THE UNITY OF THOUGHT
IN THE EARLY WORKS OF STEFAN GEORGE

BY

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Möge die Idee des Reinen, die sich bis auf den
Bissen erstreckt, den ich in den Mund nehme,
immer lichter in mir werden.

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STEFFAN GEORGE'S poetry is doubtless one of the most interesting phenomena of the first decades of the twentieth century in Germany. He has been successively claimed as embodiment of the fin-de-siècle mood, and as herald and prophet of the Third Reich. Some of his poems have appealed strongly to the sophisticated men and women in the time of Germany's greatest material prosperity, others have been quoted enthusiastically at youth meetings after the war had been fought and lost, and Germany had reached the depths of poverty and despair. The poet's friends, however, and, indeed, the poet himself, maintained "Ihr sehst wechsel, doch ich tat das gleiche." ("Das Zeitgedicht", in DER SIEBENTE KING, p. 41).

Such conflicting views on George's poetry were also favoured by the air of secrecy, even of mystification, which surrounded him. He did not contribute to the usual publications, he kept away from editors, letters were left unanswered, in short, it was impossible to get in touch with him. When the poet himself wished to get in touch with somebody he invariably did so through one of his friends.

1) George's poems are quoted from the "Gesamt-Ausgabe der Werke. Fundlütige Gesang. Berlin 1927 - 34."
by means of a personal meeting and not through letters. He had no permanent address, the address of his family, of a friend, or, later, that of his publisher, had to serve when he required a passport or had to fill in a declaration. The limited first editions of his books were not available through the usual sources of the book trade. His journal, the BLÄTTER FÜR DIE KUNST, was on sale in three places only, the shops of a Berlin, a Viennese, and a Paris bookseller. Later a Munich shop replaced the Paris one. This was the only possibility the average reader had of acquainting himself with George’s poetry, until, at the age of thirty, the poet decided to make the first five volumes of his poetry generally accessible. They were published in three volumes in the autumn of the year 1899, dated 1899; together with a volume of selections from the journal.

The poet succeeded in his attempts at avoiding the literary circles of his time in a high degree, and Adolf Bartels, in the fifth edition of his 'Die deutsche Dichtung der Gegenwart', published 1911, maintained that 'Stefan George' was the pseudonym of a Jewish writer. This statement, which can be traced back to Karl Kraus, found its way into the "Kürschner's Deutscher Literaturkalender" for the year 1912. Here the 'real' name of the poet is given as Heinrich Abeles. (Kürschners Deutscher Literaturkalender auf das Jahr 1912. Hrsg. v. Dr. Heinrich Klenz. 34. Jahrg. Berlin. column 510).
In addition to the poet's reticence, the belief that he was surrounded by a small and exclusive circle of friends gave rise to many rumours and to much unnecessary speculation. There was, of course, never a secret society for the appreciation of mystical verse. The journal, DIE BLÄTTER FÜR DIE KUNST, in which the poet published his own poems and poems in his style written by his friends, had a note on the front cover that read: "Die zeitschrift im verlag des herausgebers hat einen geschlossenen von den mitgliedern geladenen leserkreis." The recipients of the journal therefore had some justification in regarding themselves as a select company. The only figure readily available as to the circulation of the journal is that for the 'Siebente Folge' in 1904. Of this 500 copies were printed. (Bl.f.d.K. Eine Auslese aus den Jahren 1904 - 1909. Berlin 1909 p.7). Other figures for the private editions of the books of the poet and his friends range from the 500 copies of DER SIEBENTE RING down to the seven copies of a translation of Mallarmé's HERODIAS. There were also, of course, many books specially written and illustrated by his friends of which only one, or very few, copies existed.

The contributors to the journal formed a more select circle than those who had access to the poems, and they may be understood to represent the 'mitglieder' referred to on the cover of the journal. But the fact that a poem had been printed in the journal did not automatically make its author
a member of the inner circle of George's friends. George, in order to encourage young authors, frequently printed poetry that seemed to him to be 'on the right lines'. (Friedrich Gundolf, Stefan George. 3rd ed. Berlin 1930, p.31). The contributors to the journal during the twenty-seven years of its publication (1892 - 1919) are many and varied. Most names, however, appear only throughout a short period.

It was this group of contributors that was referred to as 'Der Kreis der Blätter für die Kunst' in the strictest sense. In a wider sense, however, this 'Kreis', in addition to the recipients of the journal, comprised those who were invited to the various festivals and the recitations given by the poet. Munich for a long time had been famous for its 'Künstlerfeste', and it was therefore during the years of the poet's closest connection with Munich, and Schwabing in particular, that the 'circle' took on its most distinct outline. The central figure of this circle was Karl Wolfskehl, nicknamed the 'Zeus of Schwabing', a man whose vitality and wide interests no one who has ever met him can forget. It may therefore be said that the activity of the 'circle' culminated in a party which Wolfskehl gave in February 1904, at the time of the Munich 'Fasching', and where all his friends appeared as figures of the classical and mythical age. This was followed by another party, in March of the same year, the 'Maskenzug' on somewhat similar
lines, to which reference is made in DER SIEBENTE RING and in Wolfskehl's own poems.

Wolfskehl, however, was not the poet's closest friend. This position of real intimacy was held first by a schoolfellow of the poet's, Karl August Klein, who was named as the editor of the BLÄTTER FÜR DIE KUNST. Later it was always a younger man on whose ways of thinking and writing George had a very great influence. For many years Friedrich Gundolf acted as the poet's secretary in literary matters. After the estrangement between master and disciple George found himself most strongly attached to Friedrich Wolters, to Kest Morwitz, and to Robert Boehringer. But the number of young men who have been strongly influenced by the poet, and who regard themselves as his disciples, is far greater. There is an indication of the number and variety of these young men in George's dedicatory poems from DAS JAHR DER SEELE onwards.

Another source of mystification for the general public lay in the books and articles about the poet published by members of this 'circle'. Under the influence, probably, of the cult, widespread in Germany, of the 'master', i.e. Richard Wagner, (whose music, however, was abhorrent to the true disciple of George), they proceeded to institute a George-cult that is characterised by a complete, and almost deliberate, sacrifice of all sense of proportion. Friedrich
Wolters' book on Stefan George und die Blätter für die Kunst, Berlin 1930, the sub-title of which claims it to be the Deutsche Geistesgeschichte seit 1890, is an example of this. The book, however, is invaluable to every student of the poet, and, indeed, of 'Deutsche Geistesgeschichte seit 1890', since it contains a wealth of material not otherwise accessible. On the other hand George's poetry has been attacked and ridiculed just as blindly as it has been praised. There is no denying that in one way or another its importance has been felt by almost every German writer and reader.

The poet's life, apart from the spiritual experiences of which his books are a record, has little that could arouse curiosity. His desire to remain anonymous is almost the only fact that has induced critics and historians to interest themselves in his biography, an interest that quickly subsided when Wolters published his very full and authentic biography in 1930.

Stefan George was born on July 12th, 1868 in Büdesheim on the Rhine. His father's family had been vintners and peasants in Lorraine for many years, and had emigrated into Hessen when Lorraine became French after the treaty of Lunéville (1861). The poet's godfather, his grandfather's brother, had been a member of the Hessian diet. In 1873 the poet's father decided to give up farming and moved into Bingen where, in addition to wine-growing, he took up trading in wine, as was usual with many of the more important growers.
The poet went to school first at Bingen and was later sent to the 'Gymnasium' at Darmstadt. Few countries can boast of so many interesting towns as Germany with its many small capitals, and Darmstadt is not one of the least interesting. It was, too, entering just at that time on a phase of renewed artistic and literary activity. George passed his 'Abiturium' in 1886, and decided on the study of modern languages. He began with journeys to London, Geneva, and Northern Italy. His studies at the universities of Berlin and Munich were interrupted by extensive travel, and he spent a considerable time in Paris. In 1890 he published his first book, HYMNEN, and from that time on was wholly absorbed by his poetry. Much of his time every year was spent in long journeys, and he travelled over the whole of Western Europe, from Italy to the Scandinavian countries, and from England and Spain to Poland. The winter he spent almost regularly in Germany, the first part in Berlin, the second in Munich. Until the death of his father dissolved the household, he regarded Bingen as his home, and liked to return there and spend a few months in quietness. He died on December 4th 1933, and lies buried in Minusio near Locarno.

His poetry is admittedly difficult. The first barrier to appreciation which the student of German literature will find is the use made of a special type in his books. Besides minor peculiarities the font has a shortened 't', and a distinctive 'e'. This type was designed by the poet's friend,
Melchior Lechter, who was also responsible for the printing and design of the books. Lechter based his type on the poet's own hand-writing, or rather printing, as he liked to use an artist's reed and coloured ink. This in its turn had been influenced by the Carolingian minuscule. The type, however, is unusual rather than difficult, and once the reader has become acquainted with it, he will find it not only clear and easy to read, but actually less of a strain than the so-called 'German script', and even some of the more spidery Roman types. Nor will the reader be worried, after a time, by the omission of capital letters, and a few other minor deviations from orthodox usage, such as 'jest' and 'lazte'. In this George only follows the example set by Jakob Grimm, an example followed by many of the leading German scholars and one or two journals.

George's use of punctuation, however, is more debatable. In fact, the poet admitted as much himself. The first edition of ALGASAL contained no punctuation of any kind, but when the book was re-issued the poet introduced a few punctuation marks; the full stop, a kind of half stop, i.e. a dot raised above the line and used generally in place of a comma, the colon and inverted commas. These, however, were still used much more sparingly than in orthodox writing, and in some cases their absence may give rise to doubts as to the exact interpretation of a passage. We must, however, not be satisfied with ascribing these deviations from orthodox spelling and
punctuation, though it has undoubtedly been influenced by Mallarmé, merely to a desire for the unorthodox and 'select', and, possibly, 'pour éspérer le bourgeois'. The poet realised as well as anybody that startling fashions are of little real value if there is not a sufficient reason behind them. This reason we find in the fact that poetry is, or should be, spoken poetry. It should be heard aloud, not silently read. In addition to the marks indicated by punctuation, rhythmic pauses sub-divide the lines of a poem. These are no less important than punctuation marks, although they do not appear in print. It is well known that Heinrich von Kleist used punctuation marks in an unorthodox way to mark rhythmical periods, and not primarily to make the meaning clear. In a certain way George may be said to follow this example. By abandoning the usual punctuation he forces his reader to become his hearer. Many of his poems, that appear to be almost unintelligible in print, are not so when spoken aloud. Unless read by someone to whom the fundamentals of all poetry, rhythm, melody, and cadence, mean nothing, most of George's poetry will be found to fall easily into its rhythmical periods when spoken aloud; it then loses much of its alleged difficulty.

There is, however, another difficulty of George's verse quite distinct from any question of printing. The structure of the sentence, and of the poem as a whole, is not infrequently involved, as will be seen from our interpretation of individual poems. One point, however, may be
remarked upon here. It has often been found a useful method to read George's poems not once, but two or three times, and to run on into the first verse again immediately the last has been finished. Frequently his poems are not constructed so as to tell a story from beginning to end. The first line may be intelligible only with a knowledge of the last. The poem has to be kept in view as a whole. In writing this particular kind of poetry the poet had to contend with the strong sense of continuity of time in his hearers. It is only natural to expect a development from the 'earlier' to the 'later' in a poem of which the hearer certainly hears the opening lines earlier than the closing ones. But George's poetry stands outside this natural sequence of time which most hearers will, of course, find very difficult to unlearn. This new attitude to time, too new and too strange for us to be as yet able to say much about it, may, quite conceivably, be regarded later as one of the most valuable contributions to poetry George has made.

To make this point clearer a simile may be employed. There is no one aspect of a piece of sculpture that can give a really adequate impression of the whole. It is not solely a question of three dimensions against two, as it is possible to receive an adequate and fully stereoscopic impression of a bas-relief or a stage setting. But in order to get a true and adequate impression of a statue the spectator has to call in a fourth dimension, time. He has to walk round it and
gradually accumulate innumerable views of his object. He may then, at the end of a journey that took some time, reach a point where he has an impression of the statue as a whole. There is, however, no one viewpoint from which he can get this impression. Having come to the end of his walk round the statue he cannot say that the last aspect of it brings the solution to a problem set by an earlier one. Indeed, the spectator would be well advised to go round his statue not once, but several times, in order to break up any sequence or order of aspects imposed by his having to take time to go round. If the spectator could receive simultaneously the impressions of all the different viewpoints possible, then, indeed, he might be said to receive a true impression. As it is he is forced to establish an order, a sense of 'earlier' and 'later' not inherent in the statue. In order therefore to establish free association between any and all of his various aspects he will have to break up that sense of continuity, of sequence. He can do so by linking the last view with the first, making this a later one, and covering ground with which he is now acquainted, for a second time. This will often help him to co-ordinate the various aspects and details, instead of subordinating the one to the other. - Like all similes this comparison of a poem of George's with a piece of sculpture does not bear pressing. This peculiar quality of George's poetry has been recognised by many critics, it is referred to by Kloesser under the term 'stehendes Gedicht';
And Oskar Walzel remarks of George's poems:

"Das Festungsgesteilt ihres Formwillens erweist sich in der
starken Pause, die am Schluß jedes Verses erscheint. Der
Verse erhält dadurch sozusagen Eigenleben und ist bei George
einmal derart Geschlossenes, dass es vielfach möglich ist,
die Reihenfolge der Verse zu ändern, ohne den Sinn zu zer-
stören. Ironisch spricht man von umkehrbarer Lyrik."
(Oskar Walzel, Deutsche Dichtung von Gottsched bis zur Gegen-
wart, vol. II., Handbuch der Literaturwissenschaft. Wildpark-
Potsdam 1930, p. 261)

The most important problem, however, which the early
books of the poet present is the one touched upon at the
beginning of this introduction, the apparent difference,
and even contrast, between the poet's early and later verse.
Critics are now more or less agreed that in his later books
the poet proves himself to be an idealist. He gives a descrip-
tion of his time, of events and situations, real and imaginary,
as seen by the critical eye of the idealist demanding of life
that it should conform to that pattern of beauty and truth
which is the poet's vision. He becomes a critic and a leader,
his poetry is castigation and inspiration. The difficulty
arises in trying to relate this aspect of George's work to
that of the poet of the 'fin-de-siècle', the dandy, as which
he appears in his first books. In regard to this problem
we take the view that its solution lies in the proper interpretation of the terms 'idealism' and 'beauty', particularly the latter. To George, Keats's identification of beauty with truth is more than a poetical remark and a striking idea. It has never been contended that the idea of beauty in George's early books is a central one. It has, however, been too frequently overlooked that to him beauty was not an embellishment, a super-imposition, and one of life's pleasant superfluities, but a strict task-master. Indeed, so severe was his conception of beauty that it continually strained his poetical and spiritual powers almost to breaking point. This results in his poetry being either strangely impressive and moving, or ridiculous and painful. There is no middle way in his poetry, and the poet has found, in life, either enthusiastic approval, or bitter, frequently personal, hatred. This is true even of his early verse, and the reception it received was such as is not usually afforded to unimportant, if pleasant and competently written poetry.
CHAPTER TWO

DIE FIBEL

It is always a matter of doubt whether early and immature verse should be published or not. For their proper understanding such poetry presupposes in the reader a knowledge of the more important work that followed. At its best its appeal is historical, not immediate. George knew this as well as anyone. Reiner Maria Rilke records that at their only meeting, in Florence, in 1909, George strongly criticised him for publishing at a too early age. Rilke agrees with this criticism, although he had very special and personal reasons for his action, and looked upon it as a misfortune rather than a mistake. "Mir fiel der Vorwurf ein, den mir Stefan George (etwa 1909, bei unserer einzigen Begegnung in Florens) so ausdrücklich vorzuhalten für gut fand: dass ich zu früh veröffentlicht habe. Wie sehr sehr recht hatte er damit." (Letter to Dr. Heygrod, 26th December 1921, R.M.R., Briefe aus Luzern 1921—1926. Leipzig 1925 p. 62)

In accordance with these views the poems of Die Fibel remained unpublished — with occasional exceptions — until 1901, and even then they were made available, in a limited edition, to friends only. In 1901, with the publication of DER TEPPICH DES LEBENS, the poet had entered on his second period, and no less than six volumes of verse had made his name known. DIE FIBEL is now included in the
'Gesamt-Ausgabe' as a matter of course, but it remains primarily an object of interest for the scholar and the historian.

The 'Gelaitverse' (p.8) written as an introduction to the first publication of these poems in 1861, characterise them as 'frühes dichten'. These 'gelaitverse' do not express any personal emotions of the poet's on looking back on his youthful writings, but attempt to describe objectively the situation, the conflicts, the sweetness and the despair inherent in all early poetry. It is not any memory of personal suffering, acute though it had been, from which the 'Gelaitverse' spring, but the realisation that, necessarily, 'heller treuam als wort nur trügt'. It is the conflict between the ideal and the shortcomings of its realisation which the poet discovers already in his earliest verse.

There is another characteristic worth noting, and to which the 'Gelaitverse' draw attention, the poet's objectivity. Experience, which is by necessity the basis of all poetry, must be personal, but the expression given by George to this experience is not subjective. Or, to use Dilthey's terms, with George 'Dichtung' extends very far into 'Erlebnis', and George's poetry therefore often gives the impression of being not more than an artistic experiment. In George's poetry all experience, all 'Erlebnis', at once transcends to the level of the absolute.
A third point, made in the 'Geleitverse' which refers not only to his early poems, but which is a general characteristic of all his work, is the close connection between poetry and nature. This connection is not one of sentiment. Nature, to him, is not an element in which he can lose himself, but a friendly background and a surrounding world. "Gebüsch und strom und wind im chor" do not accompany human activities so much as answer them. This relation to nature is a measure of the difference between George's poetry and that of the Romantics to whom Nature was the great chaos in which they could lose their individuality.

Much of the poetry collected in DIE FIBEL is love poetry as is only natural with an adolescent author. George's love poetry, however, shows a certain difference from the usual juvenile effusions in its tendency towards impersonal and abstract statements. "Ich wandelte auf öden düstren bahnen..." (p.13) is not so much a confession of love, as an expression of the poet's search for beauty. He is not led through beauty to love, but through love to beauty, from the subjective emotion to objective realisation. This characteristic explains the poet's gratitude in spite of his disappointment in love. His love has served its purpose and helped him to realise beauty; and beauty, the poet believed, is the ultimate aim of poetry.

This same tendency towards an abstract point of view
is apparent also in a later poem of DIE FIBEL, one in which the subject is diametrically opposed to that of the first sonnet, 'Frühe Liebe' (p.43).

In 'Die Najade' (p.14) this tendency can be shown to be a particular manner of writing, and this is the main interest of the poem. The sixth stanza contains the following lines:

"Doch ein Bild der flüchtigen Welle
Welch es eilig stets zurück."

Here the poet uses his simile not as an illustration, but as a symbol. There is no 'als', his words refer both to the nymph and to her picture in the water. He does not tell his reader that the nymph disappeared like her picture in the mirror of the pool. There is no need, the nymph and her picture have, in these lines, become identical.

The main interest of 'Abendbetrachtung' (p.18) is again a technical one: the poet's use of enjambement. The word 'lodern' is placed at the end of a verse and in enjambement. The poet makes use of a metrical pause to produce a contrast between the metrical pattern of his poem with that of the meaning. This contrast impresses the word 'lodern' on his hearer's mind, and this word gives an atmosphere of desire to the whole poem. This use of enjambement is different from Rilke's. Rilke, too, often uses the contrast between metrical and syntactical pattern, but the words which he places in enjambement do not colour the whole poem. The following may serve as an example:
"Ich bin eine Waise. Nie
hat jemand um meinetwillen
die Geschichten berichtet, die
die Kinder bestärken und stillen."

Rilke's use of the enjambement is an indication of his 'Damit
tum Kleinen', it serves to throw a sudden beam of light on
an insignificant word which had been used so often that it
had almost lost its character. This mystical attitude of
Rilke's who saw God in everything, however small and insignificant
is very different from the mainly technical use of the en-
jambement as shown in George's 'Abendbetrachtung' (p.18).

In 'Vernunft! Du legtest deine kalten hände' (p.20)
an observation which at first seems to refer merely to a
technical point takes us to the central problem of the poet
at this stage. The subject of this poem, the fact that reason
does not avail against emotion, is more than hackneyed, and
no new aspect of it is shown. The last stanza, however,
provides what appears to be a new way of saying an old truth: -

"Jedoch was hilft's wenn sie mein sinne versacht
Die lippe streng sau zu richten trachtet
Und noch das knie vor ihrem bild sich baut
Ihr neme noch den alten stern erzeugt?"

In these lines the poet's feeling is expressed not directly
but by description. It is not the poet who despises the
woman unworthy of his love, but his mind. It is not he who
is helpless against her beauty, but his knees bends before it.
This substitution of the part for the whole gives to the
poem a cold and impersonal aspect, it seems to lack in
dynamic life. This is not the case, although the awkwardness
of immature poetry makes it difficult to recognise the passion behind his words. There is, however, a later echo of our poem in George's translation of Dante's 'Commedia', which may be taken as a more competent expression of what was in the poet's mind:

"So ward ich jetzt - und ohne schauen - inne
Der Kraft die im geheimen auf mich drückte
Und fühle die gewalt der alten minne.

Und sagte meinem führer mit erbleichen:
Kein tropfen blut ist in mir der nicht bebo
Ich kenne noch der alten flamme zeichen."

(Gesamt-Ausgabe vol X/XI pp. 135-136)

The last line in particular of this version of Dante shows a close affinity in rhythm as well as in substance to 'Ihr nome noch den alten sturm erzeugt'. The rigidity and impersonality of form was necessary to balance the intensity of the poet's emotion.

A similar sense of balance is shown in 'Warum schweigst du ...' (p.27). This sense of balance is the more remarkable as it is found in a youth whose emotions are very strong, and at an age when lack of balance would appear to be the natural right of a young man. But here the poet denies himself the right to songs of sorrow. It is not a question of ethics, but one of style: the belief in the existence of an ideal pattern underlying every situation is a much stronger experience than his emotions. A similar attitude is expressed in 'Des kranken bitte' (p.50). The patient's desire to die in spring and not in winter does not indicate merely a desire
to experience another spring before his death, but points to
the poet's strong, even exaggerated, sense of style.

These main characteristics of the poet's earliest
work may, perhaps, be summarised as idealism and aestheticism.
To these the other poems of DIE PISSEL add very little. The
pronounced feeling for nature referred to in the 'Geleitverse'
is apparent in 'Ihr lüfte die ihr mild vom himmel . .' (p.29)
and in 'Schon künden . .' (p.30). There is also a noticeable
intensity of expression of a not very original subject in
'Sei stolz ...' (p.33), and a desire for brevity and
concentration in 'Druntan sieht . .' (p.40), the subject
of which reminds one a little of 'Abendbetrachtung' (p.18).

