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**The plays of Sadakichi Hartmann**

**Hodges, Peter Britt, Ph.D.**

**City University of New York, 1991**

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A

THE PLAYS OF SADAKICHI HARTMANN

by

PETER B. HODGES

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Theatre in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,  
The City University of New York.

1991

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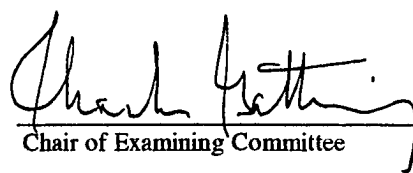
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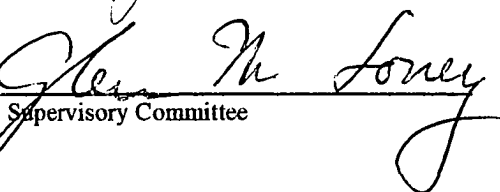
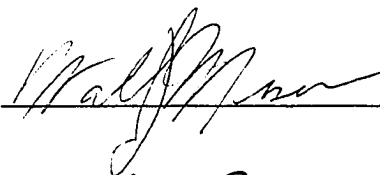
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## Abstract

## THE PLAYS OF SADAKICHI HARTMANN

by

PETER B. HODGES

Adviser: Professor Charles Gattnig

Sadakichi Hartmann (1867-1944) was a noted art critic and writer in the United States during the latter nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Remembered best for his pioneering contributions to photographic criticism, his career as an experimental American playwright at the turn of the century remains largely unknown to scholars.

Hartmann wrote over a dozen plays, over half of which were symbolist or post-symbolist works completed in the 1890s when the symbolist movement was giving rise to the artistic concepts that would influence writers and artists throughout the twentieth century. After pursuing his critical career in both photography and art in the first decades of the twentieth century, he returned to drama in the 1920s and 1930s and wrote several late works which reflected the enormous political, social, and artistic dislocations which redefined the purpose of art.

Hartmann's career as a dramatist is marked by consistent efforts to establish himself as the principal exponent of

experimental and literary quality in American theatre. As a result, he was more often than not well ahead of his potential audience and his plays went unproduced and largely unrecognized outside of literary circles. Hartmann was nevertheless successful in pointing new directions for the American theatre which later critics and writers have attempted to rediscover.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Sadakichi Hartmann had the type of personality which caused others to either revere or revile him, and for those in the latter category this dissertation will probably be of little use. Those who revere him, however, form a fairly select group which over the decades has faithfully fanned the flames of his memory in order to properly honor him and set the record straight. In the course of my studies I have had the pleasure of meeting some of these individuals, remarkable in their own right, and I wish to express my gratitude to them for their patient assistance in my work.

Like many others, I am deeply indebted to Wistaria Hartmann Linton, whose encouragement and willingness to share her father's legacy went far beyond my fondest expectations. I am equally grateful for the assistance of Dr. Jane Ann Calhoun Weaver, whose generous support and insightful work on Hartmann's critical career in art helped frame my discussion of his plays. And I want to specially thank Harry Lawton, whose work with George Knox, who I unfortunately never met, served as the inspiration and guide for this dissertation.

Both Clifford Wurfel and Gladys Murphy of the Special Collections Department of the Thomas Rivera Library at the University of California at Riverside have been particularly helpful. Through them I have received the most professional courtesy and access to the Hartmann archives. Without their assistance, I could scarcely have completed this work.

Among the faculty at the Graduate Center, I am particularly grateful to Professor Glenn Loney for his persistent and perceptive support, Professor Walter Meserve for his patient and knowledgeable stimulation, and Dr. Margaret Knapp for having served as my first Committee Chair and for prodding me to pursue the work in the first place. I should also thank Professor Daniel Gerould who, perceiving my interest in the subject of early experimental American drama, first introduced me to Hartmann's plays.

Finally, I want to thank Professor Charles Gattnig. Not only did he accept the responsibility of chairing my Committee through its final and most difficult stages, but he worked tirelessly and selflessly to see that the dissertation reached a successful conclusion. If this work succeeds in gaining me admission to the select group of the Hartmann faithful, then Professor Gattnig, who as a youth was also fascinated by the Hartmann legend, deserves entry as well.

This dissertation is dedicated  
with love and admiration to  
Sharlene Hodges, who has  
always been my strongest and  
most faithful friend.

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## INTRODUCTION

Sadakichi Hartmann (1867-1944) wrote over a dozen plays, over half of which were symbolist or post-symbolist works completed in the 1890s when the symbolist movement was giving rise to the artistic concepts that would influence writers and artists throughout the twentieth century. A naturalized United States citizen of Japanese-German heritage, Hartmann was at one time or another close friends with Walt Whitman, E. C. Stedman, Paul Heyse, William Dean Howells, Stuart Merrill, Stephan Mallarmé, Ezra Pound, Emma Goldman, Alfred Stieglitz, Douglas Fairbanks, W. C. Fields, and John Barrymore. His writing career spanned five decades, during which he published poetry, criticism, plays, novels, essays, and short stories and yet, apart from his considerable contributions as a critic of art and photography, his work remains largely unknown today.

The purpose of this dissertation is to propose Sadakichi Hartmann as an American playwright of distinction and accomplishment while further attempting to demonstrate that his contributions as critic, producer, and lecturer helped lay the foundations for twentieth-century American theatre. The dissertation also endeavors to show that Hartmann built on the tradition of poetic drama in America, that he was probably the first to introduce symbolism in American drama, that he experimented with naturalism and what was to become absurdism, and that his prescient influence was felt on both sides of the Atlantic by the artists and critics who sought to break through the restrictions of commercial theatre.

Among those who were first to recognize Hartmann's importance was James Gibbons Huneker (1859-1921), one of the most influential of the turn-of-the-century theatre critics, who declared:

One of the sensations of my lonesome later years was the reading of his dramas Christ and Buddha. . . . Sadakichi Hartmann is a deep-eyed decadent, and beats the lot for his audacity and extraordinary plainness of speech. . . . He may end on a throne, he may end in a madhouse, or he may become a great actor or an indifferent editor of some foreign paper of revolt. Everything is possible to this remarkable young man with the Hokusai profile and New York "nerve."<sup>1</sup>

Other critics, such as Benjamin de Casseres and Vance Thompson, lauded Hartmann as "one of the strangest and most original men of letters of the day. . . . His gifts are abundant and multiform. . . ." <sup>2</sup> Later, looking back in the Pisan Cantos at a generation of poetic pioneers, Ezra Pound placed Hartmann at the head of a "lost legion" of writers whose works vanished with the "fly-by-night"<sup>3</sup> periodicals for which they wrote.

While history is laden with scores of unheralded poetic dramatists or out-of-fashion craftsmen, few of these can compete with Sadakichi Hartmann for originality, range or daring. He knew, or was known to, nearly every significant cultural figure on two continents for more than a quarter of a century and even in his decline continued to exert his unique influence. That the self-styled "King of Bohemia" in the Greenwich Village of the 1890s, producer of "perfume concerts," co-founder of Camera Notes with Stieglitz and Mother Earth with Goldmann, featured player in Fairbank's The Thief of Baghdad (1923), and central character in Gene Fowler's best-selling memoir of 1940s Hollywood, Minutes of the Last Meeting (1954), could have faded to anonymity seems one of the great puzzles of American letters.

One explanation for Hartmann's obscurity is that he was notoriously difficult and demanding in his personal life. With no talent for business, he was constantly borrowing money from friends and acquaintances who were rarely repaid. Thus, over the years he fell into disrepute as he exasperated

alliances and wore out well-wishers. As a result, he had few defenders in his later years when the F.B.I. had him under investigation as a possible Japanese or German sympathizer prior to and during World War II. Although in his late seventies at the time, it seems fair to say that his slight reputation was further reduced by this humiliating scrutiny.

More than anything, however, Hartmann was far too honest and prophetic as a writer and critic to be widely appreciated. As a playwright, he was a visionary in a land ruled by politics and commerce. Hartmann's best plays, his six experiments with religious figures, Christ (1891), Buddha (1895), Mohammed (1896), Confucius (1896), Moses (1934), and Baker Eddy (1938), might well be as controversial today as they were in 1893 when the citizens of Boston burned 400 copies of Christ and imprisoned Hartmann for a week on charges of Obscenity. Some of his other plays include Boston Lions (1890-1896), Tragedy in a New York Flat (1896), Diamond Lizard (1906), and Fighting Japs (1906). Most of these plays were never staged, but Hartmann did manage to reach Broadway in 1901 as the producer and performer of his own Perfume Concerts which introduced olfactory theatre to the twentieth century.

Hartmann was not only daring in his dramaturgy, he was poetic, perceptive, and unpredictable. In Confucius he humorously examined the role of philosophy, while in Moses he presented a satiric view of nationalism. With both Christ and Mohammed he presented poetically humanized prophets troubled by sexuality, while both Buddha and Baker Eddy offer panoramic progressions toward spiritual universality. As a cycle, the plays are unique in conception and realization. As theatre they are sometimes flawed, but consistently fascinating experiments from an author who can be said to have made the concept of experimental theatre a personal statement.

This study explores Hartmann's plays from a critical and historical perspective and attempts to clarify his

contribution to modern American drama. The methodology employed is primarily that of comparative analysis of the plays with the notable poetic and commercial plays of the period within the context of the major theatrical, social and political movements of the turn of the century. The plays are analyzed from the perspective of theme, plot, character, and literary style. In addition, there are structural and textual assessments of the plays, as well as an historical overview of symbolist and experimental theatre in Europe and in America which are intended to further clarify Hartmann's status as an innovator and an artist.

To date there has been little written about Sadakichi Hartmann as a playwright, but there is a sizeable body of work detailing his career as an art critic and as a historical figure.

Perhaps the most notorious work was Fowler's Minutes of the Last Meeting. A book that documented the final years of the John Barrymore/W. C. Fields coterie, it had its gestation in a suggestion from Barrymore that Fowler attempt a biography of Hartmann, who had become a kind of court jester to the two fading Hollywood barons. Fowler's efforts were largely frustrated by the uncooperative Hartmann, and in the end the book became more a memoir of Barrymore's decline, with Hartmann in the role of caustic accomplice. A best seller, the book was published almost ten years after Barrymore's and Hartmann's death and was considered an unfair caricature by Hartmann's surviving friends and family.

The major review of Hartmann's life and letters has been compiled by George Knox and Harry Lawton who edited The Valiant Knights of Daguerre (1978), a collection of Hartmann's photographic criticism; White Chrysanthemums (1971), a selection of "literary fragments and pronouncements"; and Three Prophetic Plays (1971), in which Christ, Buddha, and Confucius were republished. Each of these books examined various aspects of Hartmann's life and

work while providing a basis for further critical exploration.

During the same period, Lawton and Knox issued the Sadakichi Hartmann Newsletter. This bimonthly publication featured articles drawn from Hartmann's own essays, Lawton and Knox's further investigations of Hartmann's uncollected papers, and correspondence from subscribers.

None of this or subsequent work would have been possible without the efforts of Wistaria Hartmann Linton, a noted photographer and daughter of Hartmann's by his second wife, Lillian Bonham. Ms. Linton preserved the majority of papers which now compose the Hartmann Collection at the Thomas Rivera Library at the University of California at Riverside. In 1970, she edited The Life and Times of Sadakichi Hartmann, a collection of essays and photographs presented in an exhibition at the Library of the University of California, Riverside.

In 1980 The Sadakichi Hartmann Papers compiled as complete a bibliography as possible of Hartmann's known work, in particular the collection held by UCR.

More recently, Jane Weaver of the University of Virginia has completed "Sadakichi Hartmann: Herald of Modernism in American Art" (1985), a dissertation about Hartmann's career as an art critic. Ms. Weaver is also working on a separate book of Hartmann's essays on art and, eventually, is expected to produce a biography.

Apart from Three Prophetic Plays, which dealt almost exclusively with Christ, Buddha, and Confucius, there has been little focus on Hartmann's plays or on the fascination with the theatre which was his lifelong passion. While Hartmann's standing as a critic of art and photography is largely acknowledged, his accomplishments as a playwright are almost totally unrecognized.

Hartmann was an unusually prolific writer yet, for all the work that has been done in other areas of his artistic career, there is a tremendous amount of unexplored territory

with regard to his motives and intentions as a playwright. Thus, while it is possible to refer at times to other critics familiar with him and his plays, for the most part it has been necessary to work with the original sources and to apply a critical framework to them in order to establish his position as a unique and prophetic force in the theatre.

Most of the source material for this dissertation is kept in the UCR Library and I have worked closely with the Heads of Special Collections, Clifford Wurfel and Gladys Murphy, as well as with Harry Lawton who still lives in Riverside and has shown considerable support for the topic. In addition, I have also had generous support from Ms. Linton and from Jane Weaver, whose own dissertation cleared up innumerable biographic and critical details.

The dissertation includes an opening chapter on Hartmann's youth and early influences, eight central chapters which focus on each of his major plays, and a concluding chapter which summarizes his work, places it in perspective and assesses his overall influence.

## NOTES TO INTRODUCTION

1. James Gibbons Huneker, "An Early Estimate of Sadakichi Hartmann," Musical America, 1897.

2. Vance Thompson, Paris Herald, September 1906, cited in The Life and Times of Sadakichi Hartmann, ed. Wisteria Hartmann Linton (Riverside, CA: Rubidoux Publishing Co., 1970), 13.

3. Ezra Pound, Pisan Cantos, canto 80, line 73.

CHAPTER 1  
FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Even from the moment of his nativity, Carl Sadakichi Hartmann could claim to be extraordinary.

Born in Japan in 1867 during the time of the Emperor's restoration to power, an event that signalled the end of the Japanese medieval era and the dawn of its opening to the West, Sadakichi ("Fortunate if Constant") and his older brother Hedetaru were the offspring of Carl Herman Oscar Hartmann, a German merchant attached to the consulate in Nagasaki, and a Japanese woman known only as Osada who was evidently the seafarer's mistress in the relaxed atmosphere of the foreign compound on the island of Dejima in Nagasaki harbor. This was a liaison which lasted several years but ended in misfortune when she died from the complications of Sadakichi's birth. Shortly afterward, Sadakichi and his brother travelled with their father upon his return to Hamburg where, treated less like family than like unwelcome immigrants, their status was uncertain at best.<sup>1</sup>

Almost seventy years later, writing his unpublished autobiography, Hartmann viewed his father as a distant, unsympathetic figure even in the best of times:

My venerable father at no time seemed to me much more than a casual acquaintance with whom one could

while away an hour pleasantly in conversation. . . . I do not believe that we have spent more than six months under the same roof together, and I often lost track of him for years. He was a roving spirit, uncontrollable in his wanderlust.<sup>2</sup>

His mother, on the other hand, held a strongly romantic fascination for him:

Hartmann seemed to construct the image of his mother around a Madama Butterfly type, which was not inappropriate, since late nineteenth century tales of this type were located in Dejima, and Osada was most likely from the same background as the tragic opera figure.<sup>3</sup>

Further evidence of this romanticism surfaced in Gene Fowler's Minutes of the Last Meeting (1954), a best-selling memoir of the twilight years of a band of Hollywood notables in drink in the early forties, which included W. C. Fields, John Barrymore, Fowler, Hartmann, and John Decker, a commercial artist. In the book, Fowler reported that:

the Hartmann family had owned and managed one of the largest coffee concerns in Hamburg, Germany, and had possessed considerable wealth.

[Nevertheless,] at the time of [Hide]taru's birth, the Japanese grandparents disowned their daughter [Osada] for having married a foreigner.

During his mother's pregnancy [with him], Sadakichi had been told, she had made daily pilgrimages to the temple, passing the stone lanterns and climbing the stone steps to pray near a bronze horse or to gaze out upon the harbor below the temple garden.

"Her body was cremated in Kobe," he said, "where the Kutobiki waterfalls spray the mountain slope. Her relatives, still scandalized by her marriage to an Occidental, strewed her ashes along the dusty road for donkeys to walk over."<sup>4</sup>

Considered illegitimate by Hamburg society, circumstances might have crushed the boys, but fortunately their father placed them in the care of his bachelor brother, Ernst, a wealthy merchant, art collector, and socialite who lived with his mother, Amalie, in a large, comfortable townhouse in Hamburg. Then sixty-one, Amalie had had thirteen children, but only three had survived and only Oscar had given her grandchildren. She took the boys under her wing, had them baptized as Lutherans with her birthdate, November 8th, and quickly became their mainstay:

She was tall, large built, [an] unusually well preserved woman for her age, of a soft, stately deportment with few gestures. . . . I was always fond of her and almost worshipped her during my youth.<sup>5</sup>

With the imposing Amalie fulfilling the vacant mother's role, the part of patriarch fell to "Uncle Ernst" who played it grandly. Charming, well educated, and romantic, he was the model of the worldly gentleman Sadakichi hoped to emulate. Host for a routine of dinners, travels, and diversions, he continued to support his brother's younger son long after the boy left and travelled to America.

The almost aristocratic style of the household offered Sadakichi endless opportunities to display his precocity. By the age of thirteen he was widely read; familiar with the works of Scott, Shakespeare, Zola, and Goethe; had studied Greek, Latin, English, and French; and delighted in

discussing art and culture with the assortment of bon vivants who regularly attended his uncle's frequent soirées.

This life of privilege and culture was abruptly interrupted by his father's return from sea and subsequent remarriage to a widow with two young daughters. Recognizing the boys as competitors for their father's inheritance and disdaining them as half-breeds, their stepmother prevailed upon the family to send them elsewhere. Taru was apprenticed to a farmer in Holstein. Sadakichi, then fourteen, was enrolled in a preparatory school in Kiel with the expectation that he would study to become a sea captain. At first amused by the routine of classes and mock sea battles, he was soon confronted upon graduation and transfer to the academy with unexpectedly harsh discipline and student hazing aimed at his Japanese ancestry. After a few weeks, he rebelled and left for his Uncle's villa, Mon Repos, at Longjumeau, near Paris. Later, when his father arrived, they fought and, refusing to return to the academy, he was exiled to live with his grandaunt and granduncle in Philadelphia.

In speaking of this, Hartmann observed, "It was surely not an act of kindness to send a boy alone and almost penniless to a foreign land across the sea. My father did not even pay for the passage; he took the money out of my savings bank, in which I had hoarded some three hundred marks. Nor was it excusable that, while I was starving in Philadelphia, and for half a year my father held a high position in New York, he never informed me of his presence. Events like these are not apt to inspire filial piety."<sup>6</sup>

Arriving by way of Ellis Island in June 1882 with crates of books and a fashionable European wardrobe, and travelling by rail to Philadelphia, Sadakichi came to his distant relatives small, Spartan home. Provided with a bed in the attic and put to work sweeping floors and emptying spittoons for a lithographic company, he spent evenings and weekends in the Mercantile Library devouring biographies of actors, painters, writers, and musicians; histories of fine arts, theatre, and dance; and philosophical texts. Then, nine months after his arrival, Sadakichi's granduncle died and his grandaunt settled with other relatives, while Sadakichi chose to make his own way at fifteen.

With a three dollar a week allowance provided by his grandmother and a new job retouching negatives in a photographic studio, he found a room of his own and continued to pursue his studies. His scholarly pursuits led to an involvement with a literary circle headed by a pair of Shakespearean scholars, Dr. Parker Norris and Albert A. Smith, which "published a little monthly magazine entitled Shakespeareana devoted entirely to textual, aesthetic, and biographical criticism."<sup>7</sup> They encouraged his studies, included him in regular literary evenings, and often treated him to the theatre where he saw Edwin Booth, Lawrence Barrett, Fanny Davenport, and Henry Irving, and fantasized of life as an actor.

Intense study and devotion to art and literature was not the only regimen then adopted by Sadakichi for he also

established a habit of feast or famine diets, frequently spending the small allowance his grandmother sent on books rather than on sustenance. It is unclear whether this was the result of youthful self sacrifice, self destructiveness, or simple poverty, but it quickly became a life-long pattern, such that, in his seventies, he would actually boast to Fowler that:

"I have starved in many cities; among them Philadelphia, Boston, New York, Paris, San Francisco, and London. Of course, in London the cooking was so bad that it was much easier to do without food."<sup>8</sup>

Hartmann's devotion to literature was eventually rewarded in November of 1884 when, in the midst of a discussion on poetry at a second-hand bookshop frequented by his Shakespeareana friends, the name of Walt Whitman surfaced. The "dusty bookseller"<sup>9</sup> was apparently good friends with the "Sage of Camden" and recommended that Hartmann visit him as he lived nearby, across the Delaware River.

Thrilled with the prospect, Hartmann soon took the ferry across and, on a windy, snow driven day, arrived unannounced at Whitman's two story frame house on Mickle Street. Answering the student's knock, the poet admitted him to his book strewn parlor and chatted with him genially. Hartmann was deeply impressed and recorded the event in a newspaper article later republished as a booklet, Conversations with Walt Whitman (1895):

There was nothing overwhelming to me in Whitman's face, but I liked it at once for its healthy manliness. It seemed to me a spiritually deepened image of contemporary Americans: an ideal laborer, as the Americans are really a nation of laborers. . . . I was much impressed by the passive power of his personality to remember too much of this first conversation.<sup>10</sup>

Whitman's presence affected Hartmann as few others' had. Perhaps only his grandmother had seemed so simultaneously imposing and pacific. Whitman seemed to possess an immense self security which Hartmann, young and cast adrift, wholly lacked. Seizing him as a personal guru, Hartmann visited Whitman often and confessed his ambition:

At that time I was stage-struck, and of course mentioned my intention to devote myself to the histrionic art; I contemplated a special study of Shakespeare's fools (though I was rather too tall for them).

Whitman: (shaking his head): "I fear that won't go. There are so many traits, characteristics, Americanisms, inborn with us which you would never get at."<sup>11</sup>

Disappointed though he may have been by this response, Hartmann made the first of several excursions to Europe to study art and, in particular, the theatre. Selling his imported library, he travelled by steerage in the spring of 1885, made his way to Munich and lodged with a distant uncle Sorgenloch, a philosophy professor who eventually set him up in a separate flat and lent him the 300 marks necessary to enroll him as a voluntary apprentice to Karl Lautenschlager, the famed stage machinist of the Royal Theatres.

My special aim and occupation was to copy all the stage machinery plans and ingenious devices of moving

property . . . and special lighting effects like the rainbow in The Dusk of the Gods [sic]. . . . I hoisted the evening star in Tannhäuser, wheeled about the Rhinedaughters, pulled Lohengrin's swanboat across the stage. . . . I learnt to work traps and drops and to produce the crash when lightning strikes.<sup>12</sup>

In his spare time he studied makeup, costume, and scene painting; read new plays submitted to the theatres in manuscript; took dance lessons, and memorized A Midsummer Night's Dream in the hope of staging one day in America its debut with the Mendelssohn score. At one point he paid a call to Ernst Possart, an older actor of great accomplishment, who, like Whitman, bluntly advised him against an acting career because his face had "too many individual features."<sup>13</sup> Undaunted, Hartmann dreamed of forming a theatrical company after the fashion of Henry Irving and used his apprentice pass to watch scores of rehearsals and performances, sometimes two, one act of each, in the same night.

During this period, Hartmann made the acquaintance of the second of his literary heroes, Paul Heyse, a German novelist and playwright who became almost as significant to him as Whitman. Armed with a letter of introduction from Professor Sorgenloch, he appeared at the writer's suburban villa and professed his admiration for Heyse's "strain of classic emotionalism, delicacy of feeling, [and] lyrical projection of scenery."<sup>14</sup> Charmed, Heyse made him welcome and invited the student back many times to discuss

literature, art, and politics with other friends and followers.

In Heyse, Hartmann found Whitman's aristocratic opposite:

His negligent elegance and natural dignity reminded me instantly of the portraits of Van Dyck and of Plato too, an aristocrat in his life as in his art. He must have been irresistibly beautiful in his younger years, he was even then at fifty-four. He looked like forty, and neither in his wavy hair nor his full beard could one discover a single gray hair. . . . What I admired most was the joyous calmness, incapable [sic] to the bourgeois and shipwrecked authors.<sup>15</sup>

Pensioned by both the Prussian and Bavarian governments, with a guarantee that every new book would command a minimum sale of three thousand copies for circulating libraries throughout Germany, Heyse was the exemplar of Hartmann's conviction that society owed unlimited support to its artists.

Heyse was apparently somewhat jealous of his position, however, a trait which would manifest itself unpleasantly from time to time. Once, when Hartmann hoped to obtain an introduction to Henrik Ibsen, whose Wild Duck was just then being performed in Munich, Heyse proved unsympathetic. Hartmann was fascinated with his newest literary hero, whom he would see almost every day sitting in the Maximillian Cafe, but Heyse "did not approve of the outspoken 'tendency' in the Norwegian's latest dramas"<sup>16</sup> and closed the discussion with the remark that:

"Ibsen has ceased to be a poet. A great pity. He was ein bedeutender romanticist in Brand and Peer Gynt."17

Similarly, when Hartmann offered him a copy of Whitman's poems, he showed equal disinterest, commenting that he preferred "flowers to leaves of grass."18

In his own way, however, Heyse could be generous. He had recently completed The Death of Don Juan and invited Hartmann to attend his personal reading of it at the villa:

It was two in the afternoon when the guests, many of them young ladies, assembled in the oval music room, . . . Heyse's voice was one of subdued passion. . . . The reading technique was simplicity clear cut. He avoided pathos. He just read without effort sotte voce.19

Afterwards, the author delighted Hartmann by first inviting him to recite some poems of Geibel and Heine and then awarding him the sole rights to produce Don Juan in America.

The climax of Hartmann's pilgrimage, however, was certainly his participation in the special performances for King Ludwig II of Bavaria:

For years the King had indulged in these midnight performances, generally twice a year. He would attend them absolutely alone, coming from his palace by a secret aisle into the royal box. The auditorium at these occasions was in utter darkness and the actors had the difficult task of appearing at their best before a silent empty house that in its dismal and chilly gloom lay like a yawning chasm before them. These performances were never ordered to start before midnight, oftener at one or two, and even later, and he

had the habit if a scene was to his special liking to have it played over again.

The repertory His Majesty deigned to select was a capricious gallimaufry. This time it was to be: two or three performances of Parsifal (think of it, in 1885!) and Rhinegold, his favorite dramas, Schiller's William Tell and Brachvogel's Narcissus, the two Indian dramas Sakuntala and Urvashi, and as special attraction Sardou's new play.

Beyond any doubt these performances represented the last word in realistic, panorama-like stage scenery. Never were scenes more luxuriously mounted. Everything was plastic, pictorial, executed with a rich fantastic pallet. In the theatre during the weeks of preparation everything was breathless activity. There were continuous rehearsals at every hour of the day and night, and sometimes several ones going on at the same time. The demands on the stage machinist and the electrician were particularly strenuous. Some of the actors were furious. In Urvashi appear gods and demons galore, and they hold conversations in floating chariots in mid air. Drach, the leading man, objected, he considered it an outrage and humiliation to expose a great actor like him to the dangers of an aerial ballet. . . . Still, he went on with his perilous task.

Of course, there was no chance for anybody to sneak into the gallery or lower tiers of boxes during the performances. . . . But I, a paying apprentice specially favored, was allowed to be a spectator during the dress rehearsals. . . . And so it came to pass that I witnessed what nobody else except the King was privileged to see. . . . Leaning back in the darkness of some box. . . , exalted, bewildered, yes even imagining I was a king myself, the various stage pictures passed by like visions of some other life.

The rehearsals lasted for nearly two weeks, and when everything was about ready, the royal order came that the performances would not take place. The King was never to see any theatrical performances again. Some chord in his highstrung personality had snapped, the end was near and his mind was now peopled with darker, chaotic visions. This was in the fall of 1885.<sup>20</sup>

Hartmann left Munich soon after and returned to Philadelphia where he resumed many of his old literary acquaintances, particularly Whitman to whom he proudly showed an article, "Ein Besuch bei Walt Whitman" (A Visit With Walt

Whitman), which he had published in the Münchener Neueste Nachrichten. Whitman was pleased and encouraged him to pursue the journalist's craft, which Hartmann promptly did, writing essays and critiques for various local papers. Having read some of these, Whitman commented: "Hartmann has written astonishingly good studies. His observations of America are bright-surprisingly searching-some of them."<sup>21</sup>

Hartmann spent most of 1886 in Philadelphia where he continued his regimen of study at the Mercantile Library and enjoyed the company and occasional patronage of the local literary coterie. Still working at odd jobs and enduring a pauper's diet, he steadily wore down his health until his father became so concerned that he invited his black sheep to recuperate with his family in Charleroi, Belgium. Arriving in October, he spent a few months with his father and step-mother, regaining his strength "with a wise diet of milk and eggs, raw meat and cod liver oil."<sup>22</sup> He soon grew bored, however, with the slow pace of country life and left for Longjumeau in the late winter of 1887 to join his grandmother and Uncle Ernst at Mon Repos.

With renewed access to Paris, and the health and funds to pursue his interests, Hartmann quickly caught up with the theatres, museums, and libraries he had pined for in Charleroi. At one point he attended a performance of a new translation of Hamlet at the Comédie Française with Mounet-Sully in the title role and subsequently wrote an article about it which later appeared in Shakespeareana:

His Hamlet is childish in practical life, like all men who have hid themselves for years among books, and who have rummaged every corner of the university library, but hardly know what a sunrise in the country is. . . . He is a dreamer; he is not the cold meditating Hamlet of Edwin Booth. Now, he smiles, his half opened mouth shows two rows of handsome, white teeth; his laugh sounds like the laugh of a madman, but one may understand he only imitates it; he is not half-mad, no, he is only confused by those strange things which have happened lately at court.

Without doubt Mounet-Sully has become a great actor while playing Hamlet.<sup>23</sup>

These comments are of particular note since they show that Hartmann was already alert to the embodiment of what was to become the model for the symbolist hero, a man withdrawn, childlike, and possessed by dreams. In many ways, this was also a type which Hartmann personified himself.

Several months later, he returned to Charleroi where, inspired by his reading of Zola's Germinal (1885), a novel about a miners' strike, he again angered his father by attempting to take part in a local glass workers' strike. As a result, he was abruptly banished again to Philadelphia, his vacation cut short, and his hoped for reconciliation suspended indefinitely.

He returned to Philadelphia on June 9, 1887 and immediately resolved to move on:

I had made up my mind to try Boston. I had no particular or clever idea of what I was going to do if once there. I wanted to become famous . . . that was the principle motive.<sup>24</sup>

## NOTES

1. Jane Ann Calhoun Weaver, "Sadakichi Hartmann: Herald of Modernism in American Art" (Ph. D. diss., University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1985).

2. Sadakichi Hartmann, Autobiography (Riverside, CA: By the author, Thomas Rivera Library, 1915; rev. 1933), 36.

3. Jane Weaver, Sadakichi Hartmann, 3.

4. Gene Fowler, Minutes From the Last Meeting (New York: The Viking Press, 1954), 50-51. The Fowler book was met with considerable displeasure by the Hartmann family, particularly by Wisteria Hartmann Linton, Hartmann's daughter by his second wife, Lillian Bonham. Wisteria had cared for her father during the period of the book and deeply resented its casual portrayal of him as a drunk and a buffoon. Wherever possible, I have attempted to restrict my use of this book to direct quotations by Hartmann or to material corroborated by other sources.

5. Hartmann, Autobiography, 45.

6. Fowler, Minutes, 54.

7. Sadakichi Hartmann, Shakespeare in Art, (Boston: L. C. Page, 1901), iv.

8. Fowler, Minutes, 65.

9. Sadakichi Hartmann, Conversations With Walt Whitman (New York: E. P. Colby & Company, 1895), 3.

10. Ibid., 7.

11. Ibid., 8.

12. Hartmann, Autobiography, 145-6.

13. Ibid., 147.

14. Ibid., 173.
15. Ibid., 173-174.
16. Ibid., 175.
17. Paul Heyse, cited in Hartmann, Autobiography, 175.
18. Ibid., 176.
19. Hartmann, Autobiography, 174.
20. Ibid., 156-160.
21. Walt Whitman to Horace Traubel, in Buddha. Confucius. Christ: Three Prophetic Plays, eds. George Knox and Harry Lawton (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971), xxi.
22. Hartmann, Autobiography, 193.
23. Sadakichi Hartmann, "The Drama," Shakespeareana 4 (1887): 422.
24. Hartmann, Autobiography, 203.

## CHAPTER 2

BOSTON LIONS

Hartmann travelled to Boston with a letter of introduction from Philadelphia millionaire and Shakespeareana patron J. G. Rosengarten which he used to negotiate a five-week stay at the St. Botolph Club, the city's most exclusive residence.

The range of people I met or got acquainted with, or at least caught a glimpse of was remarkably large. It included James Russell Lowell, John Greenleaf Whittier, Oliver Wendell Holmes [Sr.], Charles Eliot Norton, [John Boyle] O'Reilly, Trowbridge, Mrs. Deland, James Jeffrey Roach, Philips Brooks, Rev. Bartol, Everett Hale, Robert Grant, Louis Prang; the leading artists (H. O. Walker, I. M. Gangengigl, W. B. Closson, John Donoghue, etc.) musicians like Gericke, Kneisel, Chadwick, Arthur Foote and members of the Symphony, the editors of all the papers (H. A. Clapp) and many of the society dames (Mrs. Jack L. Gardner and the Ames') R. M. Field, Violet Allen, young Davenport and various members of the Boston Stock Co.<sup>1</sup>

Promoting himself as a Byronic emissary from the cultural pillars of Europe, he toured the social circuit "capitalizing on Boston society's intellectual yearnings: conducting tours of art museums, lessons and readings in German."<sup>2</sup> This provided a modest income which he supplemented by "writing articles for the Evening Transcript, the Record, and the Advertiser, far fetched but well-written stuff about Russian painters, modern Greek art, Bastien-LePage, etc."<sup>3</sup>

While he viewed this as a fair beginning, Hartmann was not to be satisfied with the prospect of becoming the season's latest cultural lion. Rather than perform as a mere curiosity, he hoped to establish himself as an authority and figure of importance. Toward this end, he sought to promote his relationship with Whitman.

There was an extremely quixotic idea in my head of starting a Whitman Society, and I dreamt of having a huge sign in gold lettering across my bay window announcing The Walt Whitman Society. Of course, I would also rent the lower floor—we would have a reading room, a Whitman library—lectures, classes and many other wonderful things—and I of course would be the curator of this self created establishment.<sup>4</sup>

In promoting the Society, Hartmann also proposed to afford Whitman a pension from the proceeds, perhaps along the same lines as that granted to Paul Heyse. He wrote to J. G. Rosengarten who, though disapproving of the project as impractical, responded with a small contribution and the advice that Hartmann would do better to take care of himself. Undaunted, Hartmann made the Society the subject of his visits to local notables. At one point he called upon John Greenleaf Whittier who first expressed distaste for some of Whitman's poetry and then donated five dollars but would not allow his name to be used "unless Holmes consented to do the same."<sup>5</sup> Promptly calling on Mr. Holmes, Hartmann discovered that he too did not favor Whitman's work, but "would be willing to give his name if Whittier [would]."<sup>6</sup> Still others, such as John Boyle O'Reilly, were less polite and

advised him frankly that Boston was the wrong place for a Whitman Society.

Apparently hoping to overcome the general impasse, Hartmann presumptuously nominated a slate of officers, including William Sloan Kennedy of the Boston Evening Transcript as President, Sylvester Baxter of the New York Herald as Vice President, and himself as Secretary/Treasurer and notified them of their first meeting without confirming their willingness to participate.

Whitman, who had known nothing of the scheme, was greatly embarrassed and moved quickly to end it by writing privately to those he knew to have been contacted by Hartmann. Several years later reflected on the incident for his aide and biographer, Horace Traubel:

It was a curious performance. . . . It was at that time that I wrote Kennedy and Baxter, in whom I most confided there, to squelch it. And somehow—quietly—I never knew just how they did squelch it. It seems Hartmann had started to collect money—got as much as ten dollars from Dave McKay alone. That was a thing we could not suffer—that brought us to a point of involving responsibility of a sort, so the decisive step was taken—the absolute disclaimer.<sup>7</sup>

The disclaimer, like much of Whitman's personal confidences, was not intended to be made public. Many years later, however, it did finally surface in the Feinberg Collection in Detroit and then printed in the Sadakichi Hartmann Newsletter. A prose piece in Whitman's own hand, it referred to him in the third person:

The Bostonians . . . have now started—or at any rate have furnished the area of—a "Walt Whitman Society." . . . But Whitman himself certainly looks with apathy on the whole business. . . . He peremptorily declines the pension effort, and is willing his poems should take their chances with other candidates for public appreciation. He is personally friendly to Mr. Hartmann, the starter of the Society.<sup>8</sup>

Whitman reiterated his appreciation for Hartmann, defending him in a letter to Traubel:

I have more hopes of him, more faith in him than any of the boys. They all seem to regard him as a humbug—or if not that, a sensationalist anyhow, or an adventurer. I can't see it that way. I expect good things from him—extra good things; if not great, but good. The Boston fellows seem to be particularly strong against him: some of them seem to think if he is not a bad egg he is at least the raw stuff of a bad egg. That sounds very familiar: lots of the most amiable people have from time to time anonymously written me the same facts about myself.<sup>9</sup>

His dream of a Whitman Society having faded and the cultural season then drawing to a close in Boston, Hartmann decided to return again to Europe. With money collected money from his father and grandmother, he proceeded first to Belgium and then, after squandering most of his funds in Rotterdam and Amsterdam, he made his way to London where he spent the summer of 1888 on the edge of poverty haunting museums.

