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Beyond Diagnosis: Literary Masters & the Search for the Truth of Existence

Stefan George and the Return to Political Reality

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In a letter to the literary scholar Robert Heilman in 1961 Eric Voegelin expressed his agreement with the view that good literature does not merely imitate or interpret reality but is a constituent of reality. In this regard he referred to Aristotle's observation that the poet gives us deeper insights into human nature than the historian because, while the historian records reality "in the state of potentiality", the poet "imaginatively creates the 'nature' of things". The poet treats "the 'true' reality of actualized nature". To do this the artist must view the "raw material" that he treats in the light of its "relation to the 'nature' of things". In order to do this the artist must have a "love of true reality".¹

Reality is symbolized in myth, religion, art, and in other forms of cultural expression and is symbolized and critically reflected in philosophy.² "Openness to reality" is an experience in which the human being becomes aware that his or her deeper self is rooted in the dynamic (act) ground of being. In a paper about a poet it may be permissible to illustrate the nature of the "deeper self" with reference to

¹ Robert B. Heilman and Eric Voegelin, A Friendship in Letters, 1944-1984, ed. by Charles R. Embry (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 2004). Here 210f.

² See Eric Voegelin, "What is Political Reality" in The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin, vol 6, Anamnesis: On the Theory of History and Politics, trans. by M. J. Hanak, ed. with an Introduction by David Walsh (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 2002), 341-412, especially 345ff.

Coleridge's well-known poem, the "Ancient Mariner". Following the mariner's killing of the bird that came each morning to the mariner's "hallo"—each encounter in the cosmos takes place under the sign of the holy— the mariner's long journey back to participation in being— reality— begins when he overcomes the murderous egotism of the closed self and opens his heart to the creatures playing on the Sargasso Sea:

"O happy living things! no tongue
Their beauty might declare:
A spring of love gushed from my heart,
And I blessed them unaware:
Sure my kind saint took pity on me,
And I blessed them unaware.

The selfsame moment I could pray;
And from my neck so free
The Albatross fell off, and sank
Like lead into the sea."

The mariner says: "[L]ove gushed from my heart". With this act of the deeper self ("I blessed them unaware", i.e. without regard to the amor sui), the mariner rejoins the ordered cosmos. Traditionally the order of the cosmos and our relationship to the ground of being, and therewith to our fellow creatures, has been expressed in the symbol of love (eros, philia, agape); love understood as a quality at the center of the soul that leads to a deeper and deeper knowledge of value and therefore of being. There exists a hierarchy of loveable qualities. At the height of this hierarchy stands the human being who has learned to see himself, his fellow human beings and the world in the light of divine being: "[A]ll loving, contemplating, thinking and willing is intentionally united in deo".³ This is the life of reason.

³ Max Scheler, Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die materiale Wertethik, in Gesammelte Werke, vol. 2, ed. Maria Scheler (Bern: Franke Verlag, 1966), 396.

Where the life of reason is overthrown the errant desire of the perverted ordo amoris calls forth distorted images of life. This is what is meant in this paper by the term “loss of reality”. To recover reality the soul must be led back to the proper ordo amoris: In Christian terms to God and “in deo” to all creation; in Platonic terms the soul must ascend from the narrow self, centered in the world of passion, to its true center in the transcendent ground of being.

It is the thesis of this paper that the early works of Stefan George demonstrate a Platonic “love of reality”. Plato is present in George’s depiction of the ascent of the soul to the ground of being in his first book of poetry, HYMNE (1890), and platonic thought is the basis of George’s critical discussion of the Eros tyrannos in PILGERFAHRTEN (1891) and in ALGABAL (1892). After examining two poems from HYMNE, the poems “Weihe” (“Initiation” or “Consecration”) and “Ein Angelico” (“Fra Angelico”), and the poem “Mahnung” (“Warning”) from PILGERFAHRTEN, I will look at ALGABAL in more detail.

