Herodias was formerly married to the Tetrarch’s brother, Philip, the father of Salome. Therefore, the relationship between Herodias and Herode is, according to Jewish law, incestuous. The captain and the page speak of the beauty of Salome and the mood of Herode, and finally, of religion. The voice of Iokanaan (John the Baptist) is heard from a cistern where he has been imprisoned for publicly denouncing the incest of Herode and Herodias. Iokanaan is prophesying the advent of the Messiah. The soldiers [a Cappadocian has joined them] discuss and describe him. They also discuss the strangeness of the prison and the death of Philip, who had similarly been imprisoned for twelve years and who had been finally strangled on order of Herode by
Namaan, the executioner. Salomé enters and converses with the soldiers. She is fascinated by the thought of this strange prophet's presence so close to her, imprisoned as he is in the same cistern in which her father had been confined before his death. She lures the captain into bringing Iokanaan before her, which is strictly against the captain's orders.

Iokanaan, upon confronting Salomé, denounces her and her mother at great length, while she speaks to him of the beauty of his body and the attraction it holds for her. Her sensual language horrifies the captain and destroys his illusions of her innocence. In his despair, he kills himself by falling on his sword. But Salomé is so intent upon kissing the mouth of the reluctant prophet that she completely ignores this event. In disgust, Iokanaan retires to his prison.

Hérode, Hérodiás and their retinue then appear, Hérodiás accusing Hérode obliquely of showing an entirely unfatherly interest in Salomé. Hérode, on walking over the terrace, slips in the blood of the dead captain (whose corpse has been quietly removed in the meantime by his companions) which arouses his superstitious fears. The voice of Iokanaan is heard again (he never reappears alive upon the stage). This brings up the subject of the prophet between husband and wife. She has long been accusing him of delaying the killing of Iokanaan, because of Hérode's fear of the prophet.
Hérode is more interested in Salomé and asks her to cancel for him. On the advice of her mother, she refuses this favor to him, but when Hérode offers her whatever she wants in return for her dance, she accepts despite her mother's objections. Salomé then dances the "dance of the seven veils" in the blood of the dead captain. Hérode thoroughly enjoys the dance and asks Salomé to name her reward. She demands the head of Iokanaan sur un bouclir d'argent. Hérode objects in horror, but Hérodias is delighted. Hérode finally realizes that he cannot persuade Salomé to accept any other reward and sends his official ring (the same ring used to order the execution of Philip) to Namaan the executioner, who descends to the cistern. After a short time, the arm of Namaan emerges from the prison with the head of Iokanaan on the silver charger. Salomé kisses the mouth of the bleeding head. This is too much for even Hérode. As he and Hérodias depart, Salomé is still gloating over her ghastly prize. He orders his soldiers to kill her and they do so, crushing her beneath their shields.

One can see what drastic changes have been made by Wilde. The main one is, of course, in changing the focus of the plot from Herodias to Salome. In the original story, Salome is only the tool of her mother. There is no love interest between John and Salome. This sensual, destructive love, so
characteristic of decadent writing is alien to the humble writers of the Gospels. However, it is Salome's love that provides the whole reason for the focal change. Her unrequited passion excites her feelings of revenge. In the Bible, John was killed because Herodias was infuriated at the denunciations he was hurling at her and her new husband, denunciations which could topple her from the throne, if it were necessary to annul the marriage. Therefore, she must silence John in the only effective way. She uses as an instrument for this, her daughter Salome, whose obedience to her mother is apparently unquestioning and whose actual guilt or innocence is not a question of much importance. In the play, Salomé is guiltier than her mother. It is she who insists on dancing for the Tetrasque, knowing his lecherous feelings toward herself. It is she who first thinks of demanding the head as her reward. Her mother is strictly a secondary figure who is pleased by this action, although she has not initiated it. Salomé might bear in mind the denunciations of Iokanaan as a factor in desiring his death, but his disinterest toward her is the main factor.

This shift in focus is even more apparent after one reads another source, Gustave Flaubert's story, "Herodias". In this story, Salomé is a very unimportant character. Again, she is just the instrument of her mother's revenge. Herodias uses her for the dance which she is too old to perform herself, because of Salome's resemblance to the young Herodias,
Herod at first thinks it is Herodias who is dancing. But then follows the only mention of Salome in the story, "Elle avait instruire, loin de Machaerous, Salome, sa fille, que le Tetrarque aimerait: et l'idée était bonne." Once more we see the change made by Wilde in making Salome the central figure of the plot, and her love for Iokanaan the central motive in the play.

In using an ancient plot, then, Wilde has, while not changing the original framework of the plot, changed the focus so completely as to make an entirely different story of it. The story of a religious prophet persecuted for his attacks against the moral iniquities of his country becomes the story of a warped, spoiled young girl's love for something she cannot have - in this case, a rather priggish religious fanatic, of whom her mother disapproves. If this seems a rather infantile story, it is redeemed to a great extent by the exotic beauty of the setting and the language, which is shown in both the English and French version, and by the character delineations.
II

Hofmannsthal's plot for *Elektra* is more ancient than Wilde's, arising from the legends surrounding the Trojan War. The leader of the Greek forces, Agamemnon, has been murdered by his wife, Clytemnestra, and her lover, Aegisth, upon his return from the war. Years later, Elektra, Agamemnon's eldest surviving child, is waiting for the arrival of Orestes, her younger brother, whom she had sent to safety. She has been driven almost to the point of madness by the delay of the avenger. It is at this point that the story of both Sophocles' and Hofmannsthal's plays begins.

Neither the ill-treatment of Clytemnestra and Aegisth, nor their pleas, nor the sensible advice of Chrysothemis, Elektra's younger sister, who wants only to live a normal life, have been able to sway Elektra from her desire to see justice done. Orest, returning, decides to conceal his presence by the reports of his own death (spread by his tutor), in order to avoid suspicion and possible death. *Elektra* is in complete despair when she receives this news. Her one reason for existence has vanished. Now she herself must avenge Agamemnon. She cannot expect any help from her younger sister. But Orest reveals himself to Elektra in a touching scene. With remarkable dispatch, he kills both his mother and her lover. Sophocles' play ends there. Since Orest has accom-
plished his purpose, the fates of Agamemnon's children, in
the Greek play, are not within the scope of the plot, but are,
in the necessity of bowing to the unity of action, subjects
for another play.

In Sophocles's drama, we naturally find the conventions
of Greek tragedy closely observed. The long speeches of the
characters and the chorus reveal the characters and the story
behind the plot. The use of the chorus of Mycenaean women as
a character who is just as much concerned with the struggle
as any single person is typical. So is the recognition scene
and the peripeteia, two cliches of classic Greek tragedy. The
two are combined when Electra recognizes Orestes, and the
peripeteia (reversal of fortune) occurs when the messenger
who announces the death of the long awaited Orestes turns out
to be no one but Orestes himself. Although Hofmannsthal did
not change the plot significantly, he nevertheless altered the
whole atmosphere of the play, mainly through changes in the
personalities of the characters and in the language. There
are also several minor changes in the plot. Like the Greek
original, Hofmannsthal's *Elektra* observes the unities of time,
place and action. The whole play, like Sophocles's, takes
place in a few hours in front of the palace of the royal fam-
ily of Mycenae.

In place of a Greek chorus, Hofmannsthal uses the ser-
vants of the palace speaking individually, and, at the begin-
ning of the play, they inform the audience of Elektra's semi-
bestial conduct in the mourning of her father and how poorly
she is treated by her mother and stepfather. Elektra enters
and tells of her hatred for her mother and of her love for
her father. Chrysothemis comes to warn Elektra that Klytäm-
nestra and Aegisth are planning to have her chained up as a
madwoman if she does not stop her wild behavior and her con-
stant accusations. Chrysothemis and Elektra argue about
their duties to their dead father; Elektra is thinking only
of avenging him and Chrysothemis, trying to forget the unalt-
terable past, wants to live a normal life with a husband and
children. The role of Chrysothemis is much larger in Hof-
mannsthal's play than in the original.

Klytämnestra enters after Chrysothemis has left. Her
conscience has given her no rest and has destroyed her physi-
cally and mentally. The description of her altered visage is
a Hofmannsthal addition. It is part of the character differ-
entiations that are so much stronger in Elektra than in Soph-
ocles's play. Naturally a modern writer has the advantage of
being able to describe minutely his characters' appearances
and actions, as well as their psychological processes, an ad-
vantage denied the Greek tragedians. The latters' characters
could hardly have shown these processes, because of the masks
they wore.
Klytämnestra and Elektra have an emotion-charged exchange, in which the mother reveals her uneasy conscience, her lack of touch with reality, and her loathing and fear of Aegisth. Unlike the original Clytemnestra, who always holds the sacrificial "murder" of Iphigeneia in front of herself as a justification for Agamemnon's murder, it seems that Klytämnestra lives in a dream world filled with nightmares, from which death, though she does not realize it, is the only release. Sophocles's queen also has bad dreams, but she is aware that they are dreams, and she feels she can escape from them by prayer and the aid of the gods:

The spectre that I saw last night, Apollo, King,
In that ambiguous dream:
If it is healthful, then fulfill it; if evil,
Let it turn back against my enemies.
Do not let plotters deprive me of my riches,
But let me live always as I am; in safety:
Having the friends that are now near me, having
Those of my children who are not bitter toward me.
Apollo, King; listen graciously;
Grant to all mine that I beg of you.
Also those other things behind my silence:
I know that you know them, being a god;
Being a child of Zeus you know everything.

This relatively optimistic attitude contrasts strongly with that of Hofmannsthal's Queen, who has no hope at all:

Ich finde nichts! Ich weiss auf einmal nichts,
ob er [Aegisth] das heut gesagt hat, was vor Wut
mich zittern macht, ob heute oder einmal
vor langer Zeit; dann schwindel's mich, ich weiss
auf einmal nicht mehr'wer ich bin, und das ist
das Grauen, das heisst mit lebendigem Leib
ins Chaos sinken...

The nature of the dream which is so significant in the Sopho-
clean tragedy

They say
She saw our father with her in the light of day.
On the hearth he was, planting his sceptre
Which Aegisthô holds now. From that sceptre grew
A swelling branch which brought at last
The whole land of Mycenae under its shadow.  

signifying the return of Orestes, the overthrow of Aegisthô,
and the re-establishment of the real dynasty of Agamemnon, is
reduced in Hofmannsthal's drama to

sie sagen, dass sie von Orest geträumt hat,
dass sie geschrien hat aus ihrem Schlaf,
wie einer schreit, den man erwürgt.

The sacrifice which Clytemnestra makes to Apollo to save
herself from the wrath of the gods, and which Chrysothemis re¬
moves from the altar, so that this salvation might not occur,
is therefore omitted. This has a further bearing on the plot
changes, since, in the Sophoclean Electra, it is when Chryso¬
themis is at the grave of Agamemnon removing the sacrifice
that she discovers the offerings of Orestes, so she, instead
of bringing the news of Orest's death as she does in the Hof¬
mannsthal version, brings a hope that he might still be alive,
which Electra destroys.

The scene between Klytämnestra and Elektra continues
with Klytämnestra showing her superstitious fears and Elektra
taunting her with possible means of saving herself (for exam¬
ple, the sacrifice of an animal, which, [after further ques¬
tioning] is revealed to mean the sacrifice of Klytämnestra
instead).
After an especially long, impassioned speech by Elektra which leaves her weaving around her mother in triumph like a snake around a hypnotized rabbit, messengers bring Klytämnestra the news of Orest's death. Because this is whispered to her, Elektra has to wait until Chrysothemis appears, screaming, to bring her the news. Chrysothemis is almost hysterical; Elektra, on the other hand, at first, is numb with shock. The story of his death which in Sophocles's play is very detailed (telling all about the chariot race in which Orestes was killed) is much abbreviated in Höfmannsthal's modern version to

Von seinen Pferden erschlagen und geschleift. ⁹

Elektra now realizes that, in the absence of Orestes, she and her sister must carry out the vengeance demanded by justice. This represents a very significant plot change. In the Greek play, it is never Electra's intention to murder any one but Aegisthos. Even though she feels hatred toward her mother, she is still not an unnatural enough daughter to be able to slay her. She feels that the death of Aegisthos will cause her mother such pain as to constitute a punishment in itself. She realizes the nature of her own relationship to her mother and own weakness as a woman. Aegisthos's death will also serve to remove the usurper from the throne of Argos, thereby going far toward establishing the status quo ante, an important element in Greek tragedy. Clytemnestra, while a murderess and an adulteress, is still by rights, Queen of
Argos. In Hofmannsthal's play, Elektra has no such scruples. She tells Chrysothemis:

\[ \text{Nun müssen du und ich} \\
\text{hingen und das Weib und ihren Mann} \\
\text{erschlagen.} \]

CHRYSOTHEMIS

Schwester, sprichst du von der Mutter?