Money slipped through my fingers as it always had done and I accepted the fact that I had nothing to live on with the indifference of a gambler. Surely my childhood had spoiled me, and days of starvation had not cured me. Nor would they ever.<sup>10</sup>

Returning to Boston in September, Hartmann initiated a series of projects which he believed would gain him not only appreciation but also a firm position in cultural society. The first of these was a poetry reading at Chickering Hall with material drawn from his own catalogue, including several pieces which, in imitation of Whitman, were erotically frank. He intended this as an announcement of his triumphant return, but as noted in his autobiography with an uncredited citation from a paper that reported the event, it was nearly his finish:

A large audience, mostly of the feminine element, assembled and things looked very bright for S. H. The reading proceeded, but as one verse followed another, a little air of uneasiness was perceived. A poem on Love was reached. Young girls' cheeks began to crimson, and matrons' faces to become set. More and more passionate grew the expressions, until at last phrases were reached which started a general exodus from the hall. There was a mad scramble to get out, but Sadakichi read vigorously on, unmoved by the sudden flight of his audience. The feelings of the few young men present may be imagined. After that, young S. H. dropped from the regions of the upper ten with a thud that was not dull, but sickening—for him.<sup>11</sup>

While the poetry reading was little more than a continuation of his previous Boston escapades, Hartmann already had in mind a venture which was striking even in its conception. Quite simply, he proposed in the fall of 1888 to mount a season of plays at Union Hall featuring Ibsen's Pillars of Society, A Doll's House, and Ghosts, plays which had only then appeared in English translation. The repertory was to be completed with Hartmann's own translations of

Strindberg's The Father and Paul Heyse's The Death of Don Juan, for which he held exclusive American production rights.

It is possible that Hartmann, at the time, may not even have understood just how audacious this plan really was. Perhaps it was only the fact that Ibsen, Strindberg, and Heyse were then almost entirely unknown in Boston that enabled him to carry the idea as far as he did. Championing Whitman would certainly have seemed mild in comparison to such a sustained menu of European iconoclasts. Hartmann only knew that it had never been done, that A Doll's House had not yet been produced in London, much less in Boston, and that if he could do it he would forever be the first.

The distinction might have been the same had he managed even one of the plays but, typically, despite his obvious lack of experience, connections, or support, he preferred to begin at the top rather than work his way up patiently. Thus, after paying a few calls on the local actresses, all of whom "graciously offered me their autographed photos"<sup>12</sup> while politely declining interest in unknown Scandinavians, he visited Lawrence Barrett, Edwin Booth's partner and co-star in the 1880s, at Barrett's Cohasset summer place. Welcoming Hartmann on the strength of introductions from potential backers, Barrett invited him onto his yacht and listened hospitably while Hartmann read him Don Juan.

He was interested but did not like the play, or rather the part. "What a villain he is; I could not rouse sympathy for that part; I do not like to act such parts." I thought him rather narrow minded at the time,

but was impressed at his dignified personality and deep chesty voice.<sup>13</sup>

The encounter encapsuled one of Hartmann's most peculiar misconceptions, as he was clearly unable to discern the enormous differences between the business of theatre then practiced in America as opposed to that in Europe. "Used to the precise methods of endowed theatres in Europe,"<sup>14</sup> he had no appreciation for the natural conservatism that a successful American actor like Barrett would display toward the unconventional. If anything, Hartmann expected the sheer quality of Ibsen, Strindberg, and Heyse to overwhelm any objections and he plunged forward, heedless of all obstacles:

I engaged liberal advertising space for a run of weeks, not only in the leading weeklies and dailies, but also in suburban sheets with a liberal service of reading notices. It amounted to an unholy sum, over two thousand, I believe. . . . And in the meanwhile large displays offered the information about the Ibsen cyclus and invited the public to subscribe to the rare enterprise. . . . I worked under the illusion that I, a mere youngster, could introduce an unknown author and material in a place used to a certain dramatic tradition, and could overcome those difficulties as soon as I had secured the necessary financial support while it was more than likely that I could not have swung it even with a few thousand at my disposal. It is astonishing that nobody came to my rescue financially, artistically or professionally. Even a splendid failure may give one a reputation in a European town, while here—well, the whole thing was an impossibility from the start, a huge joke at my expense.<sup>15</sup>

Ironically, even had his plan succeeded, Hartmann would not have been the first to produce Ibsen in America. Though he was unaware of it, that distinction belonged to Helena Modjeska (1844-1909), a Polish expatriate who made her

American debut at the California Theatre in San Francisco in 1877 and who, in 1883 "startled the public with the first American production of Ibsen's A Doll's House, which at the time was called Thora."<sup>16</sup> Presented in Louisville, the play did not meet with success but Mme. Modjeska went on to take "an important place in the American theatre as an exponent of classic drama."<sup>17</sup> A Doll's House, meanwhile, did not reappear in America until 1894 in a New York production starring Minnie Maddern Fiske (1865-1932).

The significance of Hartmann's plan, however, is less in any potential "first," than in what it shows about his prescience as an artist. While he certainly would have been the first to introduce Strindberg and Heyse, not to mention Ghosts and Pillars of Society, to America, it is far more important to acknowledge that he recognized artistic quality when he saw it and had the courage, sometimes even the folly, to champion it in the face of public scorn. It was this trait, more than anything else, which gave him legitimacy even among his severest critics.

Despite the failure of his Ibsen enterprise, Hartmann managed to keep himself afloat teaching elocution and Delsarte technique to various stage struck hopefuls. One of these students was Olive Homans, "a whimsical creature but a remarkably clever child elocutionist"<sup>18</sup> who was later to become a Hollywood silent film star and leading lady to Tyrone Power (1869-1931)<sup>19</sup>. Hartmann thought she would fit the lead role in a play he had recently finished, entitled

Mademoiselle Bébé. Modelled after the then popular stage version of Little Lord Fauntleroy, it had been favorably received, but not picked up, by readers at A. M. Palmer's Theatre in New York. Knowing that Olive's parents were interested in promoting her talent, he read the play before a solemn family gathering which afterwards surprised him by enthusiastically agreeing that it was "just the thing for Olive."<sup>20</sup>

To raise funds for the piece, he rented the lower floor of the Hotel Vendome and held a reception which, according to the Boston Evening Transcript, attracted nearly a thousand curious onlookers. Hartmann donned a Mikado's costume and

dressed in the robe of state of an Eastern emperor of operatic cut and slightly shopworn, assisted by a barnstorming actress in an amazingly loud outfit, I received. They came in thick throngs by the hundreds and (not exaggerating a bit) crowded all the rooms at my disposal, the corridors, the steps of the hotel, and stood in groups on the sidewalk. I smiled and bowed and introduced and shook hands until my arm hung limp and I felt like the President.<sup>21</sup>

Thus encouraged, Hartmann collected a company of amateurs and stranded professionals and started rehearsals. But, attracted by the publicity, the manager of the Boston Museum Company approached Olive's parents and offered her the role of Lord Fauntleroy.

The parents almost fell over each other to accept. Mr. Field courteously asked: are you obliged in any way to Mr. Hartmann? Not in the least, both chimed together.<sup>22</sup>

Olive promptly dropped out of Mademoiselle Bébé and, though Hartmann quickly replaced her with a young boy, he had lost his draw. Within a week, his funding dried up and the project was abandoned. Ultimately, the play itself was lost during his last trip to Europe in 1891.

Hartmann satirized this life of the literary adventurer adrift in a sea of "receptions, recitals, lectures, and pink teas"<sup>23</sup> in another play, The Boston Lions (1890-96), which featured a caricature of its author, Nichi Swartzman, as a panhandling social climber who assists a young lover in his effort to overcome a case of mistaken identity and secure his fiancée.

The play opens in the parlor of Professor Day's rooming house, specializing in the psuedo-literary clientele that simultaneously amuses and preys upon the thinner crust of Boston society. Two of the Professor's more poorly financed boarders, Lord Camel, the current "lion" of the Literary Association of West Canton Street, and Nichi Swartzman, Hartmann's alter ego, meet just as their separate fortunes are moving in opposite directions. Camel calculates that he owes several hundred dollars to scores of soured patrons but plans to recoup by engaging himself to May, the daughter of the wealthy mistress of the Literary Association. Swartzman, meanwhile, has concluded that his best hope for future success lies south in New York and he plans to escape his debts "the French way" by slipping out the back door.

Confronted by the Professor, to whom they both owe several month's rent, they bluff past his objections and put him off until the next morning as Camel expects to consummate his design that afternoon with a triumphant reading of Browning poetry for the Literary Association. Alone again, however, Swartzman refuses to compose Camel's introduction and sends him packing even though he needs the income Camel's success would bring.

After Camel's unhappy exit, Swartzman muses:

That's the lot of talented men to help charlatans to be successful in this world. This Camel has no other aim but to gain a comfortable position in life. . . . While I, too proud to humiliate myself to the conventional lies of society will remain where I am, poor, unrecognized, and appear in their eyes what I hate most, a charlatan.<sup>24</sup>

This moment of self revelation is soon followed by another when Swartzman, having endured for the umpteenth time the vanities of Mrs. Wiggins and Mrs. Higgins, two of the Literary Association's most superfluous personalities, presses them for a loan of fifty dollars, a tactic for which Hartmann was already notorious. He pleads that the money is to get him to New York, but the ladies promptly retire, even though he reduces his request several times.

The act ends with an encounter between Swartzman and Charles White, another suitor for May recently arrived from England where he had met her on vacation. Responding to Swartzman's advertisement in the Society Gossip newsletter

promising to advise strangers how to succeed in Boston society, he enlists the satirist's aid in his plot to win May's hand.

Unfortunately for the play, the plot is no plot at all and the second and third acts are occupied not with the antagonistic maneuvers of Mr. White and Lord Camel, but with a series of increasingly repetitive digressions lampooning the absurdly ignorant provincialism of the matrons forming the bulwark of the Literary Association. Camel, of course, delivers a perfectly stultifying address to broad approval and presses his advantage with May's mother who views him as a favorable match. White, meanwhile, is mistaken as the son of Browning and subsequently "exposed" as a fake when he introduces himself to May's mother, the rumor's source.

Unwilling to let her fate be decided by these marginal ploys, May takes control in the fourth act and hides with Charles behind a screen while the parade of clowns continues until the appropriate moment comes for her to introduce her lover to her father. All objections are quickly brushed aside, Camel is revealed as a poseur, and Swartzman is rewarded by White for his peripheral encouragement with a promise to clear his debts and a ticket to New York.

I took Kotzebue's Die Deutschen Kleinstädter as a model for the construction, but the treatment is quite original. . . . The criticism was generally that there was not enough action to it, or that it was too bitter a satire on society. One manager born in the New England states said it was a very strong play and added with a tearful voice: "That Boston should have come to this."

Another difficulty was that it had no star parts. . . . But, for The Boston Lions, I always had a special fondness. It is the artistic result of my Boston experiences.<sup>25</sup>

Hartmann admitted, nonetheless, that he did not try very hard to find a producer for the play, a fact which may be attributable to it's somewhat biographical nature. The character of Nichi Swartzman, moreover, despite the author's assertion of "the merciless way in which I have portrayed myself,"<sup>26</sup> is a much more subdued type than the original, being more notable for poverty than eccentricity.

Despite his hopes for success, Hartmann seems almost to have courted disaster from the outset. With a European perspective that never took provincial matters seriously, Hartmann delighted in exaggerating his alien status. His behavior as a disciple of art in Boston was little different from that of the outcast son known to his intolerant father, and it seems quite possible that despite his later protestations of dismay, he was actively thumbing his nose at the comfortable elites who so callously discarded him after his novelty had become awkward.

Interestingly, Hartmann's final and most serious debacle in this period came about not by intention but by accident. On April 14, 1889 the New York Herald published an expanded English version of his Munich article entitled "A Conversation with Walt Whitman" in which, among the Sage of Camden's other reflections on poets past and present, Hartmann reported the comment that E. C. Stedman was "nothing

but a sophisticated dancing master."<sup>27</sup> Stedman, a noted poet, critic, and Whitman intimate of long standing, was outraged.

Horace Traubel, ever suspicious of Hartmann, saw the article as the ultimate betrayal "written up as direct from W. W.'s lips, by that arch-fool. . . ."<sup>28</sup> Whitman was also shocked, but apparently unwilling to make a public denial, suggested that Traubel write to Stedman and explain his true feelings:

. . .the whole thing appears to me an outrageous, astonishing farrago—from beginning to end a statement of things which, even if they had been believed (as they have not been) could not have been said in that manner by me. . . . My friends know well enough that I am incapable of so mean, dirty, sneaking, cowardly, a blow.<sup>29</sup>

Just as in the Whitman Society episode, Whitman resisted further involvement, even after Stedman had written to Traubel complaining of Whitman's silence. When pressed by Traubel, Whitman responded: I do not think I am prepared to make a public disavowal of it—I have never done so; in all my life, from the very first, I have avoided that.<sup>30</sup>

Instead, he recalled that W. S. Kennedy had once sent him a copy of Hartmann's notes for the article a year prior to its appearance. Kennedy had been preparing a book on Whitman, and Hartmann evidently hoped to have the "Conversations" included. Kennedy had taken the precaution of passing a draft of Hartmann's article to Whitman, who

promptly wrote a denial of the Stedman passage. To resolve the impasse, Whitman asked Traubel to contact Kennedy and ask him to send Stedman a copy of his denial.

If Whitman now seems equivocal on the issue, it should be noted that he had had disagreements with Stedman before. In particular with regard to an essay of Stedman's in Scribner's Magazine some years before which Whitman felt "unjustifiably dwell[ed] upon what people call my filth, sexuality, all that--seemed not only to give it undue weight, prominence, but to twist it, as I thought--twist it."<sup>31</sup> Traubel reported these measured comments made several years after the fact. It may well have been that, closer to the moment, Whitman may have vented greater frustration in Hartmann's presence.

The "Conversations" incident became a major embarrassment for Whitman and his followers for several weeks, with Whitman suggesting, but not openly claiming, that the New York Herald might have printed what it knew to be suspect material in order to upset Stedman. Finally, after some delicate backstage maneuvering, Kennedy sent Stedman a copy of Whitman's letter, and Stedman wrote to Traubel that he was willing to accept the private retraction out of deference to Whitman. With all feathers thus smoothed, the only loser in the end was Hartmann, who lost Whitman's confidence and no longer was counted among the inner circle.

Hartmann never seems to have understood the nature of his faux pas and even when the "Conversations" were reprinted

as a pamphlet in 1895, including the Stedman quote, he remained convinced that Whitman had spoken deliberately. He held this belief well into his seventies when quoted by Fowler: "Hah! Whitman didn't give a damn what anyone said about him either in the way of praise or attack."<sup>32</sup>

Whitman's own ambivalence and Hartmann's impolitic persistence lend credence to the possibility that the quote was, in fact, accurate. But, that was precisely beside the point because, true or not, by reporting it Hartmann was indecorous to the point of dishonor. Significantly, he never faulted Whitman nor accused him of abandoning his protégé. Hartmann seemed to feel that artists were exempt from common social requirements and, if they were inconsistent or even paradoxical, they were to be judged more by the standards of their art than by the conventions of the moment. As if to prove this, he actually repeated the error many years later by quoting Heyse's comments on Ibsen in an article published in 1910. Like Whitman before him, Heyse denied the quote.

Reflecting many years later on his friendship with Whitman, Hartmann concluded:

Our relation was after all very much like that of a disciple to his master. Nevertheless, what the old Quaker [one of the Philadelphia literary circle] shortly before his death, remarked about his intercourse with me, I could repeat in regard to Walt Whitman. "When I summon up all the incidents of our acquaintance, it was perfectly satisfactory in every way." I would only add, the most satisfactory one I ever had, without exception.<sup>33</sup>

Sadly, these feelings were not shared by the Whitman circle and Hartmann concluded that the time had come for him to start afresh. Thus, he moved to New York City with a trunk full of scripts in the summer of 1889.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER 2.

1. Hartmann, Autobiography, 204.
2. Sadakichi Hartmann, cited by Weaver in Herald of Modernism, 22.
3. Ibid., 21.
4. Hartmann, Autobiography, 206.
5. Ibid., 196.
6. Ibid.
7. Walt Whitman, quoted by Horace Traubel in With Walt Whitman in Camden (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1964) 5, 38-39.
8. Walt Whitman, "Boston and Walt Whitman," Sadakichi Hartmann Newsletter (Riverside, California: University of California, 1972), 2, no. 2, 8.
9. Walt Whitman, to Horace Traubel, 9-14-1888, quoted in With Walt Whitman in Camden, 2, 321.
10. Hartmann, Autobiography, 220
11. Anonymous, cited by Hartmann, Autobiography, 228
12. Hartmann, Autobiography, 229.
13. Sadakichi Hartmann, "Aspirations of a Playwright" (Riverside, CA: Thomas Rivera Library, 1915; rev. 1933), 2.
14. Hartmann, Autobiography, 230.
15. Ibid.
16. Glenn Hughes, A History of the American Theatre (New York: Samuel French, 1951), 271.

17. Ibid., 270.
18. Hartmann, Autobiography, 231.
19. The second of three, grandson of the famous Irish actor and father of the American film star of the 30s and 40s.
20. Hartmann, Autobiography, 230.
21. Ibid., 231.
22. Ibid., 232.
23. Sadakichi Hartmann, "Boston Art Gossip," Art News, 1, no. 4 (June 1897): 6.
24. Sadakichi Hartmann, The Boston Lions (Manuscript, Historical Society of Pennsylvania Library, 1890-96), 16-17.
25. Hartmann, "Aspirations," 3
26. Hartmann, "Introduction," Boston Lions, 6.
27. Hartmann, Conversations, 17.
28. Horace Traubel, With Walt Whitman in Camden, 33.
29. Whitman, cited by Traubel In Camden, 34.
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31. Ibid., 35.
32. Hartmann, cited by Fowler, Minutes, 70.
33. Hartmann, Conversations, 94.

## CHAPTER 3

OSADDA'S REVENGE

Hartmann's move to New York came at a time when the city was establishing itself as the capital of American culture. Those cities which previously might have laid claim to the title, chief among them Boston and Philadelphia, were steadily being eclipsed by their more aggressive, less tradition bound neighbor which offered its artists, writers, and musicians the opportunity to escape parochialism and perform on a world stage.

Small wonder then that shortly after moving into an apartment at 5 University Place on the northeast corner of Washington Square, Hartmann should encounter a group of young writers similarly inclined toward new movements in the arts. They collected regularly at the Studio Cafe on Fourth Avenue; George Pellow, an aspiring poet; Clarence McIlvaine whose family owned the London branch of Harper Brothers and who was later to become the American branch's director; Jonathan Sturges, an early translator of Maupassant and grandson namesake of Asher B. Durand's noted patron; and most significantly, "bitter-sweet Stuart Merrill, a true poet who wrote in French and so masterly that he would have become an Academician if he had ever lived long enough."<sup>1</sup>

Hartmann had much in common with Merrill, including a link with Whitman. Like Hartmann, Merrill later wrote a memoir of his visit in 1888 with the poet which took place on the occasion of Whitman's annual memorial lecture on Abraham Lincoln in New York City on the anniversary of the assassination. Accompanied by McIlvaine and Sturges, he arrived in the crowded hall just as Whitman "half paralyzed, hardly able to walk, leaning with his right hand on a cane, and heavily with his left arm on that of the poet Stedman. . . . was installed in a great armchair, before papers which he scarcely used, allowing himself to improvise."<sup>2</sup> Whitman related the tale of Lincoln's death simply, and then recited "Oh Captain! My Captain!": "The poor voice of the old man exerted itself anew, a little before sunset, sobbing rather than chanting, the funeral verses. I was in the presence of the sublime."<sup>3</sup>

Afterwards, Stedman announced that Whitman would receive "his friends, known and unknown"<sup>4</sup> at his hotel, and Merrill, hoping to make a good impression, fetched a copy of the latest issue of Vogue which had just been mailed to him by friends in Paris and which featured Jules Laforgue's translation of Whitman's "Children of Adam":

When my turn came to be presented to him, I held out to him, stammeringly, my copy of Vogue.

"Ah! how happy I am that they are translating my poems into French!" he cried.

"And what poems of mine has he translated?" he asked.

"The 'Children of Adam'," I answered.

It is in this section of *Leaves of Grass* that are found the passages that most shock American modesty, and which caused the masterpiece of Walt Whitman to be ranked, by I do not know how many postmasters, "drunk with virtue," among the obscene writings, the sending of which through the post, exposes the sender to the worst rigors of the law.

"I was certain that a Frenchman would hit upon those poems!"

The day declined; the old man was weary; we took no further advantage of his patience, and went out quietly, touched by his good, patriarchal reception.<sup>5</sup>

This incident occurred while Hartmann was in Boston promoting the Whitman Society and well ahead of The New York Herald's publication of the "Conversations." In many ways, Merrill's reverence for Whitman paralleled Hartmann's; the principal difference being that Merrill never attempted to capitalize upon it.

Like Hartmann, Merrill had been raised overseas, but unlike the troubled exile, Merrill was secure in his position. Descended from the English-American Randolphs and English Pepperills, he could claim royal bloodlines from the houses of Stuart and Bruce. His father served as American Ambassador to France from 1866 to 1884 and Merrill had been raised in Paris and educated at the Lycée Fontanes where his English professor was Stéphane Mallarmé. By the time he met Hartmann in the fall of 1889, he already had strong ties with the French literary circles which spawned symbolism, had published a book of symbolist poetry, Les Gamins (1887), and was a frequent contributor to Le Chat Noir, Nouvelle Rive Gauche, and other periodicals of the avant-garde.

When he and Hartmann first met, Merrill was studying law at Columbia and translating to English a selection of symbolist poetry which included works by Baudelaire, Bertrand, de Geurin, and Mallarmé. The volume, Pastels in Prose (1890), was the first of its kind and established Merrill's international reputation. Interestingly, it is Hartmann who lays claim to the title in his autobiography recalling the phrase as a subtitle for a proposed series of essays on women. His working title was Consolations, but, according to Hartmann, Merrill suggested Constellations and Hartmann adopted it, although he never completed the essays, leaving his claim to Merrill's title very much in doubt.

At that time, literary circles in New York City were loose knit affairs, and it was typical for aspirants with the verve of a Hartmann or the position of a Merrill to mingle easily in the salons and cafés attended by their more established elders. Thus, every Tuesday night they attended the salon of Edgar Fawcett, a novelist and dramatist considered by some at the time to be second only to William Dean Howells in literary influence, where they might encounter Edgar Saltus, another novelist and critic, and many other poets, critics, and journalists. In his Autobiography, Hartmann remembered these days with special fondness: "Oh, it meant so much to me to meet these men—their animated faces, their gestures, even how they were dressed, and then of course what they had to say, drowsy wisdom and sparkling

wit, Saltus's cynicism and Merrill's good humored persiflage."<sup>6</sup>

Hartmann frequented all the established outposts on the circuit of Bohemian New York, ruining his credit with restaurant mâitre d's as deliberately as he pursued literary recognition. In keeping with his self-promotional style, he established his own salon soon after he was evicted from 5 University Place. Moving to a fourth-story room overlooking 14th Street and Second Avenue, he arranged it like a miniature studio replete with a candle-lit Japanese lantern dangling in the window. The regulars at this meagre shrine were, not surprisingly, "a motley crew."<sup>7</sup> Throughout, Hartmann supported himself with the marginal income from freelance work for the Philadelphia Times, the New York Herald, and Deshler Welch's The Theatre Magazine.

It is the articles from The Theatre that are of the most interest here, for it is from them that his early approach to theatre criticism can be discerned. In general, Hartmann proves himself to be a knowledgeable critic, one whose focus was on practical results rather than on theory or poetics. As might be expected, he displayed a clear emphasis on European, and in particular German, drama. He wrote separate articles on Richard Voss and Paul Heyse, the only playwrights that he focused on individually.

Hartmann praised Heyse as a writer who had "emancipated himself completely from the views of the romantic school" and without whom "the next century would look at this time as a

desert spot in the history of German literature."

Unfortunately, Heyse was not recognized in the United States, a circumstance which Hartmann interpreted as the result of "the fact that the prevailing theme of his play is too metaphysical, which always proves injurious to the absolute necessity of vitality in the dramatic art."<sup>8</sup>

Voss, on the other hand, was presented as somewhat suspect for being a writer who "always portrays that strange combination of romanticism and naturalism." Hartmann compared him to Ibsen as a "bitter opponent of social error and conventional lies" but found him falling short: "while Ibsen ends his plays with an interrogation mark, . . . Voss always becomes the idealist in the last scene of the last act and tries to explain and unriddle even the impossible."<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, Hartmann could set aside aesthetics and be "fascinated by the versatility of his talents, the sudden bursts of boundless passions, the melancholy gloom of his poetry, and the variety, force, splendor, and picturesqueness of his dramatic construction."

Included in the group of other modern writers who captured his attention were José Echegaray, "the leading dramatist of Spain. He, more than all the others, and even more than Sardou, owns the gift of exciting our interest, and leading it as if with an iron grasp, of which we cannot free ourselves, to the climax which is almost intolerable, as we see mostly the ignorance and indifference of the multitude triumphant over the truth and virtue of the few;" Strindberg,

whose "ethical assertions are as sharp as razors, with which sensitive readers may easily wound themselves;" and Ludwig Anzengruber who, in Hartmann's opinion "has written some of the greatest dramatic works of our century."

If one measure of Hartmann's skill as a critic is in the later success of those he favored, then he was already demonstrating solid credentials. In 1904, Echegaray was awarded the first Nobel Prize for literature given to a dramatist, and Strindberg's reputation as an influence on modern drama has since grown to epic proportions. Anzengruber remains largely unknown, however, a condition which Hartmann prophetically lamented: "What a loss for the dramatic art at large that his genius could only find its expression in the limited bounds of the Tyrolese dialects. Through this situation he will probably, like Goldoni, remain forever unknown to the American audience."<sup>10</sup>

Hartmann clearly saw his role as a critic in the trail-blazing mode and he would frequently take a position which appeared to leap ahead of other critics' concerns. Thus, he attacked naturalism which was then the principal thrust of those critics advocating a more literary American drama. Dismissing it as "mostly reversed idealism,"<sup>11</sup> he asserted that it was a dead-end:

One of the laws of the naturalists is to say everything. This is one of their lies. Is it possible to say everything? Are there not motives in our life so unconscious that they cannot be expressed even by the boldest realism, or the closest psychological scrutiny?<sup>12</sup>

Hartmann was far more interested in a movement which had yet to make much headway in American drama:

The symbolists in France, who do not shrink from directing human meditation, and try to give us instantaneous photographs of human thoughts and sentiments . . . as well as the young Scandinavian writers, Strindberg, Arne Garborg, and, in particular, Ola Hansson, who tried to unriddle the enigmatic traces of human life, may be called remarkable improvements on the works of some of the older naturalists.<sup>13</sup>

When it came to American theatre, Hartmann was much less sure-footed and labored to find pleasant things to say. Tracing the influence of Henry Irving, a celebrated English actor whose 1883 tour "introduce[d] to an American audience what he had learnt of the Saxon-Meiningen Company—the grand style of stage managing,"<sup>14</sup> Hartmann found that American producers had responded with somewhat uneven but generally admirable results:

I think Henrik Ibsen would be perfectly satisfied with a performance of his "The Pillars of Society" at the Madison Square Theatre. Palmer's stage settings possess that refined simplicity which is true art.<sup>15</sup>

Similarly, in an article on the evolution of acting, he concluded that:

The art of Acting in America promises a great future. We can speak in no other branch of American art of artist's families like the Booths and Jeffersons, and of the transcendental genius of a Forrest or a Cushman.<sup>16</sup>

On other occasions, however, he could be particularly acerbic, especially when he chose to confront the more

established critics. For instance, in an article praising Nym Crinkle (Andrew C. Wheeler), he also took time to confront "the sentimental Fawcett, the naughty Saltus, and the tiresome Dempster Sherman, those pariahs of literature, which receive entirely too much consideration from the public and the press."<sup>17</sup> This is a remarkably harsh statement which totally contradicts his own memoir and suggests that he was probably feuding with Fawcett and Saltus at the time. Crinkle, on the other hand, was praised as a critic with whom Hartmann frequently disagreed but nevertheless admired:

to tell the truth, I felt like throwing something at Mr. Wheeler when I read his Ibsen criticism, but . . . he is never afraid of saying what he considers the truth, and though he may sometimes say very irritating and unpleasant things about an actor or an author, he is really their friend at heart, and the reader is never shocked by unjust criticisms or cruel satirical remarks.<sup>18</sup>

Undoubtedly, Hartmann the critic wanted to be thought of in the same terms.

Hartmann's strength as a critic was his encyclopedic knowledge of German drama in particular and of European drama in general. This, however, was also his greatest weakness, for he knew, or appears to have then known, comparatively little about American drama or literature except for his close ties with Whitman. Thus, while his credentials were impressive, they afforded him little credit in a climate which, despite the continuing reliance of American producers and playwrights on the models of Kotzebue and Sardou, was

nevertheless largely adverse to the more progressive and experimental European movements.

American theatre of the 1880s and 1890s was ill suited to the temperament and style of the intense young emigré. Where European drama was flamboyant and experimental, American drama was eclectic and derivative. The European theatre had a long tradition of royal patronage and educated audiences; American theatre was governed by commercial interests and a fickle public. In Europe, actors, designers, technicians, and most importantly, playwrights were accorded distinction and social reward derived from their artistic skill. In America, the theatrical infrastructure was much less developed and a secure income was rarely attained even by the most successful actors, producers, or actor/producers. Most significantly, in America, very few playwrights had been able to establish a clear identity or the potential to support themselves as authors.

The major producers of American theatre, Augustin Daly, A. M. Palmer, and Steele Mackaye struggled to assemble entertainments pleasing to their unsophisticated audiences and, more often than not, relied upon translations of European farces and melodramas to fill their theatres. Meanwhile, Bronson Howard, William Dean Howells, and James A. Herne had only begun to assert themselves as American playwrights capable of holding the stage.

Howard, then considered the "Dean of American Drama [who] established the fact of the American Drama's

existence"<sup>19</sup> by demonstrating "the possibility of a playwright in the United States making a good living by his art"<sup>20</sup> had recently seen his fourth major success in The Henrietta (1887), a play set on Wall Street which followed a line of development begun with Saratoga (1870), "a farce comedy, with clever situations but no significance of plot and with characters that are types rather than real people,"<sup>21</sup> through The Banker's Daughter (1878) and The Young Mrs. Winthrop (1882) which was "shot through with a consciousness of social values."<sup>22</sup> "But he came to maturity in a period of transition—in the years before the artificial methods of Sardou and Boucicault had been supplanted by the sterner simplicity of Ibsen,"<sup>23</sup> and thus, even at the height of his success, Howard was not considered the literary equal of his European counterparts.

Howells, on the other hand, was given great respect as a man of letters primarily on the basis of his work as a novelist. Books such as A Modern Instance (1882), a realistic tale of divorce, placed him at the head of the American literary scene, a position which he maintained as Editor of The Atlantic Monthly and Contributing Editor to Harpers Magazine. Howells's greatest success in the theatre had come in 1877 with A Counterfeit Presentment, a comedy of mistaken identity that was considered "a genuine and pronounced triumph."<sup>24</sup> This, however, had been followed not by further theatrical ventures, but by a series of one-act plays that made their debut in his magazines and, if

performed, were played either privately or by amateurs. Many of these, including The Sleeping Car (1883), The Elevator (1885), The Mouse Trap (1889), and A Letter of Introduction (1892), followed from the success of his first play, The Parlor Car (1876) which had been brought out as a curtain raiser. Howells's greatest influence, however, was felt not on the stage but rather behind it as he worked steadily to break the American public's taste for romanticism.

James A. Herne was one of Howells's greatest causes and, with Hamlin Garland, he helped bring Herne's ground breaking drama of a marriage in crisis, Margaret Fleming (1890) to prominence. But, in 1889 Herne was recovering from the failure of The Minute Men (1886), a melodrama of the Revolutionary War, and the brief run of Drifting Apart (1888), a temperance drama which did little to restore his finances. Herne's greatest success had come with Hearts of Oak (1879), a romance between a guardian and his ward which "exhibited the influence of Dickens in its character portrayal,"<sup>25</sup> but a decade later he was clearly moving away from simple entertainment with no well established alternative.

Hartmann does not appear to have been aware of either Howard or Herne, although his distaste for naturalism suggests that he would not have been impressed with either. He was well aware, however, of Howells, a transplanted Bostonian whose move to Manhattan in 1880 signalled the beginning of the New York trend. As the champion of American

realism and publisher of Mark Twain and Henry James, Howells towered over the literary scene and loomed as a natural beacon for Hartmann, Merrill, and their band of Bohemians:

He had rooms at the Everett House on Union Square and we formed regular delegations to call on him and ask him for his opinion on Looking Backward or Hoyt, the farce writer, the histrionism of Richard Mansfield or the art of St. Gaudens.<sup>26</sup>

Hartmann made a favorable impression on Howells and was invited several times to dinners at home with Howells and his wife and daughter. Taking a liking to him and offering support for his career, Howells let him know that he would be available for him anytime in the afternoon or evening, but that Hartmann should not disturb him in the mornings when he typically wrote. Incredibly, Hartmann found a way to promptly scuttle this promising contact:

Fate willed it so that I called one day at 11 a.m. He came from his study rather grouchy: "Did I not tell you not to come in the mornings?" "I do not want to talk to you, exactly," I replied. "What, then?" "I wish you would let me have five dollars." He handed me the five in a most gentleman like manner but somehow our relations got strained thereby.<sup>27</sup>

Of all of Hartmann's faults, his penchant for panhandling from the prosperous was certainly his most personally expensive excess. If it had only been a private joke with him, then he might well have studied its limits, but on the contrary, he seemed never to comprehend that to most Americans, the request itself was offensive.

As he had with Whitman, Hartmann displayed a belief that genius should be excused from common social obligations and should be supported by society at large. Having declared himself a genius, he expected to be indulged accordingly and could not accept that his persistent requests for cash were somehow inappropriate. Willing to starve rather than descend to a life of commerce, Hartmann saw himself as a counterpart to the artists of the French avant-garde, some of whom, as Roger Shattuck pointed out, "lived in poverty and at times frightful physical hardship [which] demonstrates the dedication of their lives."<sup>28</sup> In America, however, poverty was viewed not as a badge of honor, but as bad manners at best.

Hartmann's main focus at this time remained his ambition of becoming a respected theatrical producer and playwright. In early 1890 he completed a new play, Osadda's Revenge, which borrowed its title from a respelling of his mother's name and was intended as a serious response to Ibsen but which, as Hartmann later confessed, "suffered from all the faults of a Bowery burlesque."<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, he pulled together a company of willing amateurs in New York and, playing the lead role himself, opened the play in Paterson, New Jersey. The result, as recounted by George Knox and Harry Lawton, was predictable:

Hartmann's pretty ingénue was a night watchman's daughter, naïveté personified, and he was willing to forgive her anything for her "copious wavy hair and her mild and ladylike character." Off-stage she vibrated

with the passions of a Mrs. Siddons; before the footlights she delivered lines with the sing song earnestness of a child asked to recite "The Boy Stood on the Burning Deck." The production bombed [and] fell apart in Paterson when the girl's irate father and husky brothers swooped down on the stage and took her home.<sup>30</sup>

The most remarkable thing about Osadda's Revenge, however, is not the charming tale of amateur high jinks surrounding its only production, but the almost naked way in which it exposes Hartmann's own personal drama. Stuffed with a variety of scenes lampooning privileged society, the play was held together by a plot detailing a young Japanese/American's desire to avenge his Japanese mother's death by murdering his American father. Hartmann not only cast himself in the patricide's role, but named it Hidetara, a name reminiscent of his brother Hidetaru.

Osadda's Revenge opens at a dance in the ballroom of a hotel in Newport where Mr. Dayton, a New York merchant, and his debutante daughter, Edith, have come to meet Edith's older sister, Clarissa. Others at the dance include Miss Helena Blueblood, a society spinster, Le Baron d'Epignol, a literary poseur, Mr. Van Bos, an old and prosperous farmer, and his son George, a medical student and Edith's boyfriend.

Edith, of course, is quite thrilled to be at the dance and giddily flirts with various men while complaining that George is late. In comic contrast, Miss Blueblood, who is believed to have money, is pursued by d'Epignol. These characters parade on and off while the heart of the play is

soon revealed to be Clarissa's romance with Hidetara, a Japanese gentleman.

This romance is complicated by the fact that, unknown to Hidetara, Clarissa is already married to a man named Clay, a gambler who is now in jail, dying of some unexplained illness. All of this is revealed in a scene with Clarissa's friend Cora, who advises her to tell all to Hidetara.