In the first section of this paper I will examine poems of Stefan George against the background of a Platonic understanding of reality. In the second section I will try to support the findings of the first section by arguing against those who deny the presence of Plato in George’s early work. In the third section I will examine George’s notes on the intentions of the arts journal he founded in 1892 and demonstrate their relationship to the Platonic understanding of reality that I explored in section one. In the fourth section I refer to an early reception of George’s work from an unlikely quarter for corroboration and support of my thesis. In a short “conclusion” I sum up the results of this study. I will proceed in the following steps:

- I. Stefan George: Hymns, Pilgrimages, Algabal
- II. Stefan George’s Platonism
- III. Stefan George’s Intentions

IV. Stefan George in the „Sozialistische Monatshefte“

V. Conclusion

I. STEFAN GEORGE: HYMNS, PILGRAMGES, ALGABAL

George's first published volume of poetry, *HYMNS*⁴, opens with the poem “Weihe” (“Initiation” or “Consecration”) which describes the nature of the poet's preparation for, and pursuit of, his calling.

WEIHE⁵

Hinaus zum strom ! wo stolz die hohen rohre

Im linden winde ihre fahnen schwingen

Und wehren junger wellen schmeichelchore

Zum ufermoose kosend vorzudringen.

Im rasen rastend sollst du dich betäuben

An starkem urduft, ohne denkerstörung,

So dass die fremden hauche all zerstäuben.

Das auge schauend harre der erhörung.

Siehst du im takt des strauches laub schon zittern

⁴ References to George's poems will be made to the Collected Works (Gesammtausgabe) published in 18 volumes by Georg Bondi in Berlin between 1927-1934. I will cite this edition in the main text abbreviated as: GA: vol, page.

⁵ An English translation will be found in the Appendix at the end of this paper.

Und auf der glatten fluten dunkelglanz

Die dünne nebelmauer sich zersplittern?

Hörst du das elfenlied zum elfentanz?

Schon scheinen durch der zweige zackenrahmen

Mit sternenstädten selige gefilde,

Der zeiten flug verliert die alten namen

Und raum und dasein bleiben nur im bilde.

Nun bist du reif, nun schwebt die herrin nieder,

Mondfarbne gazeschleier sie umschlingen,

Halboffen ihre traumesschweren lider

Zu dir geneigt die segnung zu vollbringen:

Indem ihr mund auf deinem antlitz bebte

Und sie dich rein und so geheiligt sah

Dass sie im kuss nicht auszuweichen strebte

Dem finger stützend deiner lippe nah (GA: II, 12).⁶

In the first stanza the poet is called to find his place in the “stream of life”: “Hinaus zum strom!” But to mature the poet also requires a hortus conclusus where he is protected by the “stately reeds” (“die hohen rohre”) that fly their flags “in the

⁶ An English translation appears below in the Appendix.

gentle winds". The poet is aware of the importance of his calling and identifies with the proud ("stolz") reeds that tower above the young waves' "flattering choir" (schmeichelchore).

The second stanza tells us that the poet is to let himself be overwhelmed ("betäuben") by the earth's strong primal scent ("urduft"). Experiencing the world for himself, concretely and in its depth, his mind is to be freed of second hand notions ("fremde hauche"). The poet is engaged in both a waiting, passive, listening as well as in an active watching: "das auge schauend harre der erhörung".

The third stanza asks the poet what he now "sees and hears":

Siehst du im takt des strauches laub schon zittern
Und auf der glatten fluten dunkelglanz
Die dünne nebelmauer sich zersplittern?
Hörst du das elfenlied zum elfentanz?

The branches move rhythmically in the breeze and the poet discerns the thin wall of fog breaking above the dark water. He has insight into the luminosity that is present in the dark waters too because, in William Blake's words, the poet is able to see "eternity in a grain of sand", i.e. that each thing in the world is aglow with the spirit of the cosmos. Consequently, the voice of the first stanza that enjoined the poet: "Hinaus zum strom!", now asks the poet if he hears the music of the cosmos:

"Hörst du das elfenlied zum elfentanz?".

The poet, having attained to the noumenal realm has gained the power of metaphor that is needed in order to depict the things of the world in their true light⁷:

“Der zeiten flug verliert die alten namen

Und raum and dasein bleiben nur im bilde.“⁸

The poet has ascended to this height through an act of love (eros) and since love is not a one-sided act, but requires a partner, it is symbolized by the muse who descends to meet him: “Nun bist du reif, nun schwebt die herrin nieder....Zu dir geneigt die segnung zu vollbringen”⁹. The muse is not part of the world and meets the poet in the middle region of the spirit between the perishing and the eternal things.