ELEKTRA

Von ihr, Und auch von ihm. Ganz ohne Zögern \\
muss es geschehn.\textsuperscript{10}

It is as though the primary object of her vengeance were Klytammnestra, nor her paramour.

In both plays, Chrysothemis refuses to help her sister. Hofmannsthal portrays Elektra as needing Chrysothemis not only for moral support but also physical assistance, because Elektra is in such a weakened physical state that only Chrysothemis has the strength to commit the actual deed. Chrysothemis then leaves, frightened by the intensity of Elektra's desires, and Orest enters, still unknown to Elektra. This is not at all implausible, since Elektra has not seen him since he was a child. Unlike the original Orestes, he is not returning the ashes of his own body, but is merely looking for the Queen to tell her the details of his death. He pretends to be a friend of Orest, and tells the despairing Elektra to be reconciled to the death of her brother. When he asks her who she is (not only has he not seen her for years, but Elek-
tra has aged much beyond her chronological age because of her privations and her unrequited hatred, he will not at first accept her answer that she is Elektra:

Elektra muss
zehn Jahre jünger sein als du. Elektra
ist groß, ihr Auge ist träurig, aber sanft,
wo dein's voll Blut und Hass...Elektra wohnt
abseits der Menschen und ihr Tag vergeht
mit Huten eines Grabes. Zwei, drei Frauen
hat sie um sich, die lautlos dienen, Tiere
umschleichen ihre Wohnung scheu und schmiegen
sich, wenn sie geht, an ihr Gewand.

Finally, realizing that this haggard spectre is really his beloved elder sister, he tells her that Orest is still alive and reveals his true identity. He tells her he has brought only his old tutor with him (Hofmannsthal omits the character of Pylades, Orestes's faithful friend) and that he, Orest, will do the deed alone. In Sophocles's play, it was an order given him by the oracle of Apollo that he should kill the guilty pair alone:

With neither shield nor army, secretly
Your own just hand shall deal them their due pay.

Hofmannsthal gives no reason why Orest should not have brought help with him.

The Greek Orestes is much calmer about the deaths than his modern counterpart. He feels that he is carrying out the command of the gods and serving eternal justice. In addition, he had not seen his mother since childhood, and then, apparently, it was his elder sister, Electra, who tended him and saved
him when his mother and her lover wanted to kill him. But Hofmannsthal's hero is definitely uneasy about his duty, although the gods have ordered it. He worries about Clytemnestra, and must be almost forced into the deed by the urgings of Elektra and his tutor. Together with his tutor, he enters the palace. Aegisth is conveniently not at home to defend his wife. Soon the screams of Clytemnestra are heard from inside the palace. Elektra stands, barring the door and not permitting any help to enter. Then Aegisth arrives, complaining about the lack of attention from the servants who have scattered in fright. He asks Elektra, the only one there, where the men are who had come announcing the death of Orest. Another change in the plot structure is found here. In the original play, Electra hints that the men brought not only the news of Orestes's death but also his body. When Aegisthos asks to see it, Orestes brings a covered bier out of the palace. Aegisthos, lifting the corner of the covering and seeing the fact of Clytemnestra instead of the expected one of Orestes, realizes what the situation is. Orestes then forces Aegisthos into the palace where he (Aegisthos) had slain Agamemnon (in order to keep from outraging the conventions forbidding the murder of someone to take place on the actual stage).

Everyone else, including Electra, follows them into the
palace. After a while, the palace doors open, showing the audience those who are still alive and those who are dead. In Hofmannsthal's play, Aegisth enters the palace himself and finds the body of his wife with her murderers. One then sees the face of Aegisth appear at a window, crying for help. Like a drowning man's, it appears one more time, and that is the end of Aegisth. Chrysothemis and the women of the court come from the palace, after seeing what is inside, and ask Elektra to come with them to see what Orest has done and how the people are exulting over him in his triumph. But Elektra does not need this. She executes her own private dance of victory, and at its conclusion, collapses.

It is not by any radical changes in the plot that Hofmannsthal altered the story of Electra. It is, as we shall see, mainly a change in the characterizations of the well-known figures of the ancient Greek drama and in a change of the atmosphere caused by the language and setting of the play that has made Elektra, though an adaptation of Sophocles, a completely modern play. [While the essential unities of Greek drama are retained, the Greek spirit of the maintenance of harmony in the plot (Orestes, in killing Clytemnestra and Aegisthos is actually reestablishing the state of balance disrupted] by the killing of Agamemnon and the seizure of power by his wife and her lover), the essential belief in the right-
ness of the world and the authority of the gods is completely destroyed in *Elektra*. The language shows this also since the Greek original has a measured rhythm that Hofmannsthal's verse does not have, the verse of (the newer play) showing, as it does, the inner conflicts of the characters, demonstrating intense emotion most of the time. Hofmannsthal has used the play of Sophocles as a base, but has interpreted the old story in the light of modern psychology and has used his own lyrical talents to make the language of his play fit this conception.
In comparing the plots of *Salome* and *Elektra*, we therefore find very similar situations. Both plays take place at the court of an ancient king of a Mediterranean country. Both heroines are the daughters of a queen, who, with the help of her lover, a close relative of her husband, who covets the throne and the queen, has murdered the father. Both heroines desire the death of a man. Both achieve their ends, but are destroyed by their victories. In both plots, the heroine's dance is an important factor; in *Salome*, the dance enables her to gain what she desires—the head of Io-kanaan; in *Elektra*, the dance is one of triumph at the goal gained. There the similarities in the plots end.

Superficially, there are already many differences, dealing mainly with the contrast in the situations of the heroines at their step-father's courts and the relationships of themselves to their mothers and step-fathers. *Salome* is obviously the spoiled darling of the court. She has no regrets for her father's death. She and her mother are very close. Herode dotes on her, and the only strain between mother and daughter consists of the mother's jealousy because of the daughter's attraction for Herode. *Elektra*'s situation is completely opposite. She had loved her father and has a pathological hatred of her mother and of the man who has not only murdered her father, but has also taken his place in her mother's bed.
Naturally, Klytämnestra and Aegisth do not respond kindly to the constant barrage of vilifications hurled at them by Elektra. [They are not overly anxious for any of Agamemnon’s children to live normal lives (they might topple the sinning pair from their usurped thrones) and while Orest’s absence makes it impossible to do anything about him, and while Chrysothemis’s docile behavior precludes any adverse action against her, Elektra almost forces Klytämnestra and Aegisth, by her behavior, to treat her abominably.]

But for the most profound difference between the two plays we must analyze Aristotle’s theories about the nature of tragedy. It is his remarks about "dianoia" or "thought", the tragic element listed immediately after plot and character, that describe an element very obvious in Elektra and almost nonexistent in Salome. Edouard Roditi, commenting on the absence of dianoia in Salome describes it as:

the element in tragedy which keeps, for instance, the diction from lapsing into excessive lyricism or rhetoric, where each speech, failing to differentiate between audience and antagonist, would become a lyrical poem or an unequivocally persuasive argument in itself; and it integrates all the speeches and arguments of the tragedy's various characters in a single artistic unit no part of which can be complete in itself. "Dianoia" can therefore be defined as the discussion or argument, the dialectical interplay of conflict of the various characters in action or of the various elements in one character; in fact, as the elements of a tragedy which makes all its parts tend outward, beyond their limits as parts, toward a common whole. In this respect, "dianoia"
breathes life into the tragedy's plot and characters and allows the latter to mould and convince each other, to change and suffer before our eyes, to overcome in monologue and self-analysis, their own passions, doubts or fears."

"Dianoia" is almost non-existent in Salomé. There is no real conflict or development shown in or between any of the characters. Iokanaan seems to live in a world of his own and never responds to any outside stimulus except disgust because such stimuli (are intruding) upon his holy meditations. Regardless of what happens or what Salomé says to him, he continues uttering the same denunciations. At first he denounces Hérodias and then Salomé, because she is Hérodias's daughter. There is no real conflict than between a living person and a stone image. Salomé, on the other hand, becomes more and more possessed by her physical passion for the prophet. As her speech develops, like a bolero coming to a climax, one can see no apparent reasons for her mounting desire

**SALOMÉ:**

Iokanaan! Je suis amoureuse de ton corps.

.................................

Ton corps est hideux.

.................................

Laisse-moi toucher tes cheveux.

.................................

Tes cheveux sont horribles.

.................................

Laisse-moi baiser ta bouche.

.................................

Je baiserai ta bouche. 15

The alternation of desire and rejection builds up to the manifold repetition of "Je baiserai ta bouche" and the breaking of
the tension built up comes at the end of the play when Salome triumphantly kisses the mouth of the severed head and says, "Ah! tu n'as pas voulu me laisser baiser ta bouche, Iokanaan." But there is no verbal sparring there, no character development, no true catharsis in the Aristotelian sense (horror, perhaps, but certainly no pity). Salome reveals itself very clearly for what it really is: not a drama but a long lyric poem, where plot, characterization, and most of all, "thought", are almost obscured by the poetic language and the atmosphere it creates. With a few changes, Salome could stand as a lyrical ballad.

Elektra, on the other hand, is charged with "dianoia". Basically, the play consists of the verbal encounters of Elektra with four other characters; first, with Chrysothemis, who is trying to persuade Elektra to act sensibly so that she will be treated better (and so that Chrysothemis will be permitted to get married); secondly, with Klytämnestra, where Elektra taunts her mother and the latter reacts like a baited animal; thirdly, another scene with Chrysothemis, in which Elektra tries to bribe her with flattery and the promise of a husband who will kill Klytämnestra and Aegisth; fourthly, with Orest, where we have the recognition scene first, and then the pressure of Elektra on her reluctant and frightened young brother to make him commit the murders; and lastly, the encounter between Aegisth and Elektra before the palace doors,
where Elektra sends him to her waiting brother with deliberately ambiguous words. Following this is a brief scene with Chrysothemis, but it evinces no "dianoia" and is not actually essential to the plot or the development of the characters. The same is true of the first scene, of the servant girls talking, which sets the scene for the entrance of Elektra.

It can be seen, then, that though Salome and Elektra are externally much alike in plot, the element of the verbal conflicts between the characters that is so important to the development of a tragedy is very prominent in the latter play and almost non-existent in the former. Yet one cannot deny the similarity of plot, one common aspect of the plays. It is in the author's treatment of the plot that we encounter a definite difference.

Wilde's aestheticism permitted him to present a play without an argument, that is really a lyrical ballad- a play that is a work of art that exists only for itself and for no other purpose. Hofmannsthal's emerging sense of responsibility toward his audience was not satisfied with that: it demanded a more conventional plot structure which serves the purpose of explanation of his main character to the public.
CHAPTER III

The Characters

For purposes of comparison, this chapter shall consider the following groups: (1) Elektra-Chrysothemis and Salomé, (2) Hérodias and Klytämnestra, (3) Hérôde and Aegisth, (4) Orest and Jokanaan, and (5) the minor, "choral" type characters in each play.

I

(1) Elektra-Chrysothemis and Salomé

Before going into the reasons for using two characters as a comparison for one character in two plays, we should first analyze the two polar characters of Elektra and Chrysothemis separately.

Elektra is far more emphasized in this play than she was in the Greek original, in which Orestes was the major character of the story of the revenge of the children of Agamemnon. In Hofmannsthal's drama, all the other characters are subordinate to Elektra, and in their encounters with her, stress the explanation of her character rather than of their own characters.

In the character of Elektra, Hofmannsthal incorporated several modern ideas to define more clearly this classical figure of the Greek tragedy. These should be considered first. They are the Freudian concept of the hysterical woman
and Nietzsche's ideas of the Apollonian and Dionysian elements in Greek tragedy (and life). The first is found in the Breuer and Freud Studies in Hysteria (1895) and the second in the Nietzsche essay entitled "Die Geburt der Tragödie" (1872). The ideas in each of these that had influence on the characters in Elektra, not only on the main character but on the other ones, too, especially Klytämnestra, will be briefly considered.

Studies in Hysteria contains Freud's first contributions to the then new science of psychoanalysis. The cases presented in this work are not so complicated as his later cases were to be, but they nevertheless formed the basis for his whole psychanalytic system. The main body of the book consists of five cases treated by Breuer and Freud. All of the patients were women in various states of hysteria. The most famous case and the one which surely interested Hofmannsthal was that of Anna O., who was treated by Breuer. A brief summary of her illness, its causes and its cure follows:

Anna O. was a girl of twenty-one when Breuer was first called in to treat her. She became ill during the final illness of her father, whom she had been nursing. Her symptoms were, among others, sleep-walking, an inability to speak, paralysis, loss of coordinated vision, extreme irritability, somnolence, anxiety and hallucinations. Their severity re-
quired her removal from her father's bedside. She then became unable to speak at all, and when the power of speech returned, there were periods of complete amnesia alternating with periods during which she spoke no German at all, only English and sometimes French or Italian. Her hallucinations and her alienation from the world around her become worse. Hypnosis relieved her state to some extent. At the beginning, this was a self-hypnosis, in which she told of her anxieties, fears and hallucinations in story form. The interesting part for *Elektra* is not only that this condition was caused by an excessive love for Anna's father, who had died during her withdrawal from reality, but also that the condition eventually crystalized in a double existence. Sometimes Anna 0. lived in the world of the present, and sometimes she lived so clearly in the year of her father's death that everything of the present was forgotten. There was also the element of sexual repression stemming from the strict family atmosphere of Anna 0. Only in complete hypnosis, and psychoanalysis, did Anna 0. find a final cure.