But Hidetara has his own concerns, obsessed as he is by his mother's death:

Hidetara: Strange. A feeling of loneliness has haunted all my life, and yet I cannot get used to scenes of gayety and mirth. In every joyful hour there steals upon me a feeling of sadness; my mind wanders back to the past, a strange mysterious light breaks through the mist of my thoughts and sentiments, and I behold the land where I was born—Japan—its conical mountains, its bamboo groves with idols of sandstone, its curved bridges and rustic tea houses covered with moss, the grey roofs of its temples, but plainer than all these I see the little cottage where my mother died.

Clarissa: Look, what a beautiful night!

Hidetara: The world is beautiful everywhere, but why is human life so sad.<sup>31</sup>

Distracted from her own troubles, Clarissa presses Hidetara for an explanation of his gloomy mood:

Hidetara: My life is a Japanese Romance. Two passions have made out my life. The unquenchable thirst for affection, and the mighty all-consuming passion for revenge—to revenge my mother's death. (Takes a dagger that is hidden under his garment) Oh

Murisame, truest friend, when will you execute the deed for which I consecrated you.

Clarissa: Speak on—speak on!

Hidetara: From my childhood I remember nothing but hunger, cold, and want and the tears of my mother. I often asked her if I was the cause, but she sadly shook her head and whispered "I mourn for him, whom I can never forget, who promised to be faithful and true." As I grew older I learnt to understand these words.

Clarissa: Oh, tell me all!

Hidetara: My mother was a lady of rank who loved a foreigner. To him she sacrificed her position, wealth and soul—and he—after the beauty of her life had faded, left her in sad straits. Barred out from society, heartbroken and destitute, she had to work day and night for her children's sake. Her tender limbs had never ached before from work, her health was feeble and her mind confused since that all nameless day. My brother and sister died from want. I was left alone. Half-mad my mother staggered through the streets and prayed in every temple for relief from all her earthly sorrows. At last she died!—Oh mother I know why you come to me so often in my waking dreams, and look at me with your sad, dark, burning eyes. They refused you the privilege to rest where your forefathers lie! They carried you to some woodland solitude, put a few flowers on your breast, heaped a funeral pyre, and burnt you like a pariah in that lonesome place where only the cedar trees could mourn your death. In that hour I vowed to revenge my mother's misery and death. I have searched for the murderer for many restless years, but all my efforts proved in vain. Nevertheless, I'll search for him until I have found him, and that hour will be his last.<sup>32</sup>

Clarissa is shocked by all this and attempts to talk him out of it. But Hidetara is resolute. Eventually, the truth about her husband comes out, but just as Hidetara has reached a peak of bitter despair, a letter arrives announcing that

Clarissa's husband has died in jail and the first act ends with Clarissa and Hidetara announcing their engagement.

Of course, at the top of the second act, Mr. Dayton is immediately revealed as Osadda's long lost lover when he describes his remorse in a soliloquy while fondling the last letter that she wrote to him, a letter that he has never opened, but kept locked in a safe for twenty years. His reverie is soon interrupted by Edith and the bulk of the act is then taken up by George's courtship of her and the bothersome entrance of the townspeople from act one.

Finally, Hidetara and Clarissa meet again with Hidetara still plotting his revenge. To distract him, Clarissa introduces him to her father who immediately recognizes him as his surviving Japanese son. Dayton tries to conceal his emotions, but Hidetara has caught the scent and, after forcing him to confess, threatens him with the dagger. Lightning flashes, Clarissa throws herself in front of the knife, and Hidetara drops it just as the curtain falls.

Much of the third act is taken up with the engagement of Edith and George and the subsequent competition between Van Bos and d'Epignol for the hand of Miss Blueblood. Eventually, Hidetara enters and tries to convince Clarissa to marry him. He promises to renounce his thirst for revenge if she will return to Japan with him. But she feels too loyal to her father and refuses.

Left alone, Hidetara again swears revenge but, before he can act, Cora enters and stops him. She tells him about her

own life, that she too had a lover who left her with a child that she was too poor to support. The child died, but, having forgiven her lover's cruelty, she asserts that Osadda surely did the same for Mr. Dayton before she died.

Hidetara admits that Cora's intuition is true, but remains uncertain until Dayton appears and asks for forgiveness. Moved, Hidetara relents and hands the knife to Cora. Clarissa is then reunited with Hidetara and the play ends happily.

Osadda's Revenge is an awkward play by an angry young man looking to settle a score. Embroidered with a collection of stock characters that would reappear, somewhat improved, in later Hartmann plays such as Boston Lions, it exhibits an almost morbid self-absorption. It seems much less a play than an attempted exorcism, one which failed to succeed. It is particularly notable that more than fifty years later, Hartmann would still be nursing his grudge to such a degree that Fowler could quote him regarding his mother's death in a passage that is no less bitter than this play.

By this point, Hartmann had suffered one rejection after another, many brought on by his own unwillingness to moderate his expectations of others. Most of all, Hartmann lacked the guidance that a parent could have offered. With his mother long dead and his father forever distant, he drifted from one upheaval to another while seeking the comfort and security he had known briefly in his youth.

Toward the end of 1890, two events occurred which brought Hartmann's malaise to a fever pitch. First, Stuart Merrill, his closest friend and ally, decided to return to Paris. Merrill had been planning this since before they had met and Hartmann knew of his intention. Still, it was a terrible disappointment when Merrill finally left, "giving me his blessings, and so the literary circle lost some of its charm for me."<sup>33</sup>

Much more devastating, however, was a meeting with his father in New York. They spent an evening over dinner in polite but strained conversation spoiled at the end by Oscar Hartmann's comment that Sadakichi probably would like a thousand dollars, since "less would be of no use to him."<sup>34</sup> He gave him nothing then, but later sent him a check for a lesser amount.

Hartmann's resentment for the years of callous neglect and humiliation finally boiled over. He fired off a violent letter to his father, returning the check and accusing him of withholding funds that belonged to him. He threatened that if the money was not sent, "I would not know what I would be capable of if our paths ever crossed again."<sup>35</sup> Oscar responded that if Sadakichi ever wrote to him again he would contact the police. Hartmann, not yet a naturalized citizen, was silenced and never saw his father again.

Burning with anger and frustration, Hartmann withdrew from his circle and isolated himself in his studio. For three weeks of creative fury in November of 1890, he wrote

his first symbolist play, Christ, and dedicated it "to all those who have misjudged, humiliated, or injured me during my past life."<sup>36</sup>

## NOTES TO CHAPTER 3.

1. Hartmann, Autobiography, 244.
2. Stuart Merrill, Walt Whitman (Toronto: Henry S. Saunders, 1922), 4.
3. Ibid., 5.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., 9-10.
6. Hartmann, Autobiography, 247.
7. Ibid., 249.
8. C. Sadakichi Hartmann, "A German Novelist and Dramatist," The Theatre Magazine, 6 (March 1890): 313.
9. C. Sadakichi Hartmann, "Richard Voss," The Theatre Magazine, vol. 6 (December 1889): 137.
10. C. Sadakichi Hartmann, "European Dramatists," The Theatre Magazine, 6 (April 1890): 412.
11. C. Sadakichi Hartmann, "The Lies of Naturalism," The Theatre Magazine, 7 (November 1890): 95.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. C. Sadakichi Hartmann, "Recent New York Productions," The Theatre Magazine, 6 (February 1890): 264.
15. Ibid., 265.
16. C. Sadakichi Hartmann, "Evolution in Acting," The Theatre Magazine, 6 (January 1890): 218.

17. C. Sadakichi Hartmann, "Nym Crinkle, The Critic," The Theatre Magazine, 6 (January 1890): 204.
18. Ibid.
19. Montrose Moses, The American Dramatist (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1925), 190.
20. Arthur Hobson Quinn A History of the American Drama (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1927), 39.
21. Ibid., 40.
22. Ibid., 53.
23. Brander Matthews, "On Putting Literature Into the Drama," Principles of Playmaking (New York: Scribner's, . 1919), 150.
24. Quinn, History of the American Drama, 70.
25. Ibid., 219.
26. Hartmann, Autobiography, 247.
27. Ibid., 248.
28. Roger Shattuck, The Banquet Years (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), 26.
29. Sadakichi Hartmann, cited by George Knox and Harry Lawton in "Introduction," Three Prophetic Plays, xxiii.
30. Ibid.
31. Sadakichi Hartmann, Osadda's Revenge (Manuscript, Riverside, CA: Thomas Rivera Library, 1889?), 12.
32. Ibid., 14-16.
33. Hartmann, Autobiography, 248.
34. Ibid., 35.
35. Ibid., 37.

36. C. Sadakichi Hartmann, Christ: A Dramatic Poem in Three Acts (New York: Author's Edition, 1893), 3.

## CHAPTER 4

CHRIST

In his 1925 book, The American Dramatist, Montrose J. Moses advanced the theory that the failure of poetic drama to find an audience in the United States was due entirely to the inability of American poets to grasp the essentials of the dramatic form. As examples for his thesis, Moses chose writers of verse like Thomas Godfrey, author of The Prince of Parthia (1765), James Nelson Barker, author of eleven plays including Superstition: or, The Fanatic Father, and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, who wrote a number of poetic plays and closet dramas intended only for reading. According to Moses: "the poet has not only misinterpreted the functions of drama, but has limited the essence of the poetic to a manner of expression; he has not only been content to deal with life in the abstract, but he has departed from life in the search for beauty."<sup>1</sup> Moses believed that the very concept of a poetic theatre was a misnomer since poets, as he defined them, lacked the essential pragmatism of the successful playwright:

Whenever a poet turns playwright, we may be sure that we are to be treated to a baffling maze of half-formed ideas, to metaphor and simile that are lost to the listening ear before they are fully uttered.

Such drama, I claim, is twice removed in its relationship to the bare boards of the stage, by reason of its surcharged beauty and by reason of its classic form. . . . The poet, turned dramatist, is

condescending toward the stage; and he has added nothing to the theatre that it did not already know.<sup>2</sup>

The sole exception, which Moses took as proof of his rule, was that of Geroge Henry Boker (1823-1890), whose Francesca da Rimini (1855) Moses considered successful as a stageworth composition. Nevertheless, he faulted Boker for a lack of dedication: "writng was to him . . . a grace rather than an eranest accomplishment."<sup>3</sup>

However reductive, Moses's argument summed up the position of many writers, producers, and critics of the late nineteenth century American theatre. Even William Dean Howells, who had written a number of poetic plays himself, including Yorick's Love (1878), Priscilla: A Comedy (1879-1882), and A Sea Change: or, Love's Stowaway (1888), "declared that any play which proposed to be a faithful representation of lives of men and women should not be written in verse form."<sup>4</sup>

What Moses and the practical people of the theatre were pleased to ignore, is the degree to which the commercial theatre's demands dictate the success or failure of a playwright. In general, it is not unfair to say that audiences have limited enthusiasm for entertainments which challenge their authority; first and foremost, audiences want to be pleased. Literary and poetic playwrights, on the other hand, implicitly challenge the audience and thus have always been actively discouraged because of the greater risk that producers face in supporting them. What critics like Moses

choose to overlook is the degree to which the literary and poetic playwrights influenced and ultimately guided the commercial theatre.

The playwrights who fought for more a literary theatre in the 1880s and 1890s were often accused of being less than serious, dilettantes who toyed with half baked notions and untested theories. Those, on the other hand, who wrote according to approved techniques, and especially those who made money, were considered serious, even though they may have been mere hacks with nothing more to express than a desire for ready cash. The fact that literary and poetic dramatists were quite willing to sacrifice commercial rewards in order to pursue art was not viewed as serious dedication but as simpleminded folly.

Thus, when Sadakichi Hartmann set out in late 1890 to write Christ: A Poetic Drama In Three Acts, he did so knowing that he was flying in the face of accepted practice and personal experience. He had already seen the failure of his Ibsen project, Osadda's Revenge, and Mademoiselle Bébé. Yet, rather than work in the accepted commercial style, Hartmann chose to make a bid for artistic authority. In doing so, he attempted to go beyond the realism advocated by Howells or the naturalism promoted by Ibsen and turned to symbolism, a movement which was still quite new in Europe and almost unknown in the United States.

Thanks in part to Merrill, Hartmann had been introduced to a number of symbolist writers and was convinced that they had found a new and significant form:

I got acquainted with Strindberg's Red Room, Hansum's Hunger, and Maeterlinck thorough a feuilleton by Octave Mirbeau—they were real events! It seemed to me then (and still does) that in his early writings showed us a new way of saying things and if he had continued to express the eurythmia of soul aciton by repitition, dreamlike incoherency and scenery of mist he would have become the great exponent of a new poetry. Alas, he drifted back to accepted classic ways, just at a time when the arts, quite suddenly, turned "right about" in an entirely different direction. What strange visions I entertained how I would stage his L' Intruse and Les Aveugles in a theatre of my own!5

Thus inspired, Hartmann wrote his first poetic play, Christ, a symbolist tragedy depicting the awakening of a transcendental consciousness. Written in a kind of free verse that recalls his fascination with Whitman, the play incorporated material from the unfinished Constellations and described the spiritual growth of its title character in markedly sexual terms. In fact, Hartmann's Christ goes so far as to propose that the fundamental crisis which revealed Christ's true, supernatural identity, was brought on by the fatal competition between his two earthly lovers.

Jeshua (Christ) dwells in a world defined by materialism and lust. In the opening scene a series of brief dialogues outline the world view of those who surround him. For Tubal Cain, a moneylender, "Mammon is a lust of possession and so is love. . . . Those who willingly denounce wealth in words

would be the very ones to misuse it, if they could."<sup>6</sup> Moments later, Semaja, a young man of the village, reenforces this materialistic aspect of sexuality: "a wind stirred garment reveals to men all there is and all there ever will be."<sup>7</sup> The poet Ellosar, on the other hand, echoes Tubal Cain's equivocal approach to morality: "Virtue can only be based on knowledge and conviction. The innocent and ignorant can be neither chaste nor sensual."<sup>8</sup> Finally, Carus Maximus, a Roman soldier, debases all moralistic speculations by advancing the glories of military life: "Rather a scabrous gladiator than a decrepit sage!"<sup>9</sup>

The narrowness of mortal vision, earthbound and shallow, is then underscored by the Hermit:

The feeling of approaching darkness and melancholy solitude of night, puts my mind at rest. All your strength, imagination, ardent zeal of youth, will arrive at the same goal. And as annihilation knows of no restraint, the nations which you conquer, as well as the Roman Empire which you serve, will perish. At last all humanity will decay. Sun and Stars will extinguish; like this day, the earth will sink into oblivion."<sup>10</sup>

This, in essence, is the symbolist message of futility and decay. The villagers, of course, are unable to see beyond their petty interests, but the Hermit, who is said to be Jeshua's father, possesses an awareness of the metaphysical insignificance of earthly reality. As Jeshua's father, moreover, he can lay claim to otherworldly connections. Like a representative of the long line of pessimistic Hebrew prophets credited with the Old Testament

writings, he embodies an even more direct connection with the harsh forces of creation. The Hermit is the flip side of the old world coin, one that both espouses and condemns materialism without offering a spiritual alternative. Certainly, the nihilism espoused by the Hermit could not be expected to gather many converts.

Jeshua, however, stands apart from this self-contained futility, though few perceive just how removed he actually is. In general, the men either ridicule or ignore him while most of the women simply cannot understand him. One, Alohibah, claims to have loved him, while another, the widow Eva, believes that "Jeshua deserves everyone's love."<sup>11</sup>

It is two outsiders, however, who are most struck by Jeshua's uniqueness. The first is Hannah, a pilgrim, who no sooner sees him than she is overcome by an intense "voluptuousness of the soul." Moments later, Zenobia, a foreign queen, enters with her train and is also swept by a wave of passion, though hers is of the more physical variety.

Later, when Hannah tries to warn Jeshua of the possessive nature of Zenobia's love, he quickly recognizes Hannah as his soul's twin and in a long pair of intertwined speeches they proclaim their love which "fills the world with the thunder of unearthly joy."<sup>12</sup> The Hermit reenters at the end of this scene and, perceiving the intensity of their love, draws a parallel with his vision of the universe "when at last, in the distant future, all the ambitious suns of heaven tumble into one mighty, burning giant star, who will

shed a light of redemption over the final union of hostile elements, sleeping mysteriously and motionless in the dark immensity of time."<sup>13</sup>

Jeshua, perhaps because of the Hermit's reaction to Hannah, is filled with doubt and in a dreamlike soliloquy, dreads the thought that she might leave him. At first, he curses the earth and humanity but then a voice tells him that "human sins will be forgiven through your faith in Hannah's faith."<sup>14</sup> Instantly strengthened by this revelation, he enters the desert to ponder his mission in solitude.

The desert, of course, is home to the Hermit who believes that "hope is justified through nothing on this earth, for existence is illusion, and human efforts but a grand mistake."<sup>15</sup> The desert encounter between Jeshua and the Hermit parodies the Biblical scene in which Lucifer probed Christ's doubts, demanding that Jehovah both feed and protect Christ in the wilderness. In Jeshua's temptation, the Hermit perversely demands that men should abandon their appetites to gain peace and when he asks who will help Jeshua in his task, Jeshua replies that he trusts only in himself. Lucifer's final trial was to offer Christ dominion over the earth; the Hermit confronts Jeshua with the futility of human endeavor against which Jeshua pits his faith in love.

Routed but ever the cynic, the Hermit exits and is soon replaced by Zenobia who has come to claim her love. Jeshua, of course, refuses her and Zenobia, the femme fatale who has conquered every man she has ever encountered, is humiliated.

Later, after Jeshua and Hannah have been reunited, Zenobia persuades Hannah to leave the village and enter her camp by asserting that "your faithfulness would hinder him."<sup>16</sup>

Meanwhile, Jeshua has found an unexpected disciple in Ellosar, the poet. After confronting the derision of the villagers, Ellosar declares his love for the widow Eva in a scene which suggests that artists, not hermetic prophets, will perpetuate the message of love.

In the climactic scene, Jeshua confronts Zenobia who has poisoned Hannah. Dying, Hannah asks Jeshua not to mourn for her, only to "think of me often when I am no more."<sup>17</sup>

Jeshua's mother would kill Zenobia, but Jeshua prevents her. Awed by this, Zenobia prostrates herself and Jeshua calls on the "God of Truth" for forgiveness for them all.

As a drama of Christ's spiritual awakening, the play encompasses many themes which are well outside traditional Christian theology, not the least of which is the concept that Christ did not, apparently, possess transcendental knowledge at birth but required the love of another to achieve this first step in his destiny. The supposition of this all-too-human imperfection leads directly to the domestic, demythological treatment of a tale laden with tradition. In this play, Jeshua's doubts are entirely human, his temptation is at the hands of human agents, and his spiritual breakthrough comes via the faith that "if men and women had no secrets from each other, . . . they would not hesitate to pity and pardon, trust and assist each other."<sup>18</sup>

Nowhere in this progression is the hand of God readily apparent, rather the divine presence is felt almost exclusively in Jeshua's faith and only at the very last does the appearance of a halo signify that this faith may not be misplaced. In effect, the question of the existence of the "God of Truth" becomes extraneous, for if it is necessary to create this God, Jeshua seems quite capable of doing so. Indomitably, his faith obliterates doubt, his purity redefines humanity, his love expands the universe.

Many other elements in the play are drawn directly from the symbolist catalogue. Dreams play a large role in this drama, serving not only as a conduit to the transcendental universe of stars, comets, and ether, but also as an agent of doubt and fear. Jeshua is the only character in the play who dreams. His dreams are of such intensity, that he can enter the dreaming state with sudden facility where, as Strindberg asserted: "anything can happen, everything is possible and probable. Time and space do not exist."<sup>19</sup> This ability points to the special significance of the dreamworld and its influence on the action of the play.

The focus on the destructive potential of sexuality is also in the symbolist tradition and Zenobia represents one of its most extreme expressions. Zenobia is Jeshua's Salomé, the archetype of all symbolist femme fatales. A slightly older and much more jaded version, Zenobia is nonetheless a true destroyer of men and in a physical, sexual, materialistic world, she knows no equal. Confronted with

Jeshua, however, she soon recognizes her inferiority. In truth, it is Jeshua who is Zenobia's destroyer, for it is in him that she finds what Frank Kermode described as "an innocent, totally destructive malice; beauty inhumanly immature."<sup>20</sup> Their positions are thus reversed and Zenobia survives only because of Jeshua's assumption of grace.

The Hermit is, above all, the symbolistic voice of pessimism, nihilism, and futility. Yet, he too is routed by Jeshua, an action which points up the significant difference between Christ and most symbolist drama, for the Hermit, like many other symbolist elements, is introduced only to be superseded by Jeshua's doggedly positivist vision. Jeshua simply does not accept that life is meaningless anymore than he limits himself to a purely material relationship to his world. He knows there is more to reality than others imagine because he has seen it in his dreams.

Just as he turned Christian tradition inside out, so Hartmann bent the tools of symbolism against one of its most fundamental aspects, its existential despair. With Christ Hartmann succeeded in injecting an unexpected but essential ingredient into the symbolist ethos. Christ plays both Christian and symbolist ends against themselves to embrace a middle ground founded on optimism, hope, and faith.

This optimism was based not on a belief in a "God of Truth," as Jeshua expressed it, or in man's rational perfectibility, but rather on the idea that the spiritual essence which animates man is part and parcel of every

material aspect of the universe. This concept of spirituality is often touched upon in the many references paralleling stars and souls and in Jeshua's younger sister's statement that: "I think that flowers have a soul like human beings,"<sup>21</sup> but is never fully or explicitly expressed. Christ was certainly an original and daring play, not only for its time but even for the present day. By late 1891, symbolism as a movement had produced only a handful of significant plays, most notably Maurice Maeterlinck's The Intruder (1890), The Blind (1890), and Pelleas and Mellisande (1891), and Axel (1890) by Villiers de l'Isle-Adam. Christ was a strong departure from any of these, however, and it was not until Oscar Wilde wrote Salomé (1892) that another symbolist play appeared with which it could properly be compared. In fact, a comparison between Christ and Salomé is especially telling because it shows how two authors of very different means and temperments could arrive at such strikingly similar results in their art and their lives.

Unlike Sadakichi Hartmann when he wrote Christ, Oscar Wilde does not seem to have been under any particular emotional strain when he chose to write Salomé. In fact, he was then in the midst of his most productive period, having recently published The Picture of Dorian Gray (1890), and had had The Duchess of Padua (1882) produced in New York in the spring of 1891 while he was in London completing Lady Windermere's Fan (1891) and generally celebrating his success with articles, appearances, and travel. In early

1891, Wilde went to Paris with his family and was introduced to Mallarmé who gave him a copy of his translation of Poe's The Raven. He left Paris that spring, but returned in the fall of 1891 and presented Mallarmé with a copy of Dorian Gray. Having left his family behind, he quickly became absorbed in the symbolist circle which then included poets like Andre Gide and Stuart Merrill, playwrights like Rachilde and Maeterlinck, and avant-garde producers like Paul Fort of the Théâtre d'Art and Lugné-Poe of the Théâtre de l'Œuvre. Though his social interests kept him preoccupied, he nevertheless found time to produce three drafts of Salomé in barely two months.

For many years there was considerable debate, sparked primarily by Lord Alfred Douglas who later translated the play into English, about whether or not Wilde had actually written Salomé in French or had translated it into French after first working in English. This matter was finally put to rest by H. Montgomery Hyde when he discovered and translated passages from previously unknown diaries of Stuart Merrill. In them, Merrill addressed the point directly:

So as to put an end to inaccurate statements it will be of advantage to report that Salomé was written in French by Wilde, then revised and corrected by me, [Adolphe] Retté and Pierre Louÿs in that order, but solely from the point of view of the language. [Marcel] Schwob corrected the proofs. Wilde was thus the sole author of Salomé, any corrections that were made being only for the purpose of drawing attention to the faults in his French.<sup>22</sup>

Salomé is a thoroughly remarkable one-act poetic play which displays Wilde at his most ingenious. By choosing to dramatize the spectacle of the symbolist muse, he had accepted an enormous challenge. The brevity of this story in the New Testament (Matthew 14: 1-13) was in itself attractive to the symbolists because they could invest it with their own visions. Wilde portrays Salomé as a childlike, destructively chaste figure. The result was a play of striking imagery and subtle action which leads to a grotesque climax followed by a shocking denouement.

Dramatically, the play seems almost devoid of action until its final stages. Set on a terrace above the banquet hall in the court of the Tetrarch Herod, Soldiers, a pair of visiting Nobles, and the Page of Herodias discuss the ominous brilliance of the moon, the unearthly beauty of Salomé, and the arrival of a captive Jokanaan (John the Baptist) whose fate is to be decided by Rome. Offstage, locked in a cistern, Jokanaan hurls invective and righteous prophecy at his captors which echoes strangely on the terrace disturbing noble and servant alike.

Into this moonlit scene drifts Salomé, having slipped away from the banquet below. She is bored, restless, and disgusted with the Tetrarch and his Roman court's lustful attention. The young Syrian Prince is immediately attracted to her, but Salomé ignores him, taken instead by the weird ravings of Jokanaan whom she has never met. Fascinated by the prophet's wild harangue, she orders the soldiers to bring

him to her. Fearful of the Tetrarch, however, they initially refuse.

Salomé promptly turns to the young Syrian Prince and, playing on his desire for her, convinces him to command the soldiers to bring Jokanaan forward.

Before her at last, Jokanaan curses Herod, her mother Herodias, and Salomé herself. The others onstage are horrified but Salomé is astonished to find herself delighted by his ghastly appearance and blunt abuse. Overwhelmed by his spiritual force, she attempts to seduce him in passages reminiscent of the Song of Solomon and, after being further rebuked, she is about to kiss his mouth when the Syrian Prince, despairing of her indifference to him, stabs himself dead at her feet.

Jokanaan is taken away and the Prince's body is carried off just as Herod enters, looking for Salomé. Surrounded by religious and political supplicants arguing over Jokanaan's pedigree, Herod can think only of Salomé, much to the displeasure of Herodias, the wife he murdered his brother to obtain. Finally, after Herodias accuses him of impotence, he makes his fateful bargain with Salomé: if she will dance for him, he will give her anything she asks, even if it costs half his kingdom.

Salomé agrees and dances the erotic dance of the seven veils which greatly pleases Herod. He repeats his offer to Salomé and then is appalled when she demands as her payment the head of Jokanaan. Herod attempts to bargain with Salomé

but Herodias applauds her choice and eggs her on, and Herod is ultimately forced to comply.

The play climaxes as the head is brought out on a silver platter, and Salomé, still enthralled by the dead prophet's strange beauty, swears her love for him and then kisses his now bloodless lips. It is a grisly moment lit by a blood red moon.

Salomé continues to fondle the head as Herod recovers from his obscene torpor and, in the final line of the play, orders his guards to kill her. Then, he exits as the soldiers carry out his fatal command.

While there are many obvious differences between Christ and Salomé, their similarities are more striking. As a work of the symbolist school Salomé exhibits all of the major themes associated with the movement, including the expression of decadence at the end of an era; the intense self-consciousness displayed most prominently by Salomé herself but also found in the other characters' moral perversity; the eerie, ominous atmosphere heightened by the changing moon, the chill air, and the dread signs found by the characters foretelling evil events; and the enervation of the characters, drained of energy and unable to resist the attraction of a grotesque fate.

Both Zenobia and Salomé are presented as sexual predators, destroyers of men and women, and both are confronted in the figures of Jeshua and Jokanaan with beings of transcendental purity. Jokanaan, of course, is far more

violent than Jeshua, and Salomé is less mature than Zenobia, but where Wilde represents a fairly stereotyped rendition of the male/female antagonism, Hartmann blends the standard roles so that it is the sexual destroyer Zenobia who is crushed more by her own mania than by any action of Jeshua.

Both plays are infused with the imagery of dreams and celestial bodies. But, where Hartmann makes the dream world unique to Jeshua, Wilde seems to make Salomé a dreamworld entire with the moon and the wind characters whose force is felt in the action of the play. Rather than set up a naturalistic frame of cause and effect psychology initiated by Salomé's love for Jokanaan, Wilde makes the moon the activator of the play. As a result, the moral element is reduced to almost nothing since the character's motivations have been limited to the point that they cannot be judged.

Wilde populated his play with characters that, in the symbolist style, appeared to lack dimensionality in order to heighten the supernatural behavior of elemental forces. The dialogue is deliberately not conversational. Instead, it is heightened to the point at which the characters do not communicate. It has an ornateness similar to Biblical passages, employing simile to describe action and character. Also employed is oppositional dialogue in which a statement is advanced and then immediately countered, a technique which reinforces the negation of cause and effect reality. Hartmann, on the other hand, employed poetic language to support the complexity of his characters.

Perhaps the most significant point of comparison between the plays rests on the autobiographical subtext for each. Perceptive critics like Jackson Holbrook focused on this element in Salomé, declaring it "an eternal tale in which he himself [Wilde] is hero."<sup>23</sup> Richard Ellman pursued this point further:

The execution of Salomé was not in the Bible, but Wilde insisted upon it. So at the play's end the emphasis suddenly shifts to Herod, who is seen to have yielded to Salomé's sensuality, and then to the revulsion of Jokanaan from that sensuality, and to have survived them both. In Herod, Wilde was suggesting that tertium quid which he felt to be his own nature, susceptible to contrary impulses but not abandoned for long to either.<sup>24</sup>

For Ellman, Salomé is a kind of monodrama in which Wilde, embodied by the figure of Herod, grapples with the spiritual/sexual conflict presented by the confrontation between Jokanaan and Salomé. Jokanaan and Salomé were seen as surrogates respectively for John Ruskin and Walter Pater, the first a noted poet and professor of Wilde's at Oxford, the other a fellow student, who held strongly opposing views and had a powerful affect on Wilde:

Pater and Ruskin were for Wilde at first imagined, and then actual figures; they came to stand heraldically, burning unicorn and uninflamed satyr, in front of two portals of his mental theatre. He sometimes allowed them to battle, at other times tried to reconcile them.<sup>25</sup>

Christ represented a similar exploration for Hartmann as George Knox and Harry Lawton noted:

Gradually Hartmann's reveries consolidated into a theme for the drama: the battle of eros and agape. The theme represented a compromise with the Lutheran puritanism that was still a predominant part of Hartmann's makeup, which had even prompted him despite increasing agnosticism regularly to attend church in Philadelphia and later to listen to sermons of various faiths in Boston. For several years he had been writing erotic poetry; it was based on sexual fantasies rather than any amatory experience. . . . The work that began developing in Hartmann's mind bridged these conflicts.<sup>26</sup>

While Hartmann could not reasonably cast himself at the center of his drama, he did place a supporting character representative of himself near to the action. This, of course, is Ellosar the poet and, just as he was later to do with the Nichi Swartzman character in Boston Lions, he allowed Ellosar the latitude to act as the chorus for the play's theme.

The influence of Whitman can also be felt in the play's erotic focus. As if to acknowledge this debt, Hartmann created the Hermit, a character which acts as a spiritual antagonist for Jeshua by expressing a vision that is equally cosmic but less hopeful.

As if all of these thematic, textual, and psychological similarities were not enough, the plays even had similar results when presented to the public.

Apparently, Wilde had no immediate plans for the play after its completion as he then returned to England to assist in the production of Lady Windermere's Fan which opened in London on February 20, 1892. Some critics, such as St. John

Hankin who thought that Salomé was Wilde's best play, nevertheless believed that it was "not written for the theatre. When Wilde wrote it he had no idea of its ever being acted. . . . and so his genius had free scope."<sup>27</sup> But more probably, Wilde saw no difficulty with the play. With Lady Windermere yet to be produced, Salomé would not have been entirely unexpected from an author known for the daring Dorian Gray and the romantic, neo-Elizabethan Duchess of Padua.

Lady Windermere was a tremendous success and, at a party given by Henry Irving, Wilde came to the attention of Sarah Bernhardt who asked him why he had never written a part for her. He replied that he had, and read Salomé to her. Bernhardt was pleased and promptly took the play under her wing, gathering an all French cast and setting up rehearsals with herself in the title role.

But the play ran afoul of the Lord Chamberlain's office for the licensing of plays which banned it on the basis of its Biblical content, a subject which had been forbidden in England since the Protestant Reformation. Bernhardt was obliged to drop the project in mid-rehearsal and the ban became a literary cause célèbre which had the unintended effect of lengthening the lines outside the ticket booth of Lady Windermere's Fan. Salomé was finally published the following year, 1893, and later produced with an amateur cast in Paris at the Theatre de l'Œuvre in 1896, but was not produced in England until after Wilde's death in 1900.

Hostile critics of the play were quick to disparage Wilde as a mere imitator and pointed to the influence of Maeterlinck and Flaubert. Arthur Symonds, for instance, stated that "throughout a large part of his work he is seen deliberately imitating the effects that these and other writers have achieved before him. . . . In Salomé, melodrama is mixed with recollections of Pelléas et Mélisande and of La Tentation de Saint Antoine."<sup>28</sup> Similarly, Edward Shanks belittled Wilde's intent, asserting that "he was not an originator, he was . . . a popularizer. . . . One might almost say that Wilde was not so much a writer as a museum."<sup>29</sup> The Pall Mall Gazette also found Salomé's heritage wanting:

If Flaubert had not written Salammbô, if Flaubert had not written La Tentation de Sainte Antione, if Flaubert had not written Herodias, Salomé might boast an originality to which she cannot now lay claim. She is the daughter of too many fathers. She is a victim of heredity. Her bones want strength, her flesh wants vitality, her blood is polluted. There is no pulse of passion in her.<sup>30</sup>

Wilde must certainly have viewed such criticism as ironic since it chastised him for the very effects he intended to create. Other reactions, however, were less easily dismissed. Yeats, for instance, found it "thoroughly bad. . . . It has nothing of drama of any kind, never working to any climax but always ending as it begun."<sup>31</sup> Such comments, though coming from a noted poet, sound remarkably

like the criticism leveled by Montrose Moses at the poetic drama in the United States.

Salomé also had defenders; in particular, George Bernard Shaw who took issue with its censorship, and William Archer who commented on the charge of derivative imitation:

I am quite willing to believe, if necessary, that the two artists [Wilde and Maeterlinck] invented their similar devices independently, to meet a common need; but if, as a matter of fact, the one has taken a hint from the other, I do not see that his essential originality is impaired. There is far more depth in Mr. Wilde's work than in Maeterlinck's. His characters are men and women, not filmy shapes of mist and moonshine.<sup>32</sup>

In time the play found many more supporters, including John Cowper Powys who admired its "sophisticated sensuality,"<sup>33</sup> Max Beerbohm, who declared: "I am enamoured of it. . . . It is a marvellous play,"<sup>34</sup> and Edgar Saltus who, upon hearing Wilde read it, reported:

I experienced that sense of sacred terror which his friends, the Greeks, knew so well. For this thing could have been conceived only by genius wedded to insanity."<sup>35</sup>

Ironically, Christ is a more optimistic play than Salomé, a fact which is contrary to the respective moods of their authors at the time of composition. Wilde, despite the censorship, was triumphant in his notoriety. Hartmann, a year earlier, remained obscure and drifting toward severe depression.

Unlike Wilde, Hartmann found no early support or venue for his play and soon grew less and less productive until he could be described as "houseless and disconsolate, dreaming of suicide at 23, sitting in Union Square at midnight."<sup>36</sup> Eventually, he found himself in a hospital suffering from nervous exhaustion.

Recuperating slowly, his fortunes took a positive turn when he fell in love with his nurse, Elizabeth Blanch Walsh. They were married in the fall of 1891 and then spent the winter of 1892 at her father's home in "the backwoods"<sup>37</sup> of Canada.

Rejuvenated, his attention once again shifted to Europe, and Paris in particular. In the Spring of 1892 he had been hired by the McClure Syndicate as a foreign correspondent. His first assignment would be Paris where, like Wilde before him, he hoped to find a welcome for both Christ and a second symbolist play he had begun to write, Buddha.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER 4.

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3. Ibid., 144.
4. Walter J. Meserve, An Outline History of American Drama (Totowa, New Jersey: Littlefield, Adams & Co., 1965), 192.
5. Hartmann, Autobiography, 249.
6. Sadakichi Hartmann, Christ, reprinted in Three Prophetic Plays, 124.
7. Ibid., 127.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid., 129.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid., 131.
12. Ibid., 134.
13. Ibid., 135.
14. Ibid., 137.
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16. Ibid., 150.
17. Ibid., 164.
18. Ibid., 140.
19. August Strindberg, "Author's Preliminary Note to A Dream Play," in Dramatic Theory and Criticism: Greeks to

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21. Hartmann, Christ, 149.

22. Stuart Merrill, cited by H. Montgomery Hyde in Oscar Wilde (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 1974), 132.

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24. Richard Ellman, "Overtures to Salomé," Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature, reprinted in Oscar Wilde, a Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Richard Ellman (Prentice Hall, Inc.: Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1969), 90.

