Fictions of Freemasonry: Chapter 5, Early Twentieth Century

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Politics, Semiotics, and Freemasonry in the Early Twentieth Century

A great part of Europe—the whole of Italy and France and a great portion of Germany, to say nothing of other countries, are covered with a network of these secret societies, just as the superficies of the earth is now being covered with railroads. And what are their objects? ... they want to change the tenure of the land, to drive out the present owners of the soil, and to put an end to ecclesiastical establishments. Some of them may go further.
—Disraeli, 1856 in the House of Commons

Diese Symbolform ist die der jeweiligen Kapazität des Geistes angepasste Erkenntnisform—nicht dass etwa irgendein mysteriöses Ahnen, eine prophetische Sehergabe angenommen werden müsste. Der Umstand, dass der Mensch seinen Symbolen immer tiefere Bedeutung abgewinnen kann, verleiht ihnen den Anschein, als wären sie himmlische Vorbote gewesen der letzten Idee, die sie ausdrücken. In einem gewissen Sinn steckte aber die letzte Bedeutung schon im ersten Auftreten des typischen Symbols.
—Herbert Silberer,
Probleme der Mystik und ihrer Symbolik

CONTINUED PUBLIC INTEREST: ANTI-MASONRY AND NEW SECRET SOCIETIES

As the nineteenth century waned, the fear of conspiracy expressed so forcefully by Disraeli in the first epigraph to this chapter was reinforced by prominent Jesuits who waged a vicious campaign against Freemasonry. They accused the order and its “Jewish allies,” among other things, of giving rise to communism, anarchism, the Social Democratic Party, and of being archenemies of the church. As a result, Pope Leo XIII renewed the church ban on Freemasons in his 1884 encyclical “Humanum genus,” warning against the forces of Satan embodied in Freemasonry. In this environment arose a fiction about Freemasonry rivaling the best stories of the eighteenth century.

The author (or perpetrator), Leo Taxil (Gabriel Jogand-Pages), was Jesuit educated. He developed into a vocal freethinker, and in 1881 joined the Freemasons. Because of conduct “unbecoming of a Mason” he was soon dropped from the lodge. Taxil began to edit an anticlerical yearbook; but then, in a sudden turnabout, he publically converted to the Catholic Church. The new Catholic turned his pen against Freemasonry and won such favor with the anti-Masonic church hierarchy that Pope Leo XIII gave him an audience in Rome. Taxil printed secret Masonic rites and accused Freemasons of being a Satanist cult engaged in sexual orgies and ritual murders. At the height of his deception Taxil wrote of a “Palladian” lodge whose members included a daughter of the devil Bitur—a woman named Dianna Vaughan. Through Taxil, the fictitious Miss Vaughan made further sensational anti-Masonic disclosures that finally earned her an apostolic blessing from the Church. In 1897, after more than fifteen years of posturing, Taxil finally revealed his fraud to the world. The allegations against Freemasonry, he declared, had been created to expose the superstitions of leading Catholic officials.

Despite his final disclosures, Taxil’s fictional charges against Freemasonry continued to inspire belief; and soon they were joined by The Protocols of the Elders of Zion. This incredible fiction, commissioned by Russian secret police and based in part on a nineteenth-century novel, depicts a diabolical Jewish and Masonic conspiracy to rule the world. First published in 1903 in St. Petersburg, the Protocols gained special prominence in the years following the First World War when they were published in France and Germany. As the next chapters relate, they then formed part of a widespread conspiracy theory that influenced both Thomas Mann’s Magic Mountain and Nazi theoreticians.
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Freemasonry attracted other sorts of attention at the turn of the century as well. Leo Trotsky, for instance, spent an entire year studying and writing about Freemasonry while in an Odessa prison. The prison library's holdings were largely of conservative historical and religious journals; and in them Trotsky found frequent discussions of Freemasonry. He wondered where and when and why the movement had begun, and he asked himself how Marxism would explain such a movement. He was surprised to find that the fraternity included revolutionary as well as reactionary branches. Over the course of a year Trotsky filled a notebook of one thousand pages with thoughts on Freemasonry.