'Schliesst ein Ort . .' (p.44) seems to be little more
than a new version of Johann Nepomuk Vogli's 'Ein Friedhofs-
gang'. Vogli's poem has been very popular in German schools,
and it is not unlikely that George came across it in his
school reader. It is contained in the 'Echtermeyer', an
anthology of German verse much used in Prussian secondary
schools (Theodor Echtermeyer, Auswahl deutscher Gedichte',
45th ed. Halle 1926, p. 260). The last couplet:

"Wie schliesst ein Raum so eng und klein,
Die Nähe einer Mutter ein!"

shows such remarkable similarity to George's opening line
that it is difficult not to think of an influence of the
one on the other, especially as George was still at school
in Darmstadt at the time of writing this poem. The influence
may have been unconscious, and there is certainly a world of difference between the thoroughly 'bürgerlich' J.H. Vogl and the young rebel and aesthete. Except for the fact that George refers to his hero's love, Vogl to the hero's mother, and the brevity of George's poem, he has added very little to the substance of Vogl's poem.

The poems of the two parts of DIE FIBEL (pp. 13-51), together with a group of 'Übertragungen' (pp. 55-65) constitute the earliest group of George's poems. The group 'Von einer reise' sounds a drier, more brittle note. The poet now avoids 'romantic' words and all 'poetry'. Rhyme alone has been retained since without rhyme the poems would have too easily disintegrated into series of independent statements. 'Ich kam...' (p. 70) is a good example of this tendency to make short, almost incoherent statements. In these poems George is mainly concerned with close observation, following the example set in modern German poetry by J.F. Meyer, whose influence is particularly apparent in 'Die Glocken' (p. 69) and 'Keim-monat' (p. 85).

The 'Zeichnungen in Grau', the third part of the FIBEL are a further step in this direction of anti-romanticism. If, in 'Von einer reise', 'poetic' and 'romantic' words had been avoided, the 'Zeichnungen in Grau' in addition avoid colour and emotion. This, however, is not the only inference that can be drawn from the title. 'Grau' also implies a certain remoteness from life, and a deliberate limitation in the choice of subjects in this group of poems.
the first to be written as a group.

This remoteness from life extends to the poet's language. Originally these poems were written not in the poet's own tongue in which he thought and dreamt, but in an artificial language, 'lingua romana', which, while it was reminiscent of Italian and Spanish was not an organic language.

The poems of this group are, however, not only experiments, although this is a frequent misunderstanding. 'Gelbe Rose' (p.92) in particular has been either praised or ridiculed as a dispassionate work of art. It has been compared to a piece of valuable china, delicate, brittle, and precious. It is in reality not so much dispassionate as an expression of thwarted passion. The fact that no passion is expressed does not mean that passion is not the origin of the 'Zeichnungen in Grau'. Norwitz even sees in them 'harte und leidenschaftliche gedankliche Auseinandersetzungen.' (Ernst Norwitz, Die Dichtung Stefan Georges, Berlin 1934, p.19). It is true that there is an air of grim determination about them, and of radicalism which does not fit into the picture of the poet as a pure aesthete.

Many of these poems, presented with dispassionate intensity (if the paradox may be allowed), are concerned with sex and the perversion of sex. 'Priester' (p.94) is the first example of a long series of poems dealing with a relation between men amongst whom some of the finest as well as some of the most despicable characters may be found.
In 'Priester' this relation appears in a very unsavoury form, but it is not wholly without a distant glimpse of beauty. This may be taken as a sign of the poet's violent passion behind his repression, a passion kicking against all convention which restrained his youthful genius. 'Gift der Nacht' (p. 96) shows another kind of exaggeration, it is more personal than 'Priester', but here, too, we may interpret as youthful impatience what appears as perversion. It may be noted also that 'Gift der Nacht', in spite of its personal note, remains purely descriptive, the poet's expression is indirect by way of description.

The subject of 'Einer Sklavin' (p. 101) is the same as that of Heine's well-known sophisticated lines:

'Bleib' ich nicht, mein schönes Kind,
Und grüse mich nicht unter den Linden . . .'

Yet in origin and intention nothing could be farther than George's poem from Heine's worldly wisdom. He is not, like Heine, afraid of an uncomfortable situation, but obsessed by an exaggerated conception of style and of what is suitable.

The three 'Legenden' are George's only long poems with the exception of those in DAS NEUE REICH, the last collected volume of his verse. In his desire to get as near as possible to the truth which he wants to state, the poet discarded progressively 'poetical' words, rhyme, rhythm, and now even the desire to reproduce the essence only of a situation.
This process has its interesting parallel in the development of all German poetry in the early 20th Century, the development from elaborate verse of the kind C.F. Meyer wrote, to impressionistic verse, expressionism and 'surrealism', ending in a sudden reversion to simple, romantic poetry.

The first of the 'legenda', 'Erkenntnis' (p.107) enlarges on the subject touched upon in 'Einer Sklavin'. The hero of the poem appears in an unfavourable light, and the poem as a whole is instructive rather than satisfactory. The hero's doubts and demands seem to imply that he is very much deceived as to his own importance. None of the criticism so freely bestowed on others does he apply to himself. Yet even this youthful conceit, unpleasant as it is, does not ultimately spring from egoism, but from an unusual sensitivity. The poet has an ideal of purity which he wants to attain at all costs. It is hard to see, however, why this absolute standard of perfection should be applied only to his partner. Norwitz's theory (loc.cit. p.25 s.) that in the relation between the sexes man is the loser if his partner is not the embodiment of perfection, but woman gains in any conditions and whatever the standard of her partner, is interesting, but hardly convincing. It must, however, be accepted as an interpretation of the poet's own theories on this subject.

The second of the legenda takes for its subject a
pagan setting and a pagan story. Like George's view of women, paganism is one of the recurring themes of his poetry which have caused much comment. Paganism had already been noticeable in 'Priester' (p.94), and in 'Gift der Nacht' (p.96). In 'Frühlingswende' the subject is presented in a much less perverted manner than in the earlier and shorter poems. There are two distinct aspects of George's paganism. The one is the 'Dionysiac' and orgiastic side of life. The other presents the curious group-spirit of young men which had been a very real force from Sparta and Plato's Athens to the band of followers of a Germanic 'herzog'.

The language in which this legend is written appears to be prose. It is almost only the printing that reminds the reader that the legends are not meant to be prose. Furthermore the separate statements and descriptions are presented with very little attempt at a rational connection. A good example of what is meant can be found in the opening lines:

"Vor keinem windeszug bebt der hein.
In der frühe fiel keiner regen . .
Nun rüst der blätter feuchte zu tropfen
Und trienkle die erde in kleinen pausen."

Here we have four separate statements, all descriptive of certain features of a spring morning, but the logical connection is not pointed out. It is left to the reader to realise that the third statement is dependent on the preceding ones. This co-ordination of statements, instead of subordination,
is, of course, the poetic technique of the impressionistic and expressionistic schools of poetry. A good poem by a writer of one of these schools hangs together not rationally but emotionally, sometimes indeed only by the magic quality and power of words in rhythm.

The third of the legends 'Der Schüler' (p.182) does not sum up the whole of the volume, nor does it introduce the subject of a new book, two functions which are associated with final poems in George's later works. The poem does, however, express the poet's dissatisfaction with his achievement, and it points forward to new tasks and new ideas. The new world which the hero of the poem means to enter is the world of 'der leiber, der blumen und der wolken und der wellen.' (p.126). This desire for action which induces the novice to bring his period of contemplation to an end may be interpreted as an expression of the poet's own feeling. It is, of course, exaggerated so as to form a pleasing pattern of contrast with the monkish ideal of contemplation, but it is nevertheless intrinsically true.

The problems presented by that aspect of life with which DIE FIBEL deals have not been mastered, and the poet feels dissatisfied. DIE FIBEL is the book of a beginner who turns to new tasks because he has found the old ones unprofitable, and not because he has mastered them so completely that he has to turn to fresh fields.
The reader, however, is not left without some indication of the poet's potential powers. There is a noticeable difference in the poet's mastery of language in 'Der Schüler' as compared with the first two legends. If the latter were heavy and prosaic the third has a lilt and rhythm that prove it clearly to be poetry, but of a kind which escapes accurate description. The poet has achieved his object, the experiments with rhyme and rhythm in 'Zeichnungen in Urne' and the first two of the legends are bearing fruit. The poet finds he can now combine rhythm with objectivity of statement.

What are the outstanding characteristics of the poet who reveals himself in DIE FIBEL? In summarising our impressions we must not forget that the verse of DIE FIBEL were not meant for publication, and, except for a few poems, remained unknown to the public. There is firstly the poet's desire to eliminate all inessentials. This desire for brevity and aptness of expression stands in contrast with the 'poetical' language of the Geibel-school, then the most influential school of poetry in Germany. There is secondly the poet's remarkable detachment from the subjects of his poems. Lastly the reader is left with a strong impression of energy and will-power, the poet appears to be a man of action and his poetry seems to be a means by which he takes his share in transforming this world into one nearer to those absolute standards of which he is so very certain.
CHAPTER THREE

HYMNEN

More clearly than the corresponding books of his contemporaries, George's 'Hymnen' show themselves to be a poet's early work. The devotion to his muse is more complete, his ideas more exaggerated, his one-sidedness more fanatical. There are other characteristics, too, which illustrate the author's youth who, at twenty-one, presented his first book to a very select circle of readers. The subjects of the poems are manifold, many are little more than essays in a new medium. In a sense all these poems may be called experiments. The poet tries to find out what he can do with his newly found language and what he cannot do. He proceeds from one experiment to the other, and very often there is little more connection between the one poem and the next but the personality of its author. No one theme, one subject is being developed throughout the whole book. HYMNEN, like PILGERFAHRTEN, is a journeying over the whole of the country which his new mastery of the language has opened up for the poet. ALCABAL is the first of his books in which every single poem points to the same central idea.

If there is no single characteristic common to all the poems of HYMNEN, there are, however, a few main subjects and ideas, which in their turn may be brought into some sort
of relation.

It is easy to recognise in many poems the dithyrambic enthusiasm that has given the title to the book. To the German reader, and certainly to George himself, the word 'Hymnen' is reminiscent of Schiller's and Hölderlin's hymns, and possibly the Greek ones, rather than the biblical hymn sung in church. George's work stands in the tradition of idealistic interpretation of the ancient world, begun by Lessing and Winkelmann and the age of Goethe.

The dithyrambic mood expressed in the hymns results from the feeling of elation which the poet experienced on realising that at last he had become the master of his medium. He had found a language of his own, or, rather, he had made his inherited tongue do what he wanted. No longer did he feel that the language, his only means of expression, was inadequate to carry such meaning as he had to put into it. The German language as he had found it had been adequate for all the needs of the poets of a century. Goethe had made the German language an efficient medium for his inspiration and there had been no changes since that time. George, however, did not find enough possibilities in all the wealth of Goethe's language for what he wanted to say. His message had to be put into new words. This does not imply that George's poetic scope is larger than Goethe's. It is, indeed, much narrower. But whereas Heine, Flaten, and C.F. Meyer found in
Goethe a rich store-house for their wants, George's poetry lay outside Goethe's circle.

This new language is not a new trick, or a mere technique, a clever re-arrangement of the old elements, but simply the necessary form of expression of a new subject. In dealing with the new subject we shall, therefore, also be dealing with the new medium.

The feeling of achievement, beyond mere personal success is the reason for the enthusiasm expressed in so many of these poems. The emotion they express is the 'aesthetic excitement' itself of which e.g. Alexander speaks, the joy in forming, formulating. (J. Alexander, Beauty and Other Forms of Value. London 1933, p. 61 s.). The poet himself states this in the poem 'Weihe' (p.12) which opens the volume.

Besides the group of poems which express elation there are others which are remarkable for the careful and deliberate choice of precious words and expressions. This preciousness of style extends beyond the choice of words to the subjects of the poems. A preference is shown for exaggerated or far-fetched subjects and settings, for the pomp of oriental splendour, for exuberance. All this can be dismissed partly as youthful exaggeration, or it can be put down to the influence of his time. There is a fin-de-siecle atmosphere in much of George's early poetry up to ALGABAL, and even D.S BUCH DER RÄNGENDEN GÄRTEN and DER SIEBENTEN RING still show traces of it. But youth and the influence of his time are not the only
reasons for this apparently rather anaemic pre-occupation with far-fetched pictures. The former may explain the particular aspect chosen, oriental etc., but they do not tell us why they were chosen. If this poetry had been nothing but the artistic juggling with precious words these silken or wicked lines would have been swept away in the storms that have come over Europe since they were first published. But the poet who wrote them in 1889 was the same who published DER STERN DES BUNDES in 1914, and there is a clear line of development from the one to the other.

Amongst the first impressions we receive from these poems is this: the poet does not seem so much to state a fact, as to assert it. On the other hand there is no indication that this assertion is to forestall an expected objection. The statement itself is made with such insistence, almost with violence, that the simple statement receives the force of repeated assertion.

The first poem of the book, 'Weihe\textsuperscript{1}', is an instructive instance of this emphasis. The position of the poet, described in this poem, is the same which Walther visualises in his well-known 'Ich sah üf eine steins'. There is a difference in that George does not imagine himself as sitting on a stone but reclining on the bank of a river, presumably the Rhine. He looks out on the reeds in the shallow water which are rustling in the wind. To George as well as Walther the following verses can be applied:
"Ich hieß in minn hand gesamogen
daz kinne und ein min wange.
dö dahte ih mir vil ange,
wie man ser wolte solte leben;" (S. 7-10)

The genius now comes and bends down to kiss the poet, and the poet is elated and purified to such a degree that even his finger with which he supports his upturned face will not sully the genius, although it had been only his lips, from which the poet's words were to come, which she intended to touch. This little incident in itself may seem trivial, but in the poem it is given a position of importance at the very end. The main stress falls on it, in it the whole preceding argument is summarised and brought to a point. It thus becomes a symbol of the purity of the poet, instead of being a mere illustration.

If this poem is compared with another, describing a similar experience, Goethe's 'Zueignung' (Der Morgen kam ...), George's poem appears to be much narrower, but also much more forceful. Such a comparison, of course, has no bearing on the invidious question which of these two poems is the 'greater' and 'better' one. George's 'Weihe' is essentially a youthful poem, and the poet was 21 years old when he wrote it. The author of 'Zueignung' was 35, and he lived in an age when the period of youth came to an end much earlier than a hundred years later. There is, however, something more than only a question of age in the difference between these two poems, both of which describe the poet's meeting with
his genius. In George we have signs of a greater activity, 
to him poetry is a substitute for action in a more direct way 
then was the case with Goethe, hence the violence of assertion.

This characteristic can also be found in 'Im Park' (p.14) 
in the description of the poet writing: 'er hat den griffel, 
der sich sträubt, zu führen.' It is this insisiveness that 
makes Rudolf Borchardt compare the style of these lines 
with Dante. After quoting the last four lines of 'Im Park' 
Borchardt proceeds:

"Der letzte Vers mit seinen echt dantischen Einschnitten, 
[Mentre che il vento, come fa, si face o Quogli che 
vince, nonostante, che perde] könnte übersetzt sein, aber er 
ist es noch nicht." (Dante und deutscher Dante. Prosa I 

Poetry is for George not a pleasant playing with beautiful 
lines which shape themselves into verse, it requires all his 
energy. The very atmosphere of the day when the incident 
in the park took place is described as one of tension, of 
desire, of lust and temptation which the poet has to resist 
by exercising his will-power.

This idea of an absolute standard which the poet applies 
not only to others, but also to himself, finds a curious and 
even unpleasant expression in 'Einladung' (p.16). The poet 
criticises his friend whom he finds 'so tiefer gefühle auch 
arm'. This uncalled-for criticism does not spring from any 
belief of the poet's that he is the better man, but from his 
conviction of the existence of an absolute, ideal, standard 
measured against which he finds even his friend wanting.
This application of an absolute standard is a harsh law, and the poet himself cannot escape it. In 'Nachmittag' (p.20) the relentlessly scorching sun is compared with the harshness of his own heart. It is significant that the setting of this poem does not include a single living thing. A pavement of stones, walls of stone, and the pitiless sun, that is the whole picture. The only thing the poet can hope for is for him to be overcome by fatigue and a will as stern as, but greater than, his own. The form, too, stresses the sternness and rigidity of the poet's world. The 'story' of the poem is given in two stanzas, the second of which is shorter than the first. The description of the pitiless sun shining down on the poet, the 'motif' of the poem, is given three times, and each section is a line shorter than the preceding one. At last the whole force of the poem is gathered into one single verse. This verse is the last line of the poem, but it is identical with the first. The effect of this repetition is to make the poem appear conclusive, there is no escape from its truth.

Poetry such as this takes the hearer into very rarified air. And 'Gespräch' (p.42) states expressly that the poet's only companion in this world is a creation of his own imagination. When these poems were written the poet led a very lonely life - in a note in the Gesamt-Ausgabe we
get a glimpse of it when he states (vol III, p. 127) that his only friends in Berlin were his Spanish friends, or rather, as Wolters points out (loc. cit. p. 23), Mexicans. We may add that possibly they were his friends because they were foreigners, and that natural distance and lack of really intimate knowledge made them appear less human and more ideal than they might have been found by members of their own nationality. But we need not go into biographical detail, the poet's attitude to life, described above must by necessity lead to loneliness, as it cannot allow for shortcomings. And indeed, 'Nachmittag' is a truly frightening picture of such loneliness.

But a strange thing happens in this poem. The poet has eliminated all failings and shortcomings from his ideal, and in doing so he has divested it also of any semblance of real life. The result we expect is something very academic and cold, classicistic idealism. Instead of this the lines have a great musical beauty: "Ihn leichter wolke kind und leichter plane" is of exquisite grace, a light touch which is altogether new, proving that the poet's ideal is a true inspiration.

In a different but no less emphatic way 'Nachthymne' (p. 32) presents a picture of love without human shortcomings. Here, however, there is no elation, and everything seems to be floating and dying away. The last stanza in particular reminds us of late medieval 'minne' poetry, e.g. that of Frauenlob, in its exaggerated devotion. The poet envies the
pebble touching the hem of her skirt, he praises former times when glory was given to those who died for their love, and he is ready to leave this world like a shadow if she will grant him only one short glance. But just as in late 'minnesang' overemphasis of emotion is here balanced by a corresponding overemphasis of form. The subject is treated not only with extreme care and precision, but it is also made to conform to certain preconceived rules. With a subject so emotional as that of 'Nachtynyme' some youthful break-away from classical expression, some 'Sturm und Drang' would not have come unexpected, and lack of form might have been added to lack of proportion in the subject matter. The very fact that with "orge this is not the case goes to prove that the real subject of the poem is not the lady to whom the poem may be presumed to be addressed, not the poet's emotions, but the radicalness of this emotion.

The means by which such transformation from the normal to the idealistic is affected is the use George makes of his language. The poet's sentences are frequently complicated and involved. Roffler (E.Roffler, Bildnisse aus der neueren deutschen Literatur, Frauenfeld 1933, p.53) criticises the last lines of the poem 'Weihe', referred to above, and speaks of their 'eigenwillig verschränkte Undeutlichkeit". But the very difficulty of construction in this poem serves to stress the last lines, and this stress brings out the overemphasis which is the real subject of the poem. The same may
be said with regard to 'Nachthymne'. The technical means of this transformation are two. There is the stress laid on an apparently insignificant detail through rhyme, enjambement, syntax etc. There is secondly the use of involved sentences which cannot be explained as a means of arresting the hearer's attention. It is, however, not enough to dismiss such cases as 'eigenwillig verschränkt'. This use is deliberate, and there is a principle behind it, the desire for conciseness. In his remarks on the three fundamental principles of art George states of the last: "Drittens die kürze: rein allenmässig die kürze." (B.l.f.d.K. Eine Auslese aus den Jahren 1892 - 98, Berlin 1899 p.13). Conciseness in itself might well be not only compatible with clarity, but actually a step in that direction, in the case of George's early poetry, however, the desire for brevity goes beyond mere conciseness. It is not so much a desired aim as an end in itself, and overshoots the mark of clarity. This brevity is forced upon the text, as the idealistic aspect is forced upon the subject matter of the poems. In HINNEN the end desired is not the resulting obscurity, but the application of force in concentrating his subject. It is not the result, but the process which interests George in his early poetry. This is the author's way of expressing 'Sturm und Drang'. In his later works the poet substitutes conciseness, which is a poetic quality, for the delight in concentrating his language, which is a psycho-
logical one.

In Rückblick (p. 38) the exaggeration of form, noted also in 'Nachthymne' (p. 32), is the only indication of the poet's preoccupation with the ideal aspect of everything, so characteristic of HYMNEN. Whatever stress there is in this poem, is shown almost exclusively in the grammar. A statement which might read: —

"Noch denke ich an eine heck aussehende Villa an der Küste, die vom nächsten Dorf durch einen Buchenwald getrennt war," is given as: —

"Wo an der Küste buchenkronen dorf und hecke villa trennen ... "

The latter is not a poetical version of the prose paraphrase. It has been telescoped to such an extent that it has become something different. It may be noted, however, that in this case the process of telescoping does not result in obscurity. The meaning is perfectly clear. The verse requires but two things, to be heard aloud, and a certain concentration of attention. It is the latter quality which the poet desires to produce in his hearer.

The ideal which the poet tries so forcefully to impress on his hearers is that of beauty, or rather what to the poet at this stage of his development appears to be beauty. Looking at the poems for a clearer idea of what the term beauty here implies, it will be found that in HYMNEN this term covers artificiality, pomp, and a certain anaemic preciousness.

Almost all these qualifications are apparent in the second
poem of the volume 'Im Park' (p.14). This poem has often been quoted to illustrate the poet's preference of the park instead of the open fields and forests of nature. In HYMNEN alone there are three poems in which a park or a garden is the setting: 'Im Park' (p.14), 'Hochsommer' (p.36), and 'Auf der Terrasse' (p.40). The setting of 'Einladung' (p.16), too, is a nature much influenced by man although it has been introduced expressly as a contrast to city-life.

The difference between 'scenery' such as is the setting of most of George's poems, and 'nature' results from the fact that the former is nature seen through human eyes and judged by human standards. The 'park' is a further step in this direction. It is, especially in its French form, the complete victory of the human mind over Nature. Even the 'English' park is natural only in so far as it fits in with the plan of the whole, and its artistic unity is not one of nature, but of the mind.

This preference for 'scenery' as contrasted to 'nature' is carried a step beyond even the French park in George's poem 'Im Park'. No drops of water sparkle here in the grass, but the grass is silk, and the drops are rubies and pearls, not only do they resemble them in their glitter. Similarly in "Weihe" the leaves of the reeds are referred to as flags. This substitution of the inorganic for the organic may be only the result of the telescoping of similes and comparisons.
But even with the utmost brevity the element of comparison might have been retained. In 'Auf der Terrasse' (p. 4o) we find 'der glatte guss von himmelgrünen glass', surely an elaborate and unusual term for the lawn in front of a house.