25. Ellman, "Overtures," 86.

26. Lawton and Knox, "Introduction," Three Prophetic Plays, xxvii.

27. St. John Hankin, "Wilde as a Dramatist," in The Dramatic Works of St. John Hankin, vol. 3 (London: Martin Secker Ltd., 1912), 199.

28. Arthur Symonds, "A Prodigious Entertainer," Athenaeum, May 16, 1908, 599.

29. Edward Shanks, "Oscar Wilde," London Mercury (July, 1924), vol. 10, 286.

30. Anonymous, Pall Mall Gazette, February 27, 1893, 3.

31. William Butler Yeats, letter to T. Sturge Moore, dated May 6, 1906, in W.B. Yeats and T. Sturge Moore: Their Correspondence, 1901-1937, ed. Ursula Bridge (1953), 8.

32. William Archer, "Mr. Oscar Wilde's New Play," in Black and White, (May 11, 1893), v. 290., reprinted in Oscar Wilde: The Critical Heritage, 142.

33. John Cowper Powys, "Wilde as a Symbolic Figure," in Suspended Judgements (New York: 1916), 410.

<sup>34</sup>Max Beerbohm, letter to Reginald Turner, dated February 25, 1893, in Max Beerbohm's Letters to Reggie Turner, ed. Rupert Harte-Davis (London, 1964), 32.

<sup>35</sup>. Edgar Saltus, Oscar Wilde: An Idler's Impression (Chicago: 1917), 20.

<sup>36</sup>. Guido Bruno, "The Poet's Fate," Bruno's Weekly, August 5, 1915.

<sup>37</sup>. Hartmann, Autobiography, 260.

## CHAPTER 5

BUDDHA

Apart from his occasional success at panhandling, Hartmann's primary source of income throughout the 1890s was journalism. Having made his debut in Boston as a free lance and frequently unpaid essayist on art and literature for various papers large and small, he had graduated to New York, becoming a regularly featured and paid columnist for both the New York Herald and the Sun. Lacking the "necessary hustling quality" for straight reportage, Hartmann's forte was criticism, music, theatre, and book reviews, and special articles which he assembled with research from the Astor Library and foreign magazines.

Like most practitioners of the trade, Hartmann had a fairly cynical perspective on its purpose and methodology:

Journalism thrives on the production of second-hand goods. . . . In its realm, plagiarism flourishes like wild flowers in the Rockies. . . . And for that reason, the only member of the press for whom I entertain a vague tinge of respect is the reporter. He has at least genuine experiences, no matter whether he is detailed to cover a fire, interview, elopement or murder case. . . . The astonishing amount of ignorance displayed in this profession may be excusable, in a way it may even be regarded as a valuable asset, as a person thus primitively endowed will approach a situation more naively and be beyond any intellectual influences. . . . And yet he is a hero in comparison with the editorial and special feature writers. . . . And the free lance, the writer of special articles, leads even a more deplorable and wearisome existence. With this party everything is mole-work. Foreign magazines, pictures

and library books are all that are needed for the fabrication of these supplementary achievements.<sup>1</sup>

Ambitious despite his disdain for the craft, Hartmann developed a special stock in trade, the literary interview. These were "reports" of "meetings" with remarkable people pieced together in the usual way, but presented in the first person as though authentic. The first of these was an account of an encounter with Verdi upon the occasion of the opening of his Otello at La Scala in Milan. The piece included a description of the opera house and the scene at the opening, Verdi's appearance before the audience in his box, and a post-performance dialogue regarding his conversion to "Wagnerism."

Though intended as a spoof, Verdi after all was well known to dislike Wagner's work, the article was applauded by readers and editors alike and Hartmann was encouraged to produce more along the same lines. Setting promptly to work, the list of his "victims" grew to include such notables as Tolstoi, Swinburne, Alma Tadema, Louis Pasteur, and even the Empress Eugenie of Russia. Years later, Hartmann would point with a certain amused pride to these inventions:

Interviewing on this order is not entirely without merit. It needs a certain amount of information and imagination. One has to construct a credible environment, describe the appearance and manners of the person, and make the party talk some sense. . . . It is only the dishonesty of the performance which jars. That one person should have met all these celebrities and hobnobbed with them, is incredible at the very outset, but it never seemed to worry my customers."<sup>2</sup>

Considering the number of celebrities that Hartmann is credited with having actually met, this passage sounds almost like a disclaimer for his entire life. It might also make one wonder about the truth of his unstated prototype for all of these interviews, the Whitman "Conversations." As if concerned about just such a point, Hartmann testified that "I was exceedingly careful in getting my facts; I read every book and article on the subject; always procured the necessary portrait, and made the party talk in sentences that were taken--when the victim happened to be an author or scientist--from his published works."<sup>3</sup>

Dated from the appropriate port of call, most of these interviews became the copyrighted property of the European correspondence department of the McClure Syndicate which then featured them in its seven papers nationwide. Hartmann had probably come to this connection by way of his familiarity with William Dean Howells who had been hired by Samuel S. McClure in 1890 for the post of editor of a proposed illustrated magazine. Dozens of "interviews" later, however, Hartmann felt played out and, following his marriage and recuperation, he convinced the Syndicate to send him to Europe where he proposed to write three articles a week of a more genuine nature.

Bad habits died hard, however, and the pressure of constant deadlines forced him to fall back on invention:

Aside from the change in residence, it was very much the same old game. It is a physical impossibility

to study up three celebrities, and arrange a genuine interview with them, if one has only a week and an income of one hundred and fifty francs. . . . And I realized, in the course of time, that to meet a celebrity in the real blood and flesh--and I met many--was of no particular advantage so far as a newspaper story is concerned. It generally proved to be too prosaic or subtle.<sup>4</sup>

His editors evidently had a similar understanding of journalistic veracity. At one point he submitted a carefully researched portrait of Emile Zola which was promptly returned with the note: "not of sufficient interest. Change it if you can."<sup>5</sup> In response, Hartmann called upon his own experiences in Charleroi and described a visit into a local mine, complete with descriptions of costume and supporting characters, which led to an encounter with the great novelist revisiting a scene from Germinal.

Hartmann, of course, did not go to Paris merely to indulge in journalistic sleightsofhand. Arriving with his then pregnant wife in late May 1892, he soon located Stuart Merrill and gained admission to the symbolist circle and the salon of Stephan Mallarmé. But, though he may well have looked forward to this event with as much anticipation as anything in his life, his reaction to the scene was strikingly ambivalent.

He detailed his reactions in an article probably written for the Syndicate but not published until a year later in the first issue of his own magazine, The Art Critic:

Mallarmé is a man of medium height with a beard plentifully streaked with grey; he is somewhat old-fashioned in appearance, reminding one of an old

professor, . . . only the dreamy look in his eyes betrays the poet.

Stephan Mallarmé is probably the most peculiar apparition in the spiritual life of contemporary France. He enjoys the fame of a poet without ever having published any remarkable work. Though nearly sixty, he has only produced a few verses, poems in prose, book reviews, dramatic criticisms, and translations from the English. His fame rests principally upon "L'Après-Midi d'un Faune," a pamphlet of not more than six pages of reading matter. His admirers seem easily to dispense with his productions, they even regard it as a merit that he does not consider his works good enough to print. By his silence he announces the fact that, as yet, he is not competent for the creation of the work he contemplates, and thus to the young literati he represents the symbolical idea of a perfect poet.

The principal characteristics of his writings are (to apply a paradox), their "intelligible unintelligibility." There is not the slightest doubt that he has meditated long over every sentence he has ever published and that his own words are full of deep meaning, but as his own individuality alone is the key to it we outsiders fail to understand him, and the most we might gain by his reading are some vague poetical suggestions. His translations of Poe's poems are in no way remarkable. . . .

His fame is chiefly due to his Tuesday evenings, where he reveals himself as what I would term an intellectual man of fashion par excellence. He speaks as the other symbolists write. He utters any amount of mysterious and harmonious words and his listeners, benumbed, as it were, by the hot punch with which they are served, leave him with the impression that they have received incomprehensible revelations.<sup>6</sup>

Either Hartmann had lost his capacity for hero worship or he was considerably less impressed with "the father of symbolism" than the steady members of the symbolist circle. Certainly, compared to someone like Whitman, Mallarmé must have seemed a surprisingly mild inspiration for the self-proclaimed incendiaries of the avant-garde. But Hartmann had already had long experience with salons of all types, starting with those of his Uncle Ernst and extending through those of Fawcett, Howells, and even his own. Attending

Mallarmé's "slow, languid monologues in the narrow, dusty, mediaeval-looking room in the rue de Rome," Hartmann must have felt some tinge of irony at the similarity of the pretensions displayed on both sides of the Atlantic.

This irony was pointedly expressed in another article in the same issue of The Art Critic. Titled "What is Fin de Siècle?" Hartmann defined the expression as "a meaningless phrase, not new, but lately suggestive of everything new and odd."<sup>7</sup> He described the leading figures of the movement as "a set of strange young men, dreamers and visionaries--often morbid, broken hearted, and poor, always nervous and impossible in society, whose first and last endeavor is to do something original, however odd and erroneous it may be."<sup>8</sup> His archly superior tone concealing his own sense of self-identification, he mocked their "confusion of suppressed ideas, impulses, sardonic smiles, narcotic dreams, chronic mental catarrhs, ascetic efforts, godlike ideas and . . . absurd eccentricities and mannerisms . . ."<sup>9</sup> and concluded that they were much less prophets than novelty seekers.

Clearly, Hartmann was disappointed with the French symbolists, yet he had no intention of abandoning the movement. As a herald of twentieth century modernism, symbolism had already become a recognized international movement and, as an American exponent with a strong Germanic perspective, Hartmann could be expected to have had little patience for the posturings of a self-promoting literary clique. As an artist, he had to be concerned with the larger

problems of symbolism which, even then, pointed toward its decline.

Chief among these problems was the fascination many symbolist writers had with the static quality of painting, a quality which they hoped to incorporate into their plays.

In this late nineteenth-century period, many painters, particularly symbolists like Gustave Moreau, Odilon Redon, Edvard Munch, Ferdinand Knopff, and James Ensor, had a literary bent and were able to envision the merger of their talents with the expressive possibilities of the theatre. At the same time, symbolist playwrights sought "inspiration and visual corroboration for their images in the work of painters who were a part of the same movement, often did stage design and costumes, and were themselves deeply theatrical in their art."<sup>10</sup> As a result, painting was to become more theatrical while symbolist poets and playwrights learned from these pictorial experiments to embrace more painterly concerns.

Gustave Moreau actually preceded the symbolist writers and, like Poe, was an inspiration to them. J. K. Huysmans discussed him at length in his novel Against Nature (1884), pointing to his ability to remove mythological figures from the specifics of time and place and to imbue them with a feeling of immobility. "The keystone of the so-called Decadence,"<sup>11</sup> Against Nature was composed of essays describing the leading character Des Essients's retreat from the new materialism affecting the age. The book pointed away from the naturalist's concern with the minutia of the new

vulgarity toward "a delight in the perverse and artificial, a craving for new and complex situations, a desire to extend the boundaries of emotional and spiritual experience."<sup>12</sup>

Huysmans's expression of the symbolists' fascination with the ethereal paralleled the painterly vision of timelessness.

This vision, adopted by painters like Munch, Knopff, and Ensor, who frequently focused on abstracting multiple forms into single large shapes which further heightened their emotional content and sensation of stasis.

Within the realm of the theatre, thematic concepts tended toward the plurality of meaning, the unknown, and the unknowable. Theatre was considered to have a greater capacity to express these issues and, as a result, dialogue was employed in a disjointed fashion and cause-and-effect reality was disconnected in order to reveal what might lie behind the pictorial veneer of reality suggested by the stage picture within the proscenium arch. The symbolist playwrights felt that it was necessary to explore the conceptual space between the real and the unreal which was often expressed as the silence or stillness of entrancement.

As Anna Balakian noted:

From the point of view of poetry, the symbolist theatre succeeds more often where verse fails to fulfill its symbolist objectives. The ambiguity of discourse can be represented by an equivocal relationship between characters and the objects that surround them. In the symbolist theatre, no object is decorative; it is there to externalize a vision, to underline an effect, to play a role in the undercurrent of unforeseeable occurrences. . . . With the aid of gesture and the variations of dialogue, repetitions and silences were

much more able to provoke the imagination and help the spectator to reach the dream state.<sup>13</sup>

The ultimate goal of the symbolist theatre was to restore drama to its religious and metaphysical functions. Mallarmé, for instance, saw "the ideal theatre as a ritual function in which word and action are completed by choreography and music."<sup>14</sup> The theatre was seen as a temple and the performers as its celebrants. By integrating all the arts, the theatre would encompass all of the real and the unreal. Symbolists wanted to combine the pre-historic past with the future apocalypse.

One of the chief elements of the symbolist theatre, as expressed by Maurice Maeterlinck, was that drama should be static:

I have grown to believe that an old man seated in an armchair, waiting patiently, with his lamp beside him; giving unconscious ear to all the eternal laws that reign about his house, interpreting, without comprehending, the silence of doors and windows and the quivering voice of the light, submitting with bent head to the presence of his soul and destiny . . . does yet live in reality a deeper, more human and more universal life than the lover who conquers in battle, or "the husband who avenges his honor."

I do not know whether it be true that a static theatre is impossible. Indeed, it seems to me that it exists already. Most of the tragedies of Aeschylus are tragedies without movement.<sup>15</sup>

This rediscovered perception of time and space as mutable and impermanent led to plays which were unlimited by commercial concerns over structure or length. Plays could easily be either very short or extremely long, with intense action or hypnotic stillness. The plays were written for the

audience of the future and, if performed, were presented by amateurs in cafés and galleries.

Two of Maeterlinck's short plays, The Intruder (1890) and The Blind (1890), crystallized many symbolist themes in uniquely dramatic statements. One of the most striking features of his theatre was the absence of the machinery of the nineteenth-century romantic stage, replacing it, as Meyerhold explained, with "extreme simplicity of production so that the spectator's imagination can supply all that is left unsaid."<sup>16</sup> In fact, The Blind is played in nearly complete darkness and could be performed only with voices. In both The Intruder and The Blind, the characters have no proper names, there is almost no action, and the use of sound and silence are tremendously heightened. The musicality, the echo and rhythm of the dialogue, and the lack of action in these plays emphasize the power of the recognition of the characters' predicament, which in The Blind is the knowledge of man's isolation brought on by the Priest's apparent death, and in The Intruder is the arrival of death itself. This delayed "recognition" substitutes for the usual dramatic action in both plays.

For the symbolists, the paramount issue was to question the realm of the unknown. Their dramas theatricalize consciousness while displaying a new attitude toward awareness which is contrary to typical cause-and-effect reality. As Bettina Knapp noted:

For Maeterlinck theatre reflected an inner search based on intuitive experience. He sought to create mood and to make man's soul manifest through rituals devoid of nearly all motion, each restrained gesture being a sign or symbol suggesting some profound and mysterious reality. A nearly static condition had to reign on stage, permitting, Maeterlinck believed, the intrusion of occult forces into the dramatic happenings.<sup>17</sup>

Although attracted to the thematic issues of uncertainty and the unknown, Hartmann's point of departure from strict symbolist theory was to introduce a fundamental element of ironic humor in order to rationalize the irrational. His first major step towards this new perspective was Buddha (1891-1895), a play which his own dates of composition suggest he was writing even while in Paris.

If Christ details the awakening of a transcendental consciousness, Buddha presents the transformation of that consciousness into metaphysical being. Like Salomé, Buddha can be viewed as a monodrama, a play that takes place entirely within the mind of one of its characters. In this case, it involves a personality on the threshold of nirvana as a dreaming Gautama (Buddha) replays the events of his life while simultaneously employing his elder persona as the motivating force behind his earlier self's journey of self-denial and discovery.

Told in twelve scenes with no act breaks, the events of the play follow the scanty historical outline of Buddha's life, that of a prince who first renounced his heritage and fortune to become a hermit and who later renounced his followers and asceticism to obliterate his ego.

In the first brief scene, Gautama is discovered asleep on a desert beach where vistas of wave and dune are broken only by a passing caravan. Gautama awakes and observes: "As human life should be! Art's fragrance wafted by, that in orgasmic joys incessantly dissolves life's ambiguity."<sup>18</sup> It is a statement full of suggestive implications, including a hint of the author's attitude toward symbolist dogma.

The second scene features an idyllic vision of the Ganges. The stage directions call for a sluggish draught in which "the trees shake dreamingly,"<sup>19</sup> emphasizing the fantastic quality of the scene as the young Prince Berusani, raised in seclusion, encounters a quartet of beautiful maidens bathing in the river. Aroused, the Prince would pursue them despite his tutors' warnings that "each urn of love is filled with filth or poison."<sup>20</sup> Heedless, the Prince bursts from his concealment at which moment Gautama appears and murmurs: "Renounce! Struggle for the cessation of sorrow, become ensouled in me: the Sublime Renunciation, The Non-God!"<sup>21</sup> It is an awkward moment made comic by the stupefaction displayed by the Prince, his followers, and the bathers at being taken unawares by Gautama's holy apparition.

This ironic element, often verging on the slapstick, runs throughout Buddha and is nowhere more evident than in scene three, when Berusani and his retinue return to the palace and encounter various unhappy and unfortunate villagers. This scene parodies the legend of Buddha's spiritual awakening when confronted with the reality of

beggars, lepers, and death. Here, the newly enlightened Berusani attempts to counsel two cripples: "Console yourselves; we wear a girdle of thorns around our waists."<sup>22</sup> Far from consoled, the cripples are revolted and stagger back, believing him mad. Everywhere he turns, Berusani's naive philosophizing is met with derision. Nevertheless, he persists.

The fourth scene finds Gautama and various other pilgrims and stewards at a cave temple awaiting the appearance of Berusani, now the Naked King, who for the past two years has been celebrating his renunciation of the material world. Little by little he has deeded away his kingdom and possessions and now intends to depart from the temple alone. Gautama, as if jesting with himself, is insulted by some of the former King's stewards who call him "an old hypocrite," "weakminded," and a "fool." The appearance of the Naked King puts the reverent crowd on its knees, save for Gautama who, following the King's pious vow to "try if I can also live in bane on the common ways of life,"<sup>23</sup> repeats his challenge from scene two: "Renounce! . . . become ensouled in me, . . . the Non-God!"<sup>24</sup> Astonished, the Naked King can only gape.

In a central section composed of three scenes, the play shifts its attention away from Gautama to view the larger world's struggle with the forces set in motion by his personal quest. The first of these scenes finds a Nobleman entertaining two of Berusani's former tutors, Nindar and

Sudotana, by a crystalline lake. Both Nindar and Sudotana were with Berusani when Gautama made his first appearance and both have been radicalized by the vision. Nindar wants to end procreation; Sudotana intends to kill the living; both seek a cessation of life. The Nobleman, meanwhile, has come to believe that human experience is insignificant: "We cannot even realize what we have experienced."<sup>25</sup> Then, following a performance of a perfumed dancer who "reveals the psychological wealth of odors [and] the possibilities of the olfactory art,"<sup>26</sup> Sudotana begins the mission of his life by stabbing the Nobleman who, with ironic detachment, asks his slaves to "inform my guests that I beg to be excused as I am engaged in dying."<sup>27</sup>

The sixth scene is set on a battlefield where a warrior son agonizes over the forces that drove him to murder his father. Once, he was satisfied with his battlelust, but having seen the Buddha, he now finds war distasteful. Then, as if to underscore the link between Berusani and Gautama, the Naked King appears and the Young Barbarian vows that he would give up to him all his spoils if he too could gain peace.

The turmoil spills over into scene seven where Sudotana is brought before a Wise Old Man by some villagers whose homes he has burnt. The villagers want sanction to punish Sudotana, but the Wise Old Man, perceiving their irresolution, chastises them. Sudotana, he declares, had the right to burn their homes because "he has a conviction,"<sup>28</sup>

whereas the villagers are too indecisive to exact their vengeance.

Following these scenes, which might well be interpreted as representing Gautama's own inner turmoil during his first few years in solitude, the play refocuses to concentrate on the later stages of Gautama's development. In the first of these, the eighth scene, Gautama is on a road leading to the Himalayas where, having reached the decisive point in his life, "the world with its tumults lies behind [him]."<sup>29</sup> Pausing by the road to rest, he overhears three women retell the old story of how Berusani left his wife, Yasodhara, and child to pursue enlightenment. Gautama seems moved by this tale but murmurs: "Yasodhara! He who renounced this is no longer of earthly mold."<sup>30</sup> The irony is that Berusani was an unwed virgin when he first glimpsed Gautama by the Ganges, a virgin who then married and sired a child before following through two years later with his inspiration.

Gautama is nothing if not a kind of cosmic practical joker and Hartmann whimsically opts to present another of Gautama's most significant renunciations in just such a light. In the ninth scene, Five Holy Disciples, described as resembling "Whitman, Hugo, Tolstoi, etc."<sup>31</sup> are gathered at the mouth of Gautama's cave where they have sat for twenty years basking in the purity of their asceticism while awaiting the reappearance of their spiritual master. But, when Gautama does at last appear, he announces: "Bless you, and follow me to deny your faith!"<sup>32</sup> and the Disciples are

thrown into hysterical despair. To Gautama, the most worldly of possessions is pride and he is ruthlessly ironic in rooting it out.

The final three scenes of the play present the final stages of Gautama's metamorphosis into a metaphysical being. The first of these offers his discourse from a Himalayan peak on the nature of being which is built on the concept that "all growing things, the flowers indeed, nay, this solid rock, possess soul atmospheres."<sup>33</sup> It is on this basis that he has chosen to merge with the universe and it is an idea upon which Hartmann elaborated in later writings. The second of this trio of scenes portrays Gautama's physical dissolution as the Himalayan snows swirl around him. Here he embraces death as the ". . . queen of beauty, benefactress of mankind . . ."<sup>34</sup> and then is blotted out by the storm. The final scene is Hartmann's great leap into theatrical space wherein he calls for a "new Optic Art, in which Color will rival sound as a vehicle for pure emotion."<sup>35</sup> On a stage 800 yards long and 500 yards high, Hartmann envisions what might be described as a symphony of light depicting as much of the universe as can be squeezed into so small a space. Perhaps, for the sake of the performance, Hartmann would have been willing to accept the compromise of a forty-by-sixty-foot screen, as Stanley Kubric did for 2001, which, given the leap in technology, might well have conveyed his conviction that Buddha lost nothing and gained much in his transformation.

Like Christ, Buddha is rife with references to the symbolist cosmos while simultaneously veering away from it. Each of Buddha's scenes are set either on a huge vista, a road, or the portal of a cave, all representing thresholds on Gautama's journey toward death. Death, however, is viewed neither as total nullity nor anti-life but as a more perfect merging of life's energies one into another.

Dreams play an even more significant role in Buddha than in Christ for the entire play must be seen as a dream in which Gautama reinvents his life. As in Strindberg's A Dream Play, "the characters split, double, multiply, dissolve, condense, float apart, coalesce."<sup>36</sup> And, like To Damascus, "the characters are not persons but symbolic figures enacted out of a single consciousness."<sup>37</sup> It is a dream which passes through several conflicting states—ironic, violent, poetic, sensual, even olfactory—before exploding into a whirlwind of pure color.

But the pessimistic arguments of the symbolists, embodied particularly by Nindar and Sudotana though vocalized by many others as well, are here presented not only to expose their limitations, but also to satirize the blinkered perspective of such ideologies. Buddha is a much funnier play than Christ, demonstrating that Hartmann had not only found a spiritual alternative to fin de siècle negativism, but that he had rediscovered that which symbolism appeared about to discard: a sense of humor.

While attempting to go beyond the symbolists in spiritual terms, Hartmann's reaction to the new stagecraft was somewhat conservative. Willing to accept that "those propagandists who clamor for more simplicity in scenic effects are perhaps right in insisting that the plays of [Shakespeare, Moliere, and Sheridan] should be reproduced without elaborate settings as the authors did not particularly consider them in their writings,"<sup>38</sup> he nevertheless felt that modern audiences wanted more realistically detailed settings. Still strongly influenced by the elaborate productions of the Munich Royal Theatres, he saw the problem as one of proper emphasis:

The opponents of the realistic theatre, who want to substitute natural effectiveness [with] decorative backgrounds and elemental designs -- cheap arts and crafts effects -- see only theatricality in this pictorialism. . . . Gordon Craig wants to revolutionize stage art, and there is no dispute about his inventions being the products of a daring, original, and resourceful mind. . . . But, its very merit, its originality, furnishes also its own criticism. Gordon Craig endeavors to make stage art an independent expression, while logically as long as there are dramatists and theatres, it can only be an accessory. . . . What is the use of my writing a *Buddha* if Gordon Craig would make a Gordon Craig of it?<sup>39</sup>

Hartmann's preference was for "judicious reproduction of natural scenes, pictorial even painterlike. . . ." <sup>40</sup> As such, he ran counter to one of the principle theories of a dramatic style that he otherwise embraced. Instinctively rejecting the inherent motionlessness of the Parisian "dreamers," Hartmann believed that the confluence of painting and theatre

implied more complete realization rather than the sensation of scenic illusion. As a result, his symbolist dramas are unique in that they do not emphasize the static quality that had quickly become emblematic of the style.

Hartmann had not yet completed Buddha when he decided to return to the United States in October 1892. Despite his apparent disenchantment with the Parisian symbolists, his departure is puzzling since Paris, in retrospect, seems to have been a much more hospitable place for his ideas than the Boston to which he returned. A variety of reasons have been advanced for this move, including his Puritan background reacting negatively to Parisian morés, difficulties with McClure over payment for articles submitted but not published, and Hartmann's reportedly weak French. Plausible as any of these reasons might be individually or in combination, another has been overlooked which seems at least as persuasive.

By the time Hartmann had arrived in Paris, Salomé had already been banned and become the topic of a literary debate which would not culminate until after its publication in the spring of the following year. It would seem inevitable that Stuart Merrill and other symbolists would have followed its abrupt censure and Hartmann should have been aware of it as well. Observing Wilde, his success in the theatre, and the impression he had made upon the symbolists, Hartmann could easily have noted the parallels between Wilde's notoriety and his own ambition. If Hartmann discussed Salomé with Merrill,

as it would be more difficult to imagine he did not, then he must also have perceived the surprising similarities between Wilde's play and Christ.

As an unknown journalist in a foreign country, Hartmann lacked the personal charm that had enabled Wilde to make a notable impression upon the local literary scene. As an American playwright and poet, however, he had an opportunity to establish himself in the vanguard of an international literary movement. Since he had already established contacts and a career in America, it may well have seemed to him that his best prospects for literary distinction lay in following Wilde's example by returning home and promoting his most challenging play.

Hartmann may even have had reason to expect greater success than Wilde, for there was no Lord Chancellor in the United States to ban his play.

In any case, he returned to Boston with his wife and infant daughter in late October and, once there, persuaded E. H. Clement, editor of the Boston Evening Transcript, to recommend him for an editorial position with The Weekly Review, a bibliographic periodical then being published by J. Morrison-Fuller, which was essentially restricted to a weekly listing of articles of interest published elsewhere in the United States.

Hartmann's effect on the magazine was explosive. Soon after the first of the year, 1893, the magazine expanded to almost triple its former size. Although it published no fiction, it became as volatile and literary

as James Gibbons Huneker's renowned Musical Courier. Hartmann apparently initiated and clearly wrote most—if not all—of two lively literary columns, "En Passant," and "As You Like It." Innumerable essays, abstracts, fillers, and squibs bear the stamp of his best prose and an encyclopedic interest in everything going on in the world from Aivazovsky's paintings to Zola's ideals on moral education.<sup>41</sup>

At the same time, Hartmann was preparing Christ for publication, checking proofs and lining up subscribers for its limited run of 1,020 copies. He even advertised it in the April 15, 1893, issue of The Weekly Review and notices of its publication ran in several Boston papers when it was finally released in May.

The Weekly Review, meanwhile, published its final issue on April 29, 1893, "after about twenty first-rate issues crammed with Hartmann contributions."<sup>42</sup> A week and a half later Hartmann was fired from the Boston Evening Transcript, apparently because Clement did not approve of Christ's publication, as noted in an angry letter dismissing the playwright:

I find you are incorrigible. My helping you was on condition expressly stated to you that you would indulge in no such wild literary and dramatic schemes. This is worse than anything that I had apprehended. . . . You are fortunate to escape prosecution for publishing obscene literature.<sup>43</sup>

In response, Hartmann set out to reestablish himself by publishing The Art Critic, his own literary review of art, and spent the following summer soliciting subscriptions and advertisers. The list of subscribers, featured in the first

issue published in November 1893, included names like Albert Bierstadt, August St. Gaudens, Childe Hassam, Robert Henri, Albert Pinkham Ryder, and Stanford White, suggesting that his literary ambitions were better received among artists in general than by other writers, publishers, or producers.

The first issue was composed almost entirely of Hartmann's own work, and in it he called for the creation of a "National Museum of Fine Arts," a "National Art Gallery," and an "Academy of Fine Arts" which would house various art collections, libraries, and academies of art, including a theatrical conservatory. Other articles discussed French and American artists, in particular Mallarmé and the symbolists.

The back page of the magazine included a surprise. It was a copy, in French, of a letter regarding Christ from Mallarmé. After opening with an apology for his late reply, the letter (translated by Lawton and Knox) stated:

You have painted the vast firmament almost as I envision it, decorating the people's palaces of this and future times. The most beautiful aspect is that of the dreamworld, delicate and powerful: so that midst the admiration of the crowd, the isolated man also has his exquisite share of joy. Thus the work, as much as by its aspiration, is human by virtue of art.<sup>44</sup>

Having campaigned for it in galleries, studios, and salons up and down the East Coast, Hartmann's first issue met with considerable success and rewarded him with a measure of respectability which had previously eluded him.

Unfortunately, he also came to the attention of the Boston Record, a competitor of his former employer the Boston

Evening Transcript, which, prompted no doubt by Hartmann's own self-promotion, reviewed Christ and found it "vicious and salacious according to American ideas."<sup>45</sup> Not satisfied with this abuse, the paper subsequently called for the play's confiscation and even offered to buy out the entire print run at \$2.00 a copy in order to have it destroyed.

The uproar was further fueled by the Boston Watch and Ward Society which roused the local authorities and finally prompted Hartmann's arrest, on December 21, 1893, on charges of publishing obscenity. Obligated to spend a week in the Suffolk county jail on Charles Street, Hartmann was not released until January 2 when J. T. S. Monks, F. H. Thompkins, and F. W. Henwood, three local artists and subscribers to The Art Critic, stood for his \$500.00 bail.

The case was heard two days later and, while waiting in the courtroom prior to examination, Hartmann was arrested again for selling the play, a separate charge from publishing. His lawyers, T. W. Coakly and A. S. Hayes, advised him to plead guilty to having violated the law which forbade publishing, printing, selling or distributing material "containing obscene, indecent, or impure language, manifestly tending to the corruption of the morals of youth."<sup>46</sup> Since this did not include an admission of having written anything obscene, Hartmann agreed and was subsequently fined \$100.00. The court then ordered the destruction of the several hundred unsold copies of the play.

Disgraced and in debt, Hartmann published only two more issues of The Art Critic, one in January 1894 which contained material written prior to his arrest, and the last in the following March, which included his response to the arrest. Noting that Section 16 of the law afforded half his fine to "the person who informed and prosecuted said offender to a conviction,"<sup>47</sup> Hartmann declared that he had chosen to accept the verdict and fine rather than mount an appeal because: "Though I am quite willing to undergo martyrdom for the benefit of art and progress, I consider it foolish to make one's family suffer if nothing can be gained by it."<sup>48</sup> Claiming that he had not realized that the censorship laws could apply to works of art, he echoed Wilde by promising to publish his future work in Paris. He then closed the essay and the magazine with a defense of free speech and an admonition to the community of artists which had casually allowed censorship laws to go unchallenged.

Clearly, the episode was as unsettling as it was unexpected. Clement's warning had gone unheeded and Hartmann had gone to considerable expense to publish and promote what he felt was his best work. Finding it thoroughly misunderstood and subject to the manipulations of politicians and the press, he protested feebly, unable to capitalize on his sudden notoriety. With few defenders and fewer resources, he found himself awkwardly exposed to the hostile scrutiny of critics whose motives were suspect at best.

As in the Whitman episode, Hartmann felt he had little choice but to withdraw. And, as before, he turned to New York City.

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41. Lawton and Knox, "Introduction," Three Prophetic Plays, xxx.
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44. Stephan Mallarmé, letter to C. Sadakichi Hartmann, June 1893, trans. George Knox and Harry Lawton, in Three Prophetic Plays, viii.
45. Anonymous, Boston Record, quoted by Lawton and Knox in Three Prophetic Plays, xxxiii.
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## CHAPTER 6

MOHAMMED

Of all the issues confronted by the symbolists, perhaps none was more compelling, more insoluble, more terrifying than sex. For them, sexuality was inseparable from mysticism and became a nexus for the conflicting forces of life and death, chaos and entropy.

Symbolist painters exploited this theme obsessively, and none more so than Gustave Moreau. His females, in particular his many figures of Salomé, are representations of the simultaneously virginal yet unchaste initiates of spiritual mysteries. Moreau became the first exponent of the inward looking face, a principal symbolist image repeatedly expressed in the form of sexually destructive females and distilled by Frank Kermode in The Romantic Image:

Throughout this tradition, the beauty of a work of art . . . is more or less explicitly compared with the mysterious inexpressive beauty of such women, and perhaps particularly with that of Salomé. . . .

The Image has nothing to do with organic life, its purity of outline is possible only in a sphere far removed. . . .

It is the dancer's movement (contrasted with the immobility of sculpture) and the fact that this movement is passionate, . . . [that gives] her a fantastic reality, a form above life, so that she becomes a complete representation of the Image. . . .

Salomé is the mask in action, the image independent of thought and thinker. She is the work of art in all its relations, dancing not only on "our stage" but . . . in that sexual dance which is an earthly copy of some divine Herodian movement.<sup>1</sup>

Though less fascinated with the character of Salomé, Edvard Munch frequently focused on the image of destructive females and the sexual crisis of identity. Within his paintings, the shapes and figures seem to exude a particular anxiety and the eyes often stare inward.

In Voice, or a Summer Night, Munch deals with the awakening of a girl's sexuality; standing on a romantic, moonlit coast, she offers herself yet appears simultaneously rigid, with her arms pinned behind her back as if incapable of returning a lover's embrace<sup>2</sup>. Equally ambivalent is The Kiss, a famed symbolist emblem in which the lovers' bodies appear to merge even while the atmosphere suggests tension and the fear of losing one's identity in the other<sup>3</sup>. Most pessimistic of all is The Madonna, in which the woman holds an academy style "beauty pose" with red hair and waves of surreal energy which is bordered by emblems of sperm and a corpselike fetus.<sup>4</sup>

Odilon Redon took the concept of the inward stare even further and in The Eye Like a Balloon Moves Toward Infinity employed a floating eye as a symbol of human intelligence and divinity.<sup>5</sup> Borrowing from mythological and medieval beliefs in the evil power of the eye, he made it the basis for his own imaginary, erotic universe in which he expressed his fascination with the then new concept of evolution by inverting it, metamorphosing his figures from human to animal and back again. He also introduced the fascination with

incongruity which would later resurface as a basis for Dada. Redon's vision of this problem was more sexual than cosmic, however, as evidenced by A Sewing Machine Meeting an Umbrella on a Dissection Table in which the sexual references included a phallus, a woman, and a bed.<sup>6</sup>

Other influential painters for whom destructive sexuality was a central theme include Ferdinand Knopff, James Ensor, and Mikhail Vrubel. Knopff created a famed symbolist house after the manner of Des Essients and his paintings were often portraits of his sister in the form of angels or sphinxes contemplating death. Ensor was fascinated with fantastic and religious imagery and often painted portraits of himself as pursued by demons or as Christ. Vrubel also painted images of demons, generally male, but as sufferers themselves rather than as torturers.

The first drama to voice symbolist concerns over the destructive potential of sexuality is Axel (1890), by Villiers de l'Isle-Adam. A play whose publication barely preceded Hartmann's composition of Christ, Axel depicts the separate but parallel journeys of Axel, lord of an ancient manor, and Sara, fugitive from a black mass, who meet as spiritual mates beneath an abandoned castle in a crypt containing an enormous cache of gold. Presented as sexual twins, an androgynous pair who inevitably find each other, Axel and Sara are exposed to a series of initiations, a process of denying temptation in order to reach a higher plane while the physical movement of the play spirals ever

downward. Neither knows where their quest will lead and both reject the temptations of the self in pursuit of a golden cascade of coins which spills over them in the final act. Trapped in the crypt, Axel and Sara choose to remain entombed rather than escape to the surface where the gold would become mere wealth rather than an emblem of the spiritual purity into which it has been alchemically transmuted.

The almost fairy-tale aspects of this play are raised to a supernatural level by its focus on the role of imagination as a more powerful force than reality. As Edmund Wilson, commenting on the play, pointed out, "the heroes of the symbolists would rather drop out of the common life than have to struggle to make themselves a place in it—they forego their mistresses, preferring dreams."<sup>7</sup> For Axel and Sara, trapped in the crypt, their discovery of the gold and subsequent fantasy of escape is more real to them than actual freedom from the tomb. Having imagined it, Axel is satisfied to die with his ultimate victory unrealized.