The poetic activity raises the materials found in the world in harmony with and in analogy to the poet’s ordo amoris. (I referred to this process above: The artist views the “raw material” that he treats in the light of its “relation to the ‘nature’ of things”.) Thus in the poetic act the poet does not imitate the things of the world, but presents them in their true light as part of the expression of his own participation in the ground of being. One of the last poems in HYMNS depicts the poetic act.

“Fra Angelico” describes the painter’s “The Crowning of the Virgin Mary”, a common subject in the 13th century based on the legend of the Virgin Mary being received by Christ following the Assumption as the first among God’s creatures. Kneeling she takes the crown from his hands. They are joined by saints and angels.

⁷ Cf. The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin, vol 16, Order and History III, Plato and Aristotle, ed. with an Introduction by Dante Germino (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 2000), 329f.

⁸ “The course of time loses the old names/ and space and existence are only present in the image [metaphor].”

⁹ “Now you have attained maturity, now the muse descends... and favours you with her blessing”.

The habit of several figures reveals that they are Dominicans and the founder of the order is also depicted.¹⁰

George saw this painting during his first visit to Paris in 1889. The sonnet reads:

Auf zierliche kapitel der legende
– Den erdenstreit bewacht von ewgem rat'
Des strengen ahnen wirkungsvolle sende –
Errichtet er die glorreich grosse tat:

Er nahm das gold von heiligen pokalen,
Zu hellem haar das reife weizenstroh,
Das rosa kindern die mit schiefer malen,
Der wäscherin am bach das indigo.

Der herr in glanze seines königtumes
Zur seite sanfte sänger seines ruhmes
Und sieger der Chariten und Medusen.

Die braut mit immerstillen kindesbusen
Voll demut aber froh ihren lohne
Empfängt aus seiner hand die erste krone.“ (GA: II, XX)

¹⁰ Cf. „The Coronation of the Virgin“, Louvre Museum, Paris: <http://www.louvre.fr/en/oeuvre-notices/coronation-virgin>. Accessed July 12, 2012.

1. True to the legend that graces the story that eternal providence watches over earthly strife the painter has brought forth a “glorious act” (“grosse tat”):
2. He has taken the gold from the holy chalices, added the yellow of ripening wheat to that of women's hair, and to the pink of children coloring with slate, he has added the indigo of the woman washing at the stream.
3. The Lord is in the glory of his pure kingdom, beside him are the gentle singers of his fame.
4. The Virgin, full of humility and with calm and childish bosom, gratefully accepts the first crown out of Christ's hands.

George's intentions are clear: In the chalice—receptacle of the Holy Communion— art reaches its pinnacle and the child's simple efforts to draw on stone symbolize the role of human art as the micro-cosmic re-enactment of divine creation.

PILGRIMAGES

In Stefan George's next book of poetry, *PILGERFAHRTEN*, the political implications of the reality of human nature and the *ordo amoris* of the well ordered soul come into focus. It appeared in 1891, one year after *HYMNS*. The subject of the opening poem, "The Recluse Goes Forth" ("Seidlergang"), is the pilgrim who has left his retreat but who is spiritually unable to return to society. The love he finds himself unable to give or accept leads him to regard the objects of his desire with contempt. Of the women who attract him he says: "Ich hasse sie und brenne sie zu greifen" ("I hate them and burn to take them") (GA: II, 55). Naturally what he finds contemptible is his own egotistical lust, but he projects his self-derision onto others.

Other poems depict the lives of women in loveless relationships who do not flee in order to enter into more satisfying ones but instead consort with "lovers" who do

not value them ¹¹ (GA: II, 64). The state of the soul of one such victim is described as “icy” (GA: II, 64). Another is described as peering through the bars of her garden gate like a prisoner (GA: II, 65). And a third says to her loveless companion in adultery: “Ich liege vor dir niedrig und gebrochen” (“I lie before you debased and broken”) (GA: II, 64).