Trotsky's Marxist interpretation of Freemasonry is a good example of new historical interest in the brotherhood, although in perspective, it is quite different from that of the literary critics and "new romantic" historians who would most strongly influence the turn-of-the-century novelists with whose work we are concerned here. The vicious lies of The Protocols of the Elders of Zion, Taxil's fraud which damaged both Catholics and Freemasons, and the Jesuits' anti-Masonic campaign are representative of the waves of anti-Masonic sentiment washing across Europe at the beginning of the new century. In a time of sweeping changes, threatened by modernism, positivistic science, political liberalism, and economic hardship, many Europeans found Jews and Freemasons likely sources of their unease and accused them of conspiracies of every kind. But if secret societies could be seen as the cause of the new malaise, they could also represent a cure.

The Wandervögel, a youth movement founded by Karl Fischer, is probably the best known of the antimodernist, nationalistic, protoromantic leagues that grew out of the early twentieth-century fascination with secret societies. On the literary scene, the circle gathered around Stefan George, writes Hansjürgen Linke, "exhibits all the features of a league of men formed in analogy to or even according to the historical example of the Templar Order." Fritz Stern has argued that the Wandervögel, the George Circle, and in general Germany's turn-of-the-century predilection for myths, Germanic roots, neoromanticism, the occult, and secret societies are reactions against all the perceived ills, the "cultural despair," of the new century. Parallels can be drawn between this time and the end of the eighteenth century when the anti-Enlightenment Gold- und Rosenkreuzer became an influential branch of Freemasonry and when romanticism became an important ideological force. Rather than repeating the work of Stern, Linke, and others, a delightful, but little known parody of the time will here provide insight into the prevailing cultural climate, as will two contemporary books about Freemasonry and its symbolism.

LITERARY FREEMASONRY AND THE OCCULT

The Novel of the XII (Der Roman der XII, 1909), the brainchild of publisher Konrad Mecklenburg, has twelve chapters, each written by a well-known author: Felix Hollaender, Ernst von Wolzogen, Hermann Bahr, Georg Hirschfeld, Gustav Falke, Otto Ernst, Gabrielle Reuter, Herbert Eulenberg, Hanns Heinz Ewers, Otto Julius Bierbaum, Olga Wohlrück, and Gustav Meyrink. Hollaender's first chapter sets the tone for the parody of both Bildungsroman and league novel when Gaston Dülfer draws simple-minded parallels between his pedagogical utopia and the pedagogical province in Goethe's Wilhelm Meister's Travels. Each succeeding author carries Gaston's plans and education to further extremes. A daemon or "Pieke" tries to guide him. He meets a mystical confidence man every inch a Cagliostro figure. And his father, a member of a brotherhood of alchemists and a Freemason, observes his son through several emissaries and steps in to rescue Gaston's children from their oppressive mother. After Gaston has repeated several developmental steps his father took before becoming a member of the alchemical secret society, the senior Dülfer asks him if he would like to "die," to leave the world in order to join the brotherhood. Although the novel directs Gaston in another direction, the theme of alchemical death and rebirth drawn from early twentieth-century books about eighteenth-century Freemasons and Rosicrucians subsequently draws the attention of both Hofmannsthal and Thomas Mann.

In a twist reminiscent of the several narrators of The Ghost-Seer, the twelve (conspiratorial) authors of The Novel of the XII themselves have an extensive influence on Gaston's life. Various references link them and the brotherhood of alchemists, they appear fleetingly in the novel, and they are said to be directing Gaston toward a strange telos: not to greater harmony within himself but rather to a loss of his true self:
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Foreign powers had reached right into his life, clumsy forces had agitated and swirled his fate in an inept creative mood so that it seemed like half-baked aperitif dough. And with all that he had lost himself; had let himself be pulled back and forth by competing feelings, had become sentimental, almost bourgeois and narrow-minded. Oh, it was high time that he once again found himself. (285)

The light-hearted satire of Freemasonry found in the novel is not appreciated by the compilers of the Internationales Freimaurer-Lexikon. In their entry for Otto Julius Bierbaum they write: "In the novel he instigated, The Novel of the XII, a Freemason appears in the 12th chapter in circumstances which indicate that none of the twelve authors has any connection with Freemasonry" (183). The novel was, of course, not instigated by Bierbaum, and in an earlier Lexikon entry for Hermann Bahr, the assertion is made that Bahr was indeed a Freemason in his younger years. But even if mainstream Freemasonry was again a staid, Enlightenment institution that worshiped Lessing and abhorred the alchemical excesses of the late eighteenth century, The Novel of the XII accurately reflects a strong public interest in Rosicrucian Freemasonry, mysticism, and ideas loosely gathered under the rubric "romanticism."