Maeterlinck's Pélléas and Mélisande is a more sparse drama of doomed lovers in a medieval setting which uses a minimum of dialogue and action to heighten the tragic sense of inevitability while enveloping it in mystery. In the play, the forest into which the lovers attempt to escape becomes "a primeval association. . . . [Symbolizing] a sinking into some past or collective unconscious"<sup>8</sup> while simultaneously removing the third dimension to produce a

flattened picture with a deliberate lack of depth and a patterned, otherworldly effect.

Just as in the paintings of Moreau, Redon, Munch, and others, sex in the symbolist theatre was typically portrayed as a destructive, uncontrolled force. Wilde's Salomé, like Pelléas and Mélisande, was prototypic in this respect, and Panniza's The Council of Love (1894) took the message even further by envisioning a latter-day mystery play which presented a wedding ritual as a burlesque. Central to this play is the fear of syphilis, a sexually transmitted disease, which at the time was incurable and had become a tremendous problem among the artistic community. Instead of presenting a symbolist mystification, however, the play is a satire which repeats and reexamines various aspects of the sexual topic leading to the arrival of Syphilis, a character who symbolizes the ultimate sexual betrayal. Panniza's stress throughout is on the abuse of the physical and his method of characterization is comic and specific rather than flat and patterned in the style of Maeterlinck and Wilde.

More in keeping with the static style is Gabriel D'Annunzio's The Dead City (1898) which presents a tragic sexual triangle among a group of archaeologists who become possessed by the past lives they have unearthed. The play presents two worlds in conflict, above and below the surface of reality, and the excavations represent the characters' pursuit of hidden lives within themselves. The writing style is rhetorical like older nineteenth century plays, rather

than the inarticulateness preferred by Maeterlinck, and played at an emotional peak like an opera. The static nature of the play is emphasized by the architecture, the desert locale, and the steady movement toward death. It has an almost somnambulistic quality emphasized by the fact that all the revelations take place at night, as if in a dream.

Even typically naturalistic playwrights were not immune to the lure of symbolism, and Ibsen himself experimented with the style and its issues. Between 1884 and 1899, he wrote several plays in this vein, including The Wild Duck (1884), Rosmersholm (1886), The Master Builder (1892), John Gabriel Borkman (1896), and When We Dead Awaken (1899). Perhaps the most successful of these was The Master Builder, a reworking of the Promethian myth, in which Halvard Solness challenges the physical laws of architecture and thus his own Gods, which he frequently describes as personal demons, Solness is urged on by the destructive worship of Hilda Wangel, a young woman he had casually abused as a child. "Solness is, or believes he is, in touch with superhuman powers, occult beings, the helpers and servers, the troll within, the god he speaks to from the pinnacle of his achievement."<sup>9</sup> Hilda, meanwhile, is portrayed as "mercurially alive, . . . aggressively enchanting, Eve before the apple."<sup>10</sup> Thus, while the play followed Ibsen's by then standard naturalistic construction, it is focused by a symbolist sensibility which unleashes destructive, occult forces through sexual conflict.

Of all modern playwrights, however, none is more specifically identified with the destructive potential of sexuality than August Strindberg. As noted in chapter 2, Hartmann had translated and attempted in Boston to stage Strindberg's The Father (1887), a bleak drama of the sexual endgame written "after the frenzied break-up of [Strindberg's] own marriage"<sup>11</sup> which "gives a penetrating diagnosis of his state of mind at its most unhappy."<sup>12</sup>

In Coram Populo!, a short play which originally appeared as a play within a play in Master Olaf (1878) and later was published in French as the introduction to The Inferno (1898), Strindberg voiced his most concentrated statement of sexual antagonism. A symbolist version of a medieval mystery play, it presents a debate between God and Satan, co-eternal overseers of a universe where suffering is the norm. While God is portrayed as indifferent to human agony, "Strindberg's Lucifer—the bringer of light—regards sex and propagation as prolongations of human anguish and mercifully wishes to liberate humanity from the burden of existence."<sup>13</sup>

Confronted with the human reality of sex, Strindberg proved more than willing to choose sides in what he often perceived as a mortal conflict. In Miss Julie he depicted the fatal seduction of an aristocratic heiress by Jean, an opportunistic valet, and in his own introduction to the play, Strindberg declared:

It is not because Jean is now rising that he has the upper hand of Miss Julie, but because he is a man.

Sexually he is the aristocrat because of his virility, his keener senses, and his capacity for taking the initiative.<sup>14</sup>

For Strindberg, like most symbolist playwrights, the sexual arena was a cosmic battleground of uncertain potential which swung between brief moments of spiritual standoff and longer periods of total confrontation.

Sadakichi Hartmann's own sexual experience as a young man and up to the time of his marriage mirrored many of these symbolist themes and it is no surprise that he would identify with these authors. For Hartmann, sex appeared to be an unfathomable mystery and, though his encounters occasionally bordered on the comic, there was an underlying tension in them which led him steadily toward the same self-destructive urge that haunted the symbolist movement's vision of sexuality.

Interestingly, he recorded many of his early romances during the same period that he was writing his plays. These were probably intended as material for his proposed but uncompleted Constellations and were later reworked and incorporated into his autobiography. The portrait drawn is that of an awkward young man enamored of older and presumably more worldly women who in turn were charmed by his youth and intelligence. None of these affairs appear to have been consummated, a fact which, while not unusual for the period, provides a stark contrast to his more unrestrained pen.

The first of these affairs took place during his early years in Philadelphia when, at the age of seventeen, he

became involved with a woman named Clara who was ten years his senior and lived with her mother and older sister managing a dry goods store in West Philadelphia. Hartmann had just returned from his first trip to Europe and, not finding work as a stage manager in New York or Boston, had returned to Philadelphia and taken a room in that family's house.

Clara and I got along well with each other from the start. We liked each other and I offered to read to her, which she graciously accepted and which I attended to with an incomparable zest. I was willing to read at all times. A stroll into the park, yes, and then some reading. Why not.<sup>15</sup>

Soon, the young man "realized that this was love"<sup>16</sup> and decided that, until he could call her his wife, he could not live in the same house. Clara's mother agreed with this decision and continued to welcome him as an almost daily visitor after he relocated. Still, despite the ardency of his feelings, the affair dragged on for almost a year, spanning the interval of his second trip to Europe, without progressing past a fairly innocent level.

I worshipped women as if they were supernatural creatures. My imagination freed them from all earthiness. They were more like spirits consisting of fire and dew than damsels with corsets and bustles. . . . Although erotically inclined in my literary taste, and even a student of sexual psychopathy, my own instincts were so overgrown, so choked with book knowledge that they operated unconsciously if in evidence at all.<sup>17</sup>

The affair finally reached its climax when Hartmann, expressing both his unrecognized frustration and what he hoped would be received as an appeal to the purity of their love, suggested that Clara pose nude for him. "It was with me an abstract ideal. Clara could not quite see it that way."<sup>18</sup>

Clara did not rebuff him out of hand, but instead suggested that he venture the idea with her mother. Hartmann agreed and the idea was promptly vetoed, but the notion remained with him and was a source of tension between them until he left for Paris in 1887 where his desire was to be awkwardly satisfied.

Wandering the streets alone after giving a lecture on Paul Heyse, he confessed to being "seized by a furious, uncontrollable desire; a rage for kisses, to crush and bruise some warm body, to realize in some tangible shape the imaginary pictures of women undressing themselves that haunted my brain."<sup>19</sup> After walking for hours, he encountered a friend from the earlier lecture who led him to a brothel and then offered to treat him to one of the girls. Feeling foolish, he followed a tall, black-haired girl upstairs to a bedroom where she promptly undressed and flopped down on the bed suggesting that he do the same.

I involuntarily thought of all the burning limbs that had stretched themselves and tossed about on those mattresses. . . . How different the old whorehouses of Kyoto must have been, where you sat in comfortable surroundings and were served tea or sake by spruce young

girls instead of old negresses, and the hetarae [sic] in marvelous coiffures and elaborate array . . . moved in stately procession through the garden, and you made your choice with some pretense of gallantry.<sup>20</sup>

Confronted with the simple reality of sex stripped of romance, Hartmann's lust receded and he sat on the edge of the bed trying to converse. The girl's reaction was direct and uncomplicated and, seeing that he was not up to it, she invited him back another time. Feeling shame and humiliation, he left--only to return the next morning when the house was shut. Embarrassed again, he left and did not return.

Returning to America, Hartmann took up with Clara again and attempted to maintain their relationship while relocating himself in Boston. But they had already drifted too far apart and, after a series of disagreements, he finally wrote demanding the return of all his letters to her, while at the same time she was sending him a box of roses for his birthday. The correspondence crossed in the mail but by then it was too late. His letters were returned the following day, "a package of alarming dimensions,"<sup>21</sup> and he did not see her again until he was about to leave a third time for Europe.

I called at her home, the mother and sister would at first not admit me, I had acted like a scoundrel and had never returned Clara's letters, etc. But Clara intervened, and there we were once more in the parlor. . . . I assured her that everything was as before. But then the mother appeared like Don Gomez in Hernani, she had no hunting horn, but her voice was sufficient to tell me that I had to leave.<sup>22</sup>

Hartmann returned to Boston and, while trying to produce Ibsen and promote Whitman, established himself as a lecturer and putative impresario, attracting various students and becoming involved with the studio circuit catering to the leisure activities of young women. During this time, he was introduced to Ruth and Hildegard, a pair of "tall, languid girls of Puritan descent [who] . . . had a strange fascination for me, exempt from all physical desire."<sup>23</sup>

They had both posed for photographers in costume and nude, and Ruth had posed for Thomas Dewing's In the Garden.<sup>24</sup> Hartmann was fascinated by Ruth, the more stately of the two, and visited her frequently. Like Clara, Ruth was also older than Hartmann, and she tried to keep their relationship on a platonic level. Hildegard, meanwhile, was closer to his own age and pursued him, pestering him with kisses and vows of love.

But, with his promotional plans all ending badly, Hartmann sank towards depression and finally resolved to attempt suicide. Planning to slash his wrists, he wrote to Hildegard, asking her to visit him before his chosen end. She arrived the next day and he tried to convince her to spend the night with him, but she countered by vowing to pray for him. Alone again, he cut his wrists, but not deeply, and promptly wrapped them in gauze.

The next day, Hildegard wrote that she had come to an answer for his problem and told him to visit Ruth the next

day. Appearing promptly, he was handed an envelope containing over fifty dollars, a gift from Hildegard to help him leave for New York.

He left Boston the next day, feeling "wronged, . . . bought for a trifling sum. . . ." <sup>25</sup> On the train he wrote a passionately vengeful and threatening letter and, at the nearest station, mailed it to Hildegard.

About two weeks later a harmless but sturdy looking man with a black mustache appeared in my lodgings and introduced himself as a Pinkerton. He talked to me in a suave, paternal sort of fashion. . . . "Of course you did not mean any harm. But it is a serious offence [*sic*], my boy. . . . You have to write an apology, making a statement that you were crazed and . . . did not know what you were doing, and then you must promise never to come back to Boston, or bother the girl, or write to her again. I have put it all down, so all you have to do is sign it." <sup>26</sup>

Shamed, Hartmann obliged, and did not attempt to contact either woman again, even when he returned to Boston several years later.

Shortly after arriving in New York, between encounters with Merrill, Fawcett, Howells, and the literary scene, he met a young Norwegian servant girl named Béb  while watching her dust a neighbor's apartment. It was a fairly prompt liaison which led to a fondling encounter in Central Park the following night. They saw each other frequently thereafter, at one point nearly seducing each other on a hill overlooking the swanboats in the lake, only to be routed by mosquitoes.

Soon, however, he realized that he was not her only suitor and that she had no intention of marrying him. Disenchanted, he drifted away from her and learned many years later that she had married and returned to Norway soon after he had last seen her.

As he had in Boston, Hartmann advertised in the papers as an instructor of Delsarte methods. New Yorker's showed far less interest, however, and he managed to find only one student, a girl of sixteen whom Fowler identified as "Genevieve." Hartmann fell in love with her almost immediately, offered her lessons for free, and visited her at her parents home in Paterson.

While her mother wanted to encourage her in an acting career, her father and older brother were openly hostile. But Hartmann was determined and took a room in a boardinghouse in town. All of this took place about the time of his performance in Osadda's Revenge and, if Genevieve was not the ingenue cast in the role of Edith who was yanked offstage by her father and brothers in Paterson, she could hardly have helped hearing the next day about her acting teacher's local debacle. In any case, she and her mother cut him loose and Hartmann returned to Manhattan in humiliation.

Alone in my lodgings, . . . I felt as though the earth had swallowed me. I took off my coat, pushed up my shirtsleeves, smashed a drinking glass, and cut my left wrist and forearm with the shards—once, twice, half a dozen times, always deeper and deeper; and at last I succeeded in piercing a vein. I staggered about the room, posed as if I were dying, and finally called the landlord. That old graybearded gentleman had felt

exceedingly friendly toward me ever since I had accidentally discovered him with a servant girl on his lap and kept quiet about it. He tied my arm with a handkerchief, brought me a glass of wine, and called a doctor.<sup>27</sup>

Though he could joke about it with Fowler fifty years later, the young Hartmann had reached a point of crisis and, after his second attempted suicide, continued to drift toward possible tragedy. Finally, dazed from hunger and his wrist infected, he was admitted to the German Hospital.

Put to bed, I became violent, shouted at the top of my voice, had weeping spells, tossed about, and threw myself out of bed. It was genuine enough; a nervous breakdown.<sup>28</sup>

In the midst of this trauma appeared Elizabeth Blanch Walsh, a young nurse. Interested in literature and the arts, she quickly became enamoured of her unusual patient. In time, his health improved to the point where he would follow her around the hospital on her duties and "meet her secretly in an unheated washroom."<sup>29</sup> They were married shortly after and, by his own evidence, Hartmann appears to have been a virgin at the time.

Hartmann had struggled with the problem of his own sexual identity for more than a decade and, almost by accident, had arrived at a happy resolution. Having been exiled to America by his father just as he was entering puberty, carrying an unresolved longing for his mother, he had careened from one failed relationship to another until it must have seemed that he was incapable of finding ever again

the stability he had taken for granted as a youth. By late 1893, he had twice attempted suicide, lost his best friends, and cut himself off, perhaps permanently, from his family.

Miraculously, at the very precipice of his despair, he had stumbled into a supportive union, one that "encouraged me to enter upon the most productive period of my life."<sup>30</sup> If anything, this experience gave him an opportunity to observe sex as something other than inherently destructive, if not altogether ordinary.

This new perspective revealed itself in his next play, Mohammed (1891-1898).

Hartmann had already employed the effects of predatory sexuality as a central theme in Christ, but, where sex had been a powerful catalyst for spiritual rebirth in Christ, it became a comic battlefield in Mohammed. Although Hartmann was never able to publish Mohammed, he eventually distributed copies of his typewritten manuscript to various libraries and private collections. Unpublished since his death and potentially offensive to some, the play is nevertheless well conceived and compactly written with a decided comic flair and a ribald innocence that is often charming.

Depicting the rise of a young female challenger to Mohammed's established authority, the play mixes exotic locales with ribald humor to produce a surprisingly successful rendition of the war between the sexes.

The play opens in an oasis among the black rocks in the Arabian desert. There, Naidavarla, a young dancer and

daughter of a wandering Storyteller, awakes from a fragile dream "like waves of dawn in the shifting darkness of night."<sup>31</sup> Her father, meanwhile, engages in a queer dialogue with the First Gymnosophist, a hermit who speaks for himself and two other members of the Order of Laughter who live among the rocks and "laugh into the wilderness . . . at anything good or bad . . . at nature, man and God . . . [even] at things that do not exist."<sup>32</sup> Reflecting upon this odd belief, Naidavarla confesses in an aside that "when father and mother lie together at night, I also feel like laughing into the wilderness, and do not know why."<sup>33</sup>

No sooner does the haughty Gymnosophist retreat to his cave than Abul Kassim (Mohammed) enters with a bundle of manuscripts that he has been composing in the desert. Pausing to converse with the Storyteller, he notices Naidavarla and comments upon her beauty, "pale as moonflowers that grow in far off lands."<sup>34</sup> She is equally smitten with him, murmuring in an aside that "he is the first man I have ever seen."<sup>35</sup>

Soon the Storyteller and his family move on, leaving Mohammed to pray for the success of his revelatory vision in a long, poetic monologue:

Ah, god of gods, could I let thy revelations flow through my soul, and let them convince like the devouring serpent line of forest fires, like the rolling well of inundations [sic] tearing the land, like the crushing curves of sombre clouds of hurricanes. Each chapter of my Koran shall, like human beings, have a soul, an individuality, something ineffable which

radiates from the universe and reverberates its essence into the listener's soul, and carries her back to the ocean of thought.<sup>36</sup>

The monologue reaches a crescendo with Mohammed expanding his vision to embrace the stars as embodied in the dreamlike appearance of female warriors astride white palfreys galloping about the rock. Finally, collapsing from exhaustion, Mohammed lies on the ground as the three Gymnosophists reappear, laughing in the night.

The second scene opens in a camp amid the tents of Mohammed's nine wives who are attending several members of his retinue who are meanwhile engaged in a sniping discussion regarding the merits of various contemporary poets. Santafayana, a poet himself, is particularly critical of Mohammed's work, declaring him inferior to a number of others: "His style is peculiar but labored, too direct and simple, not artificial enough, and evermore dependent on previous religious writings."<sup>37</sup> The wives, however, silence him by literally "licking" him. One of them, Hafsa, belittles poets and poetry in turn: "I see no use for poets; when they jest they make us ridiculous and when they are serious, they tell lies. They are not even good as lovers."<sup>38</sup>

Routed, Santayafana and the other men depart, leaving the wives to a discussion of lovers in general, and Mohammed in particular. Hafsa declares: "There is no denying, Abul is getting old, he is dieing [*sic*] his hair."<sup>39</sup> But Sawda and Maynuma still find him attractive: "He is a wonderful beast—at times at least."<sup>40</sup> Soon, a fight threatens to break out

among them and is averted only by the appearance of Mohammed himself, lost in a reverie of his long-dead first wife in which he compares the personalities of each of his present wives to single facets of the original.

The wives notice his mood and conclude that he has found yet another woman. In turn, they each try to charm him but he refuses them all. Then, the Storyteller rushes on to say that his daughter has been kidnapped. Mohammed immediately commands that the alarm be sounded, but Maynuma leaps on him, claiming him for the night. In response, he promptly beats her with his staff and, rejuvenated, gathers his men to rescue Naidavarla.

The first scene of Act 2 takes place in the drinking room of a house of pleasure and presents a brief digression from the thrust of the plot. Here, a Poet, a Doctor, a Whoremonger, and Ulada, the wife of the Storyteller, sit around a table in the early morning light, discussing the morés and hypocrisies of the age.

Although it is not clearly explained, Ulada was apparently captured along with her daughter and was subsequently separated from her while Naidavarla was being prepared for a ritual deflowering. Ulada, with a mixture of motherly concern and prurient curiosity, asks if she can be allowed to watch the ceremony.

Ulada: And is there no chance to peep in anywhere? I would risk my life doing so. I would like to know how the great folks do it.

Doctor: Just like the rest of us, I suppose.

Poet: (Nods) No special technicality.

Ulada: Well, I hope she will do me honor. I told her:  
don't be frightened, there will be nobody present  
but God. It hurts a little the first time.<sup>41</sup>

Once assured that her daughter will be treated well,  
better in fact than Ulada had been treated in her own  
marriage, she begins to consider the possibilities of the  
libertine life:

Ulada: Could not women have the same liberties as men!  
Females are as irritable as males, why should they  
forego the pleasures of youth, because no wage  
earner wants to burden his life with them! Why  
should young jades pine away, lose the best part of  
their life in flirtation, in timidly playing with  
fire, instead of boldly cleansing themselves  
whenever necessity dictates, and then think no more  
of it. Then women would also accomplish something  
like men.<sup>42</sup>

For Ulada, a woman who has always been subservient to  
men, these notions represent a fresh perspective which she  
relishes in the mere contemplation. But, for the others, the  
discussion becomes a game of one-upsmanship, ultimately won  
by the Whoremonger who invites them to visit another house  
where men are the whores and women the paying customers.

Finally, the discussion is brought into sharp focus by  
the entrance of the Heavenly Virgin, a whore who was  
initiated twenty years before in the same ceremony that  
Naidavarla is to experience. The Virgin is dressed in  
"greasy drapery" with a painted face and immediately asks if  
she can "be sexually of any service."<sup>43</sup> The Doctor and Poet

then throw dice for her while she drinks heavily and Ulada realizes that for all their talk of sexual freedom, men are simply "seculant fiends."<sup>44</sup>

The next scene is set at the Temple of Defloration, a fantastically ornate series of steps and platforms, with an altar topped by a golden bed. Nearby sits the Representative of Heaven, a "whithered wretch, too old to feel the joys of sex,"<sup>45</sup> whose duty it will be to initiate Naidavarla, who stands wrapped in yellow veils and attended by four aged Highpriests at the base of the temple.

Ascending the stairs, the Highpriests discuss their ritual:

Third Highpriest: Another year has drawn its hallowed circle over our head.

Second Highpriest: Once more a heavenly virgin will be initiated into the mystic rites.

First Highpriest: (Pointing to the Representative of Heaven) Wish I were in his place.

Second Highpriest: Too much exertion. No more virgins for me. After her abandon, she will be more beautiful, like a crumpled lily, like a white fragrant rose, steeped in mud.

First Highpriest: I am not yet as worn out as you are. To me it still seems the greatest hour of bliss, to struggle with a beautiful woman for what is hers but which a man has a right to make his own, without humiliating himself by flattering her.

Third Highpriest: A good dinner is more enjoyable.<sup>46</sup>

Naidavarla, meanwhile, is somewhat awed by the performance and disrobes in a semi-trance before the crowd:

Naidavarla: It feels as if I possessed a great treasure  
. . . which now will be burst open by some robber's  
hand.<sup>47</sup>

The Representative of Heaven is then brought toward her,  
his feeble legs pumping while two Highpriests hold him  
upright.

Naidavarla: (Stares at the Representative of Heaven)  
Did I curb my desires, when in lambent silence my  
whole being thronged to one point, for that old  
toad!<sup>48</sup>

Then, just as the Representative of Heaven is about to  
be lowered upon her, Mohammed appears, scimitar drawn, and  
storms up the staircase severing the heads of the Highpriests  
and booting them aside. Seizing Naidavarla, he hoists her  
naked over his head and stabs the Representative of Heaven,  
declaring: "Your goddess of everbreeding sin, mother of  
abominations had an abortion! There is but one God, and I am  
Abul Kassim, Mohammed!"<sup>49</sup>

The third scene of the act takes place in the Garden of  
The Sphinx where "the moonlight flooding the scene with a  
green, melodious light, plays upon her cruel smiling lips,"  
and "nude maidens, pursued by their lovers, flit through the  
scene and sink downward, exhausted, under rosebushes like  
wounded hinds awaiting, in timorous agony, the mercy of the  
huntsmen."<sup>50</sup>

Mohammed enters carrying Naidavarla and, putting her  
down, swears his love for her. For her part, Naidavarla  
seems equally enamored until she realizes that Mohammed's

desire is one of absolute possession. At that moment, she violently pushes him away and swears that "with all power I will enter the sacred war for our sex!"<sup>51</sup> She exits, wrapped in Mohammed's mantle while he, enraged, curses her and the mocking Sphinx.

At the beginning of Act 3, Naidavarla has become a fierce prophetess, dwelling in a mountain lair in front of which is placed a row of severed male heads. Now strongly reminiscent of Salomé, she touches one of the heads with her foot and then "grasps her breasts . . . and lets the moonlight bathe her pallid body"<sup>52</sup> while she confesses her continuing love and simultaneous hatred for Mohammed.

Female warriors enter and prostrate themselves before her to sing her praises. Whipped to a passion by their chants, they exit in a clamor seeking new male victims while Naidavarla is left with a frail boy who dies in her arms even while she thinks of Mohammed.

Suddenly, a servant enters to report that Mohammed's army has attacked her camp. She seizes a lance and rushes off, hoping to kill him at last.

The second scene, however, displays the Plain of Sad Surrender with several rows of slain Amazons, a heap of weapons and jewelry, and Naidavarla's camp in flames. She is brought bound before Mohammed and asks to be beheaded.

But Mohammed refuses and tries to convince her that subjugation to love is her destiny. She tries to deny him, of course, but he persists and finally, when she will not

yield willingly, orders two men to drag her to his tent. Seeing resistance is futile, she pushes the warriors away and walks proudly to the tent.

The closing scene is set near an oasis outside Mohammed's tent the following evening. From within can be heard "suppressed sighs, groans, and passionate exclamations forming a symphony of violation, interrupted by long silences in which only now and then an overripe fruit is heard thumping to the ground."<sup>53</sup>

Eventually, Mohammed appears from the tent dressed in a crimson gown, picks up a palm leaf, and wanders off silently into the desert. After a long pause, Naidavarla staggers out, her garment torn and hair disheveled and, in a poetic monologue, reflects upon her experience of love:

Naidavarla: Like a sudden fall into a black and frosty sea it came upon me. Thought had faded and only the undercurrents of my destiny revealed that I was changing from one element to another. . . . An irate thirst took hold of me, which had to be quenched even if death's hand would fall upon me. . . . An incessant pain, as if falling sleet pierced my nudated limbs, yet for hours had it continued to lacerate my violated flesh, I would have endured it for the bliss of reaching one aim.<sup>54</sup>

Finally, Mohammed returns, disappointed that he has not had another mystic revelation but philosophic that "to have two in a week . . . is expecting rather too much of the Almighty."<sup>55</sup> Naidavarla, upon hearing him, drops to her knees before him and begs forgiveness for her selfishness. Mohammed, quite willing to comply, suggests that they return

to his tent, but she wants to remain a bit longer in the moonlight. Mohammed strokes his beard, then makes the play's closing remark: "the ways of an old virgin are difficult to mend, I fear."<sup>56</sup>

The effect of this sexual frustration on his writings was first evident in the erotic poetry which caused an early stir in Boston. With Christ his inner tension found full expression but remained largely unresolved. Buddha returned to similar territory but offered a spiritual escape. Mohammed, however, confronted the problem directly and created a fantasy world of the erotic and the comic which implied a greater freedom and maturity than he had heretofore expressed.

Mohammed, for all of its overblown and self-indulgent characters, is largely a playful and self deprecating spoof. Rather than ennoble sex or burden it with tragic consequences, Hartmann allowed it to become a leveling agent, puncturing the grand postures of all the characters, even those of Mohammed.

Hartmann was moving away from symbolism. If anything, with his ribald demystification of a revered prophet, he was suggesting that the symbolists should not take things quite so seriously. Rather than dwell on the birth of spiritual consciousness, as he had in Christ, or on its transformation, as he had in Buddha, he seemed to be saying that it was more important to enjoy life. At the very least, this was a

refreshing change in his outlook. More significantly, it pointed toward a greater maturity in his writing.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER 6.

1. Kermode, The Romantic Image, 60-77.
2. Voice, or a Summer Night,
3. The Kiss,
4. The Madonna,
5. The Eye Like a Balloon Moves Toward Infinity,
6. A Sewing Machine Meeting an Umbrella on a Dissection Table,
7. Edmund Wilson, Axel's Castle (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1931), 266.
8. Knapp, Maurice Maeterlinck, 53.
9. Rolf Fjelde, "Foreword," Henrik Ibsen, Four Major Plays, ed. and trans. by Rolf Fjelde, (New York: New American Library, 1965), xxxi.
10. Ibid., xxxiii.
11. Elizabeth Sprigge, "Introduction," to Six Plays of Strindberg (Garden City, New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1955), 5.
12. Ibid., 3.
13. Gerould, Doubles, Demons, and Dreamers, 12.
14. August Strindberg, "Author's Forward," to Miss Julie, trans. Elizabeth Sprigge in Six Plays of Strindberg, 67.
15. Hartmann, Autobiography, 181.
16. Ibid.

17. Ibid., 184.
18. Ibid., 186.
19. Ibid., 212.
20. Ibid., 213.
21. Ibid., 189.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid., 235.
24. In The Garden,
25. Hartmann, Autobiography, 242.
26. Ibid., 243-244.
27. Sadakichi Hartmann, cited by Fowler in Minutes of the Last Meeting, 119.
28. Ibid., 129-130.
29. Ibid., 130.
30. Ibid., 131.
31. Sadakichi Hartmann, "Mohammed" [1891-1898], p.1  
University of California, Riverside, Thomas Rivera Library
32. Ibid., 3.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid., 4.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid., 5.
37. Ibid., 7.
38. Ibid., 8.

39. Ibid., 9.
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid., 14.
42. Ibid., 15.
43. Ibid., 17.
44. Ibid., 18.
45. Ibid., 19.
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid., 20.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid., 21.
50. Ibid., 22.
51. Ibid., 23.
52. Ibid., 24.
53. Ibid., 29.
54. Ibid.
55. Ibid., 29.
56. Ibid.

## CHAPTER 7

CONFUCIUS

With each of the first three of his cycle of religious plays, Hartmann had taken individual steps toward resolving the artistic conflicts he found in the symbolist movement. In Christ, he had outlined the cosmic dichotomy of body and mind in symbolist terms and proposed a tragic result. In Buddha, he warped the symbolist fascination with timelessness and entropy into a spiritual and sometimes comic transcendence of human limitations. In Mohammed, he crushed sexual mysticism with irony and the simple pleasure in the acceptance of its awkward amusement. With each of these plays, Hartmann whittled away at the surface of symbolism. With Confucius, he was to confront and attempt to resolve the central dilemma of symbolism.

The symbolist dilemma, if such it may be called, was perhaps best expressed by Hugo von Hofmannsthal in "The Letter of Lord Chandos." There, a young lord, asked to explain why he no longer writes, replies:

My case, in short, is this: I have lost completely the ability to think or to speak coherently. . . . At first I grew by degrees incapable of discussing a loftier or more general subject. . . . Gradually, however, these attacks of anguish spread like a corroding rust. . . . For me, everything disintegrated into parts, those parts again into parts. . . . The language in which I might be able not only to write but

to think is . . . a language none of whose words is known to me.<sup>1</sup>

Chandos's questioner in the story is Sir Francis Bacon, perceived by Hofmannsthal as an ancestor of the symbolists, and Chandos's reply makes it clear that the story's refined and aristocratic practitioner of the literary art has suddenly lost his faith not only in the efficacy of language but in the very possibility of communication. This loss of faith was an issue that no symbolist writer, schooled in revulsion for rationalism but employing rationalism's linguistic tools, could ignore. For, if language is not a clarifier but just another cloud, how then can a writer proceed? For that matter, how can any artist function if the tools of art perpetually undercut its message?

Symbolism, like most social, artistic, or political movements, had as its genesis a reaction, in this case of "a new generation of dissidents who rejected the objective and scientific view of human destiny then being proclaimed."<sup>2</sup> Science, which, as a tool of the enlightenment, offered the concept that ultimately all phenomena could be rationally understood, was countered by the symbolist perception that "the human will is subordinated to outer influences and pressures. . . . [Which take] away from man the notion of purpose, aim, [or] will."<sup>3</sup> The symbolists sought to expose "man's confrontation with occult forces over which he has no control . . ."<sup>4</sup> in every sphere of art and particularly in the theatre, through which they hoped to achieve a "total

expression of the poetry of the universe through a refined and harmonious combination of movement, color, and sound."<sup>5</sup>

The symbolist distaste for realistic theatre was rooted in an anti-scientific reaction. Realism was viewed as a "useless duplication of life"<sup>6</sup> which shackled fantasy with the commonplace. The attempt by realists to penetrate human consciousness had produced a "creeping paralysis of external action."<sup>7</sup> To counter this decay, the symbolists proposed a theatre of ritual and illusion by "synthesizing . . . all arts, making them serve its own ends and creating its own spiritual values, which are precious . . . because they are theatrical."<sup>8</sup>

As the vehicle for this synthesis, the theatre would be focused on "the tragedy of the poet's existence in the material world"<sup>9</sup> since "tragic ecstasy . . . is the best that art—perhaps that life—can give."<sup>10</sup> This poet and his tragic situation need not necessarily be couched in heroic terms for it was felt that "there is a tragic element in the life of the every day that is far more penetrating . . . than the tragedy which lies in great adventure."<sup>11</sup> Thus, symbolist playwrights felt free to employ contemporary, classical, historic, even biographical themes as part of their investigation of the dichotomy between aesthetic values and materialistic reality.

Like any artistic form, symbolism had its limitations, boundaries which defined its content and gave it shape, resonance, and authority. But, underlying these parameters

was an odd paradox of values which many symbolists seemed unable to resolve. On the one hand, symbolism appeared to be a pessimistic philosophy which, like naturalism, suggested that "man is unable to rise above human existence or even to shape it."<sup>12</sup> But, as an aspect of the avant-garde that "depends on a concept of art which sees the creative act as . . . a process of renewal . . . ,"<sup>13</sup> symbolism also suggested a kind of progressive faith akin to romanticism. Many, in order perhaps to avoid this dilemma, attempted to glaze over it by concentrating on "rhythm, balance, pattern, images that remind us of vast passions, the vagueness of past times, [and] all the chimeras that haunt the edge of trance."<sup>14</sup> The crux of the issue, however, was not aesthetic but philosophic, for if "symbolism corresponds to romanticism, and is in fact an outgrowth from it,"<sup>15</sup> how then does one resolve the contrary impulse which "in [the] search for sensation . . . , exhausted sensation . . . [and] subtilised delicacy of perception into the annihilation of the very senses"?<sup>16</sup>

Of the avenues open to those who perceived this conflict, the most direct escape was to revolt again and deny "the magic power of language . . . as an unreal bond between the solitary individual and society."<sup>17</sup> This, certainly, was the route taken by Alfred Jarry who, in 1896, tuned Père Ubu's voice to "the howl and squeak which tradition has considerately assigned to the . . . spasmodic life of puppets."<sup>18</sup> A similar tack was taken by Vladimir Mayakovsky

in Mayakovsky: A Tragedy which presented all characters but the author in masks and expressed ". . . a powerful initial statement of Mayakovsky's pessimism concerning humanity's estate and of the despair with which he viewed its prospects."<sup>19</sup>

Others, unable to embrace such nearly nihilistic views, veered away from pure symbolism "to find the road which leads out of pre-existential isolation to the social and the active. . . ." <sup>20</sup> Chief among these was Hofmansthal whose oft noted artistic crisis, mirroring that of his character Lord Chandos, "led him away from words . . . [and] took him toward theatre and music where he was forced to collaborate."<sup>21</sup> As part of this shift, Hofmansthal began to concentrate on classic and mythic themes hoping "to find the one instrument of expression whereby he could resolve the antinomy between speech and action."<sup>22</sup> Maeterlinck was another who pursued such a path, though with conspicuously less commercial success.

Hartmann's own response to this problem was to explore it from another perspective and to introduce a fundamental element of humor in order to rationalize the irrational. Not a savage humor like Ubu's which Arthur Symons saw "sweeping all art, along with all humanity, into the same inglorious slop pail,"<sup>23</sup> but a whimsical, ego-deflating comedy which encouraged humanity to look beyond its mundane horizons.

At first glance, Confucius (1894-1916; 1920-1922) might be taken as a further retreat along the lines of Mohammed

from the cosmic territory inhabited by Christ and Buddha. Written initially in the late 1890s and revised periodically over a span of two more decades prior to finally being published, the play describes the latter days of a philosopher who rejects all forms of worship but is nevertheless deified by his followers. The play is full of ironic humor and absurd juxtapositions which persistently highlight the unintended unfortunate consequences of naively good intentions.

Kung (Confucius) is gifted with neither Jeshua's faith nor Gautama's serenity; nor does he possess Abul Kassim's personal connection with his diety; he is merely a minor poet whose chief refrain is "abandon hope."<sup>24</sup> "Hope is as great an error as hypocrisy," he says, "how can we enjoy life constantly expecting something better to turn up?"<sup>25</sup> Time and again Kung advises those who seek him to do nothing: "take life as it is. You cannot change it, for if you could, you would."<sup>26</sup> This philosophy sounds very much like the apocalyptic yearnings of Christ's Hermit, yet there is an activism inherent in Kung's message that is totally absent from the Hermit's prophecies. "Everything is well enough as it is,"<sup>27</sup> says Kung, implying that if only people would leave well enough alone, life would at least be tolerable.

Unfortunately, most people seem unable or unwilling to do so, and the entire play is a parade of pilgrims and world savers seeking Kung's approval or support. Kung, of course,

supports none of them, but this in no way stems the tide of self-righteous advocates.

The opening of the play sets the tone for what is to follow, when a Mother and Child who live, as does Kung, in a boat village on the Yellow River, start fighting with each other. The mother scolds her child for swimming in the river, prompting Jen Hway and Mang Lo, followers of Kung, to reprimand her for not allowing the Child to express itself. The Mother is naturally affronted by their interference until Kung points out that "children suffer largely for the shortcomings of grown up folks,"<sup>28</sup> and then boots the child for his disobedience.