Hofmannsthal certainly took his idea of Elektra's sexual repression, which leads her into such hysterical outbursts from Breuer's report. The excessive love for her father which Freud was to call the "Elektra" complex in later works, was one that Hofmannsthal had found in the case of Anna 0. He
had already identified this complex with his heroine, and its masculine counterpart with Oedipus and Hamlet, as shown in the quoted excerpts from his diaries in Chapter I, and in several places in "Ad me ipsum":

The theories of Freud, in a way, seem to echo the theories of Nietzsche, concerning Greek tragedy and the Apollonian and Dionysian elements therein. The Germans, Nietzsche felt, had seen only one side of the Greek culture, the Apollonian, which was considered the whole of Classic civilization: Winckelmann's "edle Einfalt und stille Grösse" idea. But Nietzsche realized that calm serenity, sunlight and a sense of proportion could not account for the pessimism and darkness shown in the Greeks of Homer, which came to light so strongly when the great Greek tragedians began to write.

Nietzsche's theory was that in order to face the grimness of actual life, the Greeks had set up a barrier before it in the form of a "Traumwelt" in denen Erzeugung jeder Mensch voller Künstler ist. But through this dream world, "haben wir doch die durchschimmernde Empfindung ihres Scheins... Unter dieser Wirklichkeit... eine zweite ganz andere verborgen liege... a theory strongly influenced by Schopenhauer. This dream world of the Greeks and its beauty and serenity are embodied in Apollo. His sphere is described thus by Nietzsche:

Ja, es wäre von Apollo zu sagen, dass in ihm das unerschütterte Vertrauen auf jenes principium [principium individuationis of Schopenhauer] und das ruhige Dasitzen des in ihm Befangenen seinen erhabensten Ausdruck habe, und man möchte selbst
Apollo als das herrliche Götterbild des principii individuationis bezeichnen, aus dessen Gebarden und Blicken die ganze Lust und Weisheit des "Scheines", samt seiner Schönheit, zu uns sprache.4

The true world, hidden below the dream world, comes to the surface as a "wonnevolle Verzückung... die bei demselben Zerbrechen des principii individuationis aus dem innersten Grunde des Menschen, ja der Natur emporsteigt"5, which Nietzsche considers the Dionysian element. This "Rausch", which arises from a collective racial instinct and the will of Nature, could annihilate man if it were not for the control of the Apollonian element which keeps this ecstasy within bounds. This balance between the Apollonian and Dionysian elements in Greek culture, Nietzsche felt, was responsible for the birth of the Greek tragedy.

One can see that Hofmannsthal, in treating the characters of the classical tragedy of Electra, was influenced both by the then relatively new science of psychoanalysis and by Nietzsche's theory on the birth of tragedy. Both these ideas consist of drawing away the surface covering of things; Breuer and Freud draw away the veil of the conscious to expose the unconscious and sub-conscious, and Nietzsche pulls away the veil of the Apollonian (and with it, the German classicists' idea of the Greek tragedy) to expose the Dionysian, amoral elements in Greek culture. Hofmannsthal has taken ancient characters in an ancient story and illuminated them with the
light of these two new ideas. That Hofmannsthal's characters, unlike Wilde's, do not completely lose their Apollonian morality, is a point that is discussed later in the chapter.

Thus, Hofmannsthal's Elektra is far from the classical one. Elektra is a woman who has denied her own femininity for many years. In doing so, she has denied and negated her own self. Her ego has been suppressed to make way for the revenge for her father and the hate for her mother. Hofmannsthal wrote:

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

Elektra is trying to do the impossible. Not only has she suppressed herself; she has almost become someone else. Hofmannsthal wrote: "sie ist der Vater (dieser ist noch in ihr), sie ist die Mutter (mehr als diese selbst es ist), sie ist das ganze Haus..."

Elektra can see how the desire to avenge her father's death has ruined her life and how Hatred has become her bride-groom instead of a real lover. This she explains in a speech to Orest, which is one of the most revealing in the play:

Ich bin nur mehr der Leichnam deiner Schwester, mein armes Kind. Ich weiss, es schaudert dich vor mir. Und war doch eines Königs Tochter!

The words used by Hofmannsthal (keusch, nackt, schwul, Unberuhrttheit, eiskalt, verkohlt) with their contrast of the humid night and the chaste body bathed by the pure moonlight, the body that is later ice-cold and burning hot with passion for a lover, who is Hatred personified, emphasize the sensuality of the passage and the change that Elektra undergoes. She is literally "possessed" by hate.

The true tragedy is that Elektra realizes to a good extent that this revenge and the feelings of hate she harbors (instead of or as, a lover) have destroyed her inner self, but as she cries out of Chrysothemis, "Ich bin kein Vieh, ich
Elektra feels her father in her, but she admits her mother's image in herself only with difficulty and loathing:


and

"denn mein Gesicht ist des Vaters und aus deinen Zügen gemischt."  

But this admission is later denied by her cry to Orest, who also senses this resemblance:

OREST:  
0 meine Schwester.

ELEKTRA:  
Was willst du?

OREST:  
Schwester, ob die Mutter nicht dir ähnlich sieht?

ELEKTRA:  (wild)  
Mir ähnlich? Nein. Ich will nicht, dass du ihr ins Gesicht siehst."

Yet, in a way she envies her mother, although she would never admit it. The idea that Klytämnestra has fulfilled her function as a woman and even now has love from a man, no matter how sexually debased it is (because Klytämnestra, as we shall see, now loathes Aegisth, though he still has a certain attraction for her), is a constant point of friction for Elektra. Her condemnations of her mother's illicit love are too
frequent and gloating not to make us feel that she envies her mother this experience that she can never have. It is a wound that she touches again and again:

Aegisth, der tapfere Mardelmörder, er der Heldentaten nur im Bett vollführt.13

'Lass die Tür dahinter du ein Stöhnen hörst: sie bringen ja nicht immer einen um, zuweilen sind sie auch allein zusammen.'14

Die Höhle zu sein, drin nach dem Mord dem Mörder wohl ist; das Tier zu spielen, das dem schlimmeren Tier Ergetzung bietet. Ah, mit einem schläft sie, preßt ihre Brüste ihm auf beide Augen und winkt dem zweiten, der mit Netz und Beil hervorkriecht hinter'm Bett.15

Da geht's dem Kinde umgekehrt: das dachte die Mutter lieber tot als in dem Bette.16

Schliefen sie nicht zusamm', könnt ich's allein vollbringen.17
dass die da drinnen leben und sich freuen, dass dies Gezucht in seiner Höhle lebt und isst und trinkt und sich vermehrt...18

Another effect that the unnatural life Elektra leads has had upon her psyche is that it has given her a touch of Lesbianism. The scene in which she tries to persuade Chrysothemis, who is the physically stronger of the two sisters, to kill Aegisth and Klytmnestra, reeks with suggestions of this perversion. It is not only that she delights in the vicarious pleasure that she will get from tending Chrysothemis on her bridal night and during childbirth; it is an absolutely sen-
suital delight in the physical attributes of another woman. The most striking example of this occurs when Elektra, clutching Chrysothemis, whispers hotly:

Wie stark du bist! dich haben
die jungfräulichen Nächte stark gemacht.
Wie schlank und biegsam deine Hüften sind!
Du windest dich durch jeden Spalt, du hebst dich
durch's Fenster! Lass mich deine Arme fühlen:
wie kühn und stark sie sind! wie du mich abwehrst,
fühl' ich, was das für Arme sind. Du könntest
erdrücken, was du an dich ziehst. Du könntest mich, oder einen Mann mit deinen Armen
an deine kühlen festen Brusten pressen,
dass man ersticken musste.19

This repels Chrysothemis as much as the thought of committing the actual murder.

What destroys Elektra more than anything is the unnaturalness of a woman being a doer of deeds. Hofmannsthal said of this:

Elektra muss an ihrer Tat doppelt zugrunde gehen:
weil sie sich als Individuum für fähig hält zur Tat
und schon als Geschlecht unfähig ist, die Tat zu tun. Die Tat ist für die Frau das Widernaturliche...20

Added to this is the fact that although Elektra is to be an "Opfer", she cannot fully accept this fate. In death alone she finds release for her ego. It is "der sieghaft vernichtende Triumph dionysischer Gewalt, der Elektras Tanz erfüllt und sie zerreist."21

Hofmannsthal's theory was that "der Frauen Tat ist Mutter sein."22 Chrysothemis personifies this idea. Although
she is actually in the same position as Elektra, her reaction is very different and much more natural. Hofmannsthal sees her as an antithesis to Elektra:

So steht hier aufs neue Ariadne gegen Zerbinetta, wie schon einmal Elektra gegen Chrysothemis stand. Chrysothemis wollte leben, weiter nichts; und sie wusste, dass wer leben will, vergessen muss. Elektra vergisst nicht. Wie hätten sich die beiden Schwestern verstehen können?23

Chrysothemis is the only one of the three women in the play who has a true conception of a woman's role in life. She wants to forget a situation, about which she can, by her own nature, do nothing and achieve fulfillment as a woman. Her ideas are expressed by her cry:

Viel lieber tot, 
als leben und nicht leben. Nein, ich bin ein Weib und will ein Weiberschicksal.24

She loves Elektra, but is repelled by her thirst for blood and her unnatural behavior. Too, the constant aggravation that Elektra offers Aegisth and Klytämnestra is the cause of their refusal to consider marriage for Chrysothemis. She feels that she can forget the past if Elektra will let her. If she can only leave the palace, she will (and can) live a normal life.

Ich will hinaus!
Ich will empfangen und gebären Kinder, 
die nichts von diesem wissen, meinen Leib wasch' ich in jedem Wasser, alles wasch' ich mir ab, das Höhle meiner beiden Augen wasch' ich mir rein- sie sollen sich nicht schrecken, wenn sie der Mutter in die Augen schau'n.25
At the end of the play, Chrysothemis joins the general jubilation at the death of the guilty couple. She cannot understand Elektra's refusal to go with her.

One can see now that Elektra and Chrysothemis form one dramatic entity for purposes of comparison with Salomé. Salomé is not nearly as well psychologically defined as Hofmannsthal's characters.
At the beginning of the play, Salomé is very much the innocent pure, young, virgin princess. Spoiled as she is by the court and by her stepfather, (her beauty is the admiration of all) and it is exactly the virginal quality of her beauty that brings her this admiration and love. But during the play she changes, and it is this change in her for which she hates Iokanaan. Her desire for him, rather than his rejection of her, is what causes her hate for him. As was shown in Chapter II, there is not much dianoia in Salomé. It is not what Iokanaan says to Salomé, or anything he does that causes the change or rather, the development in Salomé, but rather his mere existence as a "desirable male". Thus we see the gradual awakening in Salomé of her sexual feelings, climax by the kissing of the dead mouth of the decapitated Iokanaan. Her despair over his rejection of her is a secondary effect arising from the loss of the virginity of her soul. Salomé's most bitter accusation toward Iokanaan's severed head is evident in the following passage:

J'ai soif de ta beauté. J'ai faim de ton corps. Et ni le vin, ni les fruits ne peuvent apaiser mon désir. Que ferai-je, Iokanaan, maintenant? Ni les fleuves ni les grandes eaux, ne pourraient éteindre ma passion. J'étais une Princesse, tu m'as dédaignée. J'étais une vierge, tu m'as déflorée. J'étais chaste, tu as rempli mes veines de feu.26

Iokanaan has given her the desire, but not its fulfillment.
The security that Salomé once felt, armored as she was in her moon-chaste virginity, in which she has loved no one, desired nothing, but was the aloof symbol to others of the desirable, was thus destroyed by her passion for a man. The changes that this passion arouse in her are progressive. Her interest in the prophet leads to her demeaning flirtation with Narroboth, then to her sensual pleas to Iokanaan, and finally to her heartless ignoring of the death of the young Syrian, whose lifeless body falls between her and the object of her passion. The next stage in her degeneration is the complete comprehension of the power she has over the aging, lustful Herode (one feels that this is something that she, in her former innocence, would not have recognized, or if she had, would have scorned to take advantage of) and her baiting of him until he promises her whatever she desires in reward for her dance. The dance shows her complete abandonment to the forces of sensuality besieging her. She dances so well that Herode is delighted, and is forced, despite his most fervent pleas and offers of other fabulous gifts, to give her what she desires. After this, Salomé seems to degenerate into complete madness, since the act of kissing the severed head shows the utter loss of her human morality.
III

In comparing Elektra and Salome, we are struck by two facts; the sexual frustration of both heroines which leads to the destruction of their egos as they are possessed by Dionysian forces, and their growing likenesses to the mothers who have become high-class harlots. Elektra and Salome began as innocent princesses, moonlight-pure and both speak of the loss of their innocence in terms of the moon (this will be further discussed in Chapter IV). Elektra and Salome have both lost their spiritual virginity: Elektra, because of her love for her father and her hatred of her mother and Aegisth, and Salome, because of her sudden physical desire for Iokanaan, who represents a type of man she has never seen at court and whom she can never possess, because of the very quality of chastity and withdrawal from the physical world (if she did, he would no longer be the man she desires). Hofmannsthal calls Elektra (and this could refer as well to Salome) "Nichtjungfrau ohne Brautnacht". This is an unnatural loss, going against the innate function of a woman (at least this is how Hoffmannsthal and Wilde saw it) which destroys both of them. Elektra is far more admirable, because her loss is an offering to her dead father and the honor of the house of Atreus. She has necessarily sacrificed her own happiness and a normal life, partly because she cannot forget, and partly to re-establish
a harmonious world order. That this necessary deed should be, and is, accomplished by a man, Orest, rather than a woman, is her tragedy. Salomé’s loss of virginity, on the other hand, is an entirely selfish matter. Even in her innocence, Salomé is a complete egotist, and it is her ego that is destroyed as well as her virginity. She destroys Iokanaan to regain what it is impossible to regain, - her ego, not to serve any one else or any purpose. While Elektra dies because her purpose is accomplished (and there is nothing left of her but a physical husk) Salomé has to be killed because she has become such a loathsome creature that she must be destroyed (a not uncommon theme in Wilde is - the theme of gradually corrupted innocence of dubious original quality that becomes a monster who must be annihilated. The Picture of Dorian Gray has a similar theme).