This substitution of inorganic matter for the things of nature points to the poet's inability to express in natural terms what he has to say. The world of nature refuses to, and cannot be forced to, conform to his preconceived ideals. Poetry to him is not the happy reproduction of nature, but a fight between the will-power of the poet who tries to impress his mind on matter, and to make nature conform to his style, and the passive resistance of both his world and his medium.

With regard to this problem Albrecht Schaeffer comes to the following conclusions:

"Es darf deshalb die 'Entfremdung' nicht so vorgestellt werden, als sei die Naturform angenehm und ihr nun von aussen die Veränderung eingepasst worden wie im Bett des Prokrustes, sondern die erste Form ist die innere, und indem die Natur oder die äussere Welt überhaupt als formlos, noch ungeformt, als blosser Stoff angesehen wird, wird von diesem Stoff soviel genommen und auf solche Weise verwandt, wie es der inneren Form dienlich ist, sie zu gestalten. Gleichwohl hat je der Bildner, der so verführt, Blick und Erkenntnis ganz wie wir für die Naturform an sich, nur erkennt er ihr für sich, für seine Welt, keine Gesetzes-Kraft zu, und so ist das nun, was an ihr geschah, eine Entfremdung."

(Albrecht Schaeffer, Dichter und Dichtung, Leipzig 1923 p. 383)

Or, as the poet himself puts it more concisely: "Er hat den griffel der sich sträubt zu führen."

The 'Neuländische Liebesmahle' (p. 25 ss.) have their origin in the same world of the spirit as 'Im Park'. These poems have often been quoted as an example of typically
neo-romantic literature. But these oriental looking poems, heavy with incense and other costly paraphernalia of barbaric splendour do not express a romantic longing for something far away, they are an indication of the poet's desire for a perfect world. In the second of these poems the poet refers to himself as a king, he remembers those days when his life and his desires had found a true expression. This kingship - a term which George uses repeatedly - does not mean glory and pomp, but power. The power to transform life so as to conform with the ideal picture the poet has in mind. It is this ideal which the poet tries to describe in 'Neuländische Liebesmähle'. He cannot, however, give reality to this picture which has been conceived, as it were, independent of, and in opposition to, reality. Starting from his ideal conception he does not approach reality, nor is he prepared to compromise. Compromise, indeed, would be fatal to his conception, for the one quality which keeps it together is its uncompromising idealism. It remains therefore remote from life and artificial.

An artificial setting, such as that of 'Neuländische Liebesmähle' offers less resistance to the domination of the poet's mind than reality does, and in 'Strand' (p.54) a transformation from the one to the other takes place before the reader's eyes. The mood of the poem suggests a sultry atmosphere, the poet turns his back on clear winds and the sober sea. Instead of these he chooses boggy undergrowth for his setting, a pond where all is rank and lush with the
appearance of extraordinary vigour but without real strength. Here, in a moment of complete ecstasy, the unhealthy richness of the jungle becomes exaggerated and transformed from the European setting into that of an imaginary East, and mere bushes become 'lorbeer tee und aloe'.

In connection with these visions of a heightened existence, either in kingship or in lust, some poems on paintings may be considered: 'Der Infant' (p.46) and 'Ein Angelico' (p.47). Poetical descriptions of pictures or statues are not unusual in German literature, especially the literature of the 17th and 18th centuries. Many pages of Zesen's 'Adriatische Rosemunde' are filled with descriptions of individual pictures and whole galleries, both in verse and in humbler prose. Goethe's description of the mural paintings in the 'Pädagogische Provinz', Richendorff's 'Marmorbild', and C.F. Meyer's 'Der römische Brunnen' are well-known and by no means isolated later examples. George is attracted to these works of art in the same way as to parks. If the park is Nature seen through, and subjected to, the human mind, a portrait is a human being whom we do not meet in life but see through the painter's mind and eye. A picture therefore offers less resistance to being idealised than its subject with its faults and shortcomings would have probably done. This idealistic interpretation is particularly noticeable in 'Der Infant', but this very poem also shows the dangers of this process: perfection is not of this world, and the boy
whose perfection George praises died when a child.

It is important that besides the uncompromising attitude of radical idealism there should be in HUNGEN also some of the gentleness without which no great lyrical poetry ever has been written. The poem 'Einladung' (p.16) which so readily passed judgement on the author's friend and host, contains also a description of nature of redeeming grace and tenderness:

"Scheu! bis hinau zum Gipfel
Wo auf fressigem stein
Kleine Kleebron wipfeln..."

Of similar dearness in expression is 'Hochsommer'
(p.36), and later this melody was to find fuller expression in the 'Lieder eines Zwergen' in the BÜCHER.

It is but one step - a long one though - from the gracefulness of such description to simple, human gentleness. Traces of this can be found in 'Von einer Begegnung' (p.22) where the very human suffering which is the subject of the poem probably has contributed to make the poem a lyrical rather than a philosophical one. It is true, the style of the poem, particularly of the first stanza, is deliberately dantesque. The situation is modelled on Dante's meeting with Beatrice (La Vita Nuova, chap. II, and Borchardt's translation 'da den augen mein allerworte erahien die fraue meines gemütes' reproduces even the grammatical structure of George's lines. Rudolf Borchardt, Schriften. Dante's Vita
Nova Deutsch, Berlin 1922, p. 5). The musical ending, however, the 'dying fall', is quite simple and unpretentious. The lyrical richness of 'Ein Hingang' (p. 36) comes from the same source: its subject is a very personal suffering instead of a metaphysical conception of beauty or the absolute. This lyrical vein finds its strongest expression in two poems, 'Rückblick' (p. 38) and the final poem of HYMNEN, 'Die Gärten schliessen' (p. 48) which may, perhaps, be regarded as the most perfect poem of the volume. Of 'Rückblick' it has already been stated that its subject is the emotion which is so sadly lacking in 'Einladung': gratitude. In addition to this, it contains a pure and very beautiful description of nature. The strange pattern which the branches of the sycamores draw upon the night sky are patterns of nature and not superimposed by the spirit.

'Die Gärten schliessen' draws the year's balance. It is the 'final' poem of this book, concluding the one circle of experience and indicating the next. What did the poet achieve, have his expectations been realised? There is no answer to these questions in the poem, they remain questions. In this way the poet's pilgrimage in search of poetical achievement, having mastered his medium, language, is introduced. The season of the year, too, changes. In 'Nachmittag', 'Einladung', and 'Hochsommer' the season had been an abstract, intellectual factor, here it becomes an almost musical mood. Autumn and the fall of the leaves is
the end of the year, there is no winter with its cold and clear days - just as there is no winter in 'Werther's Leiden'.

What then is the balance of this book, what power has its author shown, what are his achievements, his dangers, what promise does he show?

There is a certain mystery of language. It is made to express something new, something the language of his time, the poets and authors of his youth were unable to express. He has created a means of expressing his ideal, the ideal of perfect beauty. This he has conceived as of the mind and as opposed to 'Nature' and to 'Life'.

This, however, leads him into artificiality. It has to be admitted though that, granted this artificiality, his poems show coherence and logic and a strange fascination, even power that gives them the semblance of vitality. Not even the strange pomp of the 'Niederlandische Liebeschäme' is merely a technical trick; there is too much insistence in the very artistry of the poem. It is true, however, that technical questions, vowel music and the like, claim a good deal of the poet's attention, but his ultimate aim is non-technical. He aims at brevity, greatness of phrase, pithyness, even though he perhaps realises that as a result his poems not only put a strain on the hearer and demand unusual attention, but occasionally become ambiguous and obscure. The main issues preoccupy him to such an extent that, if he can
force an idealistic pattern on his material, he is ready to content himself with a largely artificial world.
CHAPTER FOUR
PILGERFAHRTEN

This book is a record of the poet’s pilgrimage which had been indicated in the final poem of HYMNEN, ‘Die Gärten schliessen’. His first elation had resulted from a new knowledge, a new idealism, and also of his mastery and even creation of a language which was capable of expressing this new idealism. Now, in PILGERFAHRTEN, the poet set out to find some indication of this new ideal world of absolute and uncompromising values. He is acutely aware that the mere knowledge about the ideal is not enough; the ideal has to be expressed here and now. That is the meaning of his pilgrimage.

PILGERFAHRTEN is the only book of George’s which has no definite plan of arrangement. There is, of course, some grouping of the various poems, but on the whole the order in which they are printed appears to be chronological. In his other books there is either a central group around which the other poems are grouped in concentric circles — as in DER SIEBENTE RING — or, and this is the most usual arrangement, there are three distinct parts, each expressing a definite mood of its own.

The ‘Aufschrift’ (p.32), the motto of the book, is a later addition like the ‘Gesamtverse’ of the FIDEL. The poet, on looking back at the poems of this period from some
distance, tries to sum up what he believes to have been the real problem of this period of his development. A mood of sadness is stated in this motto, but it is not explained. This pervading sadness of the poet's second published book stands in marked contrast to the ecstasy of the first. It is not the result of the poet's loneliness to which the motto refers, but its cause.

"Und ich suchte einen
Der mit mir trauerte . . ."

Looking for a companion not to cheer the poet up but to be sad with him, at first seems to be absurd. But the poems of this volume show some very real reasons for this mood of sadness. In FELGEPFÄHRTEN the poet experiences his first real conflict of the ideal with real life. Here he realises for the first time the limitations which make life so very different from the idealistic pattern of things as they ought to be. It must, however, be kept in mind that the ideal world, and not real life is what the poet experiences as 'real' reality. In this George finds himself in the company of many youthful revolutionaries and idealists.

'Siedlergang' (p. 54) is a symbolic expression of this conflict between the soul and the senses. 'Ich hasse sie und brenne sie zu greifen', these are the self-contradictory terms in which the hermit speaks of the red women. In spring he has left his cell and his parchments behind and now he sees the dance of the red women, a symbol of the temptation
of the senses. The subject is very like that of 'Einer Sklavin' (FIBEL p.101) and 'Legenden!' (FIBEL p. 107), and there was also a contentious reference to the 'niedere mägde' in 'Gespräch' (HYMEN p.42). The poet's idealism is inclined to dismiss the temptation of the senses as 'low' - and yet he cannot completely eliminate this side of his life. These 'low type women' are contrasted with 'lichtgestalten', who are identical with the 'wolkentöchter' (Gespräch' p.42). They are the ideal and represent perfection. This contrast is not an uncommon one, it expresses the shock which idealistic youth suffers at the revelation of a new and unsuspected world of desires, of lust and iniquity. George, however, at this juncture, refuses to come to terms with the world as it is, his outlook remains the strictly idealistic one. What solution can he then offer?

George's use of the terms for amorganic but precious things to describe natural scenery has been discussed above. The same process may now be observed with reference to personal relations:

"Ich formte früher ... 
Nach meiner hange wuchs und aug und lippe ..."

Again the poet tries to impose his will on the world of reality. Every poet, of course, must look at the world with his own eyes, George, however, goes beyond this. He refuses to have anything to do with the world of experience in order to be unrestricted in his creation of a world entirely dependent
on his own idealistic views.

There is, however, a difference between HESSEN and PILGER FAHRNEN showing that the poet now realises the untenability of his attitude of uncompromising idealism. In his earlier book the poet had been successful in imposing his aspect of the world on the world, in the second book there is an indication of conflict:

"... (seelig lief die reche)".

Confronted with the world of experience, and no longer able to live happily in a purely artificial world, two courses are open to him. He can withdraw from life in resignation and content himself with a life amongst his parchments, a cold and wintry life as the poem indicates, safe, harmless, but ineffective. Or he can join in the dance of the red women, degrade himself, abandon his idealism, and give himself up to a life of lust and sensual pleasures. George's own contribution to this age-old choice is the radicalism with which the poet approaches and presents the problem.

If the red women symbolise perhaps the strength of the irrational forces of life, irrational life as a whole is symbolised in the following poem, 'Mühle lass die "ree . "' (p.57). The subject of this poem is an irrational incident which cannot logically be explained, and which is yet convincing and 'true'. Willi Koch refers to the cause of this mysterious feeling as 'das Andere' (Willi Koch,
Stefan George, Halle 1933). This picture of the irrational forces of life is the true counterpart of the poet's kingdom of absolute idealism. Irrationalism, such as expressed in 'Mühle lasse die arme still . . . ' must be distinguished from Romanticism. George's poem is not steeped in a romantic atmosphere, it is an exact and realistic description of the presence of superhuman and irrational powers.

The first two poems of PILGERFAHRTEN form a separate group, they indicate the two main centres of the poet's thought. In the first poem the elemental in man, in the symbol of sex impulse, is contrasted with the intellectual. In the second this linking of elemental depths with what is most pure, symbolised by children from their first communion, is presented darkly in something like a ballad.

The next group consists of four love poems, recording the pilgrim's attempt at finding an personal relations between human beings, between man and woman, the secret of how to combine and reconcile the 'lichtgestalten' with the 'rote frauen'. But a barrier of loneliness separates the poet from his friends. The four love poems express a conflict of desire with repulsion which mirrors the contrast between George's idealism and the attraction of the senses. From this conflict the poet tries to escape. But he cannot forget, his thoughts which he tried to turn to things of nature constantly return to 'her' and to his chance of seeing 'her'. In the end he stands exactly where he stood at the beginning,
his problems have not been solved but intensified.

The last of the love poems introduces the 'Gesichte', poems recording the author's experiences during a visit to Verona and Venice in 1301. 'In alte lands . . .' (p. 62), the introductory poem, takes the hearer on to this classical ground, but the atmosphere is sultry as it was in the 'Zeichnungen in Grau', and the poem shows the same curious lack of substance. In move in absolute abstractions and has an air of forced unreality. A yellow rose is mentioned, the same that gave its name to a poem in 'Zeichnung in Grau' (p. 92). Here, however, it has become the symbol of something vaguely important, 'mächtige milde lose', instead of being the expression of a mood. In PILGERFAHRTEN the poet aims at describing something of perfect beauty. The very perfection of the rose is a strict law; a dew drop would be sufficient to spoil the flawlessness of its perfection.

The natural beauty of flowers, rose and violets, had to be exaggerated in order to express the poet's devotion to the absolute, and in a similar way the two 'Gesichte' are characterised by exaggeration. They are presented as dreams of a devotion so radical in its character that the object of such devotion becomes of minor importance.

'Mehrung' (p. 65) is a new version of the poet's story of the fight between the soul and the senses which a year ago had been expressed in 'Gespräch' (KYNNER, p. 42). In 'Gespräch' the poet had hardly touched upon the temptation
of the senses, there was only the short and contemptuous reference to the 'niedere mägde'. But now the poet has experienced this side of the conflict as a much more formidable opponent. He now gives a very full and sensuous, almost sensual, picture of barbaric kingship. There are bars of gold, bright yellow silk, murder, rape, and lust. The 'niedere mägde' are replaced by priestesses, and the evil temptation is heightened to the point almost of melodrama. It is, perhaps, true that such exaggeration as shown in 'Wahnung' defeats its own purpose, and that the poet's picture of complete and absolute domination is not very tempting. But again the poet is not really concerned with temptation, but with the idea of temptation. This he tries to express, and to express with all his force and power.

All this power and glory, however, is rejected by the poet. The oriental splendor and richness, the undisputed power of a ruler who can say 'man Weihe jede Lust und jeden Word', who can laugh at 'klare Luft und klaren Quell', even the priestess, the symbol of temptation in its most purified form, they are all rejected by the idealist. But if in 'Gespräch' it had been the world of the senses that had been only hinted at, it is now, in 'Wahnung' the world of ideals that is referred to only in a short, but insistent exhortation.

In 'Die märkte sind ödor . . .' (p.63) the desert is made
the symbol of both sides of the struggle between senseless sensuality and arid idealism. The pilgrim leaves the town in which he has found nothing but disappointment. He has not found the object of his pilgrimage, he did not find 'her' who combines soul and the senses.

This is followed by some poems in which the poet is shown as vacillating between hope and resignation, dreams and solace in happier memories of the past. At last he takes his refuge in the land of magic. This magic country which the poet enters with 'Ihr alten bilder . . .' (p.73) is not unrelated to the 'verderbnisvolle pracht' of his 'oriental' poems, but the wickedness of it is no longer stressed. Magic is the most complete and perfect way of escape, a simple liquidation of all difficulties. The blue glade into which the poet now takes his hearer, the white and pink herons, the unnamed queen in her robes of night-woven willow-wool, all this is magic, a world created against the laws of nature.

This excursion into the magic land is not continued in the next poem, 'Neuer Ausfahrtsrachen' (p.74). The poet returns to the real object of his pilgrimage and makes another effort to find a life at the same time ideal and real. He has already once caught a glimpse of his unattainable ideal. It is so high and so remote that only in 'lichten schlafen' a message from this land can reach him. It is the 'lichte plane', the home also of the 'wolkentöchter'.

There is no blessing on his new course. This second
pilgrimage begins in the light of day, but secret powers lead the pilgrim astray, night and the irrational powers of chaos destroy the light of his vision. In 'Dage er auf fernen Felsenpfaden' (p.75) the same mood has been presented as the poet's personal experience which had appeared in a more general form in 'Wähle lasse die Arme...'. A distinction must, however, be drawn between the irrational and the evil. The evil can very well be rational but the subject of these poems is the irrational complexity of good and evil, of light and dark. There is no strand of good that does not bring some evil with it, and no evil that does not encompass some good, or, to use the poet's own metaphor, the lily in the swamps, and the evil angel swinging in the milk-white calyx.

Such is the curse upon his pilgrimage which leads him into strange places of which 'Die frühe sonne...' (p.76) gives a description. The first impression this poem gives is one of morning sweetness and freshness, of early light. But soon this impression has to give way to another, the sun has no power and no warmth, and no fruits follow the flowers. There is beauty and glory, but no reality, a world of ineffectual grace.

Before the end of his pilgrimage the poet turns once more back to the ways of his childhood. They too were pilgrimages and undertaken in the hope that they would lead him to the ideal. The first of these 'Verjahrte Fahrtten' (p.78) is a pilgrimage in the orthodox sense of the word. What he then
did instinctively, and as a child, the poet now repeats with the full and painful knowledge of the adult. This anticipation during childhood of a later situation is often the subject of a poem of George's. Realisation that he had already done by instinct what he is now doing again gave him the assurance that he was on the right way, and that it had not been chance, but fate, that had sent him on his way.

The second of these memories takes him to the garden on the isle at Aranjuez which he had visited, in 1889, from Paris. Here the poet had found a lingering memory of the most absolute rule of human mind over matter, a radical domination of nature and the irrational by will-power.

It is significant that it should be here, in the heart of the former Spanish empire, that he is looking for a companion, and not only looking, but expecting him to come round the corner any moment. It is the infante of whom the poem in HYMNEN (p. 48) spoke, whose realm he has now entered, but never before has the poet taken anyone so deeply with him into his solitude.

'Wir jagen über weite steppen ...' (p. 80), the third of these memories, has a night journey by train as its subject. It is interesting to compare it with a poem of Hans Carossa's on the same subject, 'Der Eisenwagen rollt' (Gedichte, 3rd ed. Leipzig 1925 p. 42). Here too the magic figures on the window panes, a veritable forest of ice
flowers is one of the main subjects of the poem. But although Gerasa shows the same sensitivity and perception as George his poem is much less abstract. In Gerasa’s poem the watcher through the night turns to regard what happens outside his rolling prison in the world of everyday reality. To him the world from which he is separated by the train remains a reality and the rising sun steepes it in a golden fire. To George this world is nothing but a ‘matter scheme’. His world is his own creation, the glittering glory built according to rigorous and remote laws, truly a ‘wundersame pflanzenwelt’ and a magic world.

‘Betrüfelft an baun und saun . . ’ (p.83) brings the pilgrimage to an end. In this poem the poet meets the boy who takes him into the beyond. The season is autumn, George’s year in which winter is unknown draws to its end. All the warmth and wealth of ripeness has been showered on this autumn; mellowness, abundance, and music, these three form the background of the last stage of the pilgrimage. Once more the poet enters the magic country, and this time he does not mean to return.

After such preparation the final poem, ‘Die Spange’ (p.83), cannot come as a surprise. In it the poet states expressly that the time was not yet for the real crown, the real achievement, and that magic therefore now takes the place of reality. ‘Die Spange’ is neither a boast nor a
complaint, it is a simple statement of fact, the end of a long and varied pilgrimage. The poet did not find the world of his ideal. There was no action or human relation in which he found reality and ideality combined. There was nothing on his side but his own lonely soul. George is impatient with compromises, he will be content with nothing less than the absolute. He cannot be content with less since it is only as an ideal that life can become a symbol and a standard. This inability of the poet's to compromise is his failing as well as his strength. He now believes that, if he cannot attain the ideal, he can perhaps evoke it by magic. Nothing more than his own soul is needed in magic, and of this and his will-power he is sure. With 'Die Spange' Algebal's magic realm of soul begins. It a strange country, founded and maintained against Nature.
CHAPTER FIVE

ALGABAL

Algabal is the first of George's books whose subject is not the actual conflict of the ideal with the real but the presentation of the ideal. It is the first of George's books to be purely action, and not reaction against an unsympathetic world. The preceding books showed the author as a critic of life; with ALGABAL he gives up this attitude, and begins to build up for himself in poetry what he could not find in real life.

It is also the first book in which the poems are arranged according to a definite pattern, and not more or less in the order in which they were written. The book as a whole may be regarded as in the nature of a single poem. This is also stressed by the absence of titles to the separate poems. In the first edition the poems were even presented without capitals and without punctuation.

ALGABAL owes its label of 'Neo-Romanticism' to the presence of an undoubtedly French influence, for more than any other book of George's it shows the effect the poetry of Baudelaire and the 'symbolistes' had on George, and the very fact that it was published in Paris and later dedicated to Albert Saint-Paul openly proclaims this debt. This influence has been comprehensively dealt with in Miss Enid L.
Duthie's excellent study 'L'influence du symbolisme français dans le renouveau poétique de l'Allemagne' (Paris 1933).

The points of comparison are many. There is the same preference for exotic situations, the same delight in rare and full sounding words, and the same idea of beauty as the highest value in life. In Baudelaire in particular George found ideas similar to his own, and he began to translate 'LES FLEURS DU MAL' not merely as a poetic exercise, but because he felt they expressed something he himself wanted to say. But while nobody thinks of denying the influence of the 'symbolistes' on George, it should not be overlooked that 'symbolism' itself is only an aspect of a much bigger movement. The desire of the 'symbolistes' for strange and intoxicating beauty, their deliberate choice of immoral subjects in order to 'épater le bourgeois', their careful study of words and sounds, may, perhaps, be best interpreted as a reaction against the Nineteenth Century with its cult of utility and ugliness. Like Nietzsche and Stendhal the 'symbolistes' felt that something was seriously wrong with the standard of values which their age had inherited and accepted, and their poetry is one form of opposition to this state of things.