George explores the complementary vice to being the victim in a loveless relationship, that of being a tyrant. And he also explores the tyrannical soul in public life. In “Mahnung (“Warning”) the despot has followed the “horde” that clamored for him to seize power. The destruction he engages in, murder and pillage “consecrate every lust and murder” (“Nun weihe jede lust und jeden mord”). This “Weihe” of destruction is the perversion of the “Weihe” in HYMNS which depicted the consecration of the poet. The perverted ordo amoris retains its powers but employs them in acts of destruction. As in the poems that explored the loveless private relationships of female victims, here too the image of ice is invoked to describe the despotic closed soul:

“Dein wille rasend wie der gischt am fels

Erfreut sich am verheerischen nord

Und spotet klarer luft und klaren quells“ (GA: II, 66)

George’s translators have rendered the first two lines: “As mad surf against the cliffs your mind/ Exults in an icy and destroying gust¹². The tyrannical soul rejects the light of reason that brings order to human passions. Therefore the third line reads: the despot “spotet klarer luft und klaren quells” (“scorns the clear air and the clear wells”).

¹¹ „Wenn aus der gondel sie zur treppe steig“ („When from the gondola she mounts the stairs.“) and „Ich darf so lange nicht am tore lehnen.“ („Too long I lean against the gate and gaze“.) GA: II, 64/65. English translation in: Stefan George, The Works of Stefan George, Rendered into English by Olga Marx and Ernst Morwitz, 2nd revised and enlarged edition (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1974), 32.

¹² Ibid., 33.

The female victims of loveless relationships that were depicted in the earlier poems turn up again, now amidst scenes of blood and destruction and as the despot's conquests. "Entführte weiber weinen ihren gram" ("the ravished women wail their sorrow"). At the despot's feet the conquered stammer an oath of allegiance: "Vor deinen Schuen stammelt man den eid" (GA: II, 67).

However, the despot is as lonely as his victims: "Und einsam gibts du dir ein wildes spiel" ("and lonely you move through a savage scene").¹³ Finally, in the last stanza, the idea of conquest itself is called into question. The master of slaves is also the slave of disordered passion and the poet speaks the "warning" that gives the poem its title:

„Is this, indeed, the land for which you warred?

Oh, disregard the voice that lured and lied!

And do not say that sorrow was your guide,

Nor cast aside the raiment of a lord!"¹⁴

The man who has preferred to rule over slaves instead of entering into friendship with equals has "cast aside the raiment of a lord". Why has he done this? For the same reason that the women sought affairs outside unhappy marriages; the sorrow ("leid") of the loveless soul feeds the illusion that it can cheer itself with lust.

ALGABAL

¹³ Ibid., 33. „War so denn wirklich dein erstritten land?/O überhörte jenen lockungschrei/Und sag nicht dass dein leid dein führer sei/Und wechsele nicht ein würdiges gewand" (GA: II, 67).

¹⁴ George, Works, 34.

The poem “Warning” presages the theme of George’s next book of poetry, *ALGABAL*, which explores the political dimension of the perverted *ordo amoris*. The book is made up of a cycle of poems partly based on the *vita* of the youthful Roman emperor Elagabalus whose short reign between 218 and 222 ended with his murder by the Praetorian Guard. *ALGABAL* is made up of four sections comprising 22 poems. *IM UNTERREICH* (“UNDERWORLD”) contains 4 poems, *TAGE* (“DAYS”) 10, *ANDENKEN* (“MEMORIES”) 7, and the book closes with a section of just one poem, *VOEGELSCHAU* (“AUGURY”).

Im Unterteich

If in “Weihe”, the first poem of *HYMNS*, the poet prepared himself to meet the muse in the light of day, in the first poem of *ALGABAL* we are confronted with a figure who hides from the day. The first two stanzas tell us that the emperor is not attracted to the surface landscape and beaches (“*landschaft am strande*”) but has withdrawn into the completely artificial environment of halls and grottoes constructed underground.

In this underground world there are white walls of an “eternal winter” and others made of “hundred colored ores” in which, in candle light, “shimmering jewels” appear as “water drops”. Rivers take on the colors of the garnet and ruby caverns through which they run and on “deep green” seas mechanically propelled skiffs move without oars.

In the sixth and final stanza the poet depicts the state of the soul and the motives of the person who has created this artificial world:

“Der schöpfung wo er nur geweckt and verwaltet

Erhabene neuheit ihn manchmal erfreut,

Wo ausser dem seinen kein will schaltet

Und wo er dem licht und dem wetter gebeut“ (GA: II, 91).