Another interesting point of comparision is that Elektra and Salomé increasingly resemble their respective mothers. The growing resemblance in Elektra has already been explored; the same resemblance is true in Salomé. In Flaubert’s Hero-dias, the author had already indicated the likeness of Salomé to her mother since it was because of the physical resemblance of Salomé to the young Herodias, once Herod’s beloved, that Herodias uses her as a tool to obtain the desired head of John. Transference of the attributes of Herodias to Salomé is also found in Wilde. The folk tale, according to Heinrich Heine,
had Herodias as the one who loves John and kisses the severed head:

Wirklich eine Fürstin war sie,
War Judäas Königin,
Des Herodes schönes Weib,
Die des Täufers Haupt begehrt hat.

Dieser Blutschuld halber ward sie
Auch vermaleideit; als Nachtspuk
Muss sie bis zum jüngsten Tage
Reiten mit der wilden Jagd.

In den Händen trägt sie immer
Jene Schüssel mit dem Haupte
Des Johannes, und sie küsst es;
Ja, sie küsst das Haupt mit Inbrunst.

Denn sie liebte einst Johannem-
In der Bibel steht es nicht,
Doch im Volke lebt die Sage,
Von Herodias' blut'ger Liebe-

Wilde had already changed the Biblical story to give much of Herodias's role to Salome. How much of this was his own idea and how much was influenced by Flaubert or folk legend is hard to determine. Iokanaan sees the resemblance of the daughter to her "incestuous mother". Salome, who seems so pure at first, reveals gradually the sensual streak in her that links her to the blood of Herodias. She cares nothing about the death of one who loves her, the young Syrian, just as Herodias was similarly unconcerned about Philip's death. Indeed, Salome, who is never seriously perturbed about either her father's death or her mother's adultery, is perfectly capable of committing adultery and incest with her step-father.
uncle in order to gain her ends. Herodias recognizes this.
She fears Salome as a rival for the affections of Herod and
for her own position as Queen.

Elektra, in this comparison, again comes away the vic¬
tor. She realizes her resemblance to her depraved mother
and deplores it, while Salomé attempts to take advantage of
it, in so far as she recognizes it at all.

Chrysothemis contrasts as effectively with Salomé as with
Elektra. She is Woman, intent only upon perpetuating the
race, unconcerned with ethics, the death of kings, the adul¬
teries of queens, the demands of religion or the struggles
for power. She is a virgin, physically and mentally, and she
will not be deflowered by desire or hatred. Only a real man
can possess her. One might criticize her for being bovine,
but this would not be true. In realizing what the role of a
woman is in life and being ready to fulfill this role, and
aspiring to no other, she is able to survive where Elektra
and Salomé are destroyed.
(2) Klytämnestra and Herodias

Klytämnestra and Herodias, at first glance, have much in common. Both are middle-aged women who have murdered their husbands and married close relatives of their husbands, who aided them and who also gained by the murders. Both have grown children - the offspring of their first husbands. Both Herode and Aegis: are as interested in the throne, if not more so, as in the woman that has committed adultery with them; Aegisth is also motivated by revenge. Both women are now living with the new husbands they acquired by adultery, murder, and incest, but they are not happy. Herein lies the major difference between the Greek and the Judean women.

Klytämnestra's crime has destroyed her so utterly that death, when it comes, can be nothing but a relief from the fear and remorse which attack her now. She is a much more moral person than Herodias. First, her crime was provoked by Agamemnon's neglect of her. Like many men, he was only too happy to run away to the Trojan war as commander-in-chief and play the game of war, leaving the country in her hands. This does not even take into account her major grievance - the supposed death of Iphigenia. This daughter - the eldest of her children and apparently the one closest to her - was sacrificed to Artemis to appease this goddess for a crime Ag-
amemnon had committed and to assure passage for the Greek fleet to a war that meant little to his wife. Hofmannsthal, from his reading in the classics, must certainly have been aware of other extenuating circumstances for Agamemnon's murder such as the fact that Helen was Klytämnestra's sister, Agamemnon's affair with his Trojan spoil, Cassandra, and the fate destined for the Atrides because of their forefathers' crimes.

These reasons for a husband's murder, while not excusing the act, do somewhat justify it, whereas Herodias's only reasons for Philip's murder are the incestuous love she has for Herod and her desire to become the queen of Judea. Philip's murder, too, is not a crime committed in the heat of passion like that of Agamemnon, but one that takes twelve years to accomplish. In talking about the cistern, the soldiers say:

Mais non. Par exemple, le frère du tetrarque, son frère aîné, le premier mari de la reine Hérodias, a été enfermé dedans pendant douze années. Il n'en est pas mort. A la fin il a fallu l'étangler.30

Yet although Klytämnestra had grounds for murder, while Herodias did not, the Greek queen really suffers from the after-effects. It has ruined her health, particularly by giving her no chance to sleep because of her terrible dreams. She is not ill physically, but mentally, with a loss of self-identity and with hallucinatory dreams. Actually her symptoms
are much closer to those Hofmannsthal found in Breuer's report on Anna O. than Elektra's are. So in asking Elektra for help, she cries out:

Kann man zerfallen, wenn man gar nicht krank ist?
zerfallen wachen Sinnes, wie ein Kleid,
zerfressen von den Motten? Und dann schlaf' ich
und träume, träume! dass mir in den Knochen
das Mark sich löst, und taumle wieder auf,
und nicht der zehnte Teil der Wasseruhr
ist abgelaufen, und was unter'm Vorhang
hereingrinst, ist noch nicht der faule Morgen,
nein, immer noch die Fackel vor der Tür,
die grässlich zuckt wie ein Lebendiges
und meinen Schlaf belauert.31

Klytämnestra is disintegrating because she wants to forget
that the murder ever happened, and since her deed cannot be
negated, she is destroyed. According to Hofmannsthal:

Klytämnestra sucht sich die getane Tat un-
geschehen zu machen, das Eigentliche des
Mordes zu vergessen,—da vollzieht sie eine
Auflösung ihrer selbst, Ausstossung aus dem
menschlichen Bereich, Übergang ins Chaos.32

Klytämnestra seeks to save herself from this chaos by super-
stitious religious observances. She has in her train-bearer, "einer Ägypterin ähnlich, mit glattem Gesicht
einer aufgerichteten Schlange gleichend."33 This unpleasant
person is alienating Klytämnestra even further from her chil-
dren, and is probably the one who has obtained for the queen
all the talismans against evil spirits she is wearing. Kly-
tämnestra is anxious to listen to even Elektra's advice on
this matter, for she is all too willing to sacrifice whatever
Elektra thinks would help, even the human virgin whose death she thinks Elektra is suggesting.

To make the unfortunate Klytämnestra's plight still worse, even the man for whom and with whom she committed her crime has ceased to love her because of her present physical and mental deterioration. Aegisth has no time for an aging, sick and unattractive woman. One of Klytämnestra's bitterest outcries is now: "Aegisth! Aegisth! verhöhnt mich,..."
Perhaps it is because Herodias is a far less moral and imaginative character than Klytemnestra that she suffers so much less from the results of her crime. Herodias really has no remorse; she is relatively untroubled by the pangs of conscience. The accusations made by Iokanaan trouble her only because they cast reflections on the legality of her position as Hérode's wife and Judea's queen. Her child, who no longer feels much respect for her, does not hate her, either. Hérode is the only one troubled by the pangs of what one, in a more ethical person, would call conscience. Hérodiades either ignores the omens of the coming disaster resulting from their past crime, that Hérode "sees", or she actually does not notice "l'air très étrange" of the moon and "un battement d'ailes gigantesques". When Hérode complains of these, she mocks him:

Je le vois bien, et les étoiles tombent comme des figues vertes, n'est-ce pas? Et le soleil devient noir comme un sac de poil, et les rois de la terre ont peur. Cela au moins on le voit. Pour une fois dans sa vie le prophète a eu raison. Les rois de la terre ont peur. ...Enfin, rentrons. Vous êtes malade. On va dire à Rome que vous êtes fou, Rentrions, je vous dis.

Herodias's main concern is that she is losing her husband to a younger woman and that this woman is her own daughter. She worries about the attention that Hérode gives Salomé and
tells him "il ne faut pas la regarder" because "vous la regardez toujours." 38 She is happy when Salomé scorns Hérod; when Salomé will not sit by Hérod, she (Hérodias) triumphantly asserts, "Vous voyez bien ce qu'elle pense de vous." 39 When Hérod wants to have Salomé dance for him, she tries desperately to prevent it, but Salomé is no longer obedient to the orders of her mother. Only when Salomé asks for Io- kanaan's head as a reward after the dance, does Hérodias approve with "Ah! c'est bien dit, ma fille." 40 However Hérodias falsely assumes that Salomé is seeking revenge on the prophet because he had insulted her mother. The Queen does not realize Salomé's destructive passion for the man. Even when she does, she continues to "trouve [r] que ma fille a bienfait." 41 However she makes no protest at all when Hérod orders Salomé killed. Apparently the woman's fear of a younger rival is stronger than the mother's love for her daughter.

Thus the similarities of the situations of Klytämnestra and Hérodias and the apparent similarities of conduct in their earlier lives serve to point out their innate personality differences. Klytämnestra, who has a conscience and a low threshold of psychological endurance, is destroyed while the harder Hérodias survives.
(3) Aegisth and Herode

With Herode and Aegisth the positions are reversed. Aegisth, who has the more sensitive wife, is the more unfeeling of the men. Again we find two similar situations; both men have murdered close relatives to gain their wives and their thrones. Where this was entirely unjustified by anything but ambition and lust in Herode's case, Aegisth did have a legitimate motive because of his hatred for the Atrides and his desire to avenge his own father's murder. By killing Agamemnon, he is continuing a blood feud. But the seduction of Klytemnestra was unjustified. We see very little of Aegisth in the play, but from the other characters' remarks, we see that he is an unimaginative man, who does not fear the ghosts of the slain, only the actual coming of Orest with an army, which might defeat him. He is arrogant and jealous of the prerogatives of his usurped position. He fears betrayal and is cautious about his attendants. Elektra's ambiguous words, when he comes back from the hunt, satisfy his ego and lull his suspicions. They allow him to be drawn into Orest's trap like the great beast he resembles.
II

Hérode is a much more complicated character. His desire for Herodias and ambition were the only reasons behind his fratricidal murder. It is not strange, therefore, that the pangs of fear (Hérode feels no real remorse, only a fear of retribution from some divine power) should torment him and that he should be constantly looking for the coming of his terrible punishment. He does not have the courage of his own deeds; in short, he is a miserable coward. He sees blood everywhere, in the moon, on the floor (there actually is blood there), in the rose petals from his wreath which he has flung on the table. And in the air, he hears the beating of the wings of he knows not what— but he fears it is Death:

Ah! il fait froid ici! il y a un vent très froid, et j'entends... pourquoi est-ce que j'entends dans l'air ce battement d'ailes? Oh! on dirait qu'il y a un oiseau, un grand oiseau noir, qui plane sur la terrasse. Pourquoi est-ce que je ne peux pas le voir, cet oiseau? Le battement de ses ailes est terribles. Le vent qui vient de ses ailes est terrible. C'est un vent froid...