If we look at the matter in this way it becomes apparent why George should have found an ideal similar to his own in the works of the 'symbolistes', the 'decadents'. He was desperately anxious to find some different scale of values,
something that might reassure him in his fight against the
bourgeois materialism and mediocrity of his time, and he found
it in this group of French poets. But the extent of the
influence of the 'symbolistes' on George must not be exaggerated.
An indication of their true relationship is to be found in
the fact that while he spent much time and energy on the
translation, and introduction into Germany, of this new
French poetry, his personal contact with the 'symbolistes'
was limited to a few years. Occasionally he visited Mallarmé,
and listened to his talk — one disciple amongst many others,
coming and going. There, too, he saw Verlaine, but the French
poets whom he knew at all well were of very minor importance
and are to-day almost forgotten: Saint-Paul, Gérard, Moeckel.
They proclaimed him the leader of the German 'symbolistes'
when he had hardly written any poems, nor published anything.
They took notice of his publications long before anybody
in Germany did, but in reality all this amounts to little
more than a minor episode in the history of one of the
literary groups in which every new movement is so rich.

Of greater importance than this literary influence
is the mark which George's Spanish journey left on his
poetry. About the middle of 1880 George left Paris for
Spain in the company of three young Mexicans whom he had
met there. He remained in Spain for several weeks. The
severe aspect of the high plain, the grim darkness of its
castles, and the despotism of its rulers, now long dead, all
this presented the poet with a visible expression of his own mood. He acknowledged this influence in two poems in PILGERFAHRTEN, 'Kein tritt . . .' (p.79) and 'Betrüffelt . . .' (p.82). The impression made upon George by the sudden revelation in concretè form of a feeling, a mood, experienced by the poet hitherto only as his own, inner world, was so great that, as he himself said, 'wandel der seele gescheh'.

The title of the book, ALGABAL, is vaguely reminiscent of the late Roman emperor Heliogabalus, but no direct historical reference is implied. The name ALGABAL is purely imaginary, and reminds the hearer only very faintly not so much of a definite and distinct historical person, but of a period, of luxury, depravity, and the idea of undisputed rule of one person over the whole world, Caesar and demi-god.

The book is divided into three parts: 'Im Unterreich', 'Tage', and 'Andenken'. Roughly corresponding to the three parts of 'Pilgerfahrten', they show the poet's attitude first in a description of the setting he has chosen, then in the actions of his hero, and lastly as memories. There is, of course, no question of realism of any kind in these poems. George's life has never been anything like as artificial as that of Algabal, but for all that this world of imagination cannot be dismissed as day-dreams. They are no mere wisps of fancy, Algabal's world is the only expression George could find for his aims and ideals which, as Pilgerfahrten
shows, he did think he could realise in the world of his day. In ALGABAL the poet no longer attempts to realise his ideals, and it is this that gives the book its air of remoteness and artificiality. It must, however, be realised that the remoteness of ALGABAL is the result of a radical refusal to see in the world with all its limitations an adequate representation of the ideal. The widespread idea that the intention of the poet was only to startle, or please, his reader with some newly invented romantic, or shocking, settings and situations does not appear therefore to be quite correct. Full weight should also be given to what was said about these poems in the poet's journal, the Bl.i.d.k., either by George himself or by one of his closest friends: "Seid ihr noch nicht von gedanken überfallen worden dass in diesen glatten und zarten seiten vielleicht mehr aufruhr enthalten ist als in all euren donnernden und zerstörenden kampfreden?" (III,4).

The first of the three parts of the book, 'Unterreich', describes the new surroundings which the poet now claims as his kingdom. The introduction, 'Ihr hallen ...', speaks with pride of the unique country with its palaces and halls which Algabal has created by magic, 'Beschwörung', under the very fact, as it were, of his contemporaries, places without equal for their rare and elaborate beauty. But this kingdom exists only in the poet's imagination. It
is a more colourful, more intense, country than the world of reality, and — this is the decisive point — it knows no other law than Algabal's will. It was Klages who gave a most illuminating interpretation of this desire of the poet's to subject everything to his own will, without regard for reality. "Dies ist die wahre Ursache der sittlichen Leiden-

Klages, of course, knew ALGABAL when he wrote this inter-
pretation, and it should be noted that this exaggeration of will is traced back to a fundamental idealism, to a 'sittliche aufgabe'. The dissatisfaction with reality, and the creation of a fantastic world are not such novelties in themselves as to make ALGABAL an outstanding work, but it is not often that the origin of such a creation, the uncompromising idealism of the poet, becomes so apparent as in this case. It is this idealism which is so often overlooked in ALGABAL because of the rather unidealistic setting. Hitherto the will of the poet had been kept in balance by the forces of nature, especially by natural passion, the 'red woman' of his poems. Since the poet could not assert himself against these forces he was
driven underground, into the 'Unterreieh'.

The object of the poet's desire, expressed with so much determination and single-mindedness, and without any concern for reality, is what Algabal calls 'beauty'; and with an object such as this, compromises of any kind seem to be impossible. There may be more or less beautiful things, and there is a difference of degree between the one and the other, but the idea of beauty itself, like truth, is single. There is no gradual approach to an abstraction, and no compromise is possible with an idea.

The three other poems of 'Unterreieh' which describe in detail the setting of Algabal's kingdom have much in common with some earlier poems, in particular with the 'Neuländische Liebesmühle (HYMNEN p.28), and the 'Gesichte' (Figerfahren p.63). But this similarity of the subject in the poems makes it easy to realise the difference between them. All the earlier poems appear to be forced. They may be said to assert somewhat harshly what the poet himself does not always quite succeed in making himself believe. The poems of 'Unterreieh' are nothing but a very beautiful description of strange rooms in a palace, and of a strange garden. The ease and richness of presentation, however, prove that the poet now no longer speaks of an assertion, but of an achievement. The poet has at last become a king, the master of this strange country. It may be an imaginary
reality in which he is living, but it is nevertheless an experienced reality. The earlier poems were written in express contrast to a world whose reality the poet admitted but unwillingly. In ALGABAL the poet is completely severed all connection between Algabal's kingdom and the real world in which the poet lived; for the first time he is free to build entirely according to his own pattern.

The two rooms described in two poems of 'Unterreicht' are meant to express two different moods. The first is a warm and sensuous one, and the description leads up to the rich and melodious lines which fill the air like heavy and costly scent:

"Und dreimal tausend schwarze urnen spenden
Den geist von weihrauch amber und sitrone." (p.93)

The mood of the second poem is the serenity of pale, colourless morning, of glass and pearls, a world without emotion, empty of any signs of life except distant childhood memories.

'So sprach ich nur . .' (p.107) from the following section, 'Tage', adds a characteristic feature to the Algabal of this pale room: he is almost sexless, the face which his mirror reflects might have been that of a sister. This life of beauty does not know of struggle or strain, it is 'mild und licht', and not even Nature is allowed to disturb its peace.

The last poem of 'Unterreicht' (p.96) is a description of Algabal's garden. Its construction is the most complete
victory of the mind over matter. This garden knows neither of colour nor of warmth, there is no spring and no life, and its fruits are fruits to no purpose. In spite of this achievement one thing is lacking. The undisputed ruler of this kingdom cannot create the black flower in his garden.

It may also be noted that in all three poems the surroundings are deliberately artificial. This is in line with the substitution of glass and silk for grass and water which has been discussed above. But whereas in HIMNEN the act of substitution was stressed, as an act of the poet's idealistic will asserting itself over the shortcomings of the world of nature, in ALGABAL the stress is laid on the result: complete, if somewhat artificial, beauty.

If 'Unterreih' tries to show the character of Algabal through the surroundings which he has created for himself, 'Tege' shows him as he is revealed by his actions. The fundamental desire again is one for beauty of a radical and abstract nature. It is therefore not cruelty when Algabal accepts the sacrifice of his slave who has interfered with the perfect balance of the emperor's morning arrangements — a ritual of beauty — and who, realising his mistake, commits suicide (p.98). It certainly is not human and not a beautiful action in the ordinary sense of the word. It may even appear either ridiculous or cruel, or both
but so does every strange dogma to the onlooker. The same

can also be said of Algalbal's murder of his brother who

had been incited to rebellion by his grandmother (p.102).

The somewhat rigid and decadent view of beauty which underlies

the attitude of these poems may be due, as we have suggested,

to the peculiar form which the revolt against ugliness and

materialism took in his time.

The desire for perfection which leads the poet to

look upon the lives of the subjects and relatives of his

hero as unimportant, applies with equal force to the life

of the hero himself. There is much which those whom 'das

los für den purpur gebar' (p.109) must not do, and it is

a sad voice that tells Agathon that it is not for them to

complain, they have to perform their gestures. Even Algalbal's

most cruel, sadistic, and apparently senseless acts of

'government', his orders to have his people tormentened

(p.107), are the results of a queer, but very logical and

rigid, conception of beauty: those who have bread and

circuses should suffer with their master. He has restored

the balance which his own suffering had endangered, and he

returns to his usual detachment. How far the poet intends

actions such as these to be an interpretation of late

Roman and Oriental tyrants through a new understanding of

psychology, it is impossible to say. Nor is it of much
importance, for despite all his heavy borrowing from history the poet's intentions are not historical. He has not come to explain what somebody else has done, he is doing something himself. He has chosen the incidents and the trappings of the past, possibly misunderstanding the past as frequently as not, to express his own loneliness and boundless desire.

If this desire sometimes would appear to become unbalanced and to border on the ridiculous, it has on the other hand produced lines of great beauty and musical persuasion:

"O mutter meiner mutter und Erlauchte . . .
Doch liegen eisen stein und feuerschwamm
Gefährlich in erschüttertem gemüte." (p.108)

"Agathon kniend vor meinem pfühle,
Deine wimper spricht de dein mund sich schloss . . ." (p.109)

This sweetness is always perfectly distinct and clear, there is none of the romantic woolliness about it which was characteristic of so much gilt-edged poetry of the time.

This sweetness of expression is quite often the result of a mood of resignation, a sweet sadness rather than a sweet joy. Algabal's reasons for not acting strongly enough to please his brother and his grandmother are an instance of such resignation. It was Algabal's dislike of decisive action, and of affairs of state which resulted in the conspiracy to overthrow him. Algabal himself defends his apparent inactivity: -
"Nicht ohnmacht rüt mir ab von eurem handeln, 
Ich habe euren handels wahn erfasst, 
O lass mich ungerühmt und ungeheist 
Und frei in den bedingten bahnen wandeln," (p.102)

This is not, of course, lack of vitality, but the very 
'Weltschmerz' which is so often met with in young men of 
particularly outstanding gifts or abilities who have not 
yet found a proper sphere of action. Of greater importance 
than this 'Weltschmerz', which George shares with almost all 
considerable poets after the age of rationalism, is the sense 
of complete freedom that results from such resignation as he 
describes. This freedom through resignation is the same 
freedom from reality that is at the bottom of the whole of 
ALGABAL.

The hero, Algabal, has been conceived as the peak 
of perfection and a whole world has been built around him. 
Nature has been excluded from this world, and there is only 
one thing large enough to match his own greatness, that is 
personal oblivion. ALGABAL therefore contains one of the 
most 'magical' poems George has written, of a haunting 
musicality which George allowed himself only rarely. For 
this picture of Nirvana the poet turns to Egypt, 'Da auf 
dem seidenen lager ... '(p.103). The significance of the poem 
does not lie so much in the contents, although these too 
speak of sleep, oblivion and escape, as in the music of 
its rhythm, piercing and yet soothing like the sound of
a flute, a melody which softly but decisively banishes all thought of resistance and human dignity.

Since Algabal's rule is based on beauty it is beauty too that brings it to an end. If the slave and the brother had to die because they interfered with the perfection of the pattern, the emperor himself has to leave his empire when the pattern of his despotic rule is in the slightest impaired. (p.110). At the first sign of rebellion, and long before it breaks out, he has to leave the land. It is not the rebellion itself, but the possibility of rebellion that drives him away, not a fact, but an idea. It is not a case of despotism leading to its own overthrow that interests the poet, but the question of pattern and the destruction of pattern. The pattern of Algabal's kingdom and rule is an abstraction, and no compromise is therefore possible. As a statesman, a tyrant, a historical figure, Algabal could have remained and fought to the glorious or tragic end. But Algabal is none of these, he is merely a figure in the pattern of perfection. Just as in the first part the artificial world of 'Unterreich' was destroyed through something organic, here, too, George's creation, Algabal's realm, comes to an end because the poet brings the inhabitants of this imaginary country to life and makes them real people with actions and reactions of their own.
Such a sudden influx of reality into the carefully secluded garden and palace must necessarily result in the collapse of the artificial. Algabal, however, does not commit suicide, he retires into lonely exile - not in consequence of the new situation, but because the gesture of withdrawal into exile is a perfect gesture, and the appropriate one. Music again shows the way, the shrill sounds of Syrian harps and horns are now a consolation for a kingdom lost. The sequence of poems in which this experiment is described seems to imply a story. The poems, however, describe various stages of his 'kingship', they are records of the hero's reactions to various incidents and in various situations. There is no chronological link between them, they may be said to take place simultaneously. Algabal's realm is static, it does not move, and it is also anorganic.

'Andenken' covers the last stages of this existence which is based not on man and his world, but on man only, the lonely spirit. This last stage is no longer an expression of perfect domination, but of perfect resignation and of memories. As in PILGERFAHRTEN the poet turns back to his childhood, to that time before the great conflict, when he conversed with the gods and was happy with them, when he had that unity of life which Algabal had tried to build up again, and for the sake of which he had to create his
elaborate and insecure world. The first three poems of 'Die Andenken' deal with this wholeness of life and purpose in childhood, and the almost unbearable joy that is the result of such contact with, and elevation to, the gods. It is a reflection of this far-away happiness that makes 'Fern ist mir ...' (p.115) such a sweet and simple poem, so different from the exquisite and wicked cleverness, the forcing-house atmosphere of 'Unterreich' or 'Tage'. It has the simplicity of untroubled lyrical poetry, but it is remarkable because of a certain firmness of tone, the result of very careful wording which excludes all but one very strictly limited train of associations.

From childhood the poet turns his mind to Algabal's actions during the time of his rule. Here, too, he hopes to find that unity of heart, although no longer the result of the early days and achieved without conscious effort. These memories might, perhaps, have found their place in the second part of ALGABEL, 'Tage', since it is again only the perfection of gesture that matters. But they are concerned with private actions, and not, as in 'Tage', with his actions in his capacity as the all-powerful despot. The self-sufficiency of power has given way to the self-sufficiency of resignation. This change is reflected in the poems of 'Andenken'.

Algabal's poisoning of the two children who have lost
their innocence is not a punishment for an action which had been beautiful in its spontaneity, but is done to save this very beauty which the parents' punishment would have destroyed. In a similar way 'Becher am boden . . .' (p.104) the death of all the participants in the orgy is suggested as a fitting climax. The murder — if murder it is — is to save them from what in Algalabal's world is considered as the greatest evil, the destruction of perfect and beautiful balance. The only object of these poems is the presentation of beauty as an absolute standard, deriving from the ideal world, by which the real world is to be judged.

Algalabal is quite ready to end his life with the same poison as he now has used on the children in his garden, should such an end some day be necessary to preserve untainted the structure of beauty in his life. There is no way of now ascertaining the order in which these poems were originally written. The 'Blätter für die Kunst' began publication only after AlGABAL had appeared. If, however, 'Ich will mir jene stunden lauf . . .' (p.119) should prove to be one of the earliest of the volume it would indicate that at one time the poet contemplated the suicide of his hero instead of sending him into exile. In that case AlGABAL would have provided a close parallel to Goethe's 'Werther's Leiden'. George, however, decided otherwise, and while Werther's death left his creator
free to follow entirely new and different ways, Algabal continues to stand at the back of much of George's later poetry.

Algabal's rigid conception of beauty also governs his relation with women. Again we find in a poem the most beautiful and exclusive of women, the priestess, offered and rejected (p.118). In his early poetry the poet appears to have looked upon the relation between the sexes as an unequal fight, and this may explain why the poet for many years deliberately set out to humiliate women. But with the writing of ALCABAL he has become more sure of himself and no longer feels in such acute danger of degradation.

"Am markte sah ich . ." (p.118) is quieter, less exaggerated than his earlier work. There is, of course, still the elevation before the fall. 'She' is still a virgin and a priestess, and the king's gifts to her are still the spoils of many countries, but the atmosphere is less strained, the first meeting, on the market place, is more natural, and the description is more objective.

'Symbolism', of which ALCABAL has been regarded as one of the most outstanding examples in Germany, is only a passing phase in the poetry of George. He could not forever be content like some of his French masters with elaborating precious or pompous situations for the sake of sounding words. He was led to adopt art for art's sake, as the phrase is commonly understood, by his search for a medium
that was entirely and without compromise his own. Mastery of
this kingdom of heavy incense and dreamy perfection made him
at once aware of its artificiality and lack of any real
power to satisfy. This feeling of insufficiency became so
acute that death, the son of night, which in 'Abendbetrachtung'
(FIBEL p.18) had fascinated and repelled him, and which had
taught him to shrink in horror from an apparently senseless
world, now, in Algalal's words, became his 'trübeste tröster'
(p.120). There is an unexpected urgency in his request for
something different from drugs and spices, for something
real and alive (p.121). Is his life to be confined to this
world of artificiality, or is the wind of the open, laden
with pollen and the scent of flowers, to touch his lips?
Will he find 'her' for whom the pilgrim once set out on his
journey, or will his way take him only to marble statues?
Did the prophets and augurs lie to him when they promised
a glorious future? It is Algalal who asks these questions,
not George, although they may be thought to apply equally
well to the poet. But what the poet presents to his hearer
is always his own creation, and in this sense George may
be said to have created by his very questions, at the end
of ALGABAL that world of reality for which his hero longs.

Like 'Die Spenge' (FILGÉRFAHRTEN p.83), the poem
that concludes ALGABAL, 'Vogelschau' (p.123) indicates the
end of one stage of the poet's development and the beginning
of another. 'Die Spange' gave a clear indication of the main characteristics of the new book; in fact, it cannot have been written until after some of the ALCABAL poems had been composed and when the main lines of the new work had become clear to the poet. There is no such certainty about the future in 'Vogelschau'. In the last poem of ALCABAL proper, 'Ob denn der wolken-deuter...' (p.121) the question of the hero's future had been put to the prophets and the augurs.

Now, slightly shifting his ground, the poet completely identifies himself with his hero and replies in 'Vogelschau' (p.123). It is a true oracle and does not attempt an interpretation or explanation, the aspect alone of the birds' flight is described.

There are three different groups of birds, each symbolising one of the outstanding characteristics of his poetry as the poet then saw it. There are, first, swallows, birds of dawn and day. Next there are the many-coloured birds of the magic forest, glorious in their splendour and art.

Lastly there are the dark birds of night and destruction, symbolising all that is chaotic and beyond human reason.

With the last stanza, indicating the immediate future, the poet returns to the swallows, the birds of clarity and sanity. There is one significant change: the wind which in the first stanza was described as 'hell und heiss' and thus seemed to come out of the desert of ALCABAL, is now described
as 'kalt und klar'.

This then is the end of ALCABAL. But it is not because the grapes are sour that the poet turns away from his creation. He has made himself master of a new realm of poetry, or rather, he had created it out of nothing. But this very act of creating himself as something perfect and complete, had made it useless for him now. The symbolic world which at the beginning appeared to be not only self-contained but spacious enough to provide different walks for every day in his life, a poetic country which was proving large enough for some of his contemporaries, no longer satisfied his. He felt keenly its barrenness and turned back to our fresh reality. Not, however, to the world he had left behind in FILZERFAHRTEN; the creation of ALCABAL is not a fruitless interlude. Until he wrote ALCABAL George had nothing in his encounter with reality, in the struggle between the ideal and the real, with which he could give expression to his idealism. Now he had created Algabal's imaginary reality, and for what it lacked in width and breadth it made up in singleness of purpose. The fight between Spirit and Nature in the poet's mind is now waged between equal forces. Against the manifoldness and eternity of Nature the poet can set the force and starmess of ALCABAL, the creation of the spirit, and of the spirit alone.
Such mastery was bought dearly, and ALGARAL expresses the poet's feeling of loneliness. The poet had to separate himself from life to create it. Not only does the figure of the emperor, Algabal, in itself portray loneliness. The desolation of high places is here accentuated by making him an oriental king, always in danger, full of mistrust, betrayed by those who are nearest to him, and exiled by his own people. Moreover, as 'Agathon kneelend vor meinem pfühle...' (p.109) shows, loneliness is the very essence of the style through which, and in which, the book has come to life. The reason is not far to seek. The object of ALGARAL is the creation of a world which is entirely self-sufficient and able to counterbalance the world of Nature. Only in himself, in his own spirit, could the poet find the basis for such a creation. To this end he had to exclude rigorously everything that was not of the spirit, and of his spirit only.

There is no company in Algabal's world. There is not even the possibility of a companion. This is not an accident, as if Algabal had lost himself in the desert of his subterranean kingdom, but the poet's intention, his principle. One soul, and one soul only, stands opposed to the whole richness of nature. It is the solitary soul alone that can take up such a position, it alone can be pure spirit and counterbalance pure nature. The power of ALGARAL lies in the fact that it
is single-minded; the poet's hero therefore had to be a symbol of solitude and singularity. This is a situation for pride, and one deserving all the splendour and incense of ALGARABAL, which on the other hand derives from this very situation. It is a situation shining with the glory of success, but also charged with the burden of solitude.
CHAPTER SIX

DIE BÜCHER DER HIRTEN UND FREISGÄNGER, DER SAGEN UND SÄNGE UND DER HÄNGENDEN GÄRTEN.

This volume is divided into three parts, the three 'Bücher' of the title. These have frequently been understood to represent three stages in the poet's development, in the same way as 'HYMNEN, PILGERFAHRTEN, ALCABAL', which had been re-issued in one volume, represent three different attitudes of the poet in his search for truth and beauty. Classifying the poet as 'neo-romantic' many readers found in the new volume a progress from pastoral simplicity to medieval intensity of feeling, and lastly to Oriental splendour. This interpretation, however, cannot be upheld; it is the poems of the central book, SAGEN UND SÄNGE, that would appear to be the earliest of the three. Several poems from this section were printed in August 1893 in the 'Blätter für die Kunst', vol I, nr. 4, the new periodical founded by the poet. There is, however, not much purpose in trying to establish the priority of any of the three books over the other two, since they are really a single whole. The three 'Bücher' might, however, be said to constitute three different ways of expressing the same idea, or, perhaps, three different moods like the three
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phases of day, the cool quietness of morning, the height of
day with its activity and its romance, and evening with its
splendour of sunset and its dreams. This comparison does
not imply that the poems are to be taken allegorically, but
merely indicates a natural trilogy of moods. Critics have
been led to look upon the new trilogy, like the earlier
work, as three distinct works partly by reason of its bulk
which is approximately three times that of any earlier
publication. Each of the sub-divisions therefore presents
about the same amount of material as one of the poet's
earlier books. The reason for this is that, as the poet
grows older, the mood and inspiration of his poetry does not
change so quickly, but is sustained over a longer period
than before.