At least three of the twelve authors of Der Roman der XII had written or would write romantic league novels of their own. Felix Hollaender's novel The Path of Thomas Truck (Der Weg des Thomas Truck, 1902) describes the calculated education of young, idealistic, and enthusiastic Thomas Truck through the efforts of several quite traditional, mystical emissaries. Twenty years after the publication of Hollaender's novel, Hanns Heinz Ewers republished Schiller's Ghost-Seer along with his own three-hundred-page continuation of the fragment. In the afterword Ewers compares Schiller's century with his own:

One more word: it is astonishing how modern this Schiller is! . . . The same abracadabra knights then as now, the same miracle workers and savours in all colors, the same fantastic societies and orders fighting furiously among themselves. Whether the leaders are honest or frauds—or even, as most are, both in one person—whether they are named Schröpfer and Stark, Cagliostro, Dr. Mesmer, Gassner, whether they call themselves Illuminati or Rosicrucians, or, today, occultists, spiritualists, Christian Scientists, Theosophists, Anthroposophists, or whatever: then as now ghost-seers of all sorts were swarming in all cities and countries. Of course one will not everywhere meet such a congenial fellow as Schiller created in his 'Armenian' (529–530)

Certainly there is no character of that quality in Ewers's continuation or in his other novels (The Apprentice Magician, Horst Wessel, etc.); but like Hollaender, Ewers was a popular writer who found in the eighteenth-century league novel an appropriate form for his twentieth-century interests. A third member of The Novel of the XII's authorial conspiracy, Gustav Meyrink, was personally involved with Freemasons, Rosicrucians, and several less-known societies with self-satirizing names like the "Brotherhood of the Ancient Rites of the Holy Grail in the Grand Orient of Patmos." He also studied Madame Blavatsky's theosophy, corresponded with her follower Annie Besant, and briefly proselytized for their occult society in Prague.

Meyrink's reputation as an author and scholar of the occult led him to involvement in an anti-Masonic conspiracy during the First World War. Pastor Carl Vogl reports in his book Notes and Confessions of a Pastor (Aufzeichnungen und Bekennnisse eines Pfarrers) that while visiting Meyrink in July 1917 he found the writer busy with a whole pile of books by and about Freemasons. Meyrink said that he had been summoned to the foreign office in Berlin and had been asked to write a novel proving that the Freemasons were to blame for the war. The novel was to be immediately translated into English and Swedish in huge editions. Meyrink had agreed to the project, Vogl says, and was at work on materials supplied him by the foreign office when Vogl visited him. Meyrink soon quit his work on the novel, however, and Vogl reports that subsequently Friedrich Wichtl was given the Freemasonic material and entrusted with the task. Wichtl published his World-Freimaurerei, Weltrevolution, Weltpublik. Eine Untersuchung über Ursprung und Endziele des Weltkrieges in 1919. The ominous cover illustration of the first edition shows a group of stern-looking Freemasons in aprons ready to plunge their swords into coffins bearing the names "Wittelsbach," "Hohenzollern," and "Habsburg."

Meyrink wrote several novels and shorter works that manifest his continued interest both in the occult and secret societies, including The Angel of the Western Window (Der Engel vom westlichen Fenster), which incorporates several themes and motifs of
the league novel. After reading The Novel of the XII it is difficult to take Myrink’s alchemy and mysticism seriously. But the novel demon-
strates once again how well the requisites of the league novel meet the needs of an occult novelist. Meyrink also planned a novel to be called The Guiltless One (Der Schuldlose) in which he lists political Freemasonry among problems to be dealt with: “Connected therewith the exposing of 1) the decline of the German 2) his ‘Free-
masonic’ baseness.” The same novel was meant to trace the inner development of a person through stages of Eastern mysticism and to include a “System of Allomatism.” The reference to “Allomatism” links Meyrink to a book about alchemy, Rosicrucianism, and Freemasonry that provided Hofmannsthal with an important metaphor for his novel fragment Andreas.