This deflating irony is Kung's basic response to the stream of supplicants that haunt his little boat while his wife lies dying in the cabin and in the hold his mother prepares to give birth to her twenty-fifth child. First to arrive are The Brothers of Ugliness whose spokesman believes that "evil spirits must have invented beauty for torment and distress."<sup>29</sup> At first Kung seems to agree with him, but when his pious fascination with the grotesque and diseased entices one of Kung's sons into following him, Kung remarks: "You will make a kind of charity tramp of him."<sup>30</sup> Next come two followers of Lao Tse who hope to convince Kung to affirm their faith in the afterlife, but Kung merely shrugs. "I hope they have enough rice to eat over there,"<sup>31</sup> he says. Undaunted, others follow, including the Have Nothings who "want the government to own all land and property, all tools

and means of production, all booths of traffic,"<sup>32</sup> and the Free Men who declare: "Down with all authority! Down with morality, law, religion!"<sup>33</sup> To them, and many others, Kung's refrain is: "things will ever be as they are now. Somebody will always be obliged to make concessions."<sup>34</sup>

Between these encounters, Kung attempts to console his wife who he does not, or cannot, believe is actually dying. In their first scene they fight as she accuses him of indifference. Later, in a long speech to her brother, she recounts the tale of her marriage: "every misfortune has been mine since the day I bound my ankle to his."<sup>35</sup> But, when it is clear to them both that she is dying, she tells him, "you always pointed toward something higher—that I could have had with nobody else but you."<sup>36</sup> These are her last words and Kung, amazed that life can cease so suddenly, muses: "To think that she is no more . . . it is absurd."<sup>37</sup> As if to underscore this absurdity, Kung's Mother gives birth to her twenty-fifth child and Kung, dancing at this event, is caught out by his suddenly revived wife who first accuses him of heartlessness, and then apologizes for her rudeness and dies again, this time for good.

The relatives, hearing of her death, gather round for the wake. Kung tries to borrow money from them for her funeral but, having borrowed from them once too often, is rebuked: "This is what your aloofness from common interest has led you to."<sup>38</sup> Then, as soon as his back is turned, the relatives start stripping the body, taking her clothes, her

shoes, even her teeth and hair. Kung chases them off and, despondent, concludes, "Life is one continuous renunciation. . . . and the last renunciation—death."<sup>39</sup>

At the end of the act, Kung is commanded to appear before the ultimate supplicant, the Emperor of China. When Kung refuses, he is arrested.

The two first scenes of the Second Act offer a contrast between the Emperor's trivial life of pleasure, in which his most significant decision is the choice of a new chef, and Kung's stay in prison. Anxious to meet Confucius, the Emperor complains, "In all these ceremonies . . . I lose myself, I become a mere machine. . . . I do not know what life is."<sup>40</sup> Kung, on the other hand, when offered the means to escape, replies: "I do not consider myself imprisoned, I came here willingly."<sup>41</sup> After seeing his courtiers, the Emperor discourses on various aspects of cooking, cutlery, and dress. Kung, meanwhile, after listening to various thieves and murderers rationalize their crimes, delivers a rambling, often ironic monologue on the need for justice:

Kung: Debts over two years standing should be paid off in the workhouse. Honesty should be enforced. This would be decidedly at my expense. I would have to spend considerable stretches of my life within the workhouse.<sup>42</sup>

The climax of the play comes when the Emperor and Kung finally meet after Kung's daughter has forced him to escape from prison. The Emperor has followed him to a ravine where

various mad and starving peasants come to endure their final agonies. Kung has come to meditate on death but the Emperor, touched by the peasants' plight, commands: "Give the poor devils something to eat. Deposit the rice right here,"<sup>43</sup> and for the rest of the scene the raw rice continues to spill onto the stage. The Emperor wants to know why Kung would not come to see him; Kung replies: "As you commanded—I preferred to stay away."<sup>44</sup> They discuss various aspects of life, with the Emperor enthusiastically seeking enlightenment while Kung denies that there is any such thing. Finally, when the Emperor declares that he will cast aside his mantle and become a wandering poet, Kung advises: "There is no use of making elaborate changes. Do the little you can. Tax the bachelors, for instance."<sup>45</sup>

Meanwhile, the flood of rice is rising ever higher and both Kung and the Emperor are struggling to keep their heads above it. Kung observes that the peasants "are demented and will die from overeating."<sup>46</sup> Like a grotesque echo of the golden cascade in Axel or an eerie precursor of Beckett's Happy Days (1961), this brutal mound of raw matter clarifies at last the extreme wisdom of Kung's constant theme; do only what is necessary and leave well enough alone.

The final scene of the play is set in the Imperial Library where Kung has accepted a position as archivist. There he has set up a shrine to his dead wife. Kung closes the play by praying to her memory:

Kung: Oh, that my head could rest once more on your lap,  
 your warm breath caressing my forehead, while our  
 baby's hand petted my cheek—that would be enough to  
 fill eternity.<sup>47</sup>

With Confucius Hartmann brought his transcendentalism back to earth and in the process pointed the way beyond symbolism. Confucius is proto-absurdism. Other than the death of Kung's wife, nothing actually happens, and the play both harkens back to Aristophanes and forward to Beckett in its portrayal of a series of essentially unconnected, meaningless, and absurdly comic events.

Hartmann, however, portrays Kung's stubborn refusal to be seduced by material propositions as a necessary adaptation to this absurdity. Added to this is Kung's faltering, imperfect love for his wife which reemphasizes love as a spiritual quality that sustains life. This is the same message preached in very different ways by Jeshua, Gautama, and Mohammed. It is this love which offers hope and ultimately resolves the symbolist dilemma by transcending it.

Lest his spiritual vision be misconstrued, Hartmann outlined the essence of it in a pamphlet entitled My Theory of Soul Atoms (1910) in which he expanded upon Gautama's assertion that "soul forces of ancestral times . . . spinning in rhythmical curves . . . suddenly return to human habitations to reflect the vice and glory of dead ages."<sup>48</sup> Hartmann perceived soul substances as being composed of "forces charged with unknown potentialities of superior energy, ultra electrical perhaps . . ."<sup>49</sup> and posited that

"fragments of vibratory accumulations which once formed the soul of a Phidias, a Dante, or a Wagner, may roam through our thoroughfares and suddenly enter the studio of some sculptor, the study of a writer, or some musician bent over his instrument to influence his work."<sup>50</sup>

In advancing this concept of spiritual unity Hartmann, rather than being a "seeker after the material illusions of literary artifice,"<sup>51</sup> was expressing a sincere belief that "every ardent prayer . . . will be heard, that it will create an influence somewhere in the universe, and if strong enough will create some benefit to the original thinker."<sup>52</sup> This visionary optimism led him to propose that "the mastery of soul-atoms might become the great harmonizer and uplifting agency that will transform the world. Vibrations of love, peace, spirituality, harmony and above all else sanity could be radiated in ever widening circles meeting more and more responsive chords."<sup>53</sup>

This optimistic philosophy might have seemed quaintly innocent at the turn of the century, but to the twentieth century observer, surrounded by a veritable mob of gurus, zen masters, and cultish camps, it has an ominously familiar ring. Most contemporary transcendental movements have come, either through misunderstanding or their own excess, to be associated with the commercial and political exploitations of minor demagogues and their legions of seemingly mindless followers. As an advocate of spiritual transformation, Hartmann might mistakenly be lumped into the category of

herald for these abuses. But, the playwright was well aware of the potential for such extremes, as Confucius plainly shows.

Hartmann's movement from symbolism to post-symbolist humor mirrors in many ways the transformation of Alfred Jarry, another writer who first embraced symbolism only to reject it. Of all the comparisons that can be made between Hartmann and individual symbolists, perhaps none other is more interesting than this.

If anything, Jarry was even more extreme than Hartmann. Where Hartmann had been rejected by his father, Jarry, "from the beginning, . . . had scorned his."<sup>54</sup> Where Hartmann was an avid and self-taught intellectual, Jarry was an indifferent student who "excelled in his studies without trying."<sup>55</sup> Hartmann was tall, angular, and flamboyant, Jarry short, compact, and savage. Nevertheless, both men possessed a kind of self-destructive aura which propelled their creative impulses past the limits proscribed by their contemporaries.

Jarry came to Paris at the age of seventeen in 1891 and shortly became acquainted with the symbolists, attending many of Mallarmé's soirees and moving in a circle which included Marcel Schwob, Paul Valéry, André Gide, and Madame Rachilde, many of whom were also known to Hartmann's good friend, Stuart Merrill. There is, unfortunately, no record that Hartmann and Jarry ever met. Had they done so, however, it seems unlikely that either would have been much impressed with the other. Jarry had yet to distinguish himself as

anything other than a generally malevolent presence, and Hartmann was too much the skeptic to attract a young devoteé of "the poet of silence."<sup>56</sup>

Like Hartmann, Jarry made an early reputation for himself as "the extreme embodiment of his era."<sup>57</sup> Like the American King of Bohemia, Jarry "reveled in the waggishness and was not alone in his innocent zest"<sup>58</sup> for upsetting the conventional. And, just as with Hartmann, an incident occurred in Jarry's early twenties which dispelled the air of innocence and caused a transformation of his vision of art. For Hartmann, it was his final breakup with his father; for Jarry, it was the death of his mother from influenza. From that time forward, Jarry chose to embody his personal muse, the figure of Père Ubu, and preached his doctrine of Pataphysics just as, in a no less extreme way, Hartmann had earlier chosen to reject realism and become the self-appointed prophet of symbolism in America.

Jarry surged into prominence with the publication and subsequent production of his play Ubu Roi at the Theatre Nouveau on December 11, 1896. A savage burlesque of human barbarity, Ubu was essentially Jarry's pursuit of a schoolboy joke to its most horrendous extreme. Modeled after a bungling professor at the lycée of his youth, Ubu was originally a puppet character used to make fun of authority. Eight years later the character had been resurrected in a series of fragments and finally a full-length play about Ubu's usurpation of Poland. Written in a deliberately

childlike style to emphasize the primitive, bestial aspect of Ubu, "unrelieved by any insight into his own monstrosity, uncontrollable as an elephant on the rampage, earnest in his blundering,"<sup>59</sup> the play drew many enthusiastic supporters who saw in it a bold attack on the literary and civilized conventions which obscured the true nature of life.

Given the chance to see his creation presented on stage, Jarry would accept no half-measures of conventional staging. Instead, he insisted on the use of masks, artificial costumes devoid of realistic context, toy-like properties, and a single drop upstage "painted to represent, by a child's conventions, indoors and out of doors, and even the torrid, temperate, and arctic zones at once,"<sup>60</sup> and most importantly, that "the actors were to be as much like marionettes as possible."<sup>61</sup> Although these concepts met with some resistance from Lugné-Poë, the play's producer, Jarry campaigned for his vision with articles in the Mercure de France, a journal published by Madame Rachilde's husband, Alfred Vallette. Eventually, Jarry prevailed and, by the night of the performance:

All literary Paris was primed for the event. Jarry's friends saw to it that every critic was at the première. (The dress rehearsal had been fairly quiet.) The old Théâtre Nouveau in the Rue Blanche was filled to the last seat with partisans and enemies, with symbolists, decadents, naturists, independants, and the Mercure faithful, to hear the enormity Jarry had perpetrated.<sup>62</sup>

The result was a theatrical explosion, ignited when Firmin Gémier in the role of Ubu spoke the opening line: "Merdre."

Time and again during the evening, the performance threatened to dissolve into riot as opponents and supporters attacked each other directly. The play had become a cause célèbre even before it began and by the following day Jarry and Ubu were at the center of an artistic debate which has since become legendary.

The immediate effect, however, was minute. Those who supported Jarry's position had no follow-up, no second act which could equal, much less transcend, Ubu's cataclysmic entrance. On the other hand, those who opposed Jarry, like Arthur Symons, dismissed him as "a young savage in the woods,"<sup>63</sup> and concluded:

Jarry's present conception of satire is very much that of the schoolboy to whom a practical joke is the most efficacious form of humor, and bad words scrawled on a slate the most salient kind of wit. . . . Ubu . . . is not invented with sufficient profundity, nor set in motion with a sufficiently comic invention. He does not quite attain to the true dignity of the marionette. He remains a monkey on a string.<sup>64</sup>

Ubu's strongest affect was on its author who "was already engaged in redoubling the extravagance of his behavior and in completing his identification with Ubu."<sup>65</sup> Jarry literally destroyed his previous identity in the process of becoming the one that he alone had created. Recognizing, perhaps, that he could not surpass Ubu, Jarry

chose to become him, thus providing the "second act" of his personal drama. In time, he came to be known as Père Ubu to friends and foes alike.

Jarry's most creative period lasted through the early 1900s during which he published a number of Ubu sequels, several novels, poetry, and essays. His collection of disciples included Max Jacob, André Salmon, and Guillaume Apollinaire.

Unfortunately, Jarry's absorption of the Ubu persona ultimately became personally destructive, and his health suffered as the result of intense drinking and malnutrition which he pursued as a "form of protracted suicide."<sup>66</sup> He died impoverished in 1907, after years of decline, but interest in his work was later revived by Apollinaire who portrayed him as the prophet of twentieth century modernism, a reputation that has held to this day.

While Sadakichi Hartmann showed no awareness of Jarry or Ubu, in itself a remarkable fact given his otherwise voracious knowledge, he was not unaware of the defiant purpose behind them and, in fact, had already created an Ubu of his own in the character of Mohammed.

As offensive as Ubu may have been among certain literary cliques, Mohammed, had it been once performed, would doubtless have been far more shocking for its portrayal of a major religious figure as a man motivated by a lust every bit the equal of Ubu's primitive urges. Hartmann, of course, had already been vilified for Christ in a critical storm which

preceded Ubu by five years and in which, unlike Jarry, he lacked a strong core of defenders. His response was to produce work which distanced itself by way of self-deprecating humor. With Buddha the humor was voiced by a character whose principal message was self-denial and who, at the play's climax, underwent a physical transformation which suggested a positive alternative to the one Jarry ultimately chose. In Mohammed the humor was in the hands of a huge, overpowering creature of elemental strength and desire who would be terrifying were it not for his personal charm.

Hartmann created another Ubu-like character in Confucius: the all-powerful Emperor who is almost childlike in his inability to recognize the consequences of his actions and whose massively fumbled attempts to help others betray his impossibly crude scale. What is most interesting is the fact that Hartmann deflates this childish monster with Kung's mild-mannered humor.

Just as Jarry had with Ubu, Hartmann attempted to point the way to modernism with Confucius. The principal difference was that where Jarry chose to destroy, Hartmann chose to counsel patience. Yeats's concern after viewing the opening of Ubu was that "comedy, objectivity, has displayed its growing power once more. . . . After us, the Savage God."<sup>67</sup> Hartmann, however, seems to have been sensitive to the threat of this "Savage God" of blind objectivism and prepared a non-violent escape hatch. In this way, he provided an optimistic American response to European malaise.

This optimism, which permeates even the most ironic of Hartmann's work, seems to be of specifically American character. It is an optimism that embraces a fascination with the mechanisms of time and space akin to the American love of gadgetry. When Hartmann writes of "soul atoms," he is revealing his belief in the coherence of the cosmos, a belief that is far from the decadent hearts of the early symbolists. And, when he later propounds the idea that memory, as the central aspect of the disembodied soul, might permit human consciousness to "continue to operate without the human body"<sup>68</sup> and thus produce immortality, he is expressing a wish that would have been greeted with little enthusiasm among the fin de siècle Parisian literati. Hartmann's luxury as an American was to be able to overlook Old World pessimism; his misfortune was to be similarly overlooked in both the New and Old Worlds.

Part of this misfortune may have been due to the complexities that any production of his plays would have posed. Buddha, with its many locales, its rapid set changes, and kaleidoscopic effects presents the most varied group of problems, though Confucius, with its rice scene, appears no less difficult. Christ lends itself most easily to the call for "illusion, no matter what the source may be,"<sup>69</sup> but, like Mohammed, discusses sex too openly for the stage at that time. Where the symbolists sought a stagecraft founded on "constructions rigidly subordinated to rhythmical movement and to the musical harmony of color masses,"<sup>70</sup> and acting that

emphasized "proportions, tones, and light other than [what] we have in this world,"<sup>71</sup> Hartmann, in both his stage directions and in his "Suggestions for a Performance of Christ,"<sup>72</sup> called for "panorama-like scenery," accurate costumes, "picturesque and natural looking . . . properties, . . . natural and artistic" acting, and seemed quite comfortable with the conventions of the realistic stage. Thus, even if a simple, inexpensive, illusionistic production of Christ had been proposed, it seems likely that Hartmann would have held out for something on a grander scale.

Like Strindberg at the end of To Damascus, Hartmann was "still seeking the solution to the enigma of life and death, although his mind and spirit [had] been liberated from past doubts of the omnipotence and wisdom of the creator."<sup>73</sup> The parallel to To Damascus is apt, for the plays of Hartmann's cycle operate much like the Damascus trilogy by posing a problem and solving it in stages.

With Confucius Hartmann delivered a more subtle message than mere optimism. Kung's basic assertion is that all life is subjective and that relativity is the final paradox. In effect, no good can be done that does not at least contain the potential to create an equal evil. This is the message clearly displayed in the Emperor's flood of rice and this is Hartmann's warning to all twentieth century purists and crusaders.

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## CHAPTER 8

## FIGHTING JAPS, TRAGIC FLATS, AND PERFUME ACTS:

## HARTMANN ON BROADWAY

Hartmann became an American citizen on Columbus Day 1894, and settled in New York with his young family, supporting them by free lance journalism. After many years of apprenticeship in Philadelphia, Boston, and New York, he had become adept at the trade and viewed it cynically, commenting: "Journalism is like a big steamer's wake; it makes a lot of foam at the moment but leaves no trace."<sup>1</sup>

His new sense of responsibility overcoming his distaste, he soon landed a steady position at the New York Staats-Zeitung, a German-language paper founded in 1834, which in the 1890s had wide national and international distribution. Hartmann became close friends with the paper's publisher, Oswald Ottendorfer, an influential businessman who had run for mayor of New York in 1874. Hartmann's post at the paper was much more satisfying than his usual employ since it called upon him to produce "one seven-to-nine-column illustrated article every second Sunday, and one two-column article every week, nearly all devoted to descriptions of New York City life."<sup>2</sup> The assignment offered him the widest possible range of subjects and, even more pleasing to Hartmann, required fairly high literary standards.

Altogether, he wrote over three-hundred-and-fifty such articles between 1895 and 1902, receiving about four or five dollars a column. This, coupled with other penny-a-line articles, netted him from a hundred-forty to two hundred dollars a month, which in the mid 1890s was a considerable sum. Unfortunately, Hartmann remained as extravagant as ever, and that which did not go to his family, evaporated almost every month.

During this same period, he began to establish himself as an authoritative critic of American art. Unlike journalism or theatrical criticism, the field of art criticism was less crowded with hacks, and Hartmann's talent as a rigorous judge of quality could be more easily appreciated.

Art collections in the 1890s were principally the domain of private clubs and the wealthy. Although public exhibitions of members' collections were often held by clubs such as the Colonial Club or the Union League, and other clubs like the Lotus Club, which had a large membership of artists, and the Salmagundi Club also collected art, it was impossible to view the great majority of work, particularly contemporary American art, without gaining access to the private galleries of the artists and collectors who could afford it. Hartmann, despite his irascible and provocative manner, soon became a fixture in this small society, giving frequent lectures on art and publishing regular articles in

noted art journals like The Forum, Musical Courier, and Criterion.

Hartmann soon seized upon the idea of putting together an exhibition of the best of contemporary American art and touring it in Europe. It was a daring idea and would have been a coup for him to promote what would have been the first of its kind. He approached each of the major collectors in turn, but was politely rebuffed:

They could not see it my way. They shook their heads and stared into space—the insurance would be too high, the packing too difficult—they would rather keep their treasures in gilded oubliettes than risking losses.<sup>3</sup>

Such setbacks notwithstanding, Hartmann was at last being taken seriously enough to be featured in late 1895, in the kind of Sunday article which he later claimed to despise. Purporting to imagine the composite "New Yorker of 1995" which would be the ultimate result of the American melting pot, the Sunday Journal of November 10 selected eight prominent men of different races and occupations and, police blotter style, merged their facial characteristics into a single portrait. Included among the mug shots were Thomas Edison, Henri Villard<sup>4</sup>, and Count Olarovsky<sup>5</sup>, representative of the Anglo-Saxon, Germanic, and Russian strains respectively. Hartmann was the Oriental delegate. Ironically, the paper seemed unaware of his mixed heritage which thus gave the man of the future an extra dose of Teutonic angst.

With art circles gradually opening to him and journalism providing sustenance, Hartmann continued to find energy for his dream of theatrical success. Unfortunately, a number of his earlier efforts, including Mademoiselle Bébé<sup>6</sup> and a four act drama about Abraham Lincoln, had been lost during his last trip to Paris.

After returning to Boston from Paris 1893, in between publishing ventures, journalism, and work on Buddha, he wrote a "society play in the sentimental order called Little Joseph's Daughter."<sup>7</sup> Judging it to be more commercial than his other work, he offered it to a number of Boston and New York companies without success. At one point, he read it to Sadie Martinot<sup>8</sup> who then introduced him to R. M. Field, the manager of the Boston Museum Company, and Frank Keenan, the Company's character actor.

I surprised him just as he was going to take a nap. "I feel tired but as you have come, just read me one act, the second." I read it. "Continue," he said. So I read the third. He was all wrought up. "Let's have the fourth," and finally he wanted to hear the first. He was very enthusiastic about it, particularly about a part that he thought he could play, and he said that he might possibly buy it for his own purposes.<sup>9</sup>

Keenan's interest was not dampened even when Hartmann was subsequently arrested for his publication of Christ. Negotiating with him from behind the bars of the Charles Street Jail, Hartmann signed Keenan's contract and had his wife exchange the script for his fee. Shortly afterwards,

Hartmann was released, but Keenan never could convince the Museum, or any other company, to produce the play.

As noted in CHAPTER 2, Hartmann based Boston Lions on a Kotzebue original and, still pursuing the commercial theatre, also adapted another farce, The Diamond Lizard (1897), from a lesser known Viennese playwright, Franz von Schönthan (1849-1913). As with Boston Lions, he shopped it around as much as possible, and even advertised it in the papers. At one point, he attracted the interest of Annie Russell (1860-1936) who liked The Diamond Lizard enough to recommend it Charles Frohman (1860-1915) for production. Unfortunately, she was not aware that it was an adaptation of material that Frohman had already optioned. The play was returned within a week.

The Diamond Lizard is typical of the comedies of the period and, despite its Vienes heritage, contains many elements of French farce. Set in New York City, Act 1 opens in the studio of Miles, an old artist who has two daughters, Miss Agnes, a doctor, and Pollie, who has just graduated from business school with a degree in dress designing. At the opening of the play, Frank Bleeker, son of Henry Bleeker, owner of a large New York clothier, is waiting for Pollie in Miles's studio and learns from Maggie, the maid, that the family is badly behind in its rent.

Left alone for a moment, Frank decides to pay their rent out of his allowance and has just stuffed an envelope full of cash into Miles's humidor when Agnes enters and eccentrically inquires whether or not he would like to help her experiment

with her new electrical muscle developer (a type of gadget which was then very much in vogue). Frank politely refuses, and then suggests that she employ a "poor devil--who is willing to do anything for a few quarters"<sup>10</sup> and gives her the address of Washington Magpie, a man he knows who will fit her bill. Then, not wanting to be on hand when his money is discovered, he abruptly leaves.

Enter Miles, awakened from his nap by the electric doorbell Agnes has recently installed and, after a moment or two of puttering about the studio, discovers the envelope of money left by Frank with a note claiming to be payment of cash owed to Miles for many years. Although Miles cannot remember any such debt, he is not one to worry overmuch about it either.

This introductory incident, which has little bearing on the plot, can easily be seen as a wishful object lesson from Hartmann, as if he were suggesting that all artists should be supported as selflessly.

The play proper begins when Maggie reenters with a telegram from Pollie announcing her arrival from college at the depot that afternoon. Miles quickly goes for his coat to meet her but discovers that he has somehow got hold of the wrong coat. Maggie then recognizes it from an article in the evening paper as the coat of a man who had a jewelled diamond lizard stolen the night before. Both Maggie and Agnes are very much upset by this revelation, but Miles refuses to believe that anyone could think him a thief.

Pollie enters, not having waited at the depot (and very promptly after her telegram), and is quickly brought into the scene. She suggests that Miles simply send the coat back to the owner, anonymously, after which she will go to him to make an apology, a plan which delights everyone.

The second act is set in Henry Bleeker's office and opens as he discusses the theft of his diamond lizard with Templeton, a police detective. Expressing his irritation with the robbery, he also confides his distrust of his son Frank who seems to have suddenly transformed himself from a lazy spendthrift to an industrious draper. After Templeton leaves to pursue his case, Bleeker continues his discourse on human vice with his sister, Melanie, declaring that he has recently been making "expeditions through the slums of New York with Mr. Templeton, from one thief's den to the other."<sup>11</sup> Melanie is scandalized, of course, but Bleeker thinks it daring.

Soon, Frank enters followed very quickly by Pollie who immediately proposes that Bleeker hire her as a draper for \$75.00 a week. Distrustful of women in business, Bleeker is at first taken aback, but he is soon charmed by her forceful personality and agrees to hire her even as Frank, making believe he does not know her, comically objects.

Of course, Frank and Pollie are in love, and no sooner does Bleeker exit than they are in each others arms. Their plan all along has been to get Pollie installed at the company since she is the one with the artistic talent while

Frank is simply a rich man's son who both appreciates her ability and loves her unselfishly. Again, Hartmann's conviction that artist's should be supported is highlighted, although not quite as artificially as in scene one. It is worth noting too that Pollie is far more businesslike than Hartmann could ever have hoped to be.

The act ends with the "mysterious" delivery of Bleeker's missing coat, followed by the entrance of Washington Magpie who is instantly mistaken by Bleeker for a criminal type. To draw him out, Bleeker gives Magpie his coat and a comic interrogation follows with Magpie innocently confirming Bleeker's wildest suspicions until Frank reenters and welcomes him for having kept their appointment to visit Agnes. Bleeker, confounded, falls back in his chair as they exit.

The third act returns to Miles's studio at midnight as Miles, awakened again by his daughter's nightbell, opens the door to discover Bleeker being chased by the police. Though they have never met, Bleeker begs entrance and Miles admits him. Bleeker then tells him of his latest escapade in a Devil's Kitchen poker game.

Soon, Agnes appears and tends to Bleeker's twisted ankle while Bleeker chats with Miles and learns that he is Pollie's father. Then, Pollie enters and decides to charm Bleeker a bit more. By the time he leaves, Bleeker is totally captivated and has begun to fancy himself a possible suitor for Pollie.

No sooner has Bleeker gone than Templeton arrives to enlist Miles in a plan to capture the thief of the diamond lizard. Templeton has, naturally, mistaken Magpie as the thief and he and Miles go off to lay their trap while Pollie enters with Magpie who has come for his session with Agnes's electrical muscle stimulator.

Pollie ushers Magpie to her sister's waiting room just as Frank enters to warn her that his father is planning to propose to her. Pollie is amused and decides that the best solution is for Frank to promptly ask for her hand from her father. Frank does so and Miles agrees, seeming to settle the problem until Bleeker reappears with the same intention. With Frank and Pollie in the next room, Miles takes it upon himself to advise Bleeker of their engagement, but in doing so refers to them only as "two beings." Bleeker, thinking the reference is to himself, immediately agrees and then thanks the confounded Miles for helping him gain Pollie's hand. In the next room, meanwhile, Frank and Pollie can be heard groaning at the mixup and Bleeker becomes suspicious. But, before the mistake can be unravelled, Templeton enters claiming to have captured the thief of Bleeker's diamond lizard pin, Washington Magpie, who is dragged into the room wearing the coat Bleeker had given him back in Act 2. Scornfully, Bleeker tells Templeton to look in the next room if he wants to find the real thief. Templeton does so, and out steps Frank.

Act 4 returns to Bleeker's office with Bleeker telling Templeton to drop his investigation because the missing diamond pin has already caused him more trouble than it was worth. Templeton agrees and then exits. Bleeker then instructs his butler to go and buy another pin so that he can publicly claim that the pin has been found.

A moment later, Melanie and Frank enter and, in Bleeker's absence, agree to the same plan. Melanie rushes out to buy the pin and Frank is about to tell Bleeker about his engagement to Pollie when Pollie enters and announces that she has decided to accept Bleeker's proposal.

Frank is stunned, but Pollie tells him to trust her. She then begins telling Bleeker about some of her previous affairs, in particular a man whose picture she wants to keep on her nightstand. Bleeker is so shocked, he immediately breaks the engagement.

Pollie and Frank are then about to explain everything to him when Melanie enters with her diamond lizard claiming to have found it in her room. A moment later, Templeton enters with Miles in tow, having put him under arrest for frequenting gambling dens. Bleeker realizes that Templeton has mistaken Miles for himself, but Pollie is so upset at her father's arrest that she runs from the room leaving Frank to explain to his father that they plan to marry. Realizing that only he can straighten out the misunderstanding, Bleeker explains Templeton's mistake and gives his blessing to Frank.

No sooner is it settled than Washington Magpie rushes in with the real diamond lizard announcing that he found it in the coat Bleeker had given him. One moment later, Bleeker's butler comes in showing off a third pin, declaring that it has been found and then handing Bleeker the jeweler's bill. Everyone is greatly amused and the play closes with Frank and Pollie hand in hand.

While The Diamond Lizard is far from a perfect play, it does have charm and the potential to be quite entertaining. As he had with Boston Lions, Hartmann demonstrated that he could competently translate a foreign original and imbue it with his own sense of amusement. If the play suffered from a lack of focus, with three different plots never quite meshing, this was neither unusual nor fatal when compared to contemporary American plays. Unfortunately, Hartmann had chosen to adapt a play that a major producer already had under option in the original, a fate which has doubtless befallen many other playwrights before and since.

Rather than seek employment as a dramatic translator, a craft which had proven quite profitable for many others, Hartmann continued to advertise for his scripts and in 1897 he came to the attention of the Hanlon Brothers, "a troupe of acrobatic actors, . . . [including] George (1839-?), William (1844-1923), and Edward (1854-1931), [then] in New York with a show called Fantasma."<sup>12</sup> While not interested in Boston Lions or The Diamond Lizard, they appreciated his talent and suggested that he write "something more lively."<sup>13</sup> Sensing an

opportunity, Hartmann improvised an original idea about a play set in Japan which could include all sorts of chases and stunts. The Hanlons encouraged him and sent him off to work up an outline over the weekend.

The following Monday, the basic outline of Cherry Blossoms (1897) was set and the Hanlons paid Hartmann \$100.00 toward the finished script which he completed several months later:

They paid me but were not satisfied with the text; they wanted more gags. I refused, as I was incapable of furnishing them. Although it was a play specially suited for [their] tumbling tricks, . . . I had written it very much as I would a comedy. We could never agree on this point and finally the play itself was shelved.<sup>14</sup>

Written as a commissioned work, Cherry Blossoms is full of gags tailored to the Hanlon's acrobatic talents. The first act is set outside a Japanese summer resort near a public park. A group of European tourists arrives to attend the annual cherry blossom festival. Hartmann pokes fun at the tourists much as he did at the natives in Boston Lions and Osadda's Revenge, but in this case the fun is with their encounters with local customs.

Midway through the first act, Bob, an English nobleman, takes a fancy to Cherryblossom, daughter of a landless Daimyo (Japanese feudal chief). Likewise, the Daimyo's nephew, Shiko, is attracted to Lydia, daughter of Bostonian Mrs. Prim. Bob pursues Cherryblossom and quickly convinces her to elope with him. He is caught in the act of kissing her by

the Daimyo who has been trying to buy a bomb from a German photographer. The Daimyo threatens Bob, but the Policeman politely breaks them apart and the matter is dropped. The act ends with Cherryblossom being kidnapped by a roguish pair of actors who disguise her in a mask and costume and slip her and the Daimyo's bomb away after their performance for the feast. The feast, of course, provides all manner of dining jokes, from chopsticks to sushi.

The third act is played out before "a colossal bronze statue of Dai Butsu" and a dilapidated temple nearby. Once again, Bob is with Cherryblossom, having caught up with her captors who, oddly, are nowhere in sight. After a bit more instruction in kissing, a convention which is also notably unJapanese, the foolery continues with the thieves in the guise of ghosts attempting to frighten Bob and Cherryblossom.

Bob, of course, is not deceived and quickly routs the inept pair. There follows some play over swimming customs with Cherryblossom and a trio of female tourists who compare swimsuits and so on.

Finally, the Daimyo rushes on in a rage and threatens to behead Bob's father, Lord Worcestershire, for Bob's flirtation with his daughter. With the help of a pair of armed Ronins, he takes control of the scene, retrieves his daughter, and prepares to behead the offending lover. Then, at the last moment, the polite Policeman enters with the two abductors in tow and stops the crisis with his pleasant objections.

The Daimyo, thwarted in his vengeance, then attempts to force Cherryblossom to wed a fat middle-aged member of his retinue. But Lydia and Shiko enter declaring their new marriage and produce the bomb, threatening to detonate it if Bob and Cherryblossom are not allowed to wed. The Daimyo agrees grudgingly and the play ends with the final odd custom, a Japanese wedding.

Despite not having been to Japan since his youth, Hartmann was very knowledgeable on the subject of Japanese culture and he used Cherry Blossoms to display his expertise. It is notable that the play includes a brief play within a play showcasing a kind of Kabuki performance. This includes references to specifically stylized special effects, including the "beheading" of a pair of actors who drop false skulls to the floor and then calmly exit. There is also mention of a stagemanager dressed in black who is "supposed not to be there."<sup>15</sup> These references to Oriental theatre techniques predate The Yellow Jacket (1912), a Chinese style comedy by Joseph Henry Benrimo and George C. Hazelton, Jr., which was perceived as wholly original in 1912. The Yellow Jacket also featured a Property Man character dressed in black, familiar to Chinese and Japanese theatre alike, who was also outside the action of the play but which, in the hands of Charles Coburn, became enormously popular. Benrimo and Hazelton also used other Chinese staging techniques, such as tables for mountains and sticks for horses which was much appreciated by the advocates of new staging. All of these

techniques appear to have been anticipated by Hartmann but, since his play was never produced, Benrimo and Hazelton earned the credit for bringing Oriental theatre techniques to Broadway.

A lesser effort, probably intended as a curtain raiser, is A Vacant Bungalow (n.d.). This short one-act play is a trifle built on a case of mistaken identities as a young lawyer, Henry Furlong, takes refuge from a storm in a bungalow boarded up for the off-season and is immediately confronted by an angry Margaret Gillman who holds him at gunpoint. Margaret has taken him for a burglar and interrogates him while claiming that she has a husband upstairs attempting to sleep off a headache.

Eventually, the two begin to converse more politely and it comes out that Henry is expected for dinner at a friend's home where he is to meet an eligible young woman. Throughout the scene, however, he remarks in asides that he is strongly attracted to Margaret and wishes she were not married. Finally, the rain lets up and Henry is about to proceed to his dinner date when Margaret breaks down and begs him not to leave.

Suddenly, she faints and Henry carries her to a couch. When she revives, she explains that she is not really married, that there is no other man upstairs, and that she is the woman he is supposed to meet at the dinner, but that she too had come to the bungalow to escape the rain. In an odd touch, Hartmann has her also confess to a fear of being left

alone in the bungalow and of walking alone in the village. Henry, pleased that she is single, gallantly offers her his arm and they head out together to their dinner date.

Billed as a "Vaudeville Sketch," the play, unlike many of the vaudevilles put together by Howells and other literary writers, lacks any real dramatic motive. Hartmann does not seem to have a strong interest in the lovers and motivates them arbitrarily, particularly in the sequence in which Margaret faints.

Hartmann's last strictly commercial effort for the stage was Fighting Japs (n. d.), a melodrama that has no date of composition but which clearly after 1905 since it is set during the Russo-Japanese War of the same year. If nothing else, this unproduced play shows that Hartmann had not set aside his theatrical ambitions even after two decades of unrewarded dedication.

Fighting Japs describes the adventures of Jack Everett, an American war correspondent who is staying at a Japanese inn overlooking Port Arthur on the day when war is declared. Also at the inn are two pairs of Russian Admirals and Generals who blithely scorn the idea of a Japanese attack, a trio of Japanese spies who enlist the unwilling aid of Varenka who is in love with Everett and is the daughter of one of the Russian Generals. For comic relief, Hartmann includes his usual family of Boston provincials on vacation and a German sea captain.

Everett has managed to fall in love with Peony, adopted Korean daughter of the innkeeper. But he is torn by his desire to marry her and return to the States and his intention to follow the story of the war. Thus, when fighting suddenly breaks out, they are separated when he decides to follow the Japanese to the front and she is captured by the Russians as a spy.