The classical setting of 'Hirtengedichte' and the
great restraint shown in expression are a constant temptation
to the reader to draw a comparison with Goethe who turned to
'Iphigenie' after the storm and stress of 'Goetz' and 'Ur-
Faust', or with Grillparzer whose 'Sappho' is due to a
similar reaction after his 'Ahnfrau'. 'Hirtengedichte',
however, is only one of the three 'Bücher', and if a comparison
with Goethe must be drawn - though it will remain an awkward
one - it can be only with the development from 'Werthers
Leiden' to 'Egmont'. George as well as Goethe turned to a
historical interpretation of life after one that had been personal in the extreme, George, however, turned to history for the first time now, Goethe had already written his 'Götz'. If ALGABAL shows 'orge in the 'titanic' stage of young authorship, the 'Bücher' show him not as a 'classical' author, but as one who returns to look at real life outside his own personality, and does so through the medium of history and literature. He admits in the 'Bücher' only what had already passed through a human mind, what had become comprehensible and of essentially the same material as abstract thought. At the present stage his subject was such echoes of former aspects of life as were 'still alive in some of us', as the preface stated, i.e. life as it is mirrored in, and remembered by, individuals of high literary culture.

Such then were the intentions of the new work, it was an effort to break through the single-mindedness of the poet's idealism and the consequent loneliness shown in ALGABAL, an effort which led the poet to history. But it is still his idealism that is the real life and soul of his poetry, and it is not any historical accuracy or lack of it that makes the poems convincing or not. There is no question of a historical pastiche.

The main subject of the first group of poems, the first of the three 'books', is pastoral life. In contrast to the
ALGABAL: ALGABAL poetry there seems to be very little emotion, everything is restrained, if not naturally quiet and contented. This, however, is little more than the marble façade of a life of undiminished intensity of feeling. This becomes apparent already in the first poem of the book. It is true that at first 'Jahrestag' (p.11) seems to be just a poetical exercise in the classical style, the description of a simple rural scene. The subject of the poem is two girls who have come to the village well with their jugs to fetch water. But the simple, everyday action of the girls has a hidden meaning, known to themselves only, since it is an exact repetition of what happened seven years ago when the knowledge that they both had lost their lovers on the same day established a bond of friendship between them. It is this contrast between the unimportant and insignificant action, carried out every day, and the significance with which it is burdened which makes the poem so poignant. The pastoral setting, the biblical action of drawing water from the well, the very jugs of grey clay, they all indicate the unchanging character of the fundamental issues of life. But here they are used as symbols of a personal grief which, although a mere nothing to Nature, receives from this comparison an unsuspected depth of feeling and a heightened individuality.

Love, which was the subject of the first poem, is also
the subject of the next two, but whereas in 'Jahrestag' it was frustrated love, it is now the love that bids a woman leave her family and house and follow her heart. This is expressed in 'Drkensteg' as seen from the woman's own point of view, and in 'Loestag' (p.18) from the point of view of her sister who is losing her. Again all this passion is only hinted at, the trilogy of love poems is descriptive rather than expressive. The restraint with which feeling is here expressed does not mean that it does not go deep:

"Num bringst du mir zum erstenmal ein leid, ein tiefes – meine schwester . . ."

is in the quietness of its setting far more expressive than any passionate outburst could have been.

The fullest expression of this quiet beauty is found in 'Der Tag des Hirten' which is rather hymnic than pastoral and bucolic. The young boy who, on the first fine day of the year, takes his herd from their winter quarters back into the fields is not so much, perhaps, an individual person enjoying himself now that spring has, at last, come, as a representative figure. It is difficult to indicate in exact terms what the figure of the young herdsmen is meant to symbolise. He is an expression of the landscape, of all that is most beautiful in mountainous country on a spring day. It certainly is not merely a happy state of nature, and with George the ideal is not the fullest
development of a given, though unsatisfactory, state of humanity, but an abstraction, preconceived or at least preconceivable. The 'Hirte' shows already many characteristics of that ideal that later was to be represented by 'Maximin'. In this connection it is interesting to note that Hofmannsthal uses the word 'Hirten' in his poem 'Lebenslied' (Gesammelte Werke Berlin 1934, vol.1 p.7) as an expression of a full life in and with nature.

'Der Tag des Hirten' occupies the central position in the first group of poems in this book. The group is indicated by a blank page after the last of the seven poems which form it. Of this group the first three poems describe the effect, in the personal lives of individuals, of the law of beauty and restraint which is symbolised in the central poem. The following three show the conflict between this uncompromising law and the individual leading to tragedy. Schiller, whose idealism is, in the abstract, very like George's, would have made this conflict a consequence of personal guilt. Not so George. With him the conflict is completely undramatic. It arises out of nothing, and instead of a conflict it would be better to speak of a sudden confrontation of the very imperfect individual with the absolute ideal. The result of this sudden realisation of the limitations of the individual, even though the individual be raised above the status of humanity to the immortality
of a god or faun, is the moral, if not physical, end of his existence. In 'Flurgottes Trauer' (p.16) and 'Zwiegespräch in Schilfe' (p.18), the world of the beautiful, of nymphs and mermaids, is contrasted with the faun and the triton. The sensitivity of the bird in 'Der Hahn der Insel' (p.2o) who dies at the first sign of intrusion may be regarded as an exaggeration of this law of beauty. But it is no mere glorification of art for art's sake, or a tour de force creating something so fancifully remote from reality, so fragile, anaemic, and altogether unable to face life that the first slightest breath of actuality destroys it. The subject of the poem is not so much the story of the phoenix, too beautiful even to bear the gaze of the human eye, but the poet's belief that beauty is, by its very nature, absolute.

The central idea of the following group of poems, pp. 53 - 56, is that of hero-worship. But if the poet tries to give direct expression to great passion, as he does in 'Das Geheimopfer' (p.24), he is not so convincing as when he gives description instead of expression. In 'Abend des Festes' (p.29) the stress is laid not on the mysteries themselves, but on their effect on the lives of two young men. The subject of the poem is the human experience of sadness and rejection. Through no fault of their own the two friends have been excluded from the mysteries and this has caused their whole world to collapse. All through their lives.
they have had only this one aim, now that they have been rejected they see no way of rebuilding their world. The ALGABAL law of uncompromising beauty and fitting gesture becomes again apparent, and here, too, it leads to a tragic end, the same with which the magic bird and the Triton had met.

The poems on heroic youth, 'Der Aussug der Erstlinge' (p. 23), on the athlete (p. 26), the poet (p. 27), the conflict of fame and love in 'Ermin' (p. 26), present individual aspects of what appeared in symbolised and generalised form in 'Der Tag des Hirten'. They are, of course, also generalisations, or rather typical representations, but they have a more definite outline; these heroes represent different attitudes of youth, certain vocations, whereas the symbolical figure of the young herdsman does not represent any particular work or way of life, but youth in a general and 'original' state.

If the first group of poems came to an end with the picture of the dying bird, the second group ends with the picture of the dying hero. To the hero as well as the phoenix death comes without a struggle, they leave a world which has no longer room for them, and in leaving the world they fulfill the law of beauty which has shaped their lives and their actions down to the most insignificant detail. It is this law which seems to make their deaths little more
than a quiet withdrawal, the retirement of the hero who is afraid that his disfigurement might harm those who saw him. Such action is very alien to classical tradition, but surprisingly in tune with some of the nordic sagas. It is all the more surprising that this conception of beauty as quiet distinction and careful gesture brings George into the circle of the aesthetes. It was one of the poet's few friends at this time, the Dutch writer Ludwig van Beyssel, who compared George with Wilde, the Prince of Wales (Edward VII) and d'Aureville's Brunnel (Albert Varwey - Ludwig van Beyssel, Aufsätze über Stefan George und die jüngste dichterische Bewegung. Übertragen von Friedrich Gundolf Berlin 1905, p. 40). This comparison was justified not only because of the great care which George always spent on his personal appearance, but more particularly because of the above-mentioned characteristics of his poetry.

The third and last group of the first of the three 'books' continues the development from vague generalisations and all-embracing symbols to more definite and concrete subjects and ideas. The first of the three groups dealt with subjects that were generalised to the point of abstraction, the second dealt with generalisations and ideals as they appear in the human world, and the third takes us into the circle of friends, followers and lovers of the poet.
The choice of a classical costume for these poems of praise for the poet's friends does not indicate that his friends are out of place in the modern world and would have been more at home in classical Greece. It rather implies that this atmosphere of pastoral naturalness and ideal simplicity, the fundamental theme of the HIRTENGEDICHTE, and which the poet finds most clearly expressed in the classical age, is as much an element of our age as of those far-away centuries, that it is alive in young men and women to-day. It is, in short, not something that has appeared once in the course of history to disappear again, but is something eternal; or, as Schiller has said: "Und die Sonne Homers,
siehe, sie lachelt auch uns."

The fact of friendship is in itself a distinctive feature of the book. It brings out the contrast between it and the loneliness of ALGABAL, the exaggeration of which, in retrospect, appears even more fantastic. But the poet still needs to put himself at a certain distance from the demands of the day, from his friends, and the time spent with them, to see in their personalities and in their actions the eternal structure of beauty with which he is concerned.

The friends of whom these poems speak were mostly those of his first circle in Munich, or those, like Rolleiz-Lieder, whom he met on one of the numerous journeys that took him over the whole of Western Europe. The poems with
their classical titles and their strict regard for style hide rather than describe them. There is, however, little interest in trying to find personal clues in George's poetry and this is particularly true of the 'Preisgedichte'. Except for the very small circle of personal friends, the men and women who inspired these verses exist only in the poems themselves and not independently. But although the 'Preisgedichte' therefore are not personal in the sense that their main interest lies in guessing at the nineteenth century individuality under the classical guise and measured step of the poems, they are personal in the sense that they speak of the poet's attitude to individual friends, not abstract ideas.

The experience on which these poems draw is not as yet very large or very varied, and in spite of their rural setting the poems are distinctly urban in character. The relations between the friends are casual, but graceful, and passion as well as any real work find no place. As life makes no demands on these young men and women they can spend all their time in cultivating their personal relations. They try to give a beautiful aspect to all their meetings and separations, to their love and their friendship. This beauty is not inherent in their actual relations, they are too slight for real beauty, but the poet and his
friends bring some aspect of beauty into every action and experience.

But there are also more than mere traces of deep feeling, particularly in 'An Demon' (p.33), and there is a restrained but keenly felt sorrow in 'An Antinous' (p.42). There is more in this poetry than the kind and cultured talk of well-educated, urbane young men and women.

The true quality of the 'Freisgedichte' does not lie in their contents, nor in the story they tell, but in their being a true expression of the poet's feeling. Expression of personal emotion, however, already marks the end of the classical world of the 'Hirtengedichte'. The 'Freisgedichte' can be called classical only in costume and in so far as they seem to breathe a pure and serene air and find their standard of humanity in the picture the poet has drawn in 'Der Tag des Hirten'. From the poems in 'Freisgedichte' the poet's path lies to DAS JAHR DER SEELE in which classical and historical allusions become unnecessary in the expression of the poet's true feeling and experience.
DAS BUCH DER SAGEN UND SÄNGE

If it can be said of the 'Hirten- und Preisgedichte' that it expresses the feeling of quietness, purity and restraint which in German poetry is most readily associated with the idea of classical Greece, 'Das Buch der Sagen und Sänge' goes for its pictures and similes to the Middle Ages. The poet does not intend to give a picture of medieval happenings or customs, or merely to provide a medieval background to his poems, or even to give a modern version of medieval poetry. What he wants to do is to present that one aspect of the unchanging tale of humanity which stood out most clearly in those days.

He tried to achieve this object by his mastery of language and its absolute clarity. At the same time he limited himself to the one subject of each particular poem, excluding any idea not strictly relevant to the central one.

'Das Buch der Sagen und Sänge' consists of two main parts, as the title indicates, the second of which contains poems of the 'lied' type. The first is further subdivided into two groups of seven and three poems respectively. A blank page has again been used to indicate this grouping. The central poem of the first group, the fourth, is the 'Tagelied' (p.54) with which the poet revives a medieval form of poetry that had become obsolete, but that seems to be particularly suitable for his purpose. The 'Tagelied',
the subject of which is the parting of the lovers in the morning, compresses the greatest height of passion into the smallest space, trying to express the eternity of love at a moment when the limitation of time is most keenly felt. George, in his 'Tagelied' combines two types of medieval poetry. The first is the 'Tagelied' proper, as introduced into 'Minnesang' by Reimer, it is part of the 'hohe minne'. In this the lady is worshipped from afar, she is the poet's inspiration and leads him to high achievement, but it is essential that she should never allow the poet to become her lover. The other type was more common in France than in Germany. It is in the 'pastourelle tradition' and expresses the poet's happiness at successful, if illicit, love. George lays the stress on the idealistic side. In his poem the lover protests that he still worships his lady and is inspired by her exactly as in 'hohe minne'. His dialogue does not deal with passion and separation, but with the question of purity and impurity, and again, in spite of its dramatic form, it is not an expression, but description, even discussion, of passion.

Going from this central poem forwards and backwards within the group we next find two examples of 'minne' poetry. It is not difficult to think of a medieval poet who might have served as model for 'Im unglücklichen Tone dessen von . . .' (p.56). A figure like Ulrich von Lichtenstein at once comes to mind, and 'Frauenlob', too, refers in its title to a figure of the late 'minnesang'. If such allusions
however, lead the reader to expect a historically correct picture, disappointment is bound to follow here as certainly as with Gottfried Keller's 'Hadlaub'. The picture of the time which the poet has drawn is based on information which very soon afterwards is regarded as inadequate, or even mistaken, and the whole picture then appears to be wrong. In the particular case of the 'Minnesinger' research has now shown the large part which convention played in their work, and the reader has learnt that by no means every passionate appeal or confession was an expression of true feeling. George, however, had no intention of giving a true picture of a historical past and its customs, as had been the case with many novelists and even with the author of the 'Zürcher Novellen'. The poet's subject is general rather than historical, it is a particular mood of boundless courage and boundless devotion that he portrays in motifs borrowed from the Middle Ages. 'Im unglücklichen tone dessen von . . . ' is an exaggeration of this mood, even as compared with 'Frauenlob', but this very exaggeration is characteristic of George's conception of the glorious unreasonableness of love. He elaborates the motif of the devoted though despised lover almost to the point of paradox. It is the same motif which Schiller chose for his 'Der Handschuh'. But Schiller treated it as a ballad, thus emphasising the distance between the poet and the
hero of his poem, whereas George treats it as a lyrical poem in which this distinction is more difficult to maintain. Schiller's treatment is therefore, as a whole, the more successful one. It is true, such a romantic idea of sacrifice is not new to George, 'Nachthymne' (KEMPEN p.32) expresses a very similar emotion, but the particular aspect of this subject which he presents is no longer an expression of the poet's own ardent desire for perfection, but a description of a mood in a historical setting. 'Frauenlob' in particular is 'romantic' also in that the medieval poet, speaking in the first person, is aware that he is a medieval poet in a medieval setting.

The first two poems of the group, 'Sporenwache' (p.47) and 'Die Tat' (p.50) again may be taken together with the last two, 'Irrrende Schar' (p.58) and 'Der Waffengeführte' (p.60). The first two express the ideal of heroic youth, the latter that of friendship in a search for the common ideal. No name is mentioned, and no reference to either Siegfried or Parzival is made, nor does the poem purport to describe any actual happening, legendary or historical, but it is obvious that the heroes of 'Sporenwache' and 'Die Tat' are akin to these legendary heroes - the medieval ones, not those of Richard Wagner.

'Irrrende Schar' is a particularly happy example of a
'symbolic' poem in which the temporary aspect and the metaphysical idea of a phenomenon are equally apparent and vividly presented. 'Irrende Scher describes the common aspects of all those groups of knights, from the Round Table to the Teutonic Order, that were such such a significant feature of the Middle Ages. Their origin is legendary, the mass of the people regard them with awe or even with hatred, but always as something completely different from themselves, and their fate in this world has been determined by a higher power than their own. Through courage, service in love, and unselfishness, unswerving in their faith and in their high ideals they attain to the Holy Grail. Such a summary seems to be a mere catalogue, and the poet adds very little to it in the way of detailed description. He does not enlarge on the facts which are left general, but in his hands they become alive. 'Irrende Scher' is not, indeed, the biography of a particular group of crusaders or romantic adventurers, but a symbol which, although an ideal portrait, has not lost touch with reality.

The three poems of the following group describe a personal feeling rather than a historical picture, although, of course, the setting is still medieval. Two of them round off the picture of chivalry, and one has for its subject a monk's life. They describe very different emotions and moods, the torment of indecision, the exaggerated yearning of desire,
but also the great tenderness and unselfish love of the 'Einsiedel' (p.65). This last is one of the most successful poems of the book. The devotion it describes is no less complete and unhesitating than that of the lover in 'Im unglücklichen tanz dessen von . .' (p.56) and 'Das Bili' (p.66), but unlike the desperate lover in the former and the monk in the latter, the hermit is able to see beyond himself and is not caught up in, and bounded by, his own individuality. His wisdom springs from his knowledge of the limitations of all mankind, and the sweetness of his life has its origin in his humility. There is nothing insipid about this poem; sweetness here indeed flows from strength, but it shows a mellowness and balance which are distinct achievements.

It has been seen that the historical background of the first half of the 'Buch der Sagen und Sängen' must not be taken as a literal interpretation of an actual historical period, and the second part, 'Die Sänge eines fehrenden Spielmanns' contains almost no historical allusions, nothing beyond the mention of princesses, dwarfs, and other legendary figures associated with those times.

The first group of these lyrics are love poems, and to some extent they are reminiscent of George's earliest poetry in the FIBEL. Then as now the poet was too uncertain of himself to confess his love without some recourse to
artificiality. A further similarity lies in the fact that of all the seasons of the year only the time of 'Neue sonne, junges jahr' (p.71) appeals to the poet. If 'Der Einsiedel' had been the most satisfactory poem of the first group, a poem expressing a similar devotion and consideration for others is the most impressive of the 'lieder'. 'Sich mein kind ich gehe...' (p.75) has none of the diffidence and slightness that makes some of the other poems little more than studies in artistry. The emotion which forms the subject of the poem has been exaggerated and does not represent any normal feeling, but it is nevertheless real.

The next group returns more deliberately to the medieval setting and choice of subjects that distinguishes this book. The small and graceful world of the dwarfs comes to light again, and the lines are so playful and neat that the hearer is apt to overlook the fact that dwarfs, though visible to children only, are really a very powerful race. The expression of longing and love which was the subject of the first group of the 'lieder' here finds its counterpart in the story of the girl who begins to become conscious of love. This story, however, is given as a story, as a description of a situation, laid in the Middle Ages, and not as an expression of personal feeling. The same can be said of the 'Marienlied' 'Lille der Auw' (p.83). It is not the
voice of religious experience, but the symbol of a characteristic attitude which, although most perfectly expressed in this form in medieval literature, yet is not limited to any one time or place.

'Ein edelkind sah von balkon . ..' (p.78) allows of an interesting comparison with Rilke's 'Ich war ein Kind. . .' (Gedichte, Leipzig 1927, vol. I p. 304). The subject of both poems, resembling that of a ballad, is the same, the story of a girl of noble birth who is attracted by the song of a passing minstrel. In Rilke's poem the feeling which pervades the whole is one of fear. The longing of the girl for the passing minstrel becomes almost unbearable, as expressed by Rilke, and there is a romantic feeling that all life will be useless and valueless if her desire is not gratified. Rilke's poem, however, is not really an expression of overwhelming love, but an expression of haunting fear at the thought of missing the supreme moment of letting the Lord pass by unnoticed - the simile is not inappropriate with Rilke. In comparison with this passionate feeling which Rilke's poem conveys so effectively, George's 'lied' appears to be almost academic in its detached description. This is very characteristic of George's poetry at this stage. He chooses a subject which is inherently expressive of passion and feeling and then treats it in a cool and
and restrained way, paying so much attention to perfection in presentation that the seriousness and passionate nature of the subject is apt to be overlooked.
DAS BUCH DER HÄNGENDEN GÄRTEN.

Of the three books which form the new volume it is 'Das Buch der hängenden Gärten' which shows the closest affinity to ALGABAL. It is, however, just this affinity, not only of subject and setting, but also of mood, that makes the difference the more apparent. In ALGABAL the basis of George's poetry, his own insistent will, was very narrow. The new book deals with a world which is not confined to the poet himself, but has a reality outside his thoughts, even if this reality can as yet be presented only as history. But if the subject of 'Das Buch der hängenden Gärten' is the distant and glamorous East, for George it is no mere romantic plaything, not merely new colours and tinkling bells with which to clothe the drabness of the nineteenth century, as it had been for Rückert, Schack, Bödelschwingh, Freiligrath, and a host of others who had hitherto chosen an oriental setting for their poems. George uses the oriental setting - like Goethe in his 'West-östlicher Diven' - not as a background but as an atmosphere. Here the similarity ends, the East means very different things to Goethe and to George. Goethe saw in it the wisdom which Faust learned only very late, the realisation that life's ultimate aim is life. George's picture of the East, though very different, is no less
significant and expressive. George's East is the country where the extremes of human possibilities had been realised. He knows of splendour and despotism, of scorching heat and desolate loneliness, of 'Rausch und Tod' as he later summed it up in DER TEPPICH DES LEbens. Goethe turned to the Persia of Hafiz for his model, George to the stern fanaticism of the Arabian desert and Mohammedan religion. He had found traces of this 'East' in Spain, and it had strangely corresponded with his own mood.

'Das Buch der hängenden Gärten' is therefore more closely related to personal experience than either the 'Hirtengedichte' or the 'Sagen und Sängel', yet it is essentially a country of imagination in which they move, and it is by magic that we are taken there. As the poems show 'East' also symbolises sensuousness. It is here that George's 'East' touches that of Goethe.

"Die leiber vom weiss des marmors . . ."
and
"Die leiber die hellrot wie blüten . . ."
from 'In hohen palästan . . .'(p.90) remind the reader of
"Die lebende weisheit der leiber . . ."
which the disciple was eager to learn in the last of the three 'legenda' in the FIDEL. Then the poet despised this world of the senses, of the 'red women'. Now he begins to realise that it is this world of the senses in which he will have
to live. The preface of the 'Bücher' in referring to the 'sinnliche luft' (p. 7) of the towns as the mood which the poet tried to express in the 'Buch der hängenden Gärten' gives another indication of the different attitude of the poet to the world of the senses.

This sensuousness, once admitted into George's poetry, is immediately exaggerated. The 'reines Erhabnes geniessen berauschender sieges-gebäräuche' (p. 90), of which the poem 'Nachdem die hehre stadt . .' (p. 91) gives another example, is rather in the style of ALGABAL. There is, however, a qualifying adjective with 'geniessen' which should not be overlooked: 'reines'. This qualification is stressed by placing it in enjambement. Here the poet expresses one of the most important problems of his poetry in the shortest possible way by separating and, at the same time, joining in enjambement the two ideas, the sensuousness of 'geniessen', and the idealism of the soul with its desire for purity.