This superstitious fear makes him much more concerned with the life and message of Iokanaan than any of the other main characters are. He feels the holiness of the prophet and realizes that his message of the coming of the Messiah might be the truth. This affects him, not as a matter of religion,
but as a matter of avoiding his own destruction:

Salome, pensez à ce que vous faites. Cet homme vient peut-être de Dieu. Je suis sûr qu'il vient de Dieu. C'est un saint homme. Le doigt de Dieu l'a touché. Dieu a mis dans sa bouche des mots terribles. Dans le palais, comme dans le désert, Dieu est toujours avec lui... Au moins, c'est possible. On ne sait pas, mais il est possible que Dieu soit pour lui et avec lui. Aussi peut-être que s'il mourrait, il m'arriverait un malheur. Enfin, il a dit que le jour où il mourrait il arriverait un malheur à quelqu'un. Ce ne peut être qu'à moi. Souvenez-vous, j'ai glissé dans le sang quand je suis entré ici. Aussi j'ai entendu un battement d'ailes dans l'air, un battement d'ailes gigantesques. Ce sont de très mauvais présages. Et il y en avait autres. Je suis sûr qu'il y en avait d'autres, quoique je ne les aie pas vus.43

His concern over his own salvation does not prevent him from lusting after his step-daughter-niece who so resembles the young Herodias he once loved. He does not consider that this incest and adultery would be even worse than his previous one. It is his superstitious fears, however, as well as his loathing for Salome's unnatural act of kissing the dead mouth, that cause him to give the order for her death, a death which had been predicted in the manner it occurs by Iokanaan, for Herodias.

In each pair of adulterous and incestuous couples, one has been able to overcome the psychological impact of the crime by a lack of sensitivity and moral feelings. This enables this one to live in relative contentment with his or her
spoils. These fortunate ones are Aegisth and Herodias. The bedfellows of these have a remnant of moral feeling and more sensitivity and have been affected much more strongly. Thus, Klytämnestra is completely mentally destroyed and Herode is definitely affected mentally. Both have delusions and rely upon superstitious religion to save them.
I

Whether there is a basis for comparison between Orest and Iokanaan at all is a debatable point, but they come closest to being male protagonists in the two plays. Neither person, as characters that actually appear, is absolutely essential to the plot. Hofmannsthal saw this when he wrote:

Ueber die 'Elektra' hat er [Maximilian Harden, the literary critic] tatsächlich das einzige sehr Treffende gesagt, das ich irgend gelesen hätte: nämlich dass sie ein schöneres Stück und ein reineres Kunstwerk wäre, wenn der Orest nicht vorkäme.

Elektra dominates the play so much that Orest, who was the most important figure of the plays of Aeschylus and Sophocles, emerges as a weak young man who is afraid to do his duty. He trembles before the deed and must overcome his fear before he can kill his mother and her lover. He is still enough of a child to wonder what his mother is like now and to have a certain amount of feeling for her. Hofmannsthal considered Elektra's fate more important than that of Aegisth and Klytämnestra. It is really not fair to judge Orest by this play alone, since he was to get more consideration in Hofmannsthal's unwritten sequel to Elektra [Orest in Delphi].
II

Iokanaan is so inanimate that he seems unessential to the staging of the story of Salome. He might be compared to a candle flame that spreads its light (in his case the message of the coming of the Christ and the condemnation of the mores of the Judean court) unconcerned by the moth that is fluttering around it, attracted against its will to the fire. The candle is quenched and the moth dies. But the prophet, like the candle, has no personality of his own; it is the spirit of God, like the flame which is all that is of significance in him. Thus he undergoes no personality changes at all and his utterances all seem the same. He is not a real character at all.
(5) The "choral" characters

The minor characters in the plays may be compared to the choruses of the Greek dramas. They give us the background of the stories (a very essential feature in a one-act play, which must conserve classical unity of action, time and place) and bring news of the outside world, as well as commenting on the actions of the principal characters. In the use of these choral elements, the plays illustrate close similarity.

The "choral" characters in Elektra consist of the palace maidservants, who give the background of the plot and tell of the various reactions to Elektra's peculiar behavior; Klytämnestra's servants who reflect the mistress's confusion and mental illness; and those servants, two men and the cook, who discuss Orest's death and its significance, after news of this death has arrived. Last, there are the servants in the opening scene who announce the coming of Aegisth, and prepare the way for the final murder.

In Salome, we first encounter the soldiers who give the background of the plot and accompany with comments and their interaction the play until the entrance of the royal couple. The soldiers tell of the religious struggles in Judea and of the princess's beauty and charm. The young Syrian assumes a rather important role in the plot by killing himself for the
love of Salome. The second "choral" group consists of the various types of Jews, Pharisees, Nazarenes, and Sadducees, who tell stories of the New Testament to the Tetrarque and the Queen, and who discuss the validity of Jesus as the Messiah and Iokanaan as his prophet. In the final scene, the soldiers return to kill Salome.
The characters of Salome and Elektra show points of similarity. Both Wilde and Hofmannsthal use psychoanalytic techniques in the treatment of their characters, especially the heroines and their mothers. This shows how the idea of psychological explanations of human behavior permeated all areas of culture from the nineteenth century on. Hofmannsthal who read Breuer and Freud's reports, and Wilde, who did not, both made use of these explanations.

Yet the characters also point out the contrast of the widening gap between the aesthete, Wilde and the maturing Hofmannsthal. Wilde's characters are completely amoral. One cannot even call them "decadent" or "immoral". These terms imply a loss of pre-existing ethics which Wilde's characters never possessed. The nature of the play as a complete mosaic work of art precludes judgment of individual stones.

Hofmannsthal does not treat his characters in this manner. His growing sense of responsibility distinguishes between good and evil. The story he has chosen, like many Greek tragedies, has a strong moral background. Hofmannsthal's characters are both good and evil and his judgment of them is implied in the destruction of Aegisth and Klytemnestra, the collapse of Elektra, and the triumph of Orest and Chrysothemis. Most of these destinies are inherent in the original story, with the
notable exception of Elektra's. But the unavoidable fact
that Hofmannsthal chose this legend and changed the ethical
implications as little as he did contrasts vividly with Wilde's
choice of a story which shows few such implications and heightens its amorality.
The language of Salomé, which is such an important element in the play—far more important than in many other dramas—has been mainly influenced by two sources: the Bible and Maurice Maeterlinck's Les Sept Princesses, the latter influence brought to light by Boris Brasol and Frank Harris. The Biblical touches strike one strongly upon the first reading of the drama. Whole sentences are taken from the New Testament and the Song of Solomon. Thus, we find, for example, that the lines Iokanaan first speaks, on coming from the cistern,

Apres moi viendrai un autre encore plus puissant que moi. Je ne suis pas digne même de délier la courroie de ses sandales. Quand il vendra la terre déserte se réjouira. Elle fleurira comme le lis. Les yeux des aveugles verront le jour, et les oreilles des sourds ouvertes...Le nouveau-né mettra sa main sur le nid des dragons, et mènera les lions par leurs crinières.2

taken from Mark 1:7,

Et il prechait en disant: 'Il vient après moi, celui qui est plus puissant que moi; et je ne suis pas digne de délier, en me baissant, la courroie de ses chassures.

John 1:27,

C'est celui qui vient après moi, et je ne suis pas digne de délier la courroie de sa chaussure.

and Luke 3:16,

—mais il vient, celui qui est plus puissant que moi, et je ne suis pas digne de délier la courroie de ses chaussures.
Very little of what Iokanaan says in his prophetic statements (as opposed to his denunciations of Salome) is completely original to Wilde, but is a skillful synthesis of some of the utterances of John and several other prophets as recorded in the Bible. Thus, in a speech denouncing Hérodias, Iokanaan employs a phrase that is used by the Biblical John in a general prophecy:

Il a son van dans sa main, il nettoiera parfaitement son aire et amassera le froment dans son grenier; mais il brûlera la balle au feu qui ne s'enteint point.

is thus in the speech of Iokanaan:

Quoiqu'elle ne se repentira, mais restera dans ses abominations, dites-lui de venir, car le Seigneur a son fléau dans la main.3

The sparsity of the actual utterances of John in the Bible did not trouble Wilde, for he was able to synthesize speeches for Iokanaan that seem so authentic that one feels sure that upon closer perusal of the Bible, one would find a verse that would show those to be the actual words of John. For example:

Ne te rejois point, terre de Palestine, parce que la verge de celui qui te frappait a été brisée. Car de la race du serpent il sortira un b asilic, et ce qui en naîtra dévorera les oiseaux.4

This verse is actually taken from the prophecies of Isaiah (14:29) slightly altered, but it could have very easily been spoken by John.

The other book of the Bible that has strongly influenced
the writing of Salomé is the Song of Solomon. Salomé's description of the various parts of Iokanaan's body (when she is parising him) is an adaptation of the style of the Song. An example of this is the following passage from the Bible:

-Mon bien-aimé a le teint de blanc et vermeil;
Il se distingue entre dix mille.
Sa tête est comme de l'or pur;
Sa chevelure est souple comme le palmier,
   Noir comme les plumes d'un corbeau.
Ses yeux sont pareils a des colombes au bord d'un ruisseau;
   Ils sont comme baignés dans le lait,
Comme enchâssées dans le chaton d'une bague.
Ses joues sont un parterre embaumé,
Un massif de fleurs odoriférantes.
Ses lèvres sont des lis d'ou ruiselle la myrrhe.
   Ses mains son des anneaux d'or, où sont enchâssées des rubis;
Son corps est un chef-d'œuvre d'ivoire,
   émaillé de saphirs.
Ses jambes sont des colonnes de marbre,
Reposant sur des socles d'or pur.
Son aspect est celui du Liban.
Il est superbe comme les cedres,
   Sa bouche respire la douceur,
Et toute sa personne est pleine de charme.
   Tel est mon bien-aimé, tel est mon ami, ô filles de Jérusalem.

A progression similar to this, but not in exactly the same order, is in Salomé. Salomé praises first the eyes, then the body, then the hair and finally the mouth of Iokanaan, and in each case, after each rejection, reviles them in a similar way. One can see the similarity and differences to the Biblical original in the following passages:

C'est de tes cheveux que je suis amoureuse,
Iokanaan. Te cheveux ressemblent à des grappes de raisins noirs qui pendent des vignes d'Edom
dans le pays des Edomites. Tes cheveux sont comme
les cedres du Liban, comme les grands cedres du Li-
ban qui donnent de l'ombre aux lions et aux voleurs
qui veulent se cacher pendant la journée. Les lon-
gues nuits noires, les nuits où la lune ne se mon-
tre pas, où les étoiles ont peur, ne sont pas aussi
noires. Le silence qui demeure dans le forêts n' est pas aussi noir. Il n'y a rien au monde d'aussi
noir que tes cheveux... Laisse-moi toucher tes che-
veux.6

After Iokanaan's refusal, Salomé continues:

Tes cheveux sont horribles. Il sont couverts
de boue et de poussière. On dirait une couronne
d'épines qu'on a placee sur ton front. On dirait
un noeud de serpents noirs qui se trottillent au-
tout de ton cou. Je n'aime pas tes cheveux...
C'est de ta bouche que je suis amoureuse, Iokanaan.7

The likenesses are striking; the differences are in the
elements of lawlessness as personified by the v
dionysian addition of the grape clusters and the black nights' offering con-
celalment to the preying robbers and lions. Corruption is
found in the description of the Medusa-like locks, covered
with dirt after Salomé has been rejected. A New Testament
touch can be noticed in the "couronne d'épines" phrase. It
can readily be seen that, although Wilde has elaborated and
amplified his Biblical influences greatly, they are still very
obvious.

The second major influence on Salomé is the Maeterlinck
drama Les Sept Princesses. Here the influence of the one
play upon the other, according to Brasol and Harris, is main-
lly shown in the repetition which is so characteristic of
Salome. One can see in the following passage, how the repetition, almost in counterpoint, occurring in Salome, is derived from that of Les Sept Princesses:

Le Jeune Syrien: Comme la princesse Salome est belle ce soir!

Le Page d'Herodias: Regardez la lune. La lune a l'air très étrange. On dirait une femme qui sort d'un tombeau. Elle ressemble à une femme morte. On dirait qu'elle cherche des morts.

Le Jeune Syrien: Elle a l'air très étrange. Elle ressemble à une petite princesse qui porte un voile jaune, et a des pieds d'argent. Elle ressemble à une princesse qui a des pieds comme des petites colombes blanches... On dirait qu'elle danse.

A similar repetition occurs in the Maeterlinck play:

La Reine: Non, non ce ne sont pas des larmes, mon enfant... Ce n'est pas la mère que des larmes... Il n'est pas arrivé... Il n'est rien arrivé....

Le Prince: Ou sont mes sept cousines?

La Reine: Ici, ici; attention, attention... n'en parlons pas trop haut; elles dorment encore; il ne faut pas parler de ceux qui dorment....