Only the creation that Algabal has called into life („geweckt“) and administers („verwaltet“) can „sometimes“(!) („manchmal“) give him pleasure.

The second poem depicts the “Saal des gelben gleisses”, or the great glittering yellow hall with its chandelier sun. The room shines with topaz and amber. The tiles are made of gold and the room is filled with the “looted store of entire cities and kingdoms” (“Gesamter städte ganzer staaten beute”) (GA: II, 93).

The third poem describes a hall that is made to look winter-white with pearls, diamonds, ivory and alabaster. The last stanza recounts Algabal’s discovery of an object from his childhood which startles him into the memory of his once innocent life. As a result of this experience he avoids his excesses for a short time:

“Da lag die kugel auch von murra-stein
Mit der in früher jugend er gespielt,
Des kaisers finger war am tage rein
Wo tränend er sie vor das auge hielt“ (GA: II, 95).

But if for a moment the globe („kugel“) shaped ball reminds him of the fullness and order of his early life, Algabal has advanced too far down the path of corruption to change, and in the fourth and last poem he regains his stubborn resistance to life and celebrates the fact that the garden he has built and the birds in it are completely artificial:

“Mein garten bedarf nicht luft und nicht wärme,
Der gartem den ich mir selbst erbaut
Und seiner Vögel leblose schwärme

Haben noch nie einen frühling geschaut“ (GA: II, 96).

With the garden that “never saw a spring” (“nie einen frühling geschaut”) and that requires “neither air nor warmth” (“nicht luft und nicht wärme”), Algabal has isolated himself from the natural world. The four poems of *Im Unterreich* depict the emperor’s disordered desires and his use of technology to create an artificial paradise in order to hide from life and death.

Tage

In the second section, *Tage*, we see the emperor in his relationship to other human beings. It should be the daylight world of action, but Algabal who pursues the illusion of complete control is incapable of sustained rational action and thus, among some normal acts of state, *Tage* presents the reader with scenes like the following:

The entry of a slave to the courtyard where the emperor is feeding doves, causes the birds to take flight. Appalled by what he has done, the slave commits suicide. Algabal turns away in scorn as he sees the “patch of crimson” spread from the mortally wounded body. In the evening, in recognition of the slave’s act of self-destruction for this slight interruption of Algabal’s pleasure, he has the slave’s name engraved into his wine cup.

Algabal warns the members of his family who want more power for themselves that he will take action against them, and we are presented with the scene of the emperor descending marble steps where, stepping over a “corpse without a head”, he lifts the hem of his long garment so that it will not be clotted with his dead brother’s blood.

When the emperor signals the end of a debauchery by leaving the hall, he orders sluices in the ceiling to be opened from which rose petals fall to smother the remaining celebrants.

Unable to sleep Algabal assuages his troubled mind with the music of flutes and by contemplating suicide.

He reflects on his hatred of the people, who he calls the “the mob”, and who he punishes with execution for the smallest infractions. He realizes that this treatment of others is a reflection of his own self hate: “It is an anger that I have for myself”. But self-criticism does not detain him long and he soon concludes that his subjects get what they deserve:

“And if I scourge them until they bleed

They have their bread and their gladiator games”¹⁵

He recalls battle scenes, rivers of blood, and women’s tears and asks whether in all that weeping any of the tears were felt (GA: II, 108)?

As in the poem’s first section when the discovery of the ball that he had played with as a child induced more serious thoughts for a short time, the contemplation of his young male companion, Agathon, moves him briefly to thoughts on mortality.

In the next poem, death again enters the emperor’s mind when the augurs warn him of a pending revolt by the palace guard. He reflects that he will take his own life before they can kill him and thus rob them of that satisfaction.

In the last poem Algabal is murdered.

Die Andenken

The third section is entitled Die Andenken (Memories).

¹⁵ „Und träf ich sie mit ruten bis aufs blut: Sie haben korn und haben fechtspiele“(GA: II, 107).

In the first poem Algabal recalls his childhood, when he lived in innocent expectation of what the future would bring. This thought is followed by his recognition that his misfortunes began the day he left the altars of his own country and he wishes that he could once again be a boy.