'Kindliches Königstum' (p. 92) takes up a subject which had been touched upon in ALGABAL, the poet's feeling that he had been chosen as a king already in his childhood days. There is nothing of the desperate longing in this poem, however, that had been characteristic of ALGABAL. 'Kindliches Königstum' expresses pride, the feeling of possession, not want.
"Meine weissen ara . ." (p.96) concludes this group of poems. It is introduced by "Halte die purpur- . ." (p.94), in which the poet gives a picture of a world of strange and unquestioned delight. As in ALGABAL the real world is excluded, 'wesen und welt' are dismissed as 'lüge'. There is, however, one noticeable difference from the world of ALGABAL in that this world is now purely visual. The music of the flutes and harps which twice in ALGABAL played an important part no longer 'beladen den sinn'. Thus we are prepared for the strange and purely visual pattern of 'Meine weissen ara . .'. This poem relies for its effect entirely on the magic of its words and its rhythm. There is little tangible meaning in the description of the birds behind their golden bars. If they are symbols it is not made clear what they are to symbolise. But the rhythmical change of short and long lines, the strange fascination of the play of vowels, act like a spell.

The next group comprises only two poems, 'Vorbereitungen' (p.98) and 'Friedensabend' (p.100). These two may be compared with some poems from ALGABAL, the first with 'Am markte . .' (p.118), the latter with the seclusion and remote peace of the poems of 'Unterreich'. In 'Vorbereitungen' we find the same exaggeration of perfection which hitherto had been used only to make the rejection of the most perfect woman doubly humiliating. 'Vorbereitungen', too, does not end
with the union of the two who have prepared themselves for this union for a long time. But there is no rejection, the poem ends on a note of sad resignation. Instead of an expression of bitterness towards women the poem now expresses a feeling of uncertainty. The glorification of the most beautiful woman, the ardent purification of the lover, all this leads merely to that line of sad resignation and deeply felt uncertainty: 'Den vielleicht du nie berühren wirst.'

The following group of fifteen poems occupies the same position as the 'Sänge' in the preceding book, and may also be compared to the 'Freisgedichte'. All three groups are, each in its own way, lyrical poems, and the direct expression of the poet's feeling - at least as far as any expression in the 'Bücher' can be called direct. There is still an air of unreality about these poems, the love still takes place in that land to which the reader has come as if by magic, and the first of the poems reminds him of this by its description of some vague and mysterious happening in some garden in the French style whose outlines are left on purpose indefinite. This vagueness, permeating as it does the whole poem, is not due to any lack of skill on the poet's part, but intentional. The theme of this cycle of lyrics has a dream-like quality, expressly stated in the second poem (p.104), a quality very well befitting its position in
the 'Buch der hängenden Gärten,' the very title of which speaks of a region between heaven and earth.

But if these poems breathe a dream-like mood, there is also a directness of expression, an immediate and personal feeling of love, of longing that makes them truly lyrical. They are not spoken into the void, or addressed to some ideal of unattainable perfection, they are the expression of love for somebody very definite, or, perhaps, it would be more correct to say that they are statements about a relation as simple as it is intense. Not even here does the poet burst into exclamations, he prefers to make a statement about, a description of, a personal relation. He tries to find an objective expression for a very subjective mood, and the ardour of passion is balanced by a meticulous regard for form. What is the reason for such restraint, why does not the poet even in poetry, and with a subject as personal as in these lyrics, give free expression to his feelings, plead his suit, lament his disappointment, and sigh for relief?


This group of poems is much simpler and clearer than
any preceding ones. In HYMNEN his verses ran with an almost
dantesque sternness and impersonality: "Die blicke mein
so mich dem pfad entrafften . ." (Von einer Begegnung, p.22)
but now a similar idea is expressed: "Als neuling trat
ich ein in dein gehege . ." (p.104). And

"Wie ward es mir gebot fü r lange nächte
Treu zug um zug dein bildnis zu beschwören"
(HYMNEN p.23)
is now stated in much simpler and more personal words: -

"Jedem werke bin ich förder tot,
Dich mir nahzu runen mit den sinnen,
Neue reden mit dir auszusinnen,
Dienst und lohn gewährung und verbot, . ." (p.106).

The comparative simplicity of this cycle of lyrics
does not, however, altogether exclude that involved con-
struction of sentences which is so characteristic for the poet.
It takes some time to grasp the pattern of thought under-
lying them. The beginning and the end of the poem are often
interlocked, too, in the curious way described above (p.9),
so that we might fittingly apply to them Goethe's lines:

"Dein Lied ist drehend wie das Sterngewölbe,
Anfang und Ende immerfort dasselbe,
Und was die Mitte bringt, ist offenbar
Das,was zu Ende bleibt und anfangs war."

This feature is particularly apparent in the first nine
of these lyrics. It is only in a short poem that it is
possible to link beginning and end so closely, and to
express a mood in this way. 'Keine erfindung von geschichten
sondern wiedergabe von stimmungen" (Bl. f.d.K. II,2. Auslese 1892-93 p.13) is George's aim.

The cycle of poems begins with the poet entering 'in andrer herren prächtiges gebiet' (p.105), a country which he cannot rule, as in 'Algabal', but where he has to live in peace with other powers. Here he falls violently in love, passionate to the point of self-extinction, and in this relation again the poet feels that he is intruding. But he does not go unrequited, and the second half of the cycle, pp. 108 - 112, separated from the first by a blank page, expresses the happiness of the lovers in spite of the feeling of danger which is apparent in the 'Tagelied' 'Wenn sich bei heilger ruh ...' (p.109). The end - inevitable separation - overshadows their happiness long before the last day and the parting come. 'Sprich nicht immer ...' (p.111) has become famous for its expression of passionate sadness. A picture of autumn has been made a symbol of parting, and here again the intricate form of the sonnet is necessary to balance the intensity of emotion. Yet the impression it makes is not primarily one of artistry. Form is here used to stress emotion, the emotion expressed in the last word of the poem, 'wandelbar', the three syllables of which form the whole verse. 'Wandelbar', the poet is never allowed to forget that nothing in this world can endure, and it is this realisation of the passing nature of all things that is the subject of
the third part of the book, the sorrows of one who was a king.

The last six poems of the book are grouped together as a story, a sequel to the two cycles of love poetry, to the poem 'Hindliches Königstum' (p.92), and also to some extent to ALCABAL. While the king lost himself in his love, in human happiness, human fear, and human sorrow, he lost that exclusiveness on which his power as king was founded. It is the regal gesture which here, as in ALCABAL, is the origin of the poet's kingdom. This kingdom which the poet had won in ALCABAL, even if it had had reality only in his imagination, he now felt he had lost again. This is the reason for the utter despair of the last poems. The hero serves as slave to a more successful rival, he has no longer the courage nor the strength to fight his way back to the throne, and, throwing away his dagger, he finds his way to the river, hoping that suicide will solve all the problems of his life. In ALCABAL George had already contemplated this conclusion, now he follows the example set by Goethe in 'Werther's Leiden'.

But not only the 'suicide', all the poems of this group express the poet's sadness. It is a mood of sadness rather than of despondency, and it does not originate, as might be assumed, in any feeling of George's that he, too, like his hero, had lost his kingdom. The power of poetical expression was clearly his still, not only undiminished, but strengthened
and widened. We have to look deeper for an explanation of that sadness.

It is not essentially a new feature in the poet's work, it was present even in his apparently most happy and carefree poetry. It is clearly discernible in:

"Halte die purpur- und goldenen Gedanken im Zaum ..." (p. 94),

it is present in the doubts expressed in 'Vorbereitungen' (p. 98), in the desire, and even the attainment of desire in his lyrics as well as in the sadness of parting. It is not confined to the 'Bücher' either, it is noticeable in PILGERFAHRTEN and it was the underlying mood of 'Agathon kniend vor meinem pfühle ...' (p. 109) in ALGABAL.

It is, however, another poem from ALGABAL which, together with the 'wandelbar' from the 'Buch der hängenden Gärten', gives a clue to this sadness. This poem is 'O mutter meiner mutter . .' (p. 102), and especially the line in which Algabal speaks of his resignation and his only desire:

"Und frei in den bedingten bahnen wandeln."

Every step in the poet's development impresses him more deeply with the fact that life has its essential limitations. Passionate youth has always tried to persuade itself that things are what they ought to be, and the poet learns with sadness the story of human frailty. The very
process of finding a new means of expression, a means of expressing a new self, the conquest of a kingdom, inevitably led him to realise the limits of this kingdom. HYMNEN was the exuberant discovery of a new country, so was ALGABAL and the 'Bücher'. It was more than a discovery; it was the creation of a poetical country which did not exist until the poet found the word for it, and which after him was inhabited by other writers. But each of these victories brings with it the realisation that the new world is, indeed, limited, that even the demi-god Alagal is mortal. The wider the poet's rule reaches, the more his search for the absolute seems to be successful, the greater the strain must become when he realises that every addition to his power also increases his sense of being powerless. It is not a process of renewed hope and despair, power and limitation do not follow each other but are identical. The limitation is nothing but the new power compared with the absolute, the ideal. Every step in the one direction is accompanied by one in the other. "Ich gehe immer und immer an den Eussersten rändern — was ich hervorgehe ist das letzte mägliche . . ." (letter to Sabine Lépiaus, April 1905, loc.cit.)

A situation like this in which every gain is also a burden makes an escape from this world appear in that tempting light which is most melodiously expressed in the last poem.
of the volume, 'Stimmen im Strom' (p. 122). Beginning with PILGERFAHRTEN the last poem of each volume had been a link between this and the next. 'Stimmen im Strom' does not strike a confident note, George's books do not usually end on a note of despondency nor on one of sadness and escape. The new book, the title of which had been already published in the Bl.f.d.K. before the 'Bücher' had come out, was to take this sadness for its key-note.

The 'Bücher' were certainly no less an achievement than ALGABAL. In ALGABAL the poet's world had been entirely subjective, and deliberately cut off from real life. The poet now took a first step away from the realm of the mind and imagination to the world of the senses. For the first time his poems contained something besides the poet's own lonely soul. It is true, their world was one of general ideas and moods rather than of personal experience. The poet still relied almost entirely on history and literature for his contacts with the world. In his next book, however, he proceeded to more personal, intimate relations, from the far flung 'Bücher' to the JAHR DER SEELE.
CHAPTER SEVEN

DAS JAHR DER SEELE

The first edition of DAS JAHR DER SEELE was published privately in 1897. None of the poet's books had until then been made available to the public at large. The first three volumes of his poetry, containing his published verse up to, and including, DAS JAHR DER SEELE, but excluding those later collected in DIE FIBEL were brought out by Georg Bondi in the autumn of 1898, dated 1899, as is usual with German publications. This second edition of DAS JAHR DER SEELE, besides adding some new poems, also included a foreword by the poet. In this he warns against a possible misinterpretation of the poems which might arise from their very personal quality and character. DAS JAHR DER SEELE should not be read as a roman-à-clef. The dedication of the book to a woman, and the fact that the poems of the first part could be read as being addressed to, or as recording the poet's relation with, a woman he loved, afforded further grounds to such a misunderstanding. 'Anna Maria Ottilie, die tröstende beschirmerin' is, however, the poet's sister. This, of course, the public could not know, nor is there any poetic insight into the poems to be derived from such knowledge. Turning to the poems for some characteristics of
that mysterious woman, the poet's supposed companion through a year, the reader finds these are very conflicting, and he is led to assume that several of the poet's friends must have served as models.

The reader may then turn to the poet's statement in the preface: 'seltan sind sosehr wie in diesem buche ich und du dieselbe sest' (p. 7). At first this sounds somewhat cryptic. It is meant as a warning rather than as an explanation, and it will have to be interpreted by a careful study of the poems themselves. All poetry must of necessity be conceived as addressed to somebody, even if that somebody be nothing more definite than humanity in general, or an audience of the future. George's principal theme in this book is the experience of man's loneliness, but this loneliness has to be expressed and translated into action, hence the 'ich und du' of the poems.

The volume is divided into three parts of approximately equal length, comprising 31, 34, and 32 poems respectively. It is the first part of the volume which gives its title to the whole, but this has no separate title of its own. This first part, the JAHR DER SEELE in a narrower sense, is again subdivided into three sections or groups of 11 and 10 poems respectively. The titles of these three groups refer to three seasons, autumn, winter, and summer. It is interesting to note that just those two seasons which until now hardly
had any place in his poetry, late autumn and the depth of winter, now occupy a prominent place, and that spring, the season of hope, here appears merely as a fore-runner of summer.

The very first of the poems, 'Komm in den totgesagten park . . .' (p.12) begins with the assumption that nature is dead. Nature is represented by a garden, the relation between the two being exactly that of real life on the one side, and its reflection in the mind of men through literature on the other, with which reflection the preceding volume dealt. The poem is concerned with pointing out that nature as yet is not dead, the poet draws his companion's attention to colours, to a few last flowers, the mildness of the weather, all of which still seem to indicate the presence of life, but the mood of the poem throughout is one of resignation. The signs of life to which the poet can point are nothing but 'was übrig blieb von grünen leben'. It is characteristic of DAS JAHR DER SEELE that it is not sad events, or even the sadness of that parting year which brings about sadness in the poet's mind, but the poet's own mood of sadness reflected in what he sees of life. Moods, of course, cannot be expressed directly, there is no shape or form that could find its way into poetry. They have to be reflected by something completely different to become even material for poetry.
In DAS JAHR DER SEELE this mirror is provided by Nature. It is by description of landscape, of seasons, of the weather, that the poet can give expression to his feelings. Nature is the great force with which man may find himself in communion and yet be essentially and completely alone. He may project his moods into Nature, but Nature makes no reply. It is this situation of being at once in contact with something, Nature, and yet not in contact but alone and even lonely that explains much of the peculiar mood in which DAS JAHR DER SEELE was written.

In such a mood of autumnal sadness the poet resigns the hope of attaining the high ideals which had inspired his 'Junge Jahre' (p.13). All he now desires is simple and close human relationships. He finds a certain measure of happiness in friendship with a sympathetic soul. His relation with the companion who thus has entered his life has nothing of the unpleasant feeling of a second best, even if the poet does know that she is not the 'Eine Ferne' (p.14), his ideal. The prevailing mood of this poem is one of gratitude, 'heil und denk dir', and the comparison with the ideal adds nothing but a note of sadness, a reflection on life in general and seeming to say that all life can now offer is 'was übrig blieb.'

Of the poem 'Wir schreiten auf und ab . . .' (p.15) a
very adverse criticism by Kurt Port (Stefan George, Ein Protest, Ulm 1919) has been published which we shall discuss here. This is not done because of any intrinsic value of this criticism, but rather because Port’s criticism goes so radically astray that pointing out its errors, a normally tedious and unprofitable procedure, does indeed help to appreciate the characteristic features of George’s poetry.

"Wir schreiten auf und ab im reichen flitter
Des buchensganges beinahe bis zum tore
Und sehen ausser in dem field von gitter
Den mandelbaum zum zweiteimal im flore.

Wir suchen nach den schattenfreien bänken
Dort wo uns niemals fremde stimmen scheuchten,
In trüben unsre arme sich verschranken,
Wir leben uns an langen milden leuchten.

Wir fühlen dankbar wie zu leisen braugen
Von wipfeln strahlenspuren auf uns tropfen
Und blicken nur und horchen wenn in pausen
Die reifen früchte an den boden klopfen."

To this Port remarks:

"In diesem Gedicht, das ein Kritiker für ein schönes, durchaus stimmungsvolles Herbstgedicht erklärt, fällt George gegen seine Gewohnheit allerdings nicht aus dem Bild; was ist das aber für ein Bild, das er uns vorsetzt? Ist in diesem Gedicht ein bildeliches Moment, das nicht gänzlich unbedeutend wäre? Dass da ein Gitter am Tore ist, das beinahe erreicht wird und nicht ganz, dass auf dem Feld vor dem Gitter gerade ein Mandelbaum steht, dass dieser gerade zum zweiteimal blüht (nun denn ein typisches Beispiel für falsche begriffliche statt anschauliche Schilderung!), dass die Bänke zufällig schattenfrei sind, (oder dass die beiden die schattenfreien Bänke den beschateteten vorziehe?), dass reife Früchte, in Pausen, an den Boden 'klopfen' - sind das Teile eines Bildes, das warst ist uns vor Augen geführt zu werden? Alles Belanglosigkeiten, Zufälligkeiten, willkürlichkeiten, dazu geeignet ein Bild zu zerstören, nicht zu
erbauend! Dinge ohne Farben und Formen, ohne Anschauungswert; wir haben ein Bild ohne Bildsinn! Und dazu noch eine Vorstellung lächerlicher Ausserlichkeiten (in Träumen unsere Arme sich verschränken), zudem durch einen verdrehten Stil zur Groteske ausgewartet (die Arme träumen doch nicht, sondern die Beiden!), und eine wirre Kombination zum Teil schlecht gesehener Vorstellungen (Wir fühlen dankbar, wie zu leisen Brezen von Wipfeln Strahlenspuren auf uns tropfen). Wir beginnen zu fürchten, den Verfasser dieses gedichteten fehle nicht nur jede Phantasie, ihm fehle selbst die primitivste Fähigkeit zu schauen! " (loc. cit. p. 8 s.)

A few minor points may be dealt with first. 'In träumen unsere arme sich verschränken . . . ' is perfectly correct German, and does not make use of the vast possibilities for involved construction German syntax offers, though it is true that the poet frequently does make use of these possibilities of his native tongue. 'Der mandelbaum zum zweitemal im flore' is a thing seen, and not an abstraction. The blossoming of an almond tree in autumn is very much out of its season. Noticing the blossoms even an unimaginative and unobservant person could not help noticing this striking fact. A description that would fail to introduce this quality would be incorrect.

If such a description were to be limited to the tree itself in the narrowest sense and take no account of setting, season, etc., as Fott seems to desire, such description might indeed be called an abstraction.

The main charge, however, seems to be that the poet gives apparently disconnected remarks instead of a picture; that he deliberately, we may add - limits himself to the careful
description of a number of facts and observations which appear
to the critic to be irrelevant and not worthy of poetical
presentation. This is, indeed, exactly what the poet does
do. He offers no subjective reflections on the picture he
is presenting. His first book, HYMEN, was, of course, an
expression of his great elation at having discovered this
technique of writing. Every sentence, almost every word is
a distinct statement, and the poet's main concern is to make
his statements as accurate as possible. This preoccupation
of the poet with the statements he is just making tends to
single out each of them, although any single statement
presents only one aspect of the poetical whole, of the poet's
image. He has therefore to rely on that elusive quality of
poetry that will make a poem hang together if only the poet
has been careful and observant, in the same way as the world
is observed as many-sided and yet experienced as a whole.
If there is any 'Bildsinn' wanting, as Fort seems to imply,
the defect must lie in the poet's 'Erlebnis', or possibly
in the world as it is which does not provide the poet with
a 'Sinn'. It cannot be remedied in the poem by a later
addition out of the poet's mind. In poetry it is not possible
to separate the treatment of a subject from the subject
itself. They are co-existent, if not simultaneous in the
conception of any poem.
'Wir stehen an der Hecken grauen wall . . .' (p.17) is a careful description of a situation, not going beyond the situation itself, and yet full of meaning. There is a twofold contrast expressed in these eight lines. The first is the one found in Roman Catholicism which has a share, as the poet asserts, in both worlds:

"Sie singen lieder von der himmelswonne
In dieser erde sichrem klaren hall."

This could hardly have been put in a more concise way. The second is the yearning of age for the happiness of youth that does not know its own happiness. The phrase 'Deine worte' in the second stanza of the poem may give rise to misunderstanding. They refer to the last two verses, and in 'uns schrecken' therefore the hearer is acquainted with the result of the lady's words before he hears them.

The remaining poems of this section express a kind of autumnal sadness. It is not so much sadness at the approach of winter as a sadness inherent in autumn, or projected into autumn by man. In a similar way it is the process of parting, not the prospect of separation, that casts a shadow over their friendship. A hearer expecting a description of real, or even imaginary events will find little satisfaction in these poems. They open up many questions and problems, but they offer no answers. 'Du willst am mauerbrunnen wasser schöpfen . . .'(p.18) may be regarded as typical of this. If the value of the poem depended on the possibility of an
exact and rational interpretation of the meaning of the episode in which the poet tries to take a ring from his lady's finger, the poem could not rank high. But it is a poetical whole, and the various statements mean exactly what they say and have to be approached in the same way as one would approach natural events.

The loneliness which is the prevalent feeling of these poems does not result from separation, it is its origin. It is expressed in the lines: 'uns fehlt bis an das glück noch eine weite spanne ...' (p. 21). It is this knowledge which causes him to write the letter the pale white of which is 'die grellerste farbe'. The poet is not concerned with the story of this autumn's friendship, but with its mood. The seemingly paradoxical reversion of cause and effect, not only in the poem referred to above, are attempts to indicate this, to substitute the mood, with regard to which all happenings and emotions are simultaneous, for the story.

As in HYMNEN the setting of the scene is a park, enclosed, sheltered from the world, laid out by some human mind, and not wild nature. The sequence of poems describes the beginning and end of a friendship between a man and a woman - this is indicated by the ring episode and the reference to 'her' (p. 14). The figure of the woman remains vague. Her main reason of existence is to provide the man
with a 'du', and since she is not given a true personality to express, the poet may truthfully say that 'ich und du sind dieselbe seele'. The men seems to stand at that crucial point of his development in which a very self-centred nature comes into conflict with other people and life in general. Unable - or unwilling - to devote himself to his friends he expects his friends to sacrifice their personalities to him. He will soon have forgotten his love (p.22). This egotistical attitude, of course, can lead to nothing but disappointment and sadness. The poet is young and demands too much from others as well as from himself.

'Waller im Schnee' describes a circle of experience similar to that of 'Nach der Lese'. It begins with descriptions of a friendship that helped the poet to see beauty even in the bareness of winter. (p.25). But again there is a feeling of sadness present from the beginning. Every hope and happiness appears to be doomed. And again this sadness leads to separation, but separation is an expression of this feeling, not its culmination or its cause.

The setting of this group is winter, but no 'winter of despair' can be so deep as to destroy completely all hope of a happier future. The first of the poems (p.304) expresses this longing for happiness which may, perhaps, lie hidden, but will come to life at the first gentle touch of spring. This hope the poet sees in the new friendship, teaching him
that winter too has its beauty. The poet's experience of beauty in the very feeling of solitude, danger, and complete absence of warm, human life, is focussed in the figure of his companion. Sharing this icy desert with him she expresses the purity of winter as well as its barrenness and torment. This second aspect is developed in the following poems of this group. There is no explanation given why the walk the two are taking through a winter night should take them to that spot, left vaguely undefined, where 'die trübe liebe wächst im reif der qualen' (p.26). The 'geist der flur' (p.27) of this winter is a mood or feeling as heavy as it is inexplicable. In spite of the hope expressed in the first poem there is no happiness in this love. The poet finds his friend unsympathetic when he presents her with the greatest gift which is in his giving, symbolising his poetry.