The concept of the allomatic evidently comes from Ferdinand Maack’s Twice Dead! The Story of a Rosicrucian from the XVIIIth Century (Zweimal gestorben! Die Geschichte eines Rosenkreuzers aus dem XVIII. Jahrhundert, 1912). Drawing largely on eighteenth-century texts, Maack discusses several Rosicrucian ideas—including periodicity, polarity, duality, transformation, the unity of everything in the universe, and the aurea catena Homeri—and he posits the allomatic principle, the “Philosophy of the Other,” in which the self always depends on the other for transformation. He traces the history of Rosicrucianism through Johann Valentin Andreae and into Freemasonic lodges. And finally, in the form of a novella but with strong assertions about its truth, Maack tells the story of a certain Court Councillor (Hofrat) Schmidt, an eighteenth-century Rosi-
crucian who died and was alchemically reborn. This generally re-
sembles the story told with tongue-in-cheek in The Novel of the XII three years earlier, in which Dillert senior died and was reborn through the alchemical elixer.

Two years after Maack’s Rosicrucian apologia appeared, Herbert Silberer published his Problems of Mysticism and Its Symbolism (Probleme der Mystik und Ihrer Symbolik, 1914), a book that provides some key insights into contemporary interest in Freemasonry, Rosicrucianism, and Hofmannsthal’s novel. First, like Maack’s book, Silberer’s draws heavily on the late eighteenth cen-
tury. Near the beginning he prints a long parable published in 1788: “Secret Figures of the Rosicrucians from the 16th and 17th Centu-
ries.” Unlike Maack, Silberer is not interested in propagating Rosi-
ccrucian beliefs but rather in psychologically interpreting the Rosi-
crucian story and, more specifically, symbol formation. Higher

alchemy is a symbolic activity, he states, related to practical chemis-
try as little as Freemasonry is related to practical bricklaying. In his
discussion of symbols Silberer covers some of the same ground I have covered while interpreting Wilhelm Meister’s Travels. Taking
the sexual figures and gold making of Rosicrucian texts literally, he
writes, has often detracted from serious attempts at personal ethical
development. He focuses on the alchemical process of introversion,
of mystical turning inward; and sees in Rosicrucian symbols of in-
troversion (death, climbing down into caves, vaults, and dark tem-
ple) not only mystical symbols but also psychologically important
figures. He cites three possible outcomes of failing under the power
of symbols of introversion. The first, a positive outcome, involves
either mystical growth or development of the self. The other two,
both negative, involve loss of the self: either a passive fall into schi-
zophrenia or an active turn to magic, an attempt materially to ac-
tualize what is really a psychological or religious process, as dis-
cussed at length by Goethe. Finally, for our purposes, Silberer
writes about the production of symbols. Founders of religions are
not alone in this crucial task, he points out, but are joined by artists.
And in fact, “the absorption in a work of art [by both the artist and
the observer or reader] seems to me closely related to both introver-
sion and to the unio mystica” (235).

With new, psychoanalytical tools for investigating the sym-

dols of Freemasons and Rosicrucians, Silberer works scientifically
through problems of formation of symbols and their affect on the
psyche. Theodor Wieser comments on the book’s special attraction
for Hofmannsthal, who quotes it in his notes to Andreas: “The
psychoanalytic researcher Silberer undertakes in his book to clarify
the problem of multiple interpretation using an allegorical story
of the Rosicrucians. In the process he makes thorough use of and
discusses the symbolism of alchemy and secret societies. The many-
sidedly open, so malleable plasticity of the mystical and alchemical
tradition must have inspired the poet, reinforced his own best ideas,
and challenged him.”

HOFMANNSTHAL’S ANDREAS

“Das Symbolische an den Rosenkreuzern ist ihm
sympathisch.”
—Hofmannsthal, Andreas
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One way to describe Andreas, written between 1907 and 1927, is as a second Ghost-Seer. Like Schiller’s novel fragment, Hofmannsthal’s novel, also a fragment, portrays the education of a young foreigner at the hands of several powerful men and women. Once again Venice is the setting, for its place between East and West, its intrigue, and its mystery make the city an ideal setting for a story of transformation. As in Schiller’s novel there is a mysterious confrontation with a beautiful woman in a church; and both Schiller’s prince and Hofmannsthal’s Andreas are besieged by theater people artistically well equipped to influence the rather naive young men. Like Schiller’s prince, Andreas often finds himself caught in the complexities of language while the people around him speak easily. And finally, Sacramozzo plays the pedagogical role of Schiller’s Armenian, with the difference that he has Andreas’s good at heart. In this he is closer to the emissaries of Wilhelm Meister than to the Armenian; and several notes to the novel make this second comparison explicit. From his first meeting with Sacramozzo it is clear that Andreas is to be guided by another in the long list of Masonic mentors inspired by the Armenian and the Abbé:

He [Sacramozzo] is a Maltese Knight, he then continued, but as you see he does not wear the cross on his clothing which he is not only entitled, but also required to wear. He has made a great trip, it is said that he was in the most central part of East India or even at the Great Wall of China; according to one report he is supposed to be in the service of the Jesuits, and according to another he is no less than a Freemason. (83)

Sacramozzo’s pedagogic influence on Andreas is strong, as befits a Masonic mentor. To guide the education of a young man as traditional Masonic emissaries do, the mentor must have extraordinary knowledge of his charge and the world; and Sacramozzo clearly fits that bill. But the novel does not simply reproduce a stock figure in a stock situation. It portrays a second, weak side of Sacramozzo’s personality: “His confession of the inhibitions, the fate that binds him. He calls himself a wreck, a charlatan” (164). He is left, surprisingly, with a deep sense of loneliness:

Maltese Knight. The total breakdown of the man of forty years. He can no longer expect that additional enlightenment, rescuing revelations will come—he can not expect resources, withheld from himself, in those older than he is—he may not imploringly ap-
and the parts into further parts, and nothing more could be encompassed by a concept. The separate words swam about me; they congealed into eyes which stared at me” (466). This language crisis is repeated in Andreas as a major theme of the novel.

Arriving in Venice, Andreas’s first thoughts are of his inability to communicate, although he speaks the language: “I know the language, so what, because of that they do with me what they want! How does one speak to total strangers” (40). The first person he sees is a masked man, “who looked trustworthy and who, according to his movements and manners, belonged to the best classes” (40). Impressed and intimidated by these signs of class and power, Andreas speaks, and in so doing reveals his own contingency: “he said quickly that he was a stranger . . . immediately it seemed verbose and awkward that he had named the stations, he became embarrassed and confused himself as he spoke Italian” (41). The masked man’s cloak falls open to reveal underclothing in total contrast to the outer, the first of many indications that Andreas should seriously question the veracity of signs. But Andreas wants to believe in what others express with language. When the masked man, whom he already has reason to mistrust, mentions the names of Austrian royalty, Andreas responds positively: “These well known names, spoken here so intimately by the stranger, imbued Andreas with great trust” (41). Andreas plans an optimistic letter to his parents which will replicate the lies and half-lies told him by the man with the mask; but memories of his many humiliations during the trip to Venice make him as unable to write as he is to speak.

While traveling, Andreas had reluctantly taken on a servant, Gotthelf, whose purported linguistic abilities match those of the prince’s servant Biondello in The Ghost-Seeker: “How he spoke Slovenian, Romansch, Ladin and naturally Italian with great facility. . . . He understood stalking and hunting, correspondence, filing, reading aloud, and letter writing in four languages and could serve as interpreter, or, as one says in Turkish, as dragoman” (47). Andreas does not want to employ a servant, but his own inability to control his words (“but Andreas again said one word too many” [48]) gives the fluent Gotthelf the opening he needs. Dishonest, lascivious, and brutal, Gotthelf repeatedly enrages Andreas. At one point a speech that “bubbled . . . through his pouting lips” impugns the chastity of Romana, the young woman with whom Andreas has just fallen in love, and Andreas tries to respond: “a burning was in Andreas’s breast which forcefully rose up his throat, but no speech passed from his tongue, he would have liked to smash him in the mouth with his fist” (60). The result of this confrontation or non-confrontation is the kind of shattering of a comforting whole spoken of in the Chandos letter: “During the evening meal Andre was never before in his life, everything as if cut up into little pieces, the dark and the light, the faces and the hands” (60). Later that night he fantasizes about writing a compensatorily eloquent letter to his parents: “Thoughts came in streams, everything that occurred to him was uncontestable” (63). In his thoughts he describes the joy he will bring his parents by his marriage with the wealthy Romana; and contrary to his normal experience, “The nimble words came to him unsought; the beautiful phrases formed chains by themselves” (63). Drowsiness causes the beautiful chains of phrases to dissolve, and an evil deed by Gotthelf destroys his hopes with Romana; but Andreas has two subsequent experiences that give him a renewed sense for meaning behind the senseless chaos of signs with which Gotthelf and others surround him.