Le Prince: Elles dorment?... Est-ce qu'elles vivent encore toutes les sept?....

La Reine: Oui, oui, oui; prenez garde, prenez garde... Elles dorment ici; elles dorment toujours....

Le Prince: Elles dorment toujours?... Quoi? quoi? quoi?—Est-ce que?... Toutes les sept!... toutes les sept!....

One can notice in each passage how one phrase is first introduced, then another, how a repetition of the first phrase then occurs, how a third phrase or word may be introduced, then
a repetition, exact or varied, of the first or second phrase, and so on, more like the structure of that of a poem than a drama. This, as previously mentioned in Chapter II, is a lyrical, musical rather than a dramatic method of writing. One is reminded, to use an example, of a well-known orchestral work, Ravel's "Bolero." There is the same repetition of key phrases, with variations and changes, growing ever stronger, building up tension, until there is finally a climax at a point where any more tension would have been unbearable. In Salomé, this is best shown in the speeches of Salomé to Iokanaan in which she admires each part of his body in turn, growing more and more intense in her admiration, and rejecting each part in turn until the focus comes to a ten-fold repetition of variations on "Je faiseraï ta bouche, Iokanaan." The repetition, which is almost hypnotic, is emphasized by (1) the pleas of the young Syrian in the background for Salomé to stop saying "ces choses," and (2) his suicide when Salomé continues with her words and completely ignores him. The fact that she does not even notice the suicide, because she is so carried away by the hypnotic repetition of her monomaniacal outbursts makes his death all the more effective. The entrance of Herod and Herodias, after Iokanaan's departure, provides a partial catharsis, but the true dramatic one does not occur until the end of the play when Salomé says as her
last words, "J'ai baisé ta bouche, Iokanaan."\(^{12}\)

Much of the value of \textit{Salomé} lies in the atmosphere created by Wilde's impressionistic and lyrical language. The first and most important impression one receives is one of colors, and over and over again, in the works of anyone writing about this play, including Hofmannsthal and Wilde himself, as we have seen in the passages quoted in the Preface, color is the predominant element in the impression that \textit{Salomé} leaves on its audience. This is caused by Wilde's manifold use of colors in his word pictures. To mention just a few examples (there are many in the play):

\begin{quote}
C'est la reine Herodias, celle-la qui porté la mitre noire semée de perles et qui a les cheveux poudres de bleu?\(^{13}\)

Il possède des vins de trois espèces. Une...qui est pourpre comme le manteau de César... Un autre... est jaune comme de l'or... Ce vin-là est rouge comme le sang.\(^{14}\)

Elle ressemble au reflet d'une rose blanche dans un miroir d'argent.\(^{15}\)

J'ai des topazes jaunes comme les yeux des tigres, et des topazes roses comme les yeux des pigeons, et des topazes vertes comme les yeux des chats.\(^{16}\)
\end{quote}

In the speech of Hérode, from which the last lines are taken are mentioned the following colors: argent, or, ivoire, noire, rouge, jaune, rose, vert, bleu, and turquoise.

Another obvious prevalence is that of the similes which abound in the text. Again, the following are just a few examples of a trend that prevails throughout the play.
Il ressemble à un rayon d'argent. [Iokanaan]

Ta bouche est comme une bande d'écarlate sur un tour d'ivoire. [Iokanaan's mouth]

J'ai des saphirs grands comme des œufs et bleus comme des fleurs bleues. [Sapphires]

Elle ressemble à une femme morte. [The moon]

These two main aspects, those of color and simile along with the repetition factor, are interwoven in many of the speeches. Thus, in a speech about the mouth of Iokanaan, we find the color red constantly repeated in a series of similes.

C'est de ta bouche que je suis amoureuse, Iokanaan. Ta bouche est comme un bande d'écarlate sur une tour d'ivoire. Elle est comme une pomme de grenade coupée par un couteau d'ivoire. Les fleurs de grenade qui fleurissent dans les jardins de Tyr et sont plus rouges que les roses, ne sont pas aussi rouges. Les cris rouges des trompettes qui annoncent l'arrivée des rois, et font peur à l'ennemi ne sont pas aussi rouges. Ta bouche est plus rouge que les pieds de ceux qui foulent le vin dans les pressoirs. Elle est plus rouge que les pieds de colombes qui demeurent dans les temples et sont nourries par les prêtres. Elle est plus rouge que les pieds de celui qui revient d'une forêt ou il a tué un lion et vu des tigres dorés. Ta bouche est comme une branche de corail que des pêcheurs ont trouvée dans le crépuscule de la mer et qu'ils resservent pour les rois...! Elle est comme le vermillon que les Moabites trouvent dans les mines de Moab et que les rois leur prennent. Elle est comme l'arc du roi des Perses qui est peint avec du vermillon et qui a des cornes de corail. Il n'y a rien au monde d'aussi rouge que ta bouche...!

The similes in many cases are also symbols that are consistent throughout the play. Salomé, for example, is identi-
fied with the moon, and the colors of white and silver. This works in reverse, too, for the moon is considered as a woman or a "petite princesse", most of the time. The moon, representing Salomé, mirrors the changes in her character or (since we have only the opinions of the other characters of her changing character rather than a change in Salomé herself) the change that the other characters see in her. Thus we already have the ominous leit-motif in the beginning of the play where the moon is compared to a "femme morte" who "cherche des morts" and who "sort d'un tombeau". But in the very next speech, she is the "petite princesse" with "pieds d'argent", like "petites colombes blanches". Later, Salomé refers to the moon as a virgin, who "ne s'est jamais donnée aux hommes, comme les autres Deesses". She compares the moon to a "petite fleur d'argent" where Salomé herself had been previously referred to as "au reflet d'une rose blanche dans un miroir d'argent". Just before Iokanaan refers to the "yeux d'or" of Salomé there is a référence to the moon being like "une petite princesse qui a des yeux d'ambre". After the encounter with Iokanaan and Salomé, the moon is referred to as a "femme hystérique" reeling naked through the clouds in search of lovers. And just before Salomé dies there is an eclipse of the moon. This passes, and Salomé is last seen in the light of a moonbeam. Then she is crushed beneath the shields of the soldiers.
The language of Elektra, too, according to its author (as quoted in Chapter I, footnote 16) owes much to the style of the Old Testament "Inbesonderes der Propheten und dem Hohen Liedes". He had admired this style in Algernon Charles Swinburne's "Atalanta in Calydon". Elektra's language is one of its most compelling features. There is strength in it beyond what the younger Hofmannsthal had achieved in his earlier lyric dramas. It tends toward the harsh and almost cruel at times and has a quality quite different from the decadence of Wilde:

Und wenn sie uns mit unseren Kindern sieht, so schreit sie; nichts kann so verflucht sein nichts, als Kinder die wir hundisch auf der Treppe im Blute glitschend, hier in diesem Hause empfangen und geboren haven. Sagt sie das oder nicht?

The other major influence on the language of Elektra comes from its major source, Sophocles's Electra. Some passages are almost direct translations from the Greek original, for example:

Electra: καὶ ὅτ' ἔλειται τὰ τὰτ ἐμοὶ ἡ γὰρ χρόνῳ νοῦν ἐσχον; ὡστε συμβείν τοῖς κρείς τοῖς.

Elektra: Es ist nichts andres, als dass ich endlich klug ward und zu denen mich halte, die die Stärkern sind.

It would seem that the Old Testament's being the source of inspiration for both Wilde and Hofmannsthal would create a
great deal of similarity between the two plays. That this is not the case is due in the first analysis to the differences in tone between the French and German translations of the Bible. Luther, in his German translation of the Bible, was primarily interested in writing in the language of the people for the people, as he says in his "Sendbrief von Dolmetschen" (1530):

Denn man muss nicht die Buchstaben in der lateinischen Sprache fragen, wie man soll Deutsch reden, sondern man muss die Mutter im Hause, die Kinder auf der Casse, den gemeinen Mann auf dem Markt drum fragen, und denselbigen auf das Maul sehen, wie sie reden, und darnach dolmetschen. So verstehlen sie es denn und merken, dass man Deutsch mit innen redet.

No other Biblical translators had ever so specifically written for the "man in the market place" until the twentieth century and the French and English Bibles have formality of style that is reflected in both the French original of Salome and the more generally known English translation of the play.

This difference in the tone of the two Bible translations therefore, contributes to the difference in the tone of the language of the two plays. Salome revels in the ornate prose-poetry style of the French translation of the Bible whereas Elektra gains much of its strength from a conscious influence of Luther's style. The secondary sources for the language of the plays tends to emphasize this difference. The romantic style of Maurice Maeterlinck, combined with Wilde's own impres-
sionistic tendencies, culminates in producing the lyrical, "colorful", prose-poem that is Salome; in Elektra, the strength and simplicity of Sophocles' verse, although colored by Hofmannsthal's neo-Romanticism, add to the same quality of strength and simplicity gained from Luther.

Hofmannsthal does not use colors in his play as much as Wilde does in his, and therefore, all the shading in Elektra is gained from the scenery's use of red, black and gray. The feeling of gloom, caused by the black and gray, is enlivened only by the somber, but gorgeous, heavy colors of Klytemnestra's semi-oriental garb and the red illumination which heralds the blood that has been spilled and is still to be spilled. Even Klytemnestra is dressed in the "scharlachroten Gewand" symbolic of the spilled blood. "Blood" indeed is the leit-motif of Elektra in regard to the language: like the blood on Lady Macbeth's hands Agamemnon's blood cannot be washed out of the memories of the characters; it is portrayed as existing on the floor:

\[\text{dass wir mit Wasser und mit immer frischem Wasser das "Ewige Blut" des Mordes von der Diele abspulen.}\]

on the steps:

\[\ldots\text{Kinder, die wir hündisch auf der Treppe im Blute glitschend, hier in diesem Hause empfangen und geboren haben.}\]

in the water where he died:
Sie schlugen dich im Bade tot, dein Blut
rann über deine Augen, und das Bad
dampfte von deinem Blut...

It is blood that will pay for his blood, and whose shedding
will be accomplished by those of his blood:

Vater! dein Tag wird kommen! Von den Sternen
stürzt alle Zeit herab, so wird das Blut
aus hundert Kehlen stürzen auf dein Grab!
So wie aus umgeworfenen Krügen wirds
aus den gebundenen Mörderlern fließen...

..........

...und wir schlachten dir die Hunde
weil sie der Wurf sind und der Wurf des Wurfes
von denen, die mit dir gejagt, von denen,
die dir die Füsse leckten, denen du
die Bissen hinwarfst darum muss ihr Blut
hinab, um dir zu Dienst zu sein, und wir,
dein Blut, dein Sohn Orest und deine Töchter,
was irgend wenn alles dies vollbracht und Purpur-
gezelte aufgerichtet sind, von Dunst
des Blutes, den die Sonne an sich zieht,
dann tanzen wir, dein Blut, rings um dein Grab.

his blood on the cloths of the ghost-dead:

...wie sie flüstern
und Tücher voller Blut auswinden.

There is also the restless blood of Klytämnestra:

und müsst' ich jedes Tier, das kriecht und fliegt,
zur Ader lassen und im Dampf des Bluts,
aufsteh'n und schlafen gehen wie die Volker
der letzten Thule in blutroten Nebel...

Klytämnestra's bath water which "schaumt, wie Blut";

Chrysothemis's blood which is to be instilled with the courage
of Elektra:

Mit meinen traurigen verdornten Armen
umschling ich deinen Leib, wie du dich sträubst,
ziehst du den Knoten noch fester, ranken
will ich mich rings um dich und meine Wurzeln
in dich versenken und mir meinem Willen
das Blut dir impfen.  

the blood of Aegisth and Klytämnestra which will cling to
the Chrysothemis's after the murder:

es bleibt kein Tropfen Blut am Leibe haften:
schnell schlüpft's du aus dem blutigem Gewand
mit reinem Leib ins hochzeitliche Hemd.

the "Blut and Hass" that Orest sees in the eyes of Elektra;
and finally, the blood that covers all those present at Or-
est's's murder of Klytämnestra and Aegisth:

...alle,
die leben, sind mit Blut bespritzt und haben
selbst Wunden...

Repetition of other key words occur, too, such as "Opfer",
"Hass", "Beil" and other terms which are concerned with the
murders, sacrifice, and death.