The second act is played on a railroad track with a trestlebridge in southern Manchuria, a location that is controlled by the Russians but is soon visited by every other character in the play. First, two Cossacks establish the scene by describing their boredom with sentry duty, then ride off on patrol as Varenka and Peony enter. Varenka, continuing to serve the Japanese, plants a map describing Russian troop movements under a trio of rocks while Peony grapples with the advances of her brutish Russian captor, Tolansky. No sooner do they exit, than Everett and the three Japanese spies arrive bent on blowing the trestle.

But, before they can finish their work, a train pulls into view carrying the Boston tourists attempting to escape from the front. Everett chats with them briefly while the spies hide, and then the train moves on leaving Everett and his cohorts to be discovered by Tolansky just as they are about to light the fuse of their bomb.

Tolansky and his men quickly round them up, tie them each to a nearby tree, and begin interrogating Everett who they quickly discover is in love with Peony. Distracted by

this, he overlooks the spies who slip their bonds and, while the Russian duels with Everett, blow the trestle.

Everett and two of the three spies are recaptured and, as the third act begins, are being held under guard in a shanty near the Russian encampment on the ice covered Yalu River. Everett is upset with the situation but his Japanese cellmates are stoic. Then, during the changing of the guard, Peony convinces him to play on Varenka's love for him as a means of escape.

The Russians, meanwhile, are growing suspicious that another spy may be among them since the Japanese seem to know their every movement. Their General, Varakoff, interrogates Everett and discovers the copy of their code book which Varenka had left for the Japanese in act 2. Everett, however, is technically a neutral, so Varakoff is uncertain what to do with him and returns him to the shack just as a contingent of Japanese stage an attack.

During the distraction, Varenka appears and, after flirting with Everett, agrees to help him escape. But before she can put any plan into effect, the third spy returns and tries to cut them free only to be recaptured himself. The general, meanwhile, has begun to suspect Varenka of being the other spy. He orders that Everett and the Japanese be shot but then stops to question Varenka who provides enough distraction for Peony to set the captives free just as the ice surrounding the river begins to break up. Amid all this

confusion, Everett, Varenka, and one of the Japanese spies escape across the ice floes on the Yalu.

The question of what happened to Peony is promptly answered in the fourth act when she arrives at a Mountain Monastery where she seeks asylum from a Priest who prefers to remain uninvolved, unless he is well paid. He leaves her alone and she hides as Varakoff enters with his staff to prepare a final defense from the Japanese. After their conference, Tolansky is left behind on post, and Peony rushes off to warn the Japanese of the Russians' plans.

Enter the Boston tourists who are weary from being shunted back and forth by the Russians and quickly make appropriate arrangements with the Priest, who drops his neutrality when offered American specie. No sooner do they retreat inside the monastery than Everett and Varenka also enter and Tolansky comments: "What is this, a hotel? All Port Arthur seems to be here."<sup>16</sup> He then tries to make an escape of his own but is spotted by Everett who wrestles him to the ground.

The Tourists and the Priest rush back on, drawn by the commotion, only to stand amazed when the one surviving Japanese spy, Moto, enters with a contingent from the Japanese army making final preparations for their showdown with the Russians. After deciphering a Russian telegraph message describing their plan of defense, Moto states the purpose of the battle and the war:

As you all know, this is not a war of revenge. This is not an ambition to take territory. We don't want Korea or Manchuria. We don't want territorial expansion. What we are fighting for is the territorial integrity of China. Our object is to resist Russian aggression. We are engaged in a struggle for natural existence, and to this end we will fight as long as we are able.<sup>17</sup>

Moments later, after Moto and his company have returned to the front and the Tourists and Everett have taken refuge in the Monastery, the Russians are driven back onto the scene and Varakoff addresses his flagging troops:

What can I say to you? I don't know. Words won't come, the words I ought to utter, I daren't. And yet why should I spare you? My feelings are nothing to you. Why should yours concern me. What you are you know as well as I do--you are cowards, poltroons, dogs who turn tail and fly from the enemy and whose blood turns to water at the sight of the sword and smell of powder. I wish God had spared me to see the shame of seeing this morning's work.<sup>18</sup>

Somehow, this abuse rallies their spirits and they charge off as Varenka enters. Realizing that she has ensured the Russians' defeat, she shoots herself just as the final battle is engaged and the Russians are routed. Finally, after the Japanese take control of the scene, Everett is reunited with Peony and they are promised victorious escort to Tokyo as the play ends.

Hartmann's Japanese loyalties in this exercise are strongly on display and, as such, they undermine his own melodramatic purpose since Everett becomes more of a spectator than a death-defying hero. He is not even permitted to rescue Peony. Instead, she rescues him and then

delivers the Russians' battle-plans to the Japanese army, enabling them to defeat their enemy. A proper melodrama, on the other hand, would at least have given Everett a chance to save the tourists while maintaining his circumspect neutrality. As it is, Everett comes off as rather less than a serious adventurer who pursues the excitement of war without any of the virtuous purposes voiced by the Japanese.

With the exception of A Vacant Bungalow, Hartmann's commercially aimed plays, including Boston Lions, The Diamond Lizard, Cherry Blossoms, and Fighting Japs, are all respectable representations of their types. Hartmann, however, held them in low esteem.

I had an utter contempt for American playwrights and thought anything was good enough.

The trouble is that the playwright cannot work independantly, he has to write a play specially for a purpose, for an actress or an actor, cater to the box office and the fads of the time. So what's the use.<sup>19</sup>

In fact, Hartmann had more than enough talent to become a successful commercial playwright, but he preferred to be a poet. As a result, he put much less effort into his commercial plays and each of them suffered from a lack of the intensity and genuine energy that make his poetic plays remarkable.

None of the characters in his commercial plays have the distinctiveness or depth of conception of a Jeshua, Gautama, Abul Kassim, or Kung. Instead, they are all stereotypes who act according to the simple needs of the plot which, in each

case, lack the cohesion of a unifying theme. Similarly, the writing style of these plays is totally devoid of any of the poetic or metaphoric quality that possesses the poetic plays. Hartmann almost seems to have conceived of them in a "commercial style" that deliberately avoided all of the special characteristics that made his poetic plays unique. Simply put, he wrote these plays outside of his own best instincts and, just as he approached journalism, he treated them cavalierly and never condescended to resolve the problems they presented.

Instead, he turned his attention to poetry again and produced his shortest and one of his most striking plays, A Tragedy in a New York Flat. The play, which is barely six pages long, features four characters, George Hatching, Kathleen Fisher, her husband Charles, and her baby of two weeks, appearing briefly in the second scene. The play begins with Kathleen at home alone, cooking lunch and musing to herself about the room she and her husband have just put up for rent. At that moment there is a knock at the door and George enters. Twelve years younger than her forty year old husband, George is also quite a bit more threatening:

George (entering, reproachful): You don't seem to be very pleased to see me back again, Kathleen,—

Silence. Both search for words.

George (toying nervously with his hat): I am only a few days in town again—looked for you in the old haunts—there they told me—that you married a month ago.

Kathleen: If you know it, why do you not leave me alone?

George: I did not believe that you could forget me so soon; I wanted (grinning) to convince myself.

Kathleen (indignant): Don't waste any words. Who left me a year ago without saying good-bye? Did you ever write to me? Not once. Surely you can not blame me for—

George (scornful): For consoling yourself and taking another one; of course not, my dear. But that I went away to work, to save some money, and then to come back and marry you, you never thought of that, did you?<sup>20</sup>

Still strongly attracted to George, Kathleen passionately resists his rough advances. Knowing he has the upper hand, George slips calmly out the door leaving Kathleen to compose herself in time for her husband's return.

She quickly sets out the lunch and Charles enters, promptly telling her that he has just rented the room to "a decent sort of chap"<sup>21</sup> he had just met in the hall. This, as he explains, is George, whom he has never met before. He then gobbles down his lunch, briefly fondles and kisses Kathleen, and blissfully exits.

George promptly reenters and, with "that hypnotic magnetism which certain men possess when bent upon seduction,"<sup>22</sup> draws Kathleen to his lap and "embraces and kisses her, and kisses her more and more greedily as the curtain drops."<sup>23</sup>

The second and final scene opens in the evening in the same apartment, ten months later, with Kathleen tending to her two week old baby. Charles enters, returning from work

and, realizing that George is not in, begins to complain about the way he's taken over the house, drinking, cursing, and starting fights.

A moment later, George enters, drunk, and flops into a chair, loudly tossing off his boots. Charles furiously demands that he be quiet and let their sick child rest. George rises, slurs a threat, and, when Charles won't back down, contemptuously exposes his previous and continuing affair with Kathleen. He then passes out on the floor and Charles loses control:

Charles (gasping for breath, looking wildly at Kathleen.)

Kathleen (sobbing desperately): I couldn't help it. Spirits of the past! Oh, Charles, don't look so terrible; for God's sake!

Charles (his eyes protrude out of their sockets, a convulsive tremor shakes his body; he throws himself upon the basket, seizes the child and hurls it at Kathleen's feet): Take it back. I don't want to own it. It is not of my own flesh and blood.

Kathleen (bends over the child): Charles, you have killed him!

Charles (stares at the child, recognizes what crime he has committed; groaning and pressing both hands to his temples, he rushes out of the room).

George (is heard snoring loudly as the curtain drops).<sup>24</sup>

For compact shock value, A Tragedy in a New York Flat would seem to fit more within the style of the Grand Guignol than that of naturalism, symbolism, or even the iconoclastic world of Jarry. Looked at more closely, however, the play

clearly continues Hartmann's investigation of the destructive potential of sexuality, a theme established in Osadda's Revenge, Christ, and Mohammed. Easily the most pessimistic of any of his plays, A Tragedy in a New York Flat suggests that the true danger in sex is in reacting to its impulses too suddenly.

As with his other poetic plays, Hartmann appears to have circulated this one not among the commercial producers, but rather among his then expanding sphere of literary admirers. In general, it appears to have received a fairly favorable response, so much so that a former detractor, E. C. Stedman, wrote that "Few can make a longer play, and have it as powerful in construction and dramatic truth."<sup>25</sup> Despite such praise, the play, like so much of his other work, was never produced.

Hartmann did finally make it to Broadway, however, and in the most unusual fashion imaginable. As the 1890s drew to a close and the new century loomed, his attention turned to the idea of experimenting with what he later described as "olfactory performances," or perfume concerts. These were serious attempts to explore "the possibility of raising perfumery to an art of some pretension"<sup>26</sup> and Hartmann spent over two years developing the concept.

Sadakichi Hartmann can not be given credit for inventing the concept of olfactory performances. In fact, the classical Roman theatre appears to have been the first to employ the concept by dropping rose petals into pools of

water to enhance the theatrical mood. Similar techniques were later adopted in the Renaissance. Many years later, J.K. Huysmans suggested the idea for a full performance of odors in A Rebours. Hartmann, however, not only included the idea for such a performance in scene five of Buddha, he also later took the notion further than anyone prior and pursued the various technical issues of production from inspiration through experiment to practical implementation. In fact, it would almost appear that his real impulse was that of research more than of creative expression.

Drawn to the subject by innumerable literary references to "psychological influences of odors on human emotion,"<sup>27</sup> he first studied the scientific work produced by men like Bernstein, Cloquet, and Ramsay, and then rejected the experiments of Dr. Septimus Piesse, a French chemist whose "octophone" attempted to correlate forty odors to the notes on a piano. Hartmann felt this effort was futile since "the affinity between sounds and odors is purely speculative."<sup>28</sup>

Instead, he decided to explore the sense of smell from the perspective that "its effectiveness must be based on the more pronounced physiological characteristics of smell itself and not on laws borrowed from some other art."<sup>29</sup> Attempting to avoid the imposition of preconceived or derivative restrictions, he performed a number of tests with a variety of very specific scents, such as carnation, almond, lemon, and so on, and arrived at a set of preliminary conclusions about his new medium:

1. that the first moment of contact with an odor is always the acutest one; 2. that even the most persistent smells become imperceptible . . . after a few minutes exposure . . . ; and 3. that different odors exposed in the same atmosphere never mix, but, subject to their specific gravity and the prevailing motion of the air, continue to assert their individual sensations of smell from time to time.<sup>30</sup>

Based on these fundamentals, Hartmann further concluded that one could not hope to communicate a number of odors simultaneously, nor offer more than a dozen separate odors in sequence before the sense became, in effect, numbed to subsequent variation.

His next step was to attempt to engineer a mechanism for distributing scents. Initially, he worked with atomizers since he was staging private performances for no more than two-dozen friends in average-sized-apartment rooms. Even in this limited arrangement, he soon found that distance played such an important role that it could take as much as two minutes for one scent to sufficiently overwhelm another so as to be appreciated by his audience. Even with strong ventilation, Hartmann learned that the sensory limits were quickly strained and that his performances had to be carefully paced.

Despite the technical limitations, Hartmann believed that "smell is the most emotional of all the senses of man, and is able to arouse sentimental as well as intellectual associations more swiftly than any other."<sup>31</sup> His aim was to

arouse these associations as directly as possible and coordinate them to produce a poetic effect.

Working with individuals and small groups, Hartmann came to the conclusion that certain scents could be relied upon to produce fairly generalized impressions common to most members of his audience. For instance, "turpentine-like smells will recall in most persons the healthy atmosphere of a pine forest, as incense does a church."<sup>32</sup> The limitation was that most of these impressions were more emotional than specific and oftentimes, prompted disparate reactions.

Hartmann's thought was to produce "descriptive fragments carrying out an idea"<sup>33</sup> similar to musical passages.

Composing a sequence of Juniper, Civet, Violet, Strawberry, New-mown Hay, and Crab Apple, he hoped to suggest a romantic stroll in the woods. Without revealing his intended effect or disclosing the scents employed, he nevertheless found that the general idea had been conveyed to a small audience of friends invited for the performance. Other passages were less successful, however, such as his attempt to evoke a vision of "some Carmen kneeling in the darkened aisles with a red carnation in her hair"<sup>34</sup> which proved too esoteric an image to be rendered by scent alone.

Undaunted, Hartmann decided to stage larger concerts and soon constructed a larger mechanism, consisting of several 16-by-16-inch layers of cheesecloth, fitted in a box and drenched in perfume with a fan to blow the scent into an auditorium. Thus prepared, he secured a slot at the New York

Theatre for Sunday, November 30, 1902, and announced that he would perform "A Trip to Japan in Sixteen Minutes," employing recitation and eight scents: "White Rose to suggest the departure from New York, large bunches of roses brought to the steamer to departing tourists; Violet told of a sojourn on the Rhine, Almond of Southern France, Bergamont of Italy, Cinnamon of the Orient, Cedarwood of India and Carnation of the arrival in Japan."<sup>35</sup>

The last act to appear on the rainy evening's variety program, the performance was poorly received by a restless audience seeking popular entertainment. Undeterred, Hartmann performed the following winter at the Carnegie Lyceum where the audiences were more intellectual and less likely to be put off by the two minutes or more that his equipment required to replace one scent with another. Taking more time to rehearse and spicing the performance with more of his own commentary, Hartmann was better able to hold his audience's attention.

Having pushed his idea thus far, Hartmann was uncertain what to do next since he found the technique too imprecise and even the most polite and intellectual audience too limited by sensory ignorance for him to communicate any but the most general impressions. His impulse being to create semi-narrative, poetic images, the limitations of the medium proved insurmountable. He concluded that while specific odors might enhance certain aspects of a more standard performance, there was little hope of producing an actual art

of perfume performances which might join music or painting as a sensual art.

More than anything, it is interesting to note the seriousness with which Hartmann approached the problem of perfume concerts. Pursuing it almost as a scientific inquiry, it seems fair to say that he did far more research on the problems of such performances than anyone before or since. If perfume concerts were ever to become an actual performance art, Hartmann would have to be considered the form's father, although it is more likely that, by clearly defining its unavoidable limits, he must also be declared its nemesis.

The exercise can also be seen as a defining moment for Hartmann. Even today, when artists employ gimmicks at every turn, very few would be willing or able to treat perfume concerts with such high resolve, or more importantly, to convince others in the artistic community to attend, support, and often serve as subjects for his experiments.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER 8.

1. Hartmann, "Confessions," 13.
2. Ibid., 14.
3. Sadakichi Hartmann, Strands and Ravellings of the Art Fabric (Riverside, CA: Thomas Rivera Library, University of California, 1940), 13-14.
4. Henri Villard (1835-1900), American journalist, financier, and railroad man. Born in Bavaria, came to U.S. in 1853 and gained control of the New York Post in 1881.
5. Count Olarovsky, descendant of an 18th century Russian artistocratic family, Orlov.
6. See Chapter 2.
7. Hartmann, "Aspirations," 3.
8. Sadie Martinot (b. 1861), N. Y. actress engaged by R. M. Field for the Museum Company in 1878. Married twice, toured many times. Miss Martinot was a close friend of Hartmann in the early 1890s and Godmother to one of his children.
9. Hartmann, "Aspirations," 3.
10. Sadakichi Hartmann, Diamond Lizard (Riverside, CA: Thomas Rivera Library, University of California, 1897), 3.
11. Ibid., 14.
12. Phyllis Hartnoll, ed., The Oxford Companion to the Theatre, 3rd Ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), 427-428.
13. Hartmann, "Aspirations," 4.
14. Ibid., 5.

15. Sadakichi Hartmann, Cherry Blossoms (Riverside, CA: Thomas Rivera Library, University of California, 1897), p. 34.

16. Sadakichi Hartmann, Fighting Japs (Riverside, CA: Thomas Rivera Library, University of California, 1905?), 72.

17. Ibid., 76.

18. Ibid., 78.

19. Hartmann, "Aspirations," 6.

20. Sadakichi Hartmann, A Tragedy in a New York Flat (Riverside, CA: Thomas Rivera Library, 1896), 2.

21. Ibid., 3.

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid., 6.

25. Edmund Clarence Stedman, cited by Fowler in Minutes, 133.

26. Sadakichi Hartmann, "In Perfume Land" Forum 50 (July 1913), 217.

27. Ibid.

28. Ibid., 217.

29. Ibid., 218.

30. Ibid.

31. Ibid., 220.

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid., 222.

34. Ibid.

35. Ibid., 223.

## CHAPTER 9

MOSES

By the late 1890s Hartmann's writing as an art critic was very much in demand. With steady work at the New York Staats-Zeitung, Musical America, The Criterion, and The Daily Tattler, he nevertheless found time to publish four issues of his second self-published art journal, Art News, in 1897. Also in that year, he managed the publication of Buddha in a private edition which he sold directly to friends and literati.

While working on Musical America, Hartmann met James Gibbons Huneker who was later to become the literary critic for the New York Sun. Hartmann gave copies of both Christ and Buddha to Huneker who then declared Christ "absolutely the most daring of all decadent productions."<sup>1</sup> Similarly, Vance Thompson, upon reading Buddha, wrote:

It is strange, gaudy, fantastic—a thing all color and incense; something gilded and monstrous and uncouth as the temple of Benares. . . . It is a very strong poem. Indeed were it not for a certain frippery of verbal decoration Buddha would be in the way of being a masterpiece.<sup>2</sup>

Hartmann may not have found a wide audience for his plays, but he had found an appreciative one which respected his influence. Other poets, like Richard Hovey, editor/publisher of the short-lived Daily Tattler, also took

to writing cycle plays, which in Hovey's case became The Holy Graal (1907), a cycle which was published posthumously and included Launcelot and Guenevere (1891), The Quest of Merlin (1898), and The Marriage of Guenevere (1898).

As an art critic, Hartmann had reached sufficient prominence to act as consultant to John H. Beatty, Director of the Department of Fine Arts at the Carnegie Institute, and from 1902 to 1908, assisted in the selection of its drawings collection. His History of American Art (1902) was widely considered to be the best work on the subject to date and was considered indispensable by collectors and academics for many years.

But it was as a critic of the new art of photography that Hartmann made his most lasting and significant contribution. Ever the seer, Hartmann had written in The Criterion that while "artists are apt to argue that photographs are lifeless, and can never express sentiment," he felt that "it depends entirely on whether the photographer is poetically endowed or not."<sup>3</sup> He urged artists to become familiar with photography, to use it artistically, and predicted that "should ever colored photography be rendered successful only dream pictures and color orgies will hold their place in painting."<sup>4</sup>

Such articles and his general sympathy to the new medium brought him to the attention of Alfred Stieglitz, who was then editor of Camera Notes. A photographer who believed fiercely in the artistic potential of the new medium,

Stieglitz found a compatriot in Hartmann and invited him to join the staff of Camera Notes in 1898. Hartmann wrote under the pseudonym of Sidney Allen and his unique contributions helped push Camera Notes from being essentially a trade journal to being a voice of the new art.

Hartmann is generally considered to be "Stieglitz's tutor in learning about art"<sup>5</sup> and was a powerful influence on the entire Photo-Secession movement which included not only Stieglitz, but C.J. Strauss, Edward J. Steichen, Rudolf Eickemeyer, Jr., and many others. The movement's chief prophet and critic, Hartmann wrote extensively for Camera Notes and later for Camera Work, the magazine Stieglitz founded in 1902 to advance the Secession movement.

Hartmann's relationship with Stieglitz was notably intense and they suffered several break ups over the years, the first coming in 1904 when Hartmann, chafing under Stieglitz's demanding style, accused him of dictatorial behavior and fired off a pointed two act satire entitled Who Did It! A Mystery Play in Two Exposures Dedicated to the Photo Secession. As reported by Jane Weaver, it was "in the form of a 'Court-Martial in Cloudland' [with] the judgement throne occupied by "Sidney Allan" [and] the Hartmann Children who form a sort of Greek chorus."<sup>6</sup> The characters of Steichen and Stieglitz are brought forward and comically assert their preeminence, with Stieglitz getting the worst of it. Hartmann may have intended this act as a slap or as a kind of

honorific spoof. In any case, Stieglitz did not appreciate the humor.

Early in 1905, Hartmann announced that he was leaving New York to make a national lecture tour. He secured dates and venues and made his first trips during the "season" of 1906/07. Discussing art and photography in particular, he toured Buffalo, Omaha, Toledo, Cincinnati, Denver, Detroit, Madison, and many other mid-Western cities, making a small sensation wherever he went. The tours were successful enough that they became his principal occupation through 1909, when he returned to New York, grudgingly made up with Stieglitz, and resumed writing for Camera Work.

At this time he also attempted to start his third magazine, The Stylus, which he hoped could eventually become a full-fledged publishing company for his own work. Unfortunately, The Stylus lasted only three issues, from December 1909 to February 1910. A more successful venture was the publication of The Whistler Book (1910) which received high acclaim and became his best selling work.

Hartmann's personal life during these years was equally turbulent. The strain on his marriage began with his perpetual financial difficulties which he never managed to solve. Added to this problem was his affair with Anne Throop, a poetess he met in 1898. Throop was strongly independent and, rather than seek marriage with Hartmann, chose to bear him a son out of wedlock. They remained in close contact for many years, even after Hartmann transferred

his affections to Lillian Bonham, a young painter whom he met in 1907 who was eventually to become his second wife and bear him seven children.

His first wife, Elizabeth, after bearing him five children of her own, had meanwhile become a script-writer for the Vitagraph movie company and by the early 1900s was "considered one of the foremost of women photo-playwrights."<sup>7</sup> Interestingly, there is no evidence that Hartmann was ever involved despite his intense interest in photography, not to mention drama. In any case, they drifted apart and were eventually divorced in 1911.

Hartmann's health had never been strong but it began to seriously decline after his first national tour and would remain weak for the remainder of his life. Suffering primarily from asthma, complicated by his drinking and general enervation, Hartmann was sufficiently depleted by 1911 to consider leaving New York for good. The picture of him in these years, reported by Joseph Lewis French, is telling:

The sight—or rather the apparition, for such he is as he rises to begin—of Sadakichi Hartmann on the platform of the assembly rooms of the Ferrer Center in New York reading his Buddha the other evening, operated on myself in several ways. First it stirred up wonder at the weird look of the man, rising pale, like an Afrite, in his black dress-clothes—a feeling that thrilled every one of his auditors to the core. I have seen a young woman, as he rose to give his "Poe" years ago, throw up her hands, shriek and faint at the sight of him. Here is a man who looks like the ghost of the dreams he is about to interpret. His message, his mission, are all in his manner. You cannot look upon

this tall, gaunt ashy-pale specter of a man without feeling that you are going to get something sincere, exotic. You are never disappointed. My second thought, for I had not seen Sadakichi in some time, carried me back at once to a little room in a poverty-stricken flat in New York, and an evening seventeen years before, when I heard the words of Buddha as they came fresh from the brain of the young poet. . . . I never knew a man in those days who lived so completely in his dreams as Sadakichi Hartmann.<sup>8</sup>

Hartmann's final essays for Camera Work appeared in 1912, after which he published little in the way of serious criticism on either photography or art. Most of his photographic work was journalistic, how-to articles and so on. Finally, he gave it up and, in 1923, moved to Southern California. These late vagabond years are best summed up by Harry Lawton and George Knox:

He cultivated the Hollywood motion-picture crowd. Between 1925 and 1931 he was Hollywood correspondent for an English Theatrical magazine, The Curtain, reviewing films and describing Hollywood mores. He wrote the first motion picture script of Don Quixote, but was unable to find a producer. Douglas Fairbanks, fascinated by Hartmann's face, cast him in the brief role of the Court Magician in The Thief of Baghdad (1923). Although Sadakichi's acting was much acclaimed, his irresponsibility and unstable health during the filming of Fairbank's classic made directors reluctant to take a chance on him for other roles. His drinking became excessive, and he continued to act out a Bohemian charade that had now become passé. To many who met him in that period he appeared to be a grotesque caricature of the artist manqué—a fierce old man who told unbelievable stories of hobnobbing with Walt Whitman and bumming around Paris with Verlaine—in short, a charlatan.<sup>9</sup>

Hartmann's increasing alienation had begun with his final break from Stieglitz and worsened with the death of his son by Anne Throop in World War I. This alienation, which

propelled him in his California years, was to become the subject of his final masterpiece, Moses (1934).

In their introduction to Sadakichi Hartmann: Buddha, Confucius, Christ, Three Prophetic Plays, Harry Lawton and George Knox referred to Moses as a product of "old age when his thoughts turned back with increasing nostalgia to the Mauve Decade."<sup>10</sup> A close examination of Moses reveals, however, that the play is a new step for Hartmann for unlike Christ, Buddha, Mohammed, and Confucius, which are about the spiritual growth of their protagonists, Moses is a play primarily about politics and alienation and is very much an expression of contemporary issues.

Save for his screenplay adaptation for a silent version of Don Quixote and some reworking of some passages of Confucius prior to its belated publication in 1924, Hartmann had not written a play in over twenty-five years. His return to dramatic writing revealed a significant change in attitude, for with Moses he no longer displayed a strong faith in spiritual fulfillment. This had already begun to show in Confucius, his fourth poetic play. With Moses Hartmann delivers the quintessential alienated man. Severed from his original Egyptian home and considered a freak by his followers, Moses professes faith in God but prefers to act without reference to divine authority. A character drawn from ancient texts, Moses personifies the major issues confronting artists in a violent and distressed twentieth century.

Hartmann's long absence from writing for the theatre derived more from personal disillusionment than from external forces. Yet, his eclectic energies, which had led him to succeeding careers as poet, art critic, lecturer, and Hollywood gadfly, mirrored the new century's artistic fits and starts, and his return to literature embodied many of the uncertainties and challenges that had beset dramatic poets since the decline of symbolism. In many ways, Moses represents his attempt to resolve those issues which had transformed the arts.

Stephen Spender pointed out that poets in the post-industrial age ". . . felt threatened by a change in consciousness from organic and concrete to scientific and abstract thinking. . . . As a result of the sense of irremediable change, there began to be an examination and re-evaluation of the once primary place of imagination in life as in poetry."<sup>11</sup>

The immediate response to the post-industrial challenge was naturalism's attack on privilege and symbolism's anticipation of decline. Both of these stances proved essentially romantic and thus open to question as literature soon found itself in "the blind alley of a convention which no longer had any connection with real life."<sup>12</sup> Hartmann dealt with this dead end by attempting to fuse American optimism with the symbolistic aesthetic. Though successful as literature, his plays failed to find an audience, causing him to turn away from drama just as the host of nineteenth-

century movements ran afoul of a new vision which demanded "the complete destruction of the current and exhausted means of expression . . . [which based] its theory of art on a contradiction."<sup>13</sup>

This sense of contradiction was heightened by World War I, a cataclysm that swept aside the previous debate and politicized twentieth-century art. This sudden change could most clearly be seen in Russia. Huntley Carter noted that:

It may be that historians of the future will regard the Russian October Revolution as the great turning point in the modern history of the theatres of Europe. It brought about a change of direction, released revolutionist plays and writers, and gave an impulse to the democratic evolution of the theatre.<sup>14</sup>

The new government felt theatre "should express the problems of the revolution and solve them as far as possible, and make them clear and intelligible to the people who would thus be led to contribute to the solution."<sup>15</sup> The immediate aim of the revolutionary theatre was to discredit the fallen regime. This intention gave rise to a host of new intellectual movements followed by "co-operative theatres with an educational object; by workers uniting to form their own theatrical organizations; by peasants in remote places forming theatrical groups and giving popular performances of their own plays."<sup>16</sup>

In the twenties, Russian theatre was an art without center and, for critics like Harold Segel, "the incongruities, anomalies, and even illogicalities . . .

created a fertile field for the rebirth of comedy."<sup>17</sup> Others, like Huntley Carter, saw in this a mere grasping at straws and asserted that "the application of terms like expressionism, dynamism, [and] activism to the new theme is quite absurd. . . . The theme was confusion."<sup>18</sup>

In the midst of the ferment, many, like Evgeni Zamyatin, spoke up for chaos and the need for iconoclasts asserting that "harmful literature is more useful than useful literature: because it is anti-entropic, it militates against calcification, sclerosis, encrustedness, moss, peace. . . . If there are no heretics, they have to be invented."<sup>19</sup>

Despite this ingenuous defense, the anarchists lost ground as the revolutionary regime solidified. As James Billington observed, "the relatively permissive cultural atmosphere of the twenties [in Russia] was, in part, the result of Bolshevik preoccupation with political consolidation and economic reconstruction."<sup>20</sup> Many fought losing battles for artistic license only to find that their iconoclasm, held in such esteem when turned against the Tsarist elite, retained little favor with the revolution's doctrinaire censors. "Indeed, the Marxist intellectuals who had played a key part in refining Communist ideology and building the new Soviet state became increasingly victims in the new purges."<sup>21</sup> Yet, "whatever the opposition to the Bolshevik seizure of power, whatever the problems of adjustment in the post revolutionary era, to take flight from the country, above all in the 'difficult years,' was regarded

by the new regime as morally indefensible . . . and a despicable act tantamount to treachery."<sup>22</sup> This left many with little choice but to toe the ideological line or be silenced completely as, within a decade, Soviet power was fully established and art was placed in the service of the state.

The politicization of art had similar, if not as immediately numbing, effects throughout Europe. Wherever the postwar political state was unsettled, artists were militant. In Germany, some, like Erwin Piscator, wholeheartedly embraced this revolution and charged:

The political tension which has dominated the world over the last decades does not even allow the dead to be neutral. . . . Only those who wish to carry on political activities--and unsavory ones at that--while pretending to be unpolitical, will deny that this is so. . . . The difference between us and most theatres is that they are being forced in this direction against their will, while we are developing in this way quite deliberately, with a clear political end in view.<sup>23</sup>

In Italy, D'Annunzio lived the life of a military adventurer and was the darling of the fascists until his ambitions outran their favor. Marinetti and the futurists openly advocated war, and Pirandello, though personally more aloof, was assiduously courted by Mussolini. In Spain, meanwhile, Lorca became a focal figure in the Republican struggle and ultimately was assassinated for his efforts.

In countries with more stable societies, the post-war reaction was more peripheral, if no less strident. In France the tight-knit art world issued scores of manifestoes calling

attention to and agitating against "the double meaning and duplicity of existence . . . [which] had never been experienced so intensively."<sup>24</sup> In Poland, on the other hand, artistic insularity produced a kind of underground theatre, "lonely, private, prophetic . . . , a theatre of revolution, social upheaval and the historic crisis conceived in metaphoric terms."<sup>25</sup> Nor was America immune to the dislocations. The Twenties saw a burst of expressionism followed by a native brand of socialist realism spawned in the dust of the Great Depression.

In each case, be it Russian purges, German or Italian confrontations, French or Polish withdrawals, or even American self-consciousness, the underlying subject of the debate was what had become of the artist's role in the modern world. With events seeming to outpace imagination, "the artist appears to be working in circumstances where he is not only solitary in his exceptional awareness . . . but where he feels, it seems, alone in being alone."<sup>26</sup> Demanding either radicalization or isolation, often both, "the new century is full of such deep antagonisms . . . that the combination of the furthest extremes . . . becomes the main theme, often the only theme of its art."<sup>27</sup>

Sadakichi Hartmann summed it up:

Modern civilization was dying then. You could hear the death rattle in the music, a fermented noise; and in art see the linoleum-maker's feeling for design. Literature was faring somewhat better than the other arts, but it too smelled of death, and had for its main theme the story of a lost man in a hopeless world.<sup>28</sup>

Hartmann's reaction to this state of affairs was to keep his distance. His decision to write again for the theatre after decades of abstention reflected his determination to grapple with the issues that had tormented the twentieth century.

In choosing to write Moses, Hartmann selected a subject that was at once in keeping with the context of his earlier symbolist dramas while redefining their concerns. Like Christ, Buddha, Mohammed, and Confucius, Moses is a significant religious figure, but unlike them he is more a political presence than a spiritual guide. Possessed of the same inner strength and self-confidence of the earlier Hartmann protagonists, Moses is less a seeker than a dictator. Where others pursued fulfillment by stepping out of society, Moses finds satisfaction only in the struggle to create one. Moses is literally the reverse side of the symbolist coin; a man of thoroughly practical inspiration, he refutes fin-de-siècle asceticism by putting his faith in the service of nationalism. By merely selecting Moses as his subject, Hartmann struck a note that reverberated back through several decades of uncertainty while prophetically inclining toward dramas yet to come.