The first comes on the grave of a dog that Gotthelf has poisoned, where Andreas remembers an ugly incident in his twelfth year when he broke the back of his own dog. The memory helps him sense connections between the dog in the grave, Gotthelf, and himself; and out of these meaningful connections “a world spun itself which was behind the real one, and not so empty and bleak” (72). As powerful as this vision appears, however, Andreas is immediately barred from the transcendent world: “Then he was astonished by himself: Where do I come from? and it seemed to him that someone else was lying there into whom he must go, but he had lost the word” (72). The second experience of meaning beyond language comes in the mountains after he has left Romana behind. Watching an eagle soar over him, he envisions the broad expanses of landscape the eagle can see. Such a view would unify all divided things; and this thought gives him the feeling that “His soul had a center” (76). Looking into himself he sees Romana kneeling like a deer, and that “gesture was ineffable to him. . . . An ineffable certainty assailed him: it was the happiest moment of his life” (76).

This security found in nature and in Romana’s gesture has a counterpart in the second half of the Chandos letter. Chandos reports that even while surrounded by empty signs, which he likens to eyeless statues, he has joyful moments, moments specifically beyond language: “the words leave me once again helpless. For it is something completely unnamed, and indeed scarcely nameable”
(467). Ordinary things become the vessels of his revelation, filling him with a rising flood of divine feeling. “I feel then,” he writes, “as if my body consisted only of ciphers which unlock everything for me. Or as if we could enter into a new, prescient relationship with all of existence, if we were to begin to think with our hearts” (469). Andreas’s experiences with the dog and the eagle produce exactly this sort of harmonizing, centering feeling: but the assurance does not last. On reaching Venice, Andreas is as unsure of himself as ever; and his inability as yet to find lasting meaning through language is well portrayed in the memory of a childhood dream: “he had crept hungrily into the pantry to cut a piece of bread for himself, he had held the loaf of bread tightly, but the knife in his hand cut repeatedly past the bread into emptiness” (96).

Andreas’s longing for a clear, harmonious center in place of this emptiness relates directly to Sacramozo’s role as Masonic or Rosicrucian mentor. When first seen, Sacramozo is at a café writing a letter (Andreas has twice found himself unable actually to write one), exhibiting a relationship to things in strong contrast to Andreas’s alienation. Uncomfortably seated and with a wind pulling at his papers, “he should have been impatient, and yet there was control in all his limbs, an—as strange as the word may sound—an obligation (Verbindlichkeit) to the dead objects” (83). Andreas’s companion explains the man’s extraordinary presence by repeating rumors that he has traveled in India and China and that he may be a Jesuit or a Freemason. Andreas is completely captivated by Sacramozo’s grace, and when he hands him a paper he thinks he has dropped, “Andreas thought he had never perceived a more wonderful harmony between the bearing of a person and the sound of his voice. The words: you are very kind, sir, came in German and in the best pronunciation from his lips” (84). In contrast, Andreas’s response is confused, and he twitches with embarrassment at his own awkward gestures and broken speech.

The contrast is so great that Andreas is brought to speculate on just what gives Sacramozo the power he so sorely lacks: “Does he belong to a secret society? Andres feels certain: the Jesuits—then the lodge. Finally: an even more secret league: are there Templars? Rosicrucians?—But he seems beyond all of this, by a spiral turn. Templer and School-League-Hetaeria: has taken all this into himself” (160). Another note suggests that Sacramozo combines his own incredible sense of personal power with secret missions to change the world: “His foundation: a powerful faith in himself.

Faith of a Messiah. Thus: undertake every mission (Catholic, Freemasonic: Templar): amor fati in the most extreme sense. Grandiose view of his own situation and of the possibility of enhancement of the function of the individual: who can simply change everything” (164).