Although the moon-filled, "colored" atmosphere of the
language of Salome is in sharp contrast to the lightless,
blood-stained atmosphere of Elektra (admittedly, there is
blood in Salome too but it is a minor rather than a major sym-
bol), there is one passage in Elektra that is very reminiscent
of Salome, especially in its moon-imagery, and, since it shows
a pre-Elektra who no longer exists, points out again that the
language of the two plays emphasizes the contrast of their
heroines' present characters:

Auch die Scham, die susser
als alles ist, die, wie der Silberdunst,
der milchige, beim Mond, um jedes Weib herum ist und das Grassliche von ihr und ihrer Seele weghält...

and:

Ich fühlte, wie der dunne Strahl des Mondes in seiner weissen Nacktheit badete [her own body] so wie ein Weiher...
The language of *Elektra* and *Salome* is, as we have seen, one of the points on which the plays differ quite radically. This, as Hofmannsthall himself saw it, is mainly a matter of "color". Hence *Salome*, although written in prose, seems more like an impressionistic dramatic poem, rather than a drama, while *Elektra*, written in blank verse, is a drama foremost, whose poetry is used only to enhance the effect of the drama.
Chapter V

The Presentations of *Salome* and *Elektra* as Plays and as Operas

*Salome* and *Elektra* share the uniqueness of having been the only two of Richard Strauss's operas to have been presented first as dramatic plays. Both were first presented in Berlin in their German production by Max Reinhardt, one of the most influential forces in modern stage-craft. In his use of stage-settings, in the colors he used in scenery, in the use of music with drama, he revolutionized the theater of his day.

Hofmannsthal wrote of stage-craft:

Versucht man in seiner so vielfältigen Tätigkeit das Entscheidende auszufinden, so ergibt sich vielleicht als das Stärkste die: er hat die Art des Zuhörers verändert. Seine Tendenz ging beständig dahin, den Zuhörer auf eine andere Ebene hinübersuziehen. Hierin liegt die Einheit und Konsequenz von vielen scheinbar ganz disparaten Versuchen und Unternehmungen: das Spielen in sehr grossen, dann wieder kleinen Sälen, die wechselnde Verwendung der Musik, die Varianten der örtlichen Relation zwischen dem auftretenden Schauspieler und dem Publikum, die scheinbare wechselnde Aufmerksamkeit, die er der sogenannten Illusion und dem sogenannten Bühnenbild widmet. Musik ist ihm wesentlich ein geselliges Element und das Licht und die Kulisse ebenso. Er benutzt alle drei als Hilfsmittel, um die gewohnte Relation zwischen Zuschauer und Schauspieler aufzuheben und den einen als Mittelpunkt und Festgeber, den anderen als Teilnehmer des Festes und Medium einer vor sich gehenden Zauberei möglichst frei zu machen.

..............................
Er wirft einem Element das andere entgegen: dem Schauspielerischen das Malerische, beiden das Dichterische und kühlt ein Feuer mit dem anderen. Diese Arbeitsweise ist ganz einzigartig, unendlich fruchtbar in sich und eigentlich unnachahmlich.¹

Reinhardt showed a certain amount of daring in producing Salome at all. Its premiere on the London stage had been prevented by a censor. What angered Wilde more than anything was that no one seemed to mind this. In a rage he even threatened to give up his British citizenship:

If the censor refuses Salome, I shall leave England, and settle in France: where I shall take out letters of naturalization, I will not consent to call myself citizen of a country that shows such narrowness in its artistic judgment.²

However, it was not a personal matter for the censor at all, because, according to English law, plays about Biblical subjects were not permitted to be performed on the English stage.³ At any rate, the play was first produced at the Théâtre de L'Oeuvre in Paris in 1896 by Lugné-Poë, with Lina Munte playing Salome.⁴

In Germany also, Salome ran into censor trouble. At first, Max Reinhardt wanted to give a public performance of this play, but after the censor banned it, he arranged a private performance with only invited guests attending. This took place on November 15, 1902, in the Kleines Theater in Berlin. It was paired with a performance of Wilde's comedy, The Importance of Being Earnest.⁵ Julius Bab said of this per-

The performance was a great success. The stage-craft of Reinhardt added much to the atmosphere of Salome, and, since much of Salome's appeal lies in atmosphere, the way a director stages it is more important in this particular drama than in the usual play. Wilde's directions are not very explicit:

SCENE--A great terrace in the palace of Herod, set above the banqueting hall. Some soldiers are leaning over the balcony. To the right there is a gigantic staircase, to the left, at the back, an old cistern surrounded by a wall
of green bronze. Moonlight

He leaves the elaboration of the details to the director; and as Wilde was dead before the play was produced in Germany or the opera was written, he could not advise the producer of either, or consult with Strauss about changes in the libretto.

On the German stage and in the opera, an excellent translation by Hedwig Lachmann was used that catches the spirit, rhythm and lyrical quality of Wilde's language to an amazing degree.

Wilde's faults as a dramatist proved to be advantageous on the opera stage. The fact that Salome is a play of language and atmosphere instead of plot and character made it ideally suited for an opera libretto with almost no changes at all. The play is shortened in only some of the long repetitive lyrical monologues, and the only addition is in a speech of Herode's, which attempts to improve the motivation of the plot by emphasizing more strongly his religious awe, rather than fear, of Iokanaan. So this passage is thus inserted in his last speech to Salome, in which he offers her any of his possessions in exchange for her releasing him from his promise to give her the head of Iokanaan:

HEROD: Salome, bedenk, was du tun willst. Es kann sein dass der Mann von Gott gesandt ist. Er ist ein heiliger Mann. Der Finger Gottes hat ihn berührt. Du mochtest nicht dass mich ein Unheil betrifft, Salome? Hör' jetzt auf mich!

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The elisions from the original concern the story of Phillip's death, which is not as detailed in the opera as in the play. This does not damage to the plot.
Hofmannsthal had very close connections with both Max Reinhardt and Richard Strauss. *Elektra* was the first Hofmannsthal play that Reinhardt produced and the first Hofmannsthal libretto Strauss used. These collaborations were, by nature of the success of the first effort, to continue for the lifetime of Hofmannsthal. Strauss never again used another librettist until after Hofmannsthal's death, and Reinhardt was to produce many more Hofmannsthal plays.\(^\text{10}\)

As we have seen by Hofmannsthal's diaries, *Elektra*, though previously planned by him, was actually executed for Max Reinhardt specifically, and for Gertrud Eysoldt, the actress who had first presented *Salome* on the German stage. A contemporary wrote of Miss Eysoldt:

> The first type is represented by Gertrud Eysoldt, an actress of the ultra-modern movement. She expresses the emotions through the intellect—the intellect indeed fashions the emotions. In fact, she is the extreme kind of the intellectual actress, in whom the intellect is a fine instrument for shaping the feelings. She is the present type of actress—not the type that the new theatre and new drama will evolve. She is the actress who "knows", is always on the level of consciousness like Bernard Shaw.\(^\text{11}\)

Hofmannsthal had seen Miss Eysoldt act, met her, and later corresponded with her, and this must have had some influence on the portraiture that she gave to Elektra. She was an actress who thought out her parts thoroughly, a type whom we would classify in our generation as a "Method" actress.
Elektra was first performed on October 30, 1903, in the Kleines Theater in Berlin, the same theater which had seen the first German performance of Salome. The critic who had previously commented on Eysoldt's performance in the older play, Julius Bab, now wrote:


Hofmannsthal, being available for consultation on the production, must have given advice to supplement his rather terse scene descriptions. In an undated letter to a theater group in Tokyo, wanting to present Elektra, he wrote, concerning the scenery:


Although in the play script itself, Hofmannsthal is spe-
specific only about the costuming and appearance of one character, Klytämnestra, he gives very detailed instructions on the stage, lighting and the costumes of all the characters in his "Szenische Vorschriften zu 'Elektra'", published in 1903, the year of the premiere of the play. Especially interesting is the oriental influence in the staging and the appearance of Klytämnestra:

Die Hinterwand des königlichen Hauses bietet jenen Anblick, welcher die grossen Häuser im Orient so geheimnisvoll und unheimlich macht; sie hat sehr wenige und sehr unregelmässige Fensteröffnungen von den verschiedensten Dimensionen...In den höheren Stockwerken sind nur hier und da ein paar verstreute Fensterlücken, denen die Kraft des Malers jenes Lauernde, Versteckte des Orients geben wird...Vor diesem Gebäude steht eine Zisterne.

Ihr [the characters'] Kostüm muss sich, ohne sehr zu befremden von den konventionellen, pseudo-antiken entfernen und darf an die Stimmung orientalischer Märchen anklangen, aber in finsteren, wenn auch keineswegs toten, Farben. 14

Elektra was not to be presented as an opera until six years later. Meanwhile, Hofmannsthal had seen the Strauss opera made from Salome, and had recorded his impressions of it in various letters to friends and to his father. In November, 1906, he wrote to Helene von Nostitz:

Sie erlaubten, von dem Eindruck der "Salome" eine Nachricht zu geben. Er war sehr stark: ein schwer zu beschreibendes heftiges und die ganze Zeit andauerndes und ungewöhnliches Glücksgefühl. Man ahnte unter einem glitzenden Schleier noch
He wrote a month later to his father, after Strauss had played and sung to him some parts of Elektra:

(und mir machte das Gedichtete in dieser Form (obwohl er natürlich elend singt) eine grosse Freude, viel mehr als von Schauspielerin gesprochen. Es ist ihm unglaublich gelungen, soweit ich das beurteilen kann, die Figuren der "Elektra" und ihrer sanften Schwester zu kontrastieren. Ich denke, es wird sehr schön werden.)

that he wanted to hear Salome again.

Since Strauss and Hofmannsthal worked together for three years (from 1906 to 1909) on Elektra and exchanged a long series of letters, discussing changes in the play, it is not strange that Elektra was changed much more than Salome in adapting it for the operatic stage. There are numerous small changes to fit the music better, as well as the omission of whole sections of the dialogues between Elektra and Chrysothemis and Elektra and Klytämnestra. This fits the pattern of Salome. But there are also several long passages added or substituted, the first, during the encounter of Elektra with
her mother, when Elektra describes the chase that Orest will give Klytämnestra through the palace, when he hunts her down like an animal in order to kill her. Elektra adds the element of her own presence, like "ein Hund an deiner [Klytämnestra's] Ferse". This is actually a fragment of a former speech of Elektra's to Chrysothemis about Klytämnestra's dream. The second major addition occurs after the recognition scene with Orest, when Elektra is relating the dreams of her youth which she had to sacrifice to the avenging of her father. There is first an emphasizing of the surrender of her feminity for her father's sake, by a lengthening of speech about the dream and an indication of the "Traumbild" of Orest that has replaced her earlier dreams and made life possible. The most important addition is a long duet between Elektra and Chrysothemis, after the death of Aegisth, when Chrysothemis tries to get Elektra to join in the general celebration in the palace. Elektra pays no attention to her younger sister's happiness and her description of a future life filled with joy and love. She sings of her own triumph. "Ich habe Finsternis gesät und ernte Lust über Lust" and the fatality of love. Love for her is a death-dealing, not a life-giving, force as it is for Chrysothemis, and this duet emphasizes this fact and gives more sufficient reason for her final collapse. It is certainly a more powerful ending than the play has, with its leading up to the triumphal dance and death of Elek-
The above mentioned letters (exchanged in the three years that Strauss and Hofmannsthal were working together on the adaptation of *Elektra* for the operatic stage) are a fascinating study in the collaboration of two artists in different fields for the purpose of forming a single work of art. They discuss some of the minutest details as well as some of the larger changes. For example, in a letter from Strauss to Hofmannsthal, dated June 22, 1908, we find that Strauss is puzzled about the stage setting and the physical action of the characters:


Questions such as these, though seemingly minor, tend to make the playwright define his play more clearly, to tie up all the loose ends that are not important to the play as a work of literature, but which are important to it as a dramatic
production. Hofmannsthal, in answering these questions, is forced to see the motivation of his characters, as shown by their actions, more concretely:

Seite 91 kommen die Frauen "wild herausgelaufen" aus ihrem Dienerinnengebäude, Harem links. Seite 93 läuft Chrysothemis durch die Hoftür rechts hinaus, weil sich indessen das ganze Kampfgetöse, der tödliche Kampf zwischen den zu Orest haltenden Sklaven und den Angehörigen des Aegisth (dieser grosse Stoff für die Hintergrundmalerei des Orchesters) in die inneren Höfe gezogen hat, mit denen die Hoftür rechts kommuniziert.

Situationsplan [following is a sketch of the floor-plan of the palace with all the doors clearly marked.]


Even though Elektra had been written as a play previous to the collaboration of Strauss and Hofmannsthal, the operatic version shows precisely that unity which was to make the operas they collaborated on later seem the work of one man, like those of Wagner, rather than the work of two separate individuals.
III

The comparison of the presentation of the plays and operas, Salomé and Elektra, shows more similarity than any other facet of them. Their production by the same director at the same theater and their playing by the same actress would tend to make them seem to have more similarity in their presentation to an audience than the two plays actually have upon closer analysis. The treating of the two librettos by the same composer, who, as we have seen, had the opinion that these two works were alike anyway, and who composed these two works in a relatively close span of time, accentuates the likenesses even more. The two operas are of similar length. There is a curious juxtaposition of the singing roles which shows again, Strauss's feeling of the similarity of the two plays. Elektra and Salomé are both sung by dramatic sopranos, Chrysothemis by a soprano, and Hérodias and Klytämnestra by mezzo-sopranos. The remaining casting is unusual. One would expect the older men, Aegisth and Hérode, to be baritones or basses, since that is the usual casting in an opera. But Strauss felt that these two men, though chronologically mature, are mentally and emotionally immature. Although they stand in the position of stepfather to the heroines (and are perhaps what could be considered in most operas, the villains) they are not at all paternal. They are too much the lovers of Klytämnestra and Hérodias (and
in the case of Herode mentally in love with Salomé herself) to be given mature baritone parts to sing. Instead they are given the tenor roles usually reserved for the young lover.