She cannot understand the Catholic imagery in which his world of art is expressed, she does not understand his poetry. She does not know of that world of gesture which the poet inhabits and does not realise that behind the polished formality and pomp, so characteristic of George's poetry, there is passionate feeling, a world of 'gluten, trünen, schimmern' (p.28).

As this 'winterly' aspect of life, the atmosphere of this group of poems, becomes more and more oppressive, open landscape and scenery - for although they are covered
with snow, they are not hedged in as the park was in 'Nach der Lese' - are replaced by rooms.

What the poet tries to communicate to his companion only proves that there is no real bond between them. Again his search for companionship is doomed to failure. The only living issue in such barren friendship is the faithfulness with which the poet regards sadness as his duty, the better to share his companion's sadness. This sadness, like that expressed in the motto of the PILGERFAHRTEN, is in truth about nothing or about everything. It is also apparent in the lines:

"Nun hab ich wieder meine leeren augen
Und in die leere nacht die leeren hände." (p.51)

in which the repeated 'leer' impresses the hearer with the poet's feeling of the emptiness of life. Together with 'Noch zwingt mich trau' (p.36) and 'Dein zauber brach ...' (p.32) it describes how the strain, which has clearly been growing in this series of poems, has become too great and the link between the two friends breaks.

'Die blume die ich mir ...' (p.51), the poem of desolation and despair is the last of its mood in this group. The spell is broken, and, as in his earliest poetry, the poet uses the coming of spring to symbolise this. It is equally correct to say that the coming of spring has broken the spell of wintry desolation, and to express it
in a more paradoxical way by stating that the breaking of the spell has brought the spring. The two events are different ways of expressing the same fact on two different planes, two ways of translating a mood into events that can be described. The last poem of the 'winter' group is really a 'spring' poem. It is, however, put into its group because so much of the feeling of dark and troubled times is still noticeable in it.

Almost without exceptions the poems in 'Sieg des Sommers' are more cheerful and full of confidence than those of the two earlier groups. The subject of the last group is the wisdom of enjoying the 'propitious moment', the 'kairos'. It is now or never that the poet will find happiness in human companionship. The new adventure on which he sets out is taking him away from home and beneath strange skies.

"... Aus grauem himmel brechend milde feuer
Und rauschen heimatwärts gewandter schwingen
Entbietet mir ein neues abenteuer
Du all die jahre hin mir glanz und glaube
Bei dir, und wo die stummen zeugen waren
Von hoffen und von angst, bei diesem laube."

(p.36)

The verse in this poem is rather involved, the line of thought runs:

"Milde, aus grauem Himmel brechende Feuer und das Rauschen von Schwingen die sich der Heimat zuwenden, all das verheisst mir ein neues Abenteuer bei dir, der du durch all die Jahre hindurch mir Glanz und Glaube warst; ein Abenteuer unter diesem Laube, das ein stummer Zeuge meiner Angst und meines Hoffens war."
Twice in this passage the adverbial phrase of place, 'bei dir' and 'bei diesem laube', is given after the clause dependent on it, thus apparently unnecessarily obscuring the sense. The reason for this is, of course, the principle of 'construction in a circle' referred to above.

It is a condition of such happiness in, and satisfaction with, the propitious moment that all memory of the past should be banished. 'Den blauen rachen ...' (p.37) expresses this feeling. The marks of past passion, however deeply it may have cut, are now no longer living memories. The poet's companion during this part of his life once planned to found a Utopia with his poet-friend, a 'reich der sonne' (p.38). Now the poet learns from him 'dass dieses süsse leben uns geüge'. Not only has he to find present happiness in the moment, but he realises that there is nothing beyond the happiness of the moment. He finds this happiness in, and of, the moment expressed in Nature, her law is recognised by the 'einfach starken', it is apparent in the life of animals and birds which shut their eyes to the suffering of others, and who, the poet asks, has ever seen flowers weeping?

The propitious moment must wipe out all memories of a sad past, but it must also exclude every question as to the future. This is the meaning of the advice 'die reichsten schätze lernet frei verschwenden' (p.43). It finds a parallel
in Hofmannsthal's 'Lebenslied' which begins 'Den Erben lass
It is the same poem of Hofmannsthal's that introduced the
term 'Hirtentag'. The secret of life is 'dass ihr soviel
verliehen ist genossen' (p. 43).

An almost metaphysical interpretation of such concentration
on the present is given in:

"Und tätig nennst als übel zu befehren
Dass ihr in euch schon ferne bilder küsset
Und dass ihr niemals zu versöhnen wüsset
Den muss im traum empfangen und den wahren." (p. 43)

The lack of punctuation in these lines and the use of the
ambiguous 'befehren' make interpretation very difficult. None
has been offered so far, although Gundolf quotes the lines
(loc. cit. p. 152). The main idea, however, is not difficult
to grasp. The poet thinks it unwise to insist on the
distinction between the real happening and the ideal. He has
experienced the fullest union with his friend (p. 42). This
has broken his former loneliness, and he has found in this
union a solution to the fundamental problem of his life, the
contrast between the ideal and the real. In the moment of
complete happiness, the 'kairos', there is no such problem.
The contrast has disappeared, and real life experiences an
elation which identifies it with the ideal. The real human
being transcends its limitations and becomes the 'ferne
bild'; 'traum' and real life become one.
This aspect of the 'propitious moment', the union of the ideal and the real, explains the poet's aestheticism. It was an attempt at transforming the real life into the ideal by means of the beautiful gesture. It is, properly understood, the glorification of the moment.

Such an outlook on life must not be interpreted as shallow hedonism, it is a reaction against an idealism too abstract to be a guide in life. But even now the happiness is not unqualified. Even in the poem 'Die silberbüschen . . .' (p. 39) in which the poet expresses the happiness of perfect friendship, he finds it necessary to assert 'Nun sorgen wir dass uns kein los mehr drücke . . .'. The very fear of the future, of the uncertainty of life, that ought to be absent from the enjoyment of the happy moment is its dark background.

In spite of such undercurrents the main subject of this group remains that of happiness, and in the security of this happiness and his new friendship the poet need not fear 'Wenn trübe mahnung noch einmal uns peinigt . . .' (p. 41). The 'trübe mahnung' to which the poem refers is the knowledge of the ephemeral character of all things, ' . . . was flüchtig sich erneut'. This the poet feels the more keenly now that with the 'Bücher' and GES JAHR DER SEELE he has lived in the real world. It is this world in which, in spite of its limitations, satisfaction can be found, a satisfaction which he did not derive from the abstractions of the ALGABAL.
world. But when the poet once more turns to the memories of his childhood days, these memories are no longer sad reminders of a happier time, but an additional happiness, a very real wealth that was still alive in him.

'Sieg des Sommers' ends with a hymn of praise, one of the most beautiful poems of the volume (p. 45). The poet has learnt to hold 'das glück in seinem flüchten'. Again, however, this is portrayed against a realisation of the uncertainty of life. This is done here in a striking way by placing the word 'flüchten' in enjambement. The subject of the poem expresses the same contrast, separation is the inevitable end of all friendship, but happiness can now be derived even from the thought of parting. No effort is made to hide, or to minimise, the suffering that parting brings, but it is submerged in a general feeling of elation that bids the poet listen to hope rather than despair. With this poem the cycle was completed. It takes the reader back to the first poem of the first cycle, thus completing the typical circle of George's poetry, for both poems express the feeling of hope and preparedness.

It was probably this first part of DAS JAHR DER SEELE the trilogy of frustration and love, which made this book the most popular of all George's verse. His publisher, Georg Bondi, in a pamphlet 'Erinnerungen an Stefan George'
(Berlin 1934), gives the exact figures of copies published of all his books, including the private editions and the 'Gesamt-Ausgabe'. Working from these figures we come to the following order of popularity. DAS JAHR DER SEELE with 31,000 copies, DER TEPPICH DES LEBENS 27,700 copies, DER GIERBENTHE RING 25,300, DER STERN DES BUNDDES 21,500, DIE BUCHER 16,300, HYMNER, FILGURF-HATER, ALCABAL 15,100 DAS NEUE REICH 16,100 (exclusive of the separate editions of DER KRIEG 6,300 and DREI GESAEGE 4,500). Of his translations his DANTE leads the list with 14,400 copies, with his BAUDELAIRE, 14,100, a close second.

It is, perhaps, not very difficult to understand in a general way the popularity of DAS JAHR DER SEELE, seeing that it deals with what can be interpreted as human emotions, human love and sorrow rather than abstract thought. It is, however, very difficult to define this appeal more exactly. Gundolf calls the book 'die Verzweiflung aller Ausleger' (loc.cit.p.141), although he himself gives an excellent, if occasionally vague, interpretation. It is, perhaps, permissible to draw certain comparisons between the ambiguity that is a central feature of DAS JAHR DER SEELE and the ambiguity of folk-song. Both give, in the first instance, a simple statement of a situation or a happening, strictly objective, descriptive rather than expressive, and given
as often as not in logically disconnected phrases. There is, secondly, a vague and indefinable, but very pronounced, emotional background. Rhythm, sound, and the abruptness of the descriptions combine to produce an effect of mystery. The hearer is convinced that the various images have a unity and a significance beyond and behind comprehension.
The second of the three parts into which DAS JAHR DER SEELE is divided is dedicated to the poet's personal friends. In the first part the figures of his friends were expressions of the poet's moods and symbolical of the landscape in which they were set. In the second part his friends are distinct personalities, and the landscape now serves as a setting and background only.

The poems, however, are not confined to the purely personal aspect. Being an idealist George sees in every human relation a general aspect, and it is this with which the poem is concerned. The quality of all our relations depends in the first instance on ourselves, and in this poem George speaks for the first time of himself without the use of oriental, medieval, or classical allegories. He admits his great danger, escape from reality into ineffective abstraction: 'Zu meinen träumen floh ich vor dem volke . . .' (p.50). But now he has turned back from the poetry of escape and has brought the golden light and lofty idealism of his abstractions into real life — choosing, however, the hour of twilight as the one when the two worlds meet. His ambition is no longer the lofty and uncompromising idealism of his
early years, service and resignation now seem to weigh most with him. Resignation and disillusionment is also the key-note of 'Als ich zög . .' (p.54).

There is hardly a section of George's poetry which does not contain one or more references to his childhood. In keeping with the general, much more natural, tone of DES JAHR DER SEHLE George gives in 'Das sehers wort . .' (p.52) a description of what in an earlier poem he had called his 'Kindliches Königstum' ('Bücher' p.92). The realm in which he had been master and king was the realm of words, here he had been the undisputed ruler of a country of his own creation. He did not as a poet begin by using language as he found it, he went far back behind the actual appearance of words to language in general, to the very material from which all language is built. Starting from an entirely independent, and consequently entirely incomprehensible 'language' he creates a new poetic use of German that is at the same time generally comprehensible and yet his personal medium.

It is in a similar way that George's poems in foreign languages have to be interpreted. Some of the poems in his earlier volumes, a few from DER TEPPICH DES LEBENS, but significantly none of his later poems were originally written in foreign languages, French, English, or in an invented
language of romance character which he called Lingua Romana. In his notes to the 'Dücher' (p.137) the poet points out that such poetry in foreign languages is not sufficiently explained by foreign influences. The poet handles the foreign language material as a painter may, for the sake of experience, handle the stone and the tools of the sculptor. These experiments, tentatively begun with DIE FIBEL come to a climax with the present volume. The original versions of some of the poems in the foreign tongues are given in the 'Schlussband' of the final edition. Regarded as French, English, etc., poems they are indifferent, and certainly do not express the spirit of the language in which they were written. They must, however, be read as experiments in expressing in one of the existing tongues idea which had been conceived in a kind of 'general language'. These experiments were, of course, doomed to failure, as there is no such thing as a language at large, no 'Ursprache' in a metaphysical as distinct from a historical meaning.

The 'Sprüche für die Geladenen in T.', the first of which had been originally written in French, were first intended for 'Das Buch der Sagen und Sängen' and would there have occupied a position similar to that of the 'Preisgedichte' in the 'Buch der Hirtengedichte'. There is, indeed, much in the setting and general mood that is reminiscent of the
earlier volume. In the first of the two 'proverbs' the poet
expresses his conception of poets and poetry. The second
deals more directly with the subject of DAS JAHR DER SEELE:
'Ihr lernt das haus des mangels nur konne die schwemnit . . '
(p.57). It is the sadness which comes not from want, but
from richness: 'Ich zeige euch in der erfüllung das grausamstes
schicksal'. The same sadness is apparent in the other poems
of this group, it is 'das Erste' (p.59) that casts a dark
shadow over all life. It is the more keenly felt as it does
not bring any solution to his problem, it is not a struggle,
not an achievement, but merely a burden that has to be
borne. The poet realises the impossibility of final artistic
achievement that would wipe out the memory of his first impact
with life.

Under the title 'Erinnerungen an einige Abende innerer
Esselligkeit' (p.61) the poet has grouped together a number
of poems describing comparatively simple human relations
without that elusive strangeness that is characteristic of
the first part of DAS JAHR DER SEELE. They take us to a
circle of friends in the poet's home town, Bingen, which
the poet had long shunned, feeling, and fearing, the
familiarity which breeds contempt. His return now was a
re-discovery of the country that in his heart he had never
ceseed to love. In particular it had been the river itself
and its banks that had always attracted the poet. It expressed the true spirit of the country to a mind that looked for a symbolical meaning in everything it saw. The circle of friends in Singen, mainly composed of women, meant to George, whose stern and uncompromising idealism must have made him a difficult friend, something similar to what the court of Weimar meant to Goethe. He had been accepted into cultured society, and even more important, he had been accepted as a poet. He had achieved a definite social standing, he was able to share in a world which he had not himself created, but which was yet an expression of that culture and idealism that was the basis of his existence.

These 'Gelegenheitsgedichte' have that direct human appeal which is not often met with in George's work. They are simple, but they are not slight. Goethe's favourite term 'bedeutend' might well be applied to them, and there is always a more than personal interest in their subjects. In one of the finest poems of the group, 'Rückkehr' (p.63), the poet describes an experience which in itself is not very significant although he himself had felt it very deeply. The record of this very personal experience is made to express an overwhelming feeling of triumph of a far more general character than the experience itself could warrant. The insignificant episode is used as a symbol.
The situation itself in which the poet found himself was not so much one of 'Rückkehr', as a first entrance into that world of society from which he had kept away for so long. The link connecting the symbolical episode and the situation it symbolised is the emotion of happiness and triumph. It is not so much in the words that this feeling of elation, of passionate joy is expressed, as in the poem as a whole. Taken separately the words refer only to the poet's return after a long absence. The secret of the symbolical meaning lies in the weaving of the individual sentences into an emotional, but not logical, pattern, the poem. There is no logical sequence in the lines:

"Das ziel erwacht im abendrot
Vom masto weht die wese fahne .. ."

It is its emotional sequence that transforms the white flag for the reader into something like a banner of victory.

It is the feeling that he has 'come into his own' to which the poet alludes in the title 'Rückkehr'. With the exception of 'Nachtwachen' (p.67 ss.) this same feeling pervades also all other poems of this group. It culminates in 'Weisser Gesang' (p.36), which gives a picture of a dream-like elation, symbolising the moment of ultimate happiness, but also that of death.

Contacts with other human beings, however, inevitably bring with them friction. It is with the result of such
friction on the unusually sensitive soul of the poet that the poems grouped together in 'Nachtwachen' deal. Their mood is an extraordinarily complex one. The relation between the watcher and the sleeper is one of love, but of a love not strong enough to turn adversity into companionship and blessing. It is, however, too strong for the poet to detach himself easily. He therefore finds himself in two minds, in a conflict between his better judgement and an irresistible passion. To this is added the tired watchfulness which had characterised one of George's earlier poems, 'Wir jagen über weisse steppen ...' (PILGERFAHRTEN p.80).

The remaining sixteen poems of the second part, the 'Widmungen' are dedicated to individual friends. The first four are addressed to women, the others to men whose initials are indicated in the title.

Of the first four poems the third, 'Angenehm flossen ...' (p.75) is in the tradition of the 'Freigedichte' with its quiet and restful beginning and its bitter ending no less than in its metre. There is, however, a feeling of personal passion about the rejection of the woman whom the poet has found wanting that is absent from the earlier group where feeling had been more detached. The other three poems are more directly related to the main line of DAS JAHR DER SEELE.
In a certain way they may be regarded as subjective equivalents of the objective descriptions of mood and landscape in the first part of the book. Here we are given direct expressions of moods and emotions which appeared as description in 'Nach der Lage' and 'Waller im Schnee'.

The poems of this group may be addressed to personal friends, but they are nothing less than an attempt to state in a few lines the essence of a character. They are not expressions of the poet's own relations with his friends. There are, of course, exceptions to this, notably the poem dedicated to Hofmannsthal (H.H.) (p. 79) the subject of which is the relationship between the two poets. But George himself is a poet of outstanding character, and comparison with him tests so many and so essential sides in his friends that this poem gives an astonishingly fair impression of the triumphs as well as the weaknesses of the early Hofmannsthal.

The poet does not criticise or rebuke, but he compares and contrasts.

It is a common feature of all these poems, dedicated to obscure and now long forgotten poets, artists and philosophers that they are extraordinarily convincing. In most cases little help can be derived from supplementing the enigmatic initials with the full name, and yet there is in as little as eight lines always a true and living picture of a personality. The poet did not intend to glorify his friends, but to immortalise them by giving the essence
of their being, their 'Gestalt', if we may here use a
term whose modern use in history and psychology is due in
no small measure to the poet himself. These poems convey
that most elusive of all qualities, personality, and this
is what justifies their publication in a book of verse intended
for readers who knew nothing of, and were not interested in,
the poet's circle of personal friends.

Besides the poem to Hofmannsthal there is another poem
dedicated to a figure who has since become well known through
work of his own. This is the one to Ludwig Klages (L.K.)
(p.87), than one of the youngest of the poet's friends, for
which reason this poem is the last of the group. There is
in this poem already an indication of the fact that Klages
was to make his reputation independently of the poet. It opens
in a beautiful and impressive way:

"Doch unser aller heimat bleibt das licht
Zu dem wir kehren auf gewundner stegen."

This is an assertion, stressed by the position of the
'Doch' at the very beginning. On this point, it would seem,
the poet and his friend join issue. Indeed, there can be
little that shows so distinctly the difference between
George's philosophy and the tenets of the 'Orphic circle'
in Munich, of which Klages was one of the most prominent
spirits, as this question of 'Tages-' or 'Nachtansicht des
Lebens. Whereas Klages has more and more strongly seen the
'Widersacher der Seele' in the 'Geist', George has not insisted on 'das Andere'. To George the chaotic side of life was the dark and unconscious background of life against which life in the bright light of conscious action must stand out clearly. George never shut his eyes to the dark forces of Nature, and in his latest book a dialogue between 'Der Mensch und der Drud' (DAS NEUE REICH p.71) gives a most impressive interpretation of this side of life. But although he is more aware of it than many of his contemporaries the truth he maintains is 'unser aller heimat bleibt das Licht ...'
TRAURIGE TÄNZE

According to Morwitz (loc. cit. p. 65) the first, limited, edition of D.S JÄHR DER SEELE showed in its table of contents, a division of the poems of 'Traurige Tänze' into three groups of 16, 9, and 7 poems respectively. There is, however, no indication of such a division in the final edition. The poems of the central group, from 'Die stürme stieben ...' (p.106) to 'Da vieles wankt ...' (p.115), show a certain similarity not only in structure and rhythm but also in their subject-matter. But on the whole the 'Traurige Tänze' have such a strong unity of mood that sub-divisions are not very noticeable, and now are no longer indicated.

The first three poems take up again the subject of the first part of D.S JÄHR DER SEELE, emotion expressed in the description of landscape and season. Each of the three poems has for its subject one of the seasons, autumn, winter, and summer, that had given title and mood to the first group. The same order, too, is maintained. It is, however, not possible to insert the three poems from 'Traurige Tänze' in their respective sections of the first part. They have a peculiar 'mystical' quality which makes them part of the 'Traurige Tänze'.

'Des erntenonds ungestüme flammen ...' (p.91) has an autumn setting like 'Nach der Lese'. It is the season
of spent passion, but passion is still active in the two people whose relationship provides the subject of the poem. There is a certain restlessness in its mood. The quarrel between the friends is the result of friction and of irritation rather than a real dispute about important matters.

The second of these poems 'Der raum mit sammetblumigen tapeten ...' reminds the reader of 'Waller im Schnee'. The setting is again a room, the friends are shut off from the world. The mood of this poem is almost morbid, death is the subject of the friends' talk, and the fantastic pictures and flowers of ice on the window recall 'Wir jagen über weisse steppen ...' (FILZERFAHRTEN p.86) where this image had been used to symbolise the poet's loneliness and his separation from the real world. His feeling of the barrenness of this winter is so overpowering that he almost despairs of his poetry.

The last of the three 'introductory' poems takes the reader back to 'Sieg des Sommers'. 'Es lacht in dem steigenden jahr dir ...' (p.93) is a very beautiful and elaborately constructed poem of praise, a hymn to life. It has great richness of tone and melody, though it is not entirely without its shadows. The double rhyme maintained throughout the odd lines of the poem gives it an atmosphere approximating to luxury and ease. It is a device which George uses for the first time in this poem, and which later is
used mainly for its musical effect. The poem, however, in its choice of subject, gives a more melancholy aspect of the 'propitious moment' than 'Sieg des Sommers'. A greater stress than had been apparent in those poems is now laid on the limitations of a life in, and for, the moment, however full and happy this moment may be. A certain feeling of contrast is carried right through the poem. The lines are arranged in pairs setting forth alternately happiness and its limitations. This becomes most noticeable in the second stanza. The parallelism of the construction is very cleverly maintained, e.g. after the reference to the 'flatternde haer' which evokes a picture of bacchic delight, the next line brings the reference to the ivy, symbolising sadness. In the last stanza the order is reversed and the limitations are stated first. By this reversal the poem as a whole ends on a happy note. This note is not incompatible with the mood of enjoyment of life as it is expressed in 'Sieg des Sommers'.

These three poems have stated the subject of 'Traurige Tänze'. They take up the main theme of DAS JAHR DER SEHLE, but give it a different interpretation. The inexplicable sadness that had been the underlying note of the first two parts is now expressed as restlessness, nervousness, as a feeling of barrenness and lack of life, and lastly
of frustration. In the following poems of 'Traurige Tänze'
"diese allzu dumpfe bedrückung des jahres der seele" is
further developed.