In secret societies, especially in the Rosicrucians, Sacramozo finds the transcendental signifiers that allow him to live beyond Andreas’s sorry semiotic condition:

Sacramozo What appeals to him about the Rosicrucians is the symbolic—the absolutely symbolic, the use of words transcending the world. For in the soul, he says, is everything: everything that conjures, also everything that can be conjured. Every word is a conjuration: that spirit that calls determines which spirit appears. . . . He is intent on the incantation. (106–107)

At times Sacramozo is sure he has the key to the world: “in hours of exaltation he is sure that only he has the true key to the world, everyone else slips past the secret lock” (98); but that key, based on Rosicrucian symbols, based on “true poetry,” is itself a signifier, and as such it is hardly the absolute answer he desires. The same note that refers to Sacramozo’s possession of the true key states that his fate is “the key of Solomon in Hebbel’s epigram” (98). That epigram firmly locates “transcendence” in nontranscendent language: “You think you grasp Salomon’s key and can open up / Heaven and earth, and then it dissolves into figures, / And you watch, horrified, as the alphabet renews itself, / But find comfort, in the meantime it has enhanced itself.” Hebbel’s epigram clearly gives some language a privileged place in expressing truth, as does the statement quoted earlier placing Sacramozo a “spiral turn” higher than Freemasons and Rosicrucians: but at the same time it severely limits symbolic access to any truth beyond the sign. Poetry both unifies and separates: “True poetry is the arcanum which unites us with life, which separates us from life” (107). Both poetry and a mentor like Sacramozo achieve a totality, but a totality only in the eyes of others:

Totality. In life everything is separated—only in writing poetry, in depicting, are things together—in a figure like the Maltese Knight everything seems to indeed be together. Only he himself, such a man, can know what he himself lacks. To compensate heroically for this lack, he dreams of leading himself over into Andreas. (189)
Andreas believes in Sacramozo's authority: "Andres—faith in authority through and through, branching into the extremities of peripheral being" (144); while for Sacramozo, even in his most unified moments, "everything remained partial (where, in contrast, Andres has a sense for how everything conjoins, only not: The grasp, to get it); The Maltese Knight knows: my command is a command, my smile has, in general, an attractive power—but what use is it en somme—" (144). Sacramozo is necessary for Andreas, but Andreas is just as necessary for Sacramozo: "Maltese Knight: to kneel down?—as one kneels to receive council from a teacher worshipped as godlike—this gesture—I will have died without having found it on my life's pilgrimage—Will this youth [Andreas] be the one who may kneel? . . . And will I find the way to be him?" (185).

The allomatic principle, or dependence of the self on the other for transformation, that Hofmannsthal borrowed from Maack's "Story of a Rosicrucian from the Eighteenth Century" works both ways in Andreas. Andreas finds the authority, the semiotic assurance, the center he lacks in Sacramozo. Sacramozo can act as that center because of his personal power and the authority he draws from Masonic symbols. The novel keeps from falling into Maack's esotericism, however, as Sacramozo realizes that the symbols, which are enough for Andreas, give way to ever new symbols; they never reveal absolute truth. Sacramozo turns from this epistemological abyss to find meaning in Andreas's belief in wholeness, in the gesture of kneeling before a divine teacher. Romana's kneeling like a deer (within Andreas) brought the young man an ineffable security; and Sacramozo's final assurance, as questionable as it may be, also arises from his vision of Andreas kneeling. That too, of course, is a sign; but the gesture is, in the context of the novel, a spiral turn higher than previous signs.

Schiller's Armenian used Masonic symbols and linguistic facility to awaken a desire in the prince for closure. The emissaries of the Tower Society in Wilhelm Meister use the same symbols but take care to move back and forth from craft to art so as to guard against the destructive jump from symbol to the gold of desired transcendent reality. Hofmannsthal's novel continues this semiotic theme, relativizing Andreas's belief in the higher reality behind Masonic signs with Sacramozo's insight into the eternal regress of such signs. Sacramozo's relative position is also called into question, however, by the faithful gesture of Andreas. The sign both unifies and separates.

Hofmannsthal was not alone among twentieth-century authors to find ready-made metaphors for investigating language and politics in the Freemasonry of Schiller's and Goethe's novels (and in contemporary works like those of Maack and Silberer), for, as we shall see in the next chapter, Thomas Mann likewise drew on both eighteenth-century precedents and twentieth-century critical interpretations of those sources to create The Magic Mountain, his own novel within the Masonic literary tradition.