The opening scene of Moses is set in one of the many tents occupied by the scribe service and, though Moses is not onstage, his presence is immediately felt for the scribes are engaged in copying and recopying the laws of conduct he has

dictated. These, however, are not the patient, obedient scribes of nearby Egypt, they are Israelites, " . . . vagrom nomad tribes in the throes of forming a race,"<sup>29</sup> and they chafe at their work from the outset. The scribe Jared, first to speak, complains: "Isn't it rather futile to sit here day after day writing down how often we have to wash ourselves or our clothes before even or after even. . . . Half the time there is no water in evidence. . . ." <sup>30</sup> Paradah, a female scribe, agrees: "If we had to take all these ablutions he prescribes we would have no time left for writing."<sup>31</sup> Even Aseph, the chief scribe, is bold enough to report to his patriarch that "there are too many repetitions. . . ." <sup>32</sup> Moses' curt reply is simply "What is not understood nine times may be understood the tenth time."<sup>33</sup>

Despite years of vagabond adventuring, Hartmann continued to display his aristocratic inclinations and, when touching the political, he preferred the leadership of the elect to the dominance of the mob. In this, he was very much like José Ortega y Gasset, the noted Spanish political philosopher who published one of his most significant works, The Revolt of the Masses, in 1930. In this book, he "discussed the situation of a 'select minority' within a social and political framework where the 'masses' (a term which is not employed as a class concept and which is taken primarily to mean the educated and uneducated majority who do not demand the standards of 'quality' and 'excellence' of

themselves and who should always be led by an elite) are perpetually taking over the decision making process."<sup>34</sup>

Moses is Ortega y Gasset's clearheaded man who "looks life in the face, realizes that everything in it is problematic. . . . and [with] that tragic, ruthless glance . . . bring[s] order into his life."<sup>35</sup> He is a man who "thinks more in an hour than [his followers] do in a year."<sup>36</sup> The focus for Israel's budding society, he demonstrates that "the State begins by being absolutely a work of imagination."<sup>37</sup> A mythic figure who towers over his people, he is like Paul Valery's dictator who "remains the sole free will, the only whole intelligence, the sole possessor of the fullness of action, the sole being to enjoy all the properties and prerogatives of the mind."<sup>38</sup>

Moses' mythic status is confirmed in act 1, scene 2 when Aseph, out for an evening with Molodah, another female scribe, amuses his young companion with the tale of their commander's life:

The skin of his face sometimes shines like the moon. . . . His whole life was exceptional from the very birth; escaping death in a basket-found by a princess. . . . In the Academy of Magicians [he] took the highest degree as a mere youngster. . . . Then happened the murder of the Taskmaster. . . . The Princess helped him escape. . . . He wandered about and came to the farm of the High Priest Jethro who had seven beautiful daughters.<sup>39</sup>

The fanciful description of Moses' adventures takes up most of the scene, but Hartmann does more than merely retouch a legend. He wryly shows how quickly minions adapt to their

masters. While Molodah is awed by Moses, the cynical Aseph is familiar enough with his leader to employ his biography as a pretext for seduction. With every peak in his story he asks the girl: "May I put my hand on your breasts, there is no harm in that," to which she replies, "It will cost you nothing, Dear."<sup>40</sup>

Pressing his advantage, Aseph is also rather sceptical of Moses' religious authority:

I am sure he believes most [of what] he preaches. Some of the messages may come as in a trance, others he may invent with shrewd calculation knowing how ready most minds are to accept things that are mysterious.<sup>41</sup>

Molodah, however, is less charmed by this remark and when he next asks permission to place his hand on her loins she replies: "It will cost you nothing, Dear, so far."<sup>42</sup>

Unlike Cecil B. De Mille's The Ten Commandments, which featured the personal confrontation between Moses and Pharaoh Ra-Am-Ses, Moses' adversary in Hartmann's play is his own nation in the making. Indeed, his relations with Egyptian nobility are positively cordial. He calls the 120-year-old Princess Thermutis "Mother" and banters with her about the differences between their respective peoples. Even his confrontations with them are more formal than acrimonious, as when he dickers with the Orifical, Pharaoh's representative, over an exchange of Hebrew mercenaries for Egyptian cattle. This scene is particularly humorous for the way in which Moses' hardnosed bargaining sets the standard for his tribe:

"Make exchanges, always see that you drive a hard bargain, getting a little more than you give."<sup>43</sup>

The Egyptian's are Ortega y Gasset's "heir-men," those who dwell within circumstances created by their ancestors. "Condemned to represent the other, consequently to be neither . . . [their] life is atrophied."<sup>44</sup> Among them, only Thermutis appears to have any independence of action, but she is so hindered by age that she prefers not to "indulge in any unnecessary movement."<sup>45</sup> She and Moses debate the merits of their opposed societies. Thermutis derides his invention of a God "who talks with you and advises you about cooking and bathing and is interested in needlework."<sup>46</sup> She accuses him of plotting an invasion:

You want to find a land of milk and honey ready for your use. Your people are too lazy to build a flourishing empire like the Egyptians have done, stone by stone. . . . They will never be willing to work but just prey on others, make promises, practice usury and usurpation.<sup>47</sup>

Moses does not remind her that much of Egypt's grandeur was built on the backs of Hebrew and other slaves. Rather, he excuses their misbehavior and expresses his hope for their future:

You must remember we were bondsmen for generations. . . . I, with the help of our Lord, will nurse and tutor them. . . . My people must find a new way to multiply and wax mighty.<sup>48</sup>

Excuses aside, Moses regards his people as Ortega y Gasset viewed the mass of men in the modern age: "primitive

[people] suddenly risen in the midst of a very old civilization."<sup>49</sup> Moses' sympathies often seem to tilt toward the Egyptian nobles and their love of "contemplating the glory of nature, the formation of clouds, the Nile floods, the sweep and swing of constellations, . . . the flow of the tale that shadows tell in space, . . . an austere, sublime and everlasting mystery."<sup>50</sup> Yet, he is also a practical politician and recognizes that Egypt, like nineteenth-century Europe, "so self satisfied, so perfectly rounded off, [is] dead within."<sup>51</sup> Moses passes no judgement on this nostalgic culture or those that raised him. Rather, he merely observes that "that sort of mystery is too lyrical for the Jews."<sup>52</sup>

Moses lives at the center of an insoluble paradox for, even while he seeks a more robust society whose enthusiasm for the future is "like the noisy joy of children let loose from school,"<sup>53</sup> he realizes that "there is no culture where there are no principles of legality to which to appeal. . . . [and that] the varying degrees of culture are measured by the greater or less precision of the standards."<sup>54</sup> Thus, even though he wants the Israelites "to feel the sense of freedom . . . ,"<sup>55</sup> he persists in imposing new and more rigorous dictates of behavior. In attempting to instill civilized behavior and nationalistic pride, he has set himself against the anarchistic energy and selfish instincts which make the Hebrews so promising.

The revolt of the Hebrews against Moses is inevitable and begins at the end of the First Act even while he is in

the Egyptian capitol negotiating for their survival. Significantly, Hartmann chooses this moment to deviate from his biblical source which places Moses "up on the mountain . . . forty days and forty nights."<sup>56</sup> In the book of Exodus the Israelites are shown complaining that Moses has deserted them. It is clearly their fear which causes them to demand that Aaron "make [them] gods, who shall go before [them]"<sup>57</sup> Thus, the breach is perhaps understandable and explains why Moses argues against Jehovah's desire to "burn hot against them . . . and consume them. . . ."<sup>58</sup>

Hartmann, on the other hand, has Moses gone for barely a day and the orgy of the Golden Calf is presented as a metaphor for the "command over public life exercised . . . by the intellectually vulgar. . . ."<sup>59</sup> Far from frightened, they willfully "want to have a good time while the old man is away."<sup>60</sup> Yet, they do not wish to do so without official sanction, so they pressure Moses' brother for permission. Aaron, "slightly inebriated" and supposing Moses will be absent for several days, capitulates immediately, "dodging the difficulties of the hour . . . employing any methods whatsoever, even at the cost of accumulating thereby still greater difficulties for the hour which follows."<sup>61</sup> The Israelites meanwhile prove themselves to be archetypes of the Ortega y Gasset's revolutionary masses, collective possessors of "the commonplace mind, knowing [themselves] to be commonplace, [with] the assurance to proclaim the rights of the commonplace and impose them whenever [they] will."<sup>62</sup>

Moses, having concluded his Egyptian embassy, is returning to camp with his son Gershon by way of Mount Horeb where Egyptian stonecutters are creating the two tablets of law. Gershon is shocked to find artisans and not Jehovah responsible for the tablets, but Moses candidly observes:

You cannot expect Jehovah in person to come down and do it. These things must be taken figuratively. . . . As long as you are a tabernacle priest it can do you no harm to know a little about the mechanism of religion.<sup>63</sup>

Moses is still the herdsman he became when he first fled Egypt and he views the average man as:

. . . stupid, ignorant and untrustworthy. . . . You cannot approach them with intelligent utterance. . . . You cannot be poetical or purely emotional, they fail to grasp it. Only if something foolishly mysterious is mentioned [will] they prick up their ears. . . . You have no power over man without miracles, so I perform one occasionally.<sup>64</sup>

With so much cynicism in the service of statecraft, Moses resembles Valery's dictator who:

. . . treat[s] men as things, since it is always a matter of dealing with them according to ideals sufficiently abstract to be, on the one hand, transmitted into action . . . and on the other hand, applied to an indefinite variety of unknown individuals. . . . making of human society a kind of product. . . . There is something of the artist in the dictator, and a certain amount of aesthetics in his conceptions.<sup>65</sup>

Moses is not merely a politician, he is an artist too and seeks confirmation of his vision in the world of art. The Israelites and the Egyptians alike scorn this conceit and

even the stonecutter charged with the tablets of law bridles at the least of Moses' aesthetic musings, retorting when asked to cut the words a little deeper: "Say it again and I quit work!"<sup>66</sup> Moses professes to appreciate this independence, but his is merely an aesthetic appreciation for those not under his dominion. The Stonecutter is like Ortega y Gasset's specialist who is "the learned ignoramus . . . with all the petulance of one who is learned in his own special line. . . . [behaving] in almost all spheres of life as does the unqualified, the mass man."<sup>67</sup> Moses can compliment insolence when it is outside his authority, but he cannot afford to be so permissive within his own camp, as events shortly prove.

Moses' rage upon discovering the next morning the orgy still in full swing is the climax of the play and brings its argument into sharp focus. With dreadful fury he shatters the tablets, disperses the mob, and then orders the slaughter of some three thousand as examples of his wrath. Far from pleading with Jehovah, Moses, like Lenin, makes a "deliberate break with . . . belief in the existence of objective moral laws for human behavior."<sup>68</sup> With the tablets destroyed, Moses becomes a capricious judge, sparing Aseph because he is a useful scribe and Shechem because he leads the troops. Aaron, meanwhile, is spared but exiled, while those without use or influence are sacrificed.

Later, in a more reflective moment, Moses recognizes the danger of his act, admitting to Thermutis:

I am a little weary of it all. This is not the last revolt. The Jews will always be a nuisance, never grow up into a nation of serious manhood.<sup>69</sup>

This is not merely a moment of depression. Moses remains determined to lead his people but he no longer believes that he alone can drive them toward maturity. Rather, he declares: "if I failed it is not of my doing."<sup>70</sup>

The final scene of the play is set some forty years later. The Israelites' wanderings are nearing an end but they are still far from Moses' dream. In a rambling monologue a weary, resigned patriarch advises his handpicked successor, Joshua, against warfare: "conquer in peace, by cunning."<sup>71</sup> He speaks of business dealings, tribal insularity, and his minutely detailed code of behavior. Gone are his dreams of national genesis. While hopeful for the future, he nevertheless admits that "they are tainted with slavery and it will take them centuries to forget it."<sup>72</sup>

By accepting defeat Moses acknowledges the truly radical nature of his vision. The very concept of nationalism was literally without precedent, as Egypt, though the undisputed center of commerce and culture, saw itself more as an expression of its gods than as a product of a purely human vision. By emphasizing law and civil relationships, Moses thrust himself into the future and, as a result, encountered a uniquely futuristic problem, the revolt of the masses.

Moses, as Hartmann conceives him, may well have been history's first dictator, a ruler without hereditary

authority whose mandate comes not from God but from the ruled. That they proved less than perfectly cooperative simply confirms their status as the rightful recipients of his attention. Headstrong and contentious, the Israelites are the citizens of the future. If Moses cannot rule them it is only because they must rule themselves.

In Moses Hartmann presents a capsulized vision of the artist at odds with modern society. Moses himself is much more artist than politician and his unsolved conflict with the tabula rasa that is Israel represents the artist's struggle with both his crude materials and the world he seeks to change. In this sense all of Hartmann's protagonists are artists, but Moses is of a more practical, fundamental stripe. He is the twentieth century's gut reaction to the ephemeral preoccupations of the late nineteenth century.

Theatrically, Moses carries on the spirit of Hartmann's earlier, symbolist and poetic plays, a spirit both Wagnerian and epic, yet anti-mythic and personal. Hartmann was fond of reducing larger than life figures to scale and Moses gets treatment similar to that accorded to Christ, Buddha, Mohammed, and Confucius. Like them, he emerges more comprehensible and yet no less unique.

To accomplish these transformations Hartmann employed a theatrical technique that was both archaic and visionary. With Christ he "observed the pyramidal construction of the well built play,"<sup>73</sup> while in Buddha and Mohammed he employed and simultaneously satirized symbolist methods. Confucius,

on the other hand, is built like an Aristophalian comedy, inventing an absurd situation and stretching it past recognition. For Moses he chose to emphasize a strong fantasy element exemplified by the patriarch's legendary life and his sorcerer's skills which invites comparisons to the Aesopian dramas of Yevgeny Shvarts:

In an East European and Russian context Aesopian writing has meant, above all, historical fiction and fantasy. So it is that Shvarts' most political and philosophical plays are. . . . developed organically with relation to character and situation. . . . [and] concentrated against two targets: authoritarian political rule and those areas of the human psyche which either quest for power or readily submit to authority.<sup>74</sup>

Hartmann presses Moses into similar service by making his struggle stereotypical. Moses, like Shvarts' Dragon, is the embodiment of the dictatorial idea. Unlike Shvarts, however, Hartmann considered anarchy a more powerful force than dictatorship.

Anarchy fairly defines Hartmann's theatre. His plays are composed of ". . . allusive and imagistic language; the evocation of indefinite moods and feelings; choreographic and vaudeville type situations; verbal punning, coining of neologisms, and the use of portmanteau words; a dehumanizing and typifying of characters into stylized choral figures exemplifying abstract ideas; soliloquy type speeches; dreamlike stage settings and scenery; and sheer spectacle—the appearance of jugglers, circus animals, and gorgeously panoplied processions."<sup>75</sup>

This all embracing vision anticipated Marinetti's fascination with "Variety Theatre" and Artaud's perception that ". . . The domain of the theatre is not psychological but plastic and physical."<sup>76</sup>

With Moses, Hartmann seized upon epic theatre and recast it in his ironic mold. Artaud's assertion that "the first spectacle of the Theatre of Cruelty will turn upon the preoccupations of the great mass of men . . . ,"<sup>77</sup> was promptly satisfied. At the same time, his contrary dictum that "this essential drama . . . exists . . . as the result of one will alone—and without conflict"<sup>78</sup> is embodied in the character of Moses. With the mass pitted against the individual, Hartmann grapples with Artaud's most challenging demand that character, psychology, and passion "be taken as the emanation of certain forces and understood in the light of events and historical fatality in which they have played their role."<sup>79</sup>

Both Hartmann and Artaud wanted to re-invent the theatre and it is striking how strongly Moses resembles Artaud's proposal for a production of The Conquest of Mexico, his own vision of the Theatre of Cruelty. Artaud, of course, wanted to eliminate "masterpieces reserved for a self-styled elite and not understood by the general public . . . "<sup>80</sup> while Hartmann viewed his work as "playable, but just like Wagner's, not for the ordinary."<sup>81</sup> Artaud professed to be anti-literary and yet is most remembered for his critical work; Hartmann, also a successful critic, never had his best

plays produced and only his scripts survive as skeletons of the revolutionary theatre he hoped to create. "In his stage business, as in his character drawing, Artaud juggles all the time with opposites . . . , he wishes to unify them as in an alchemical retort."<sup>82</sup> Hartmann anticipated Artaud with his symbolist cycle and proved his theatrical vision durable with Moses.

Hartmann, of course, was prophetic in another way. In a century dominated by social and political upheaval, he selected as his subject a group largely overlooked in the mid thirties by all but a handful of radical right-wing extremists. This disenfranchised, nationless group was shortly to rise to such prominence that its struggles for identity would become one of the most divisive forces in the century. Hartmann might have chosen Chinese, Japanese, Spanish, African, or Indian subjects, each with their own discontents and historic imperatives. Yet, at a time when Jewish history was seen as little more than fodder for Hollywood spectacles, Hartmann recast it as the archetypal saga for the modernist theatre.

Like Spender, Hartmann perceived that "there runs through modern criticism the fantasy of the Second Fall of Man. . . . [which] seems to result from the introduction of scientific utilitarian values and modes of thinking into the world of personal choice between good and evil."<sup>83</sup> Hartmann's parable of this fall was the Hebrew orgy before the Golden Calf, a tale with clear parallels in the modern world.

Caught in the midst of this unstable nexus is Moses, a man who yearns for past glories while driving toward an unforeseen future. Blocking his path is the mass man who uses civilization "as if it were a natural force. . . . unaware of [its] artificial, almost incredible character."<sup>84</sup>

Moses is exceptional theatre from almost every perspective. Tight and compact at thirty scripted pages, it encompasses a wide range of theatrical imagination and more than justifies Hartmann's earlier symbolist dramas. Like the avant-garde dramatic poets in Poland he maintained "a high degree of irony and detachment, instead of displaying the usual partisanship characteristic of literary and theatrical movements."<sup>85</sup> Like Zamyatin, he believed that "heretics are the only (bitter tasting) remedy for the entropy of human thought."<sup>86</sup> As a critic, he delighted in deflating other's pomposity and, like Alfred Jarry, he was as extreme a character as ever pranced the Champs Elysees or panhandled Broadway. Such curiosities could better be appreciated in the dream state of Europe's fin-de-siècle. America, on the other hand, awaking to empire, could absorb Hartmann, but not comprehend him.

A testament to the defeat of idealism, Moses is one Hartmann's parting shots. As such, it was fully worthy of the eccentric nomad and piercingly accurate. That it passed unnoticed in his time is only appropriate in a prophet of his caliber.

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## CHAPTER 10

## CONCLUSION

Sadakichi Hartmann is almost as difficult to summarize as he is to categorize. Even Hartmann himself apparently found the task overwhelming.

In the last decade of his life, after having relocated to California and pursuing the Hollywood scene, he embarked at last upon his autobiography. The idea for this appears to have been suggested by John Barrymore who introduced Hartmann to Gene Fowler, a writer who specialized in biographies. Eventually, Fowler became one of the last of Hartmann's many patrons, supporting him liberally while Hartmann dictated and edited his autobiography, much of which became the source material for Fowler's last book, the 1954 best selling memoir, Minutes of the Last Meeting.

Fowler, who knew Hartmann only in these final years, saw him as "a skinny, prancing, cynical, yet beauty loving wraith"<sup>1</sup> with "the astringent wit of an unfrocked prior of the neo-Gothic age."<sup>2</sup> Although fascinated by the Hartmann presence, he clearly doubted his fellow writer's many grandiose claims of famous contacts, conquests, and controversies and rendered him as a self-aggrandizing "Fool" to Barrymore's "Hamlet" and W. C. Field's "Claudius." Though he included much biographical detail, Fowler preferred to

dwell on Hollywood anecdotes of drinking sprees rather than investigate Hartmann's significance as a critic or an artist.

Hartmann's Autobiography, meanwhile, remains unfinished and unpublished, accessible only through the Thomas Rivera Library at the University of California, Riverside. It was deposited there in the mid nineteen-sixties by his daughter, Wistaria Hartmann Linton, who, with her husband, had looked after Hartmann from 1938 to his death in 1944, during which time he lived in a shack he built called Cat Claw Siding on the Morongo Indian Reservation in Banning, California.

The Autobiography runs over two hundred fifty pages and cuts off its narrative shortly after Hartmann's first marriage in the early 1890s. Separate essays, such as "Confessions of a Journalist," and "Aspirations of a Playwright," span some of the later 1890s, but there is nothing from Hartmann about his later relationship with Stieglitz and the photo-secession, of his divorce and second marriage, nor of his later writings and wanderings in the teens and twenties, some of which are at least as colorful as anything which preceded them.

It is almost as if Hartmann, having begun the project in 1933, and using many of the middle chapters to revise from his own sympathetic perspective some of his most notorious encounters, including the Whitman episodes, found himself unable at last to reconcile the various mismatched pieces of his puzzled life. In the end, he passed the project over to

Fowler, trusting a skeptic to make a cynic's case. That the tale became garbled would have been no surprise to Hartmann.

The Autobiography was not Hartmann's sole attempt at artistic reconciliation, however. During the same period, he also wrote his last play, Baker Eddy (1936-38), with which he attempted to draw together and resolve the multiple strands of his five previous poetic/religious plays, Christ, Buddha, Mohammed, Confucius, and Moses.

Mary Baker Eddy was the first religious figure in this cycle taken from Hartmann's own life and times. Though he had not known her personally nor participated in her church, she lived in Boston in the late 1880s, "right around the corner from me, having opened a School of Metaphysics, still busy with spinning her yarn for a universal religion (may I say primarily for women)."<sup>3</sup> Rather than become one of her "devotees," Hartmann attended all of the major Boston churches in turn seeking cultural fibre.

There was at the time an unusual amount of good pulpit oratory heard in the Boston churches. Phillips Brooks delivered his impassionate rapid firing speeches at the rate of three hundred words a minute. I did not understand a single sentence, but was impressed like everybody by the rush and glow of his delivery. Rev. E. C. Bartol, a quaint little man behind a huge desk in his strangely barren-looking church gave veritable masterpieces of educational sermonizing. Besides that there was J. M. Savage with his logical scientific diction, and Rev. E. E. Hale, who from time to time delivered a sermon which in eloquence and thought could compare with the best pulpit orations of all time.<sup>4</sup>

Hartmann maintained his interest in religious issues chiefly through his cycle of poetic dramas about religious figures. It is well worth remembering, however, that none of these plays is particularly religious in character. If anything, it is their very irreligious and humoristic treatment of the founders of five great religions that made the plays so controversial.

This perspective was further underscored with Hartmann's publication of The Last Thirty Days of Christ (1920), his only novel. Taking up the story line several years from the point that his earlier play left off, the novel nevertheless continued to explore the ironic and humorous possibilities rarely found in the Christian saga. Interestingly, with almost thirty years between their publication, the critics of the book were much more receptive to Hartmann's iconoclasm in 1920 than were the critics of his play in 1892.

The New York Post, for instance, commented that "The Last Thirty Days is manifestly a tour de force, an attempt to give a new exposition of Jesus, removing him from the atmosphere of Godhead and coherently explaining the miracles. . . . The attempt to read a sense of humor into Jesus, especially into the parables . . . is not without a clever point."<sup>5</sup> Similarly, Bill O'Brien remarked that "Sadakichi represents the intellectual manner of biblical commentary as typified by Renau, St. Augustine, Shaw. He has drawn a definitive personality in print. . . . A well written, readable book."<sup>6</sup> S. Jay Kaufman seemed equally impressed:

"His Last Thirty Days of Christ is a creditable performance, contents as well as general make-up. The simplicity and fictionlike quality of the narrative are superb."<sup>7</sup> Even H. L. Mencken, though not particularly favorable to Hartmann or the book, believed that "there is nothing evil in his comparisons, but he takes literature too seriously."<sup>8</sup>

Doubtless, Hartmann found this last remark unpleasantly condescending, and he pointed out that the reviewers, in general, were not up to the task of analyzing his work:

None of us can wholly deny the charm and power of press notoriety. Still the average criticism means little more than that such and such a book is published and is worthy of possession. The superficiality and partiality of the performance, the routine of a reviewing system, excludes all possible merits of judgement and analysis.<sup>9</sup>

Hartmann's consistent spearing of spiritual icons had a more serious motive than most critics were willing to pursue, even if they did not choose to pillory him for attempted blasphemy. Far from being an end in itself, Hartmann's demythological treatment of religious figures was, in fact, aimed at uncovering an underlying truth, one which he thought religions in general had obscured with dogma and beauracracy.

Hartmann had first outlined his ideas on the subject in a pamphlet titled My Theory of Soul Atoms (discussed in Chapter 7) and seventeen years later he returned to the subject with another pamphlet, Passport to Immortality (1927), in which he asserted that "the permanency of the soul

depends on the permanency of memory."<sup>10</sup> Like Descartes, Hartmann "considered memory to be the main constituent of the soul."<sup>11</sup> Seeking to answer whether or not immortality could be possible, he asked:

Can memory, the mind, continue to operate without the special apparatus that keeps the brain going on this planet, without the large and small division and the medulla oblongata. . . ?

Can the soul as told in Japanese legends escape as an entity after the body's loss of motion? Is it feasible that the super-electric forces . . . are of such a nature that they can operate without the body, rotate their activity so to speak within themselves and remain united? Why not?<sup>12</sup>

In fact, he wanted to believe that it was possible:

I personally hope for this or any other kind of immortality that salvages my poor self. I believe that most of us wish there was. . . . For if we all were over after we have drawn our last breath, then those in power today, the profiteers and exploiters of human society, are in the right.<sup>13</sup>

There is more than a hint of self-evaluation in these comments. All his life Hartmann had flown in the face of established power. From his relationship with his father to his final fugitive days being hounded by the F.B.I. on suspicion of being an Axis sympathizer, Hartmann was ever at odds with those who held the reins of authority. Having Quixotically borne the shield of art for his entire life, Hartmann ruefully contemplated in failing health the possibility that his effort had been for naught.

The fact that he returned toward the end of his life to the subject of religion as the basis for his final four major works is particularly revealing. Equally notable, is the fact that despite his fascination for the subject, he rarely, if ever, referred to the existence of God. Any God. For Hartmann, religious speculation centered around the concept of the soul as the driving force of life. And this soul seemed to be, in his mind, of entirely human origin.

Hartmann seems to have thought that he had found the summation of these ideas in the character of Mary Baker Eddy and in the religion she founded, Christian Science. For him, Baker Eddy was an advocate of the view that the soul is the source of physical health and that a soul which is strengthened through faith gives health to all who encounter it. Unfortunately, Hartmann never specified in what the faith should lie and the play he subsequently wrote suggests more that, in his declining years, he had become another camp follower of the kind of "new vision" that had forever characterized one part of Southern California culture.

Baker Eddy (1936-38) is an episodic drama in three acts and two epilogues that attempts to take a panoramic view of the major events in the life of a great religious figure. In this respect, it is much less compact than the previous plays in the cycle and has more of the sense of epic rather than poetic drama.

Act 1 scene 1 is set in the sitting room of the Fox sisters in Hydeville, New York in 1856. The sisters,

Margaret, 20, Catherine, 14, and Lea, 8, have invited a correspondent from the New York Tribune to discuss the frightening manifestations, knocks and taps, emanating from underneath their dining room table. The correspondent promptly asks the table a few questions, which it answers with one rap for no and two raps for yes, and just as it indicates that a woman will arrive, Mrs. Mary Baker Patteson (Eddy) enters.

Having been sent by the local parson, she converses with the girls and learns that they have lived alone since their mother died two years before. She suggests that they talk to her through the table, improvising an alphabet around Morse code. Charmed, the girls ask her to stay for supper and she sits as they serve.

A shift in the lighting reveals the spirits of Uncle Hiram and Aunt Sarah under the table. They are frustrated with the difficulty of communicating to the "other world" and Sarah wants to leave altogether, but Hiram convinces her to stay and be patient. Baker Eddy, meanwhile, sensing their presence, asks about her son who died at an early age. The spirits try to answer, but their knocks and raps are too confusing and the scene ends inconclusively.

Scene 2 jumps eight years ahead to the office of Phineas Quimby, "Doctor by Courtesy Only." Quimby is a kind of hypno-healer and the scene opens with him practicing his method on Mrs. Witherspoon, a hypochondriac. Baker Eddy enters and he promptly dismisses his patient in order to

confer with her. Having once been a patient of his as well, she now declares that his curing power actually comes from God:

Baker Eddy: In good acts we are all representatives of God. Did this thought ever occur to you: medical science has failed to cure mortals because they leave out the soul? Their remedies may be efficient in a way but can not erase—because one half of the main functions of the human body are the soul, the mind, the will that controls.<sup>14</sup>

Though not religious, Quimby finds himself agreeing with her since he never felt that hypnotism alone could account for his success. She decides to help him convert his notes from his cases into a book describing a new science of health.

Baker Eddy: I believe, if we can achieve a momentary realization of God, we can cure all ills—supreme mind action is health and cleanliness.

Quimby: What a devilish bright woman you are. More of a Jesus than a Mary.

Baker Eddy: No blasphemy please. Tush.<sup>15</sup>

Two years later, in scene 3, Baker Eddy stands in her own back yard and splits finally with her husband, Daniel, who confesses bitterly: "You can not offer homelife to a woman-chaser, drunkard, unemployed and all that goes with it. (Sullenly) That's the stuff we men are made of. The millennium of perfection has not yet come."<sup>16</sup> He leaves and

her sister Abigail enters offering to let her live with her and her husband if she will only "attend church and . . . not vent those strange ideas which occupy you of late."<sup>17</sup> But, Mary is determined. She has realized that Quimby was a fake and that the true answer lies in her own faith. She has decided to strike out on her own and found a new "Christian Science." "I shall do the work Divine Inspiration prompts me to do, add to the joy of the world, be more to life than life is to me."<sup>18</sup>

Act 2 opens another eight years later in 1874 at the "Little House on Broad Street" in Lynn, Mass. where Baker Eddy practiced. Now 53 years old and well established, she dispenses healing advice to a motley collection of characters, including Matthew Fever, Mark Tumor, John Boil, and Luke Hives: "There is no such a calamity as a tumor unless you want to have it. There is nothing the matter with you."<sup>19</sup> Dismissing them all with similar advice, she turns to her students and lectures them to "aspire to cure by belief alone."<sup>20</sup> The scene ends with the appearance of Dr. Wiggins, who reports on the successful publication of her book: "it is sure to stir up a lot of controversy. It is a new religion in the making."<sup>21</sup>

Act 2 scene 2 jumps ahead a full eleven years to observe a conversation at Marliave's restaurant in Boston in 1885. There, a Poet, an Architect, and an Essayist discuss the merits of Baker Eddy's theories. They are interrupted by a Hunchback Tutor who introduces them to Dr. Wiggins and they

continue their debate, concluding: "and so let us drink to the female Daniel, first woman prophet, messenger of what we mortals call: divine holy celestial superhuman ubiquitous."<sup>22</sup>

In the third scene, the Hunchback Tutor, considering whether or not he should submit himself to Baker Eddy, meets Mrs. Kartoffel, a reader for the Church. They discuss her faith and her relationship with her husband, who she happily accepts despite his frequent bad temper and drunkenness. The Hunchback Tutor leaves, without resolving to see Baker Eddy, but remarking to himself: "It seems a good man is at a decided disadvantage. It is always the bum that is protected and favored by women."<sup>23</sup>

In act 3, the Hunchback had become a Student of Creeds and attends a religious convention composed of every imaginable faith at the turn of the century. The hot topic among the delegates is Christian Science, and the scene quickly devolves to a babble of opinions and criticisms. Annoyed by the triviality of the debate, the Student departs: "this is getting too much for me—praying to the grandmother of Christ."<sup>24</sup>

Act 3 scene 2 finds Baker Eddy, now 85, in her Concord, New Hampshire study in 1906. In a long monologue, she recounts the significant events of her life, concluding:

All manifestations of life are arrested continuity of space activity. In space everything moves and changes, whenever continuity halts a re-birth occurs, a new start for some individualized exfoliation. Still it is all pre-arranged (not pre-destined) by ancestry, what has gone before—their environment, breed, character. So

I could not become something entirely different than I forced myself to be.<sup>25</sup>

After receiving her retinue of admirers, a Senator enters and politely hands her a summons to court, requiring her to defend her mental competence. This is followed by the appearance of her adopted son, George, who, though he instigated the summons, promptly tears it up and begs her forgiveness. He then leaves and she turns to deliver another long address to a large group of pilgrims that has shown up outside her balcony.

Scene 3 jumps across space and time to Nikko, Japan where the Student of Creeds is conversing with a Taoist Monk under a shrine. The Monk is not impressed with Baker Eddy's new religion: "Self improvement, fine—but solely to be near-perfect and not try to live this life, what sense is there in that. I am fed up with asceticism. Philosophy is cold, exclusive—religion should be piping hot."<sup>26</sup>

Another monk joins them and they all three discuss the similarities among the various world religions until the Student declares that sun worship is the one true religion: "There it rises, there it sets! It warms the soil and human vitality alike. Gives and asks nothing."<sup>27</sup> The second monk points out that this is nothing more than the philosophy of health and the Student slaps himself on the forehead. "By the Pilgrims of Plymouth Rock, Christian Science again, here in the city of temples. There is no escape from it."<sup>28</sup>

The play closes with a number of oddly disconnected scenes. In the first (act 3 scene 4), a quartet of doughboys in the allied trenches at Mons grouse about the meaning of life and the war while one of them reads from a Christian Science book. In the second (epilogue scene 1), an orgiastic congregation of refugees from all walks of life gathers at the Salon of Derelicts in Souther California while an unidentified war rages outside. Towards the end of the scene, the Student appears and delivers the message of Christian Science, but draws no response and the apocalyptic orgy continues until the bombs find the Salon, destroying everything.

The final scene (epilogue scene 2), takes place behind the Milky Way where the voices of the Student and the Correspondent from act 1 scene 1 speak to the emanations of Einstein, Sappho, Aristophanes, Chopin, and Baker Eddy. Reflecting upon all that has passed, the Student concludes:

That is Baker Eddy! See, how the gaseous gyrations swing about in ellipses, volutes, spirals—collapse, telescope, turn solid, shift, sweep to and fro, soar and summersault! . . . she was a star on earth as she is in heaven! Whoosh!<sup>29</sup>

Having been compared favorably with Oscar Wilde, Alfred Jarry, Strindberg, Ibsen, Artaud, and even Ortega y Gasset, it should not seem inappropriate now to compare Hartmann with George Bernard Shaw, another noted playwright, novelist, critic, and contemporary. But, though Hartmann might claim

similar literary credentials, his Baker Eddy cannot compare to Shaw's Major Barbara.

Like Major Barbara, Baker Eddy is extremely didactic—hardly a scene passes which does not center on the viability of the new religion. But, unlike Shaw, Hartmann fails in this instance to provide suitable contrast. Where Shaw pits the fervent Barbara against the cold rationalism of her father, Undershaft, Hartmann allows Baker Eddy to sweep her fellow ministers and unbelievers aside as if they were insubstantial.

Baker Eddy has much more in common with Hartmann's overtly commercial plays than with the poetic/religious plays that it attempts to tie together. It has none of the humor that suffused the previous five, in fact, it reads more like a tract. Perhaps Hartmann was too sympathetic to these ideas to view them from his usual humoristic perspective.

It is this absence of humor that most seriously weakens Baker Eddy. Except for the Salon of Derelicts scene, the sense of humor that enabled Hartmann to create his iconoclastic perspective and demythologize some of the greatest religious figures in history is almost entirely missing from this play. And even in the Salon, the humor is aimed not at Baker Eddy or her message, but at the decadent derelicts who ignore possible salvation while destroying themselves in a final, grotesque orgy.

In fact, humor and its expression was Hartmann's greatest achievement. In this regard, he must finally be

compared with Luigi Pirandello whose best known critical work, Il Humorismo (1908), defined for many writers the essence of the quality known as humor.

Pirandello considered that humor "with it's 'feeling of the opposite,' touches a deeper base where it is able to perceive simultaneously the conflicting aspects of every situation."<sup>30</sup> In defining humor, Pirandello stated that

the comic consists precisely of [the] perception of the opposite. But . . . reflection has made me shift to a feeling of the opposite. And herein lies the precise difference between the comic and humor.<sup>31</sup>

For Pirandello, humor contains both the comic and its opposite and the clash between these two elements creates laughter and understanding. He maintains that "the humorist . . . will decompose the character into his elements and while an epic or dramatic poet takes pains to picture him as coherent in every action, the humorist enjoys representing him in his incongruities."<sup>32</sup>

This sense of incongruity is strongly present in Moses when the Hebrew leader condemns thousands for their iniquitous orgy but spares Aseph and Sechem because they are still useful. Similarly, Gautama persists in uprooting his own followers, Kung deflates all who depend on the security of faith, and Abul Kassim embodies the contradiction of spiritual and sexual force. Only Jeshua appears exempt from this treatment, but Hartmann later revisited the character in his novel and recast him as a humoristic prophet. Hartmann

was ever effective at simultaneously dismantling and reconstructing his characters and at the core of this process was his perception of their innately paradoxical nature.

Hartmann's very eclecticism finds support in Pirandello's declaration that "humor needs a highly spirited, free, spontaneous, and direct movement of language—a movement that can be achieved only when form creates itself anew each time."<sup>33</sup> For Hartmann, each play was an adventure, an opportunity to start from scratch. Pirandello who emphasized that comparisons are always secondary to an artist's own individual expression since "all humoristic art . . . is and has always been an art of exception."<sup>34</sup>

Pirandello also touches upon another trait already noted in Hartmann when he observes that "having a profound belief, an ideal goal, having an aspiration and struggling to attain it, far from being conditions necessary to humor, are rather obstacles to it; . . . any such ideal, in itself, does not dispose anyone to humor but rather works as a handicap against it."<sup>35</sup> It was the absence of faith that made the first five poetic plays so successful as drama and the curious presence of an apparent faith, perhaps driven by Hartmann's fear of his own mortality, that created the impediment to humor in Baker Eddy.

Thus, Baker Eddy is not merely a flawed play or a failed attempt to reconcile a grand cycle that inherently resists reconciliation, it is an aberration in Hartmann's oeuvre. Though it includes aspects of the spiritualism central to

Hartmann's professed atheism, it is wholly unlike any of his other work in that it fails to treat its central character with humor. Rather than deflate Baker Eddy's easy profundities, Hartmann appeared to embrace them not realizing that this would produce, for him, a dead end.

Baker Eddy aside, however, Hartmann's plays, particularly the cycle plays, stand comparison with the best work of any modern playwright. They are striking in conception, unique, boldly executed, and successful on a number of complex levels; poetic, dramatic, philosophical, and theatrical. Hartmann wanted most of all to be an innovator and a prophet of a new direction in art. Unfortunately, like a number of prophets, he succeeded in his art but fell short in its reception.

Certainly, his personal character had much to do with that; being selfish, arrogant, proud, beggarly, and forever assertive of superior critical acumen did little to endear him to the masses. Nevertheless, even those who disputed with him most, continued to hold his opinion in high esteem.

Perhaps the worst disservice done to Hartmann was the portrait drawn of him by Fowler. Admirers of Hartmann had long looked forward to a biography which would at last establish his literary significance. Instead, they were shocked at what they found. Peter Plagens summed up the reaction:

Gene Fowler . . . used Hartmann as a cat's paw subject for Minutes of the Last Meeting. . . . It's doubly pathetic because Fields, who referred to Hartmann as "itchy Kootchy," "a moocher and a bum" and the like, was for all his comic genius a genuine four-square asshole. (Who else would keep \$10,000 in a Berlin bank in case Hitler won?) Decker, the crowd's token artist who combined the worst of, say, Schiele and Henri, desperately wanted Hartmann to like his work. And Fowler, to put it bluntly, was a plodding hack. the persistent image of Hartmann-unshaven, his store teeth ill-fitting, his asthma killing him-with no dignity save the rehearsed perversities of a Gully Jimson-suffering the inanities of a late-night debate on "art" at Decker's studio with a bunch of boozed up imitation Edwin Booths, is cause for tears.<sup>36</sup>

Unquestionably, Hartmann's deserved a better memoir.

Perhaps, in time, he will have it.

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