The reasons for this are easier to understand than those behind the bestowal of baritone roles upon the two younger men, Iokanaan and Orest. Iokanaan, it is true, although young and as much a hero as Salomé has, is a prophet and therefore seems entitled to his baritone voice. But the fact that Orest, who in the Hofmannsthal play is a rather ineffectual adolescent (regardless of how Hofmannsthal planned to represent him in Orest in Delphi) who does his duty only after repeated urgings from his sister and tutor, should be played by a baritone because of his manly strength is not too acceptable. This again shows how Strauss treated the plays alike in his composing, even when they differed in the original.

This tendency to see in Elektra a younger almost identical sister to Salomé, thus fostered by Strauss, has been widely accepted without much questioning. It is true that there is much similarity in the two plays, especially in their staging. Any influence from Wilde on Hofmannsthal in these plays, is revealed mostly in Elektra's dramatic presentation. Hofmannsthal was definitely influenced by Wilde's staging— for example, in the use of an unnecessary cistern on Elektra's stage similar to the necessary one on the stage of
Salome and in its oriental rather than occidental atmosphere. But these external resemblances, which have made such an impression on the literary critics, have made them neglect seeing the deep-rooted differences in the two plays.
Conclusions

Oscar Wilde's *Salome* and Hugo von Hofmannsthal's *Elektra* are very similar plays. But this similarity is mainly an external one. For over fifty years, critics have been deceived by this external similarity to conclude that *Elektra* was so greatly influenced by *Salome* that the later play is an imitation, good or bad, of the earlier. This deceptive similarity, caused by a similar plot, and enhanced by musical and stage settings by the same composer and the same director, has long obscured the essentially different natures of the two plays. Each play reflects its author's aesthetic philosophy and his development as an artist. Wilde, the complete Aesthete, who was destroyed by his philosophy, used his play to express his idea of a work of art which exists for its own sake alone and which is completely devoid of those "ethical sympathies" that are such "an unpardonable mannerism of style" in an artist. In such a play, form and atmosphere predominate. There is no place for dianoia or morality.

Hofmannsthal, who had said ten years before the appearance of *Elektra* that "die Grundlage des Aesthetischen ist Sittlichkeit", attempted to give his artistic endeavors this foundation of morality. He finally achieved this in his later dramas, such as *Jedermann* (1912), *Das Salzburger grosse Welttheater* (1922) and *Der Turm* (1925) by the use of themes
based on religious allegory. *Elektra*, which belongs to his middle period, shows the morally-based aestheticism, especially in his treatment of the characters. *Elektra* is a play dominated by character-development and dianoia.

*Salome* and *Elektra* were written by writers with widely differing personalities and philosophies of art. Wilde's play had definite influence on Hofmannsthal's play, but in the scheme of the development of the two writers, a really deep-based similarity was not possible.
Footnotes to the Preface


2. Edmund von Hellmer, "Hofmannsthal als Gymnasiast", in Fiechtner, op. cit., p. 11.


4. Ibid. p. 58.

5. Prosa I, p. 119.


8. Ibid. p. 237.


16. Ibid.

*Note: The volumes of Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Gesammelte Werke in Einzelausgaben. Herausgegeben von Herbert Steiner. in 15 vols., S. Fischer Verlag, Frankfurt, 1953, will be referred to only as Prosa I, Drama II, etc. The two volumes of Hofmannsthal's letters, Briefe 1890 - 1901, S. Fischer Verlag, Berlin, 1935 and Briefe 1900 - 1909, Bermann-Fischer Verlag, Vienna, 1937, will be referred to as Briefe I and Briefe II.
24. Hesketh Pearson, Oscar Wilde, His Life and Wit. "The Exile". Harper & Bros., New York and London, 1946, p. 297. The idea of St. Sebastian representing the artist beset by bourgeois society is not uncommon. For example, from Thomas Mann's "Der Tod in Venedig" (Thomas Mann, Novellen II. S. Fischer Verlag, Berlin, 1922., p. 360), we have the same idea when Aschenbach finds in the "Sebastian-Gestalt"... "das schönste Sinnbild, wenn nicht der Kunst überhaupt, so doch gewiss der in Rede stehenden Kunst." It is also interesting that St. Sebastian was killed by arrows and the prison costume in England had arrows on it.
26. Ibid. p. 137.

31. Ibid. p. 16 (Hofmannsthal to Strauss, April 27, 1906).

Footnotes to Chapter I

1. I will refer to the characters in the Sophoclean play as Electra, Clytemnestra, Orestes and Aegisthos. The characters in the Hofmannsthal play are designated as Elektra, Klytämnestra, Orest and Aegisth. Unfortunately, no such distinction is possible with Chrysothemis, whose name is spelled alike both in English and German. I use the English spellings of Salome, Herod, Herodés, etc. for the historical and Biblical source figure, the French spellings (Salomé, etc.) for the characters in the Wilde play.


5. Ibid.

6. Ibid. p. 218.


15. Hofmannsthal, Briefe II, p. 383-384 (actually taken from Ernst Hladny, "Hugo von Hofmannsthals Griechenstucke")

16. Ibid.


18. Ibid. p. 152.

19. Ibid. p. 132.
Footnotes to Chapter II


4. See Footnote 1, Chapter I.


7. Fitts, op. cit., p. 73.


10. Ibid. p. 47.

11. Ibid. p. 59.

12. Fitts, op. cit., p. 64.

13. Unconscious or dead - this is not clearly indicated in the play, but in the excerpt from Hofmannsthal's diary, dated July 17, 1904 (see Chapter I, footnote 13), Hofmannsthal states that Elektra could no more keep on living after her purpose is accomplished than a drone can keep on living after he has accomplished his purpose of fertilizing the queen bee.

14. Aegisthos is the first cousin of Agamemnon, Herod the half-brother of Philip.

15. "The thought of the persons in the play is shown to be all that must be effected by their language (i.e., effects upon the emotions or the reasons) - in every effort to prove or disprove, to arouse emotion (pity, fear, anger and the like), or to exaggerate or minimize things. It is clear also, that their mental procedures must be on the same lines with their actions likewise, whenever they
wish them to arouse pity or horror, or produce an effect of importance or probability. The only difference is that in action the effect has to be produced without explanation; whereas with the spoken word it has to be produced by the speaker, and result from his language."


18. Ibid. p. 117.
Footnotes to Chapter III

   "Das Alkestis und Oedipus-Thema sublimiert in der "Elektra". (Das Verhältnis der Elektra zur Tat freilich mit Ironie behandelt. Elektra-Hamlet)" p. 361.
   "Sie wandeln (sein Schicksal suchen in Tun (Tun ist Sichaufgeben)
   Oedipus - Gegenfigur; Kreon
   Elektra  O p f e r" p. 364.
   "Analogie zwischen Oedipus und Elektra. Wo ist die Offenbarung des Höchsten?" p. 365.


3. Ibid. p. 52-53.
4. Ibid. p. 54-55.
5. Ibid. p. 55.

10. Ibid. p. 27.
11. Ibid. p. 41.
13. Ibid. p. 17.
15. Ibid. p. 20.
16. Ibid. p. 35.

* Also Aufzeichnungen, p. 217.
° Also Aufzeichnungen, p. 201.
17. Ibid. p. 49.
18. Ibid. p. 58.
22. Hofmannsthal, as quoted by Wyss, op. cit. p. 57.
25. Ibid. p. 21.
34. Ibid. p. 30.
36. Ibid. p. 39.
37. Ibid. p. 64-65.
38. Ibid. p. 35.
39. Ibid. p. 41.
40. Ibid. p. 67.
41. Ibid. p. 76.
42. Ibid. p. 61.
43. Ibid. p. 72-73.
45. See Footnote 17, Chapter I.
Footnotes to Chapter IV


4. Ibid. p. 43.

5. La Sainte Bible Société Biblique de France, Paris, 1921 Le Cantique des Cantiques, 5: 10-16.


7. Ibid. p. 29.

8. Ibid. p. 5.


10. Wilde, Complete Works, Vol. V.

11. Ibid. p. 31.

12. Ibid. p. 81.

13. Ibid. p. 8.


15. Ibid. p. 7.

16. Ibid. p. 73-74.

17. Ibid. p. 25.

18. Ibid. p. 29.

19. Ibid. p. 74.

20. Ibid. p. 5.


22. Ibid. p. 5.
23. Ibid. p. 6.
24. Ibid. p. 15-16.
25. Ibid. p. 25.
26. Ibid. p. 25.
27. Ibid. p. 22.
28. Ibid. p. 35.
30. Ibid. "Ein Analogon findet sich bei Swinburne, dessen 'Atalanta in Calydon', 'Erechtes' usw., mehr alttestamentarisch als antik sind, zumindest beides vermischt."
33. Dramen II, p. 72.
34. I am assuming that for literary purposes, Hofmannsthal, though a Catholic, meant Luther's translation as his model for style.
35. Martin Luther, "Luthers Sendbrief vom Dolmetschen." Luthers Sammtliche Schriften, v. 19. Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo. 1907, p. 77+
37. Ibid. p. 13.
38. Ibid. p. 13.
40. Ibid. p. 15.
41. Ibid. p. 22.
42. Ibid. p. 32.
43. Ibid. p. 39.
44. Ibid. p. 50.
45. Ibid. p. 55.
46. Ibid. p. 59.
47. Ibid. p. 73.
48. Ibid. p. 64-65.
49. Ibid. p. 62-63.
Footnotes to Chapter V


2. Brasol, op. cit., p. 223.

3. "A great deal of abuse and ridicule has been heaped on that official for this, but in all fairness to him, it must be admitted that he had no choice in the matter. Rightly or wrongly, plays dealing with Biblical subjects are not allowed to be performed on the English stage and the Censor's business is to see that the rules and regulations governing stage productions are duly observed." Leonard Cresswell Ingleby, Oscar Wilde. T. Werner Laurie, Ltd., London, 1907. p. 187.


6. Julius Bab, Das Theater der Gegenwart. J. J. Weber, Leipzig, 1928, p. 120.

7. Wilde, Salome, p. 25.

8. "Two operas have been composed on Salome; one by Richard Strauss, which has been performed all over the world; the second by a young French naval officer, Lieutenant Marriotte, a native of Lyons'. The German opera was performed for the first time in Dresden in 1905, the French at Paris: in 1911..."Ervine, St. John, Oscar Wilde. William Morrow and Co., New York, 1952. p. 140. Since only the Strauss opera is important, and the other one, to my knowledge, is never performed, only the former will be considered in this thesis.


15. Briefe II, p. 241. It is interesting that Hofmannsthal uses the word "Farbe", since color, as we have seen, is one of the most important elements by which he felt Salome, in the earlier letter to Strauss, was distinguished from Elektra. (Preface, footnote 31).


18. Ibid. p. 216.


20. Ibid. p. 33-34.

21. "Hofmannsthal...worked so closely with Richard Strauss that the libretto and score of their works, as in few operas save those of Wagner's, can now be analyzed as a single and almost indivisible work of art." Roditi, op. cit., p. 57.


22. "...In Elektra (1904) there is perhaps more of Oscar Wilde's Salome than of Sophocles: the imitations are indeed as glaring as they are in Vollmoeller's Katharine, Gräfin von Amagnac. There were several translations of Salome, one by Hedwig Lachmann; and as one of Max Reinhardt's gorgeously pictoral productions, it held the
stage for years. The influence of the English play is shown in the concentration on the ragged figure of Elektra — she never leaves the stage — while Orestes is reduced to a minor figure. The theme of both Salome and Elektra is the sexual repression of the heroine." J. E. J. Bithell, Modern German Literature, Methuen and Co., London, 1939. p. 247.

"...Mit feinem Verständnis hat man auf Hugo von Hofmannsthal's Elektra, als die deusch-griechische Schwester der französich orientalischen Salome hingewiesen." Daffner, op. cit., p. 309.

"...Elektra (1903), a work which deals with sexual repression and ensuing vampire-like fury, and in this greatly resembles Oscar Wilde's Salome..." Werner P. Friederich, An Outline-History of German Literature, Barnes and Noble, Inc., New York, 1948. p. 222.

"...And it is not surprising that Salome should lend itself so easily to operatic adaptation, where music and splendid staging reinforce the spectacular element and add a new element of atmosphere that tends toward an analogous sublime; not that one of Wilde's followers along the same path, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, should have conceived his dramas so often as operas..." Roditi, op. cit., p. 56-57.
Footnote to Conclusions

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