'Gieb ein lied mir wieder . .' (p.94) shows that the
poet, longing to get out of his unhappy state, does not know
exactly what it is he wants. He has lost the 'clarity'
of his early poetry. The images of his poetical dreams
are still as lofty as ever, but they seem to lack conviction
and the radiance of his early idealism. This uneasiness,
penetrating to the very foundation of his poetry, is explained
by the fact that the poet has now left behind the poems
of pure abstraction which had made ALGABAL complete in
itself, and 'clear'. The poet has, on the other hand, not
yet reached the stage at which he could see and recognise
his ideals in the actions and situations of real life.

The next poem, 'Das lied das jener battler dudelt . .' (p.95),
gives a double simile of the mood of frustration that
prevails in this group. The poet finds it in the senseless
songs of beggars and children, and again in the lack of
understanding with which he meets from his friend.

The arrangement into three parts which is so character-
istic of George's poetry as a whole is also noticeable in
'Drei weisen kennt vom dorf . .' (p.96). With regard to the
subject of this poem it should not be overlooked that it is
the 'blöde kmbe' who knows the three melodies. These
melodies indicate the circle of life: memory of the past of which the individual is a part through his forefathers, the narrow but sweet simple life of the present, and lastly romance and fear, the two emotions which transcend the life of the individual. This is presented to the hearer with the apparent simplicity of folk-song. But this simplicity is more apparent than real. "What is life," the poet seems to say in this poem, "if in its three fundamental aspects it can be summed up in the song of the village idiot?"

George does not express an opinion: 'The world is a mad-house'. He gives a description. Not a description of the world and its madness, but of an idyllic situation that should not necessarily lead to any extreme opinions. It is the choice of subject and the mood of frustration, not any clearly formulated opinion, that induces a sympathetic feeling of despair in the hearer. But George does not dwell on such depressing thoughts. With the next poem (p.97) he turns away from them. If he cannot avoid these bitter questions he can face them in a different spirit.

The two poems 'Die wachen auen . . .' (p.98), and 'Da kaum noch . . .' (p.99) are printed so as to face each other and are in a certain sense complementary. The first gives the picture of a woman, the second that of a man. Common to both is a sense of a life lost and frustrated. The man's part is a more active one, the woman is purely passive.
Both, however, suffer for no reason, from no guilt of their own; their lives are wasted. All this is expressed in beautiful and solemn language, but the beauty of form cannot entirely remove the oppressive sensation of frustration.

This frustration, the main subject of 'Traurige Tänze' is expressed in 'Trauervolle nacht!' (p. loco) in the rhymes rather than in its subject. The subject is little more than a vague incantation about something dark and cruel. The characteristic feeling of spiritual uneasiness is here produced by mingling rhymes with assonances. In this way the poet conveys to his hearer a sense of impurity, to the sensitive ear even one of torment. In the matter of rhymes the next poem, 'Wir werden nicht mehr . .' (p. locl), follows an exactly opposite course. Not only are there no assonances, and not only is the same rhyme maintained throughout the four verses of each stanza, but the same vowel - ei - is used for all stanzas. The effect of this arrangement is a kind of general assonance throughout the poem, and the word 'schrei' which occupies a central position in the second stanza, and which ordinarily would ring out loud, almost discordantly, is suppressed and 'muffled' by assonance with all the other rhymes. This helps to bring out the restraint which the poet is exercising and under which intense feeling and suffering is still noticeable. This restraint is also
the subject of the poem. Subject and rhyme express the same mood. The four lines in which an 'open' all is used in the rhyme are surrounded by those in which a consonant with a pronounced softening and muffling effect, 'l' or 'ch', follows the vowel.

Suppression of feeling is the subject also of the next poem 'Ich weiss . . .' (p.102). The mood of this poem is characterised by two features, the poet's 'danzism', which had been especially noticeable in ALGABAL, and the heavy atmosphere of the 'Traurige Tüne'. His is not the robust life of action, not only are life and light subdued, but life is stifled.

'Dies leid und diese last . . .' (p.103) is, perhaps, the most immediate expression the poet's mood of sadness has found in this book. It is not difficult to discover in it the core of all his despair. He had discovered that every aim, when achieved, became mere 'schein' and lost its substance, its metaphysical value. This problem of 'schein' is, of course, not peculiar to George. It runs through German literature since Grimmaleshausen with his motto 'Der Wahn betrügt', if we disregard the somewhat different aspect of the problem in the Middle Ages. DAS JAHR DER SEELE is the book in which George faces it. Everything on which he had seized in his search for reality turned out to be 'eitles sein und sein'.
and the poet realises that of all life’s difficulties the
most unbearable is man’s loneliness: ‘O dies: mit mir allein!’

From such suffering springs the wisdom of the stoic.
Whereas ‘Sieg des Sommers’ sees in the ‘propitious moment’
the be-all and end-all of life, the present mood proclaims:

"Nicht ist weise bis zur letzten frist
Zu genieessen wo vergängnis ist."  (p.104)

The following two poems, the last of the original first
section, are a little less despairing in their outlook.
It is true, ‘Mir ist kein weg . . ‘ (p.106) draws a picture
of resignation, ‘in wahmut’, ‘der freudlos grauen aschén
flur’, but it is not without its hope. The first verse
expresses tenderness and trust, if somewhat subdued. This
same feeling of trust, this time almost without reservation
is expressed in ‘Keins wie dein feines ohr . . ‘ (p.108).

It is still a long way from the restraint of this poem
to Goethe’s letter to Frau von Stein ‘Warum gabst du uns
die tieferen Blicke.. ‘, but it is at least not burdened
with the feeling of loneliness of ‘Dies leid und diese last . . ‘

The next group of poems, from ‘Die stürme . . ‘(p.107)
to ‘De vieles . . ‘ (p.115) is the closest approximation
in the ‘Traurige Tänze’ to the first part of DAS JAHR
D.R. STEHEL. Unlike the first three poems of ‘Traurige
Tänze’ the mood is one of sadness rather than frustration.
The poems again follow the cycle of the seasons, beginning, however, with winter instead of with autumn. Another difference lies in the strict limitation of all poems of this group, as, indeed, of the whole of 'Traurige Tänze' to three stanzas of four verses each.

The peculiar quality of the poems of this group may, perhaps, best be appreciated from a rather full analysis of one of them, 'Der hügel wo wir wandeln .' (p. 111). This is not only one of the most beautiful and satisfactory of the group - Hofmannsthal praises it in his 'Gespräch über Gedichte' (Gesammelte Werke, Berlin 1934, III, 2 p. 239) - but also the one which is least burdened with metaphysical implications. It is a pure lyric, but not quite so simple as it looks.

"Der hügel wo wir wandeln liegt im schatten. Indes der dichten noch in lichte weht. Der mond auf seinen zarten grünen matten Nur erst als kleine weisse wolke schwebt.

Die strassen weithin deutend werden blasser. Den wandernm bietet ein gelieplus halb. Ist es vom berg ein unsichtbares wasser Ist es ein vogel der sein schlaflied lailt?

Der dunkelfalter zwei die sich verfrühten Verfolgen sich von halz zu halz im scharz. Der rain bereitet aus gestrauch und blüten Den duft des abends für gedämpften schmerz."

The poem begins in the poet's characteristic way as a pure description, without comment or expressed opinion.
To all appearances there is not even in the choice of adjectives a subjective or 'personal' note. The whole of the first stanza is an objective and competent description, though it is not without a strong feeling for the poetic, even the romantic. It appears to be nothing but a carefully worded description of a poetic situation, and in this it is not unlike 'Wir schreiben auf und ab . . .' (p.15). The second stanza is no less purely descriptive, there is still no comment or 'personal' feeling introduced, - except for the poet's choice of subject. But since the subject of a poem does not exist independent of the poem, presentation of a subject is an act of creation. The incidents which the poet describes in his second stanza convey a vague feeling of sadness. None of the incidents and situations described, however, are such as to strike the hearer as intrinsically sad. The road becomes hazy and indistinct in the distance for the poet and his friend, it is lost to sight. They hear sounds and are puzzled to know where they come from. These incidents evoke a vague, yearning, romantic mood of a summer's evening when dusk softens the outlines or obliterates them altogether, and the sadness that comes over us on such a night may be just a feeling that everything slips away from us and we are unable to hold or to recognise it. The third stanza, while still keeping to an objective description of nothing more than a walk in the dusk introduces a discordant
note. Even this is only hinted at. Two moths have come out
to play before night has really fallen. It is not this
trivial incident that in itself gives the feeling of slight
uneasiness to the last stanza, but the poetical effect of
the words 'dunkelfalter' and 'verfrühten', the one introducing
the impression of darkness which not even the reference to
'schatten' in the first stanza had evoked, as it was
immediately balanced by the very beautiful reference to
light, 'im Lichtes wabt'. The other word of the last stanza,
'verfrüht' through its prefix 'ver-' suggests that all is
not as it should be. This, too, is much more marked than in
the second stanza where this feeling was left so vague that
the hearer can hardly become conscious of it.

In this way a feeling of sadness is being built up
throughout the poem until the hearer reaches the last word:
'schmerz'. When he comes to this he is convinced that it
is an atmosphere of sadness that pervades the whole poem
from the first line. He is not surprised that 'gedämpfter
schmerz' is the 'duft des abends', the mood of the poem.
He realises that this mood has been present all through
the poem, although it was not until the very last word it
was expressed. But with George - as has been pointed out -
a poem does not begin with the first word and come to
an end with the last. Indeed, it might be said that this
particular poem begins with the last word, which gives the key to the whole. It is not sprung as a surprise, it is not a sudden, if half-expected, turn the poem takes in the last line—such as the anacrusic poets loved, nor is it a sudden twist such as Heine delighted in. George is not a witty poet, and he does not aim at startling his hearer. The hearer has been under the influence of this mood of an evening’s sadness from the very beginning, but so subtle was it that the most sophisticated hearer could hardly have detected, still less proved it, and the words ‘gedämpfter schmerz’ at the very end is the unobtrusive revelation of what had been present from the beginning.

This ‘schmerz’ is not allowed to assume violent forms but is subdued. There is, however, a connection between subdued life and suffering, and George’s poem expresses not only the subdued mood of an evening in contrast to the height of day, a mood which has found its classical expression in ‘Wanderer’s Nachtlied’ (‘Der du von dem Himmel bist . . .’ and ‘Über allen Gipfeln . . .’), but also real suffering. George’s poem may be regarded as a modern version of Goethe’s poems, written in a more restless age and one that was not quite certain of itself.

Another example of the kind of ‘magic’ landscape that is so characteristic of this group of the ‘Treurige Thäne’
is 'Ob schwerer nebel ...' (p.114). Landscape in these poems stands in much more immediate relationship to man than in the first part. It is now not an objectivation of man's feelings in a form which can be understood as pure description, but it is filled with the very emotion, human emotion, that it is called upon to express as a picture. The heaviness of November is also the heaviness of the poet's mind, and the two are one and undivided, not only companions as Nature and Man were in 'Nach der Lese'. This picture of Nature stands in the same relationship to Man as would the images of his dreams. But the advice the poet offers is to speak to ghosts that appear 'ohne schaudern', they will then vanish.

The words 'magic' and 'mystical' have been used to describe certain features of this central group of poems of 'Traurige Tänze', and this description applies in an even more pronounced degree to the last section of the book, 'Zu traurigen bahuf ...' (p.116) and the subsequent poems are incantations; they are literally inexplicable and present a blank wall to any attempt at interpretation. They are not entirely without precedent in George's earlier work, in particular the poem referred to above reminds the reader of 'Graue rosse muss ich schirnen ...' (ALCABAL p.168), but none of the poem's predecessors were so completely irrational.

There is much in their form, too, that is typical of
incantations. 'Zu treurigen behuf . .' in particular is remarkable in its onomatopoeic use of vowels and consonants. It is, however, not only in the sounds, and more especially the rhymes, that this 'magical' quality can be found. A poem like 'Ihr tratet zu dem herde . .' (p.118) is in the strict sense of the word incoherent and incomprehensible, in spite of the fact that the poem seems to describe a definite action. But this action is told as if the teller were in a dream or in a trance. It does not hang together, and there is no unity of thought. There is, however, another unity, the poem is convincing in the same way as fate is always convincing, unconnected though its aspects may seem.

The last poem of the book marks the end not only of the 'Treurige Tänze', but also of DAS JAHR DER SEELE. The poet reminds himself that frustration can lead only to barrenness, he calls himself away from this theme and from the subjects he had been cultivating. There are other possibilities in life and other, happier, days.

'Willst du noch länger . .' (p.122) is not a natural conclusion of the book, but a break. Furthermore, no new work is indicated in its lines, and there is a remarkable break in the continuity of the poet's work. DAS JAHR DER SEELE, extracts from which had been published in the Bl.f.d.K. since 1895 (vol II, nr.5), was published in the autumn of 1897. At the same time the Bl.f.d.K. ceased
publication for over two years. It was not until the end of 1899 that the '3. - 5. Band' of the 'Vierte Folge' came out which contained selections from DER TEPPICH DES LEbens, none of which came from the 'Vorspiel'. DAS JAHR DER SEELE therefore clearly indicates the end of one of the main periods of the poet's development. It is with 'Vorspiel' that an entirely new period begins, this was preceded by a period of uncertainty that extended over several years.

This position is clearly indicated in the 'final' poem of DAS JAHR DER SEELE. There is no summing up, no collecting into one poem of the essence of the whole book, no vision of the future. The very sadness which is the subject of DAS JAHR DER SEELE does not lend itself easily to such summing up. It is inexplicable, not a sadness because of some reason or another, but prior to any reason. The circle of experience which led to DAS JAHR DER SEELE does not end because it has been exhausted, - as had been the case with both ALGABAL and the 'Bucher' - but because the poet had to make an end.

The reader who has accompanied the poet through the sadness of DAS JAHR DER SEELE, and especially through the 'Traurige Tänze' may well ask what is the good of such sadness, such morbidity in verse. He has been shown a despair so deep that only incantations could express it. The answer to such inquiry lies in the very title of the last part, 'Traurige
Tänze'. These poems are more than merely sad, they are 'Tänze', i.e. verse, rhythm. These 'Tänze' do not only contain some very beautiful and melodic poetry, but their very existence is a solution of the problem their subject sets. The sadness of DAS JAHR DER SEELE is none other than that which had characterised PILGERFAHRTEN and had not been absent from any work of the poet's since. It sprang from the conflict between the poet's youthful idealism and real life with which he came into contact, between mind and matter. In DAS JAHR DER SEELE this conflict takes on the most personal aspect, that of a conflict between Nature and the Soul. It is the shapelessness of matter, the impossibility of interpreting matter in terms of the ideal, of 'understanding' Nature that has led to the sadness of DAS JAHR DER SEELE.

But the poems themselves are the achievements for which the poet was longing. Nature had been interpreted, or rather symbolised, in them by the mind. Nothing less had been attempted than to translate the very incomprehensibility of Nature into ordered verse. It may be impossible to express Nature adequately in words which by necessity originate in the mind. Poetry, however, is different from, and more than, words, it has rhythm and melody, and these can be used for incantation. The sadness that was vague and undefined like the romantic yearning we feel on a summer evening, that was sadness because it was vague and undefined,
because it was shapeless, has been given shape, has been
expressed in rhythms and rhyme. Out of Nature and Soul,
of 'Jahr' and 'Seele' there has been evolved, in the process
of poetry, Das JAHR D. A. SEELE.
CHAPTER EIGHT
CONCLUSION

With DAS JAHR DER SEELE George may be said to have returned to his starting point. Like the FIBEL, DAS JAHR DER SEELE was a direct expression of the poet's most personal experience, without the disguise of exotic kingship or literary traditions. Thus the poet's search for his ideal in the real world took him back to himself.

If the unusual intensity with which this search for the ideal was expressed is peculiar to George, the conflict itself between the ideal and the real is one experienced by every spirited youth. As the young man grows up he becomes conscious of the discrepancy between the image of an ideal world which he brings with him, and the real world which he meets. With George this conflict resulted in the high and exacting demands which he made on life. He took his standards from the ideal world, and denied that the world as he found it was 'right' in a metaphysical sense. He felt completely at home in this ideal world, a world of his own, and this feeling was expressed in his picture of kingdom and kingship.

It was now the poet's task to effect some relationship
between his kingdom of ideas and the real world. He began
with his conception of a world as it ought to be, and
refused the least compromise regarding his standards. This
certainty of the value of his idealistic standards cannot
be stressed too much. George's strength as well as his
weakness lay in the fact that he could not make his peace
with the world. To his friends he must have seemed arrogant.
Within himself he was tormented with doubts which only a
doubly haughty appearance of assurance could cover. These
doubts did not refer to his poetic vision, but to his ability
to express it. His self-imposed task of judging his friends
and the world in general by his idealistic standards could
be justified only by the production of really outstanding
poetry, but he was only beginning. At that time he had only
sweeping criticism for the literature of his time, and could
not point to any achievement of his own.

This conflict between the ideal and the real became
apparent to the young poet most strikingly in the relation
between the sexes. To his women symbolised the world of
nature as opposed to the world of spirit. This dualism of
his philosophy was expressed in his hostile attitude to
the other sex. The attraction which women held seemed to him
to endanger his dignity. Only the most extreme expression
of his idealism could assure him that he was not succumbing
to the forces of passion. He found such an expression in a strict regard of form, and the solemn gesture therefore became his substitute for action. It is because the poet was still very young that he was so concerned about his dignity. When he wrote the poems later collected in DIE FIBEL he saw himself as a lone champion of the Spirit contending with the world of Nature.

HYMNEN were his first real achievement. In this book he has found his means of expression, a language of his own. This language was characterised by two main features. The first is its very full and beautiful sound, though it was stately rather than musical. More remarkable, however, was the poet's ability to outline his poetical images with great precision, excluding the inessential. The real significance of HYMNEN is not so apparent if compared with the poet's later achievements as when it is seen against the background of its own time. Although George in DIE FIBEL strove for originality he could not altogether escape the influence of lyrical poetry from Heine to Geibel, then the strongest force in contemporary German verse. It was amongst the German poets of his time that the rising author had to make himself a name. HYMNEN was the first book that had an unmistakable note of its own.

Already before HYMNEN had been published George had
come under the influence of the French 'symbolistes'. He shared with them their protest against the ugliness of their materialistic age. From this materialistic world George, as well as the French 'symbolistes', separated their own world of poetry completely. This George achieved most markedly in ALCABAL.

From the violence with which the poet reacted to this confrontation with the real world we are further made aware of his unusual sensitivity. Here again ALCABAL is an instance, but also PILGERFÄRTEN. His regard for form may now be further interpreted as a form of defence against the crudity of the real world from which the poet shrank back. The insistence with which he put forward his poetic vision was a sign of his awareness of the danger which lay in the separation of his poetic world from the real world. He had to maintain this vision against a very different conception of life which, he felt, was very powerful, if also very unidealistic.

If the poet's first three books dealt exclusively with himself and his reactions, the next book, the 'Bücher', introduced subjects that had an existence independent of the poet's emotions. Much of the quiet beauty of the 'Hirtengedichte' can, perhaps, be traced back to such an independence of its subject. The poet was now no longer forced to use only such poetic material as he himself had created in order to keep distinct the dividing line.
between the country of his vision and the real world. While he retained his extreme sensitivity as well as his rigorous idealism, he had, on the other hand, become more certain of himself and his message. He was no longer so anxious to avoid the slightest conflict between his ideals and the world. This attitude again found a clear expression in the poet's representation of the other sex. He still found himself separated by an abyss from the world of mature as symbolised in woman, but there was no longer a fantastic enmity. If he did not show any signs of understanding his partner, he did, at least, no longer express any hatred.

In other respects, too, the poet drew nearer ordinary poetic usage. Most of the poems or groups of poems in the 'Eichen' have a title. This is another indication of the fact that the poet himself no longer formed the exclusive subject of his lyrics, but that there was an object which could be summarised or indicated in a title. This, together with the fact that the poems dealt with subjects less fantastic than those of ALGASAL was a distinct step away from the poet's early isolation.

This advance, however, did not satisfy him. He aimed at nothing less than the complete unity of the ideal and the real. He realised that the poetical world of the
'Bücher' was not an adequate interpretation of the real world. Nor was it quite convincing as a picture of the ideal. The way he had taken in the 'Bücher' could not lead to a satisfactory solution of his problem and the poet found himself thrown back on himself.

In DAS JAHR DER SEELE George tried no longer to force his idea of the world, his ideal world, on to the existing world. The clash between these two had led to nothing but an acute feeling of frustration. But not even here, facing, as he did, a desperate outlook on life in the 'Traurige Tänze', could the poet for a moment doubt the validity of his ideals. They were the true standards by which life was to be judged, even if it consistently failed to come up to them.

The solution which George had tried to apply to his problem had been a purely formal one. After the publication of DAS JAHR DER SEELE there was a break, and the poet's next volume was introduced by a 'Vorspiel'. The first poem of this 'Vorspiel' described the despair in which the poet had found himself after the completion, and even during the writing, of DAS JAHR DER SEELE. The conflict between the ideal and the real had led to a deadlock. The problem was solved not by any effort of the poet, but by a message brought by an 'angel'. The angel of the first poem of the
'Vorspiel' announces that he is sent by 'das schöne Leben', a phrase in which the two protagonists of the struggle that had been going on in the poet's mind, beauty and life, are merged.

It is possible that the early influence of French 'symbolistes' had left its mark on the poet's rigid conception of beauty. This influence, which already had been waning came to an end with DAS JAHR DER SEHLE. 'Schon locht nicht mehr das wunder der Lagunan . .' (Vorspiel V), this reference to the attraction which Italy had held for Germany ever since the Middle Ages may also be read symbolically as referring to the attraction which the poetry of the 'symbolistes' had held for the poet. Like Hölderlin George experienced his 'Deutsche Wendung'.

The poet's standard of beauty, instead of being frustrated in a barren contrast with the world as it is, now became a challenge. This challenge was made in the first instance to his friends and to the young men of his own nation who had become his disciples.

"Nezaurant le chemin parcouru et les victoires gagnées, le poête ne parle plus, cette fois-ci, de principes d'esthétique, mais il nous annonce un renouveau spirituel dont il découvre les symptômes chez la jeunesse de son pays. L'esthète paraton commence d'ailleurs à se souer en profonde d'une Allemagne nouvelle... Il s'agit, on le voit, non d'une sorte de 'retreat' anticipée, mais bien d'un rajeunissement..." (Jean-Edouard Spenlé, Stefan George, Poète de l'Allemagne nouvelle. Mélanges Henri Lichtenberger, Paris 1934, p.391, 395).

But the early labours of the poet had not been in
vain. His challenge could not have carried the same conviction if it had not grown out of a rigidity and sternness which refused to compromise on the question of beauty and its meaning in life. If George occasionally had carried his regard for form, for the fitting gesture, to the point of the ridiculous, he did so because of his conviction that he was dealing not with an aesthetic, but a moral question. 'What the imagination seized as beauty must be truth' (Keats, letter 22nd Nov. 1817). In his early poetry George may be said to underline the 'must' of this statement.
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