In the second poem he considers what he has lost. With the image of a butterfly he reflects on the soul that has been chilled by frost and asks doubtfully whether it is really dead or perhaps only sleeping.

In the third poem he recalls his elevation to the throne and how his subjects worshipped him and reflects on the necessary decay of fame.

In the fourth poem he recounts his marriage to a priestess he had chosen for her seemingly perfect beauty and regal demeanor. But then recalls with bitterness that he found a blemish on her body that destroyed his illusion of perfection; he therefore divorced her and sent her back to the temple.

In the fifth poem he evokes the memory of two lovers he watched while they slept and who he poisoned before they woke again to the world that was such a disappointment to him:

“You are reprieved! My coming was benign,
For no awakening shall abate the rapture
Which only dreams so perfectly recapture...”¹⁶

In the last poem he reflects on the artificial life he leads and his need to stimulate himself with drugs in order to combat ennui, and he admits to himself that he has traded human love for a “pillar’s marble breast”.

Vogelschau

¹⁶ The Works (1974), 56.

The last section of the book, Augury, consists of one poem. Here George, speaking in his own voice, recapitulates the atmosphere of the three previous sections of ALGABAL and ends the book with the prospect of a soul in the state of openness:

Augury

Once I saw the swallows winging,
Swallows snow- and silver-white,
In the wind I saw them clinging,
Windy weather, hot and bright.

Saw the jays alight and glimmer,
Parakeet and colibri
Through the trees of wonder shimmer
In the wood of Thusferi.

Saw the ravens flap and slacken,
Daws of black and somber grey
Over adders, near the bracken
Where the magic forest lay.

Now again I see the winging

Snow and silver swallows veer,
In the wind I see them clinging,
Windy weather, cold and clear.¹⁷

Once Algabal saw the swallows in the fetid air and saw other birds alight in the dark and enchanted forest. In the last stanza the white swallows appear again, this time in the sobering “cold and clear” wind.¹⁸ The first three stanzas sum up Algabal’s development: from his entanglement in the chthonic powers in Unterreich, through the brutalities of Tage, to the recognition of the essential poverty of his life in Andenken. Finally, the poem’s last stanza offers a glimpse of the world of light.

SUMMARY

What do George’s early poems tell us of his “return to political reality”? Let me briefly recall the steps of the path we have traced from HYMNE and PILGERFAHRTEN to ALGABAL.

At the beginning of this paper I referred to Eric Voegelin’s statement that the hallmark of the literary artist is the “love of true reality”, love understood as the soul’s orientation to the ground of being (eros, philia, agape). An individual’s life is guided by his or her ordo amoris. In the first poem of HYMNS, “Weihe”, I traced the ordo amoris of the ascent of the soul from the world of senses to the ideal world-- the broad theme of Plato’s Symposium. In this regard it is appropriate to speak of a “broad Platonism” because some of the elements that we find in

¹⁷ Ibid., 57f. (GA: II, 123).

¹⁸ It is the opposite of the despot in “Warning” who looked with contempt on the clear air and the untroubled fountains, who “spotet klarer luft und klaren quells.”

“Weihe”, while ultimately rooted in such dialogs as the Symposium, Timaeus, and Phaedrus have also lived in other texts in a more than 2,000 year history of the reception of Plato in European literature. And “Weihe” is structured by the same fundamental understanding of the soul that we find— to take just one example from one literature and one period— in the English Renaissance poet John Milton:

“O Adam, One Almighty is, from whom
All things proceed, and up to him return,
If not deprav'd from good, created all
Such to perfection, one first matter all,
Endued with various forms, various degrees
Of substance, and, in things that live, of life;
But more refin'd, more spiritous and pure,
As nearer to him plac'd, or nearer tending,
Each in their several active spheres assign'd,
Till body up to spirit work, in bounds
Proportion'd to each kind. So from the root
Springs lighter the green stalk, from thence the leaves
More aery: last the bright consummate flower
Spirits odorous breathes: flowers and their fruit,
Man's nourishment, by gradual scale sublim'd,
To vital spirits aspire: to animal:
To intellectual!—give both life and sense,
Fancy and understanding; whence the soul
REASON receives, and reason is her being,
Discursive or intuitive.”¹⁹

As we saw in “Fra Angelico”, the process of poetic creation mirrors the poet’s *ordo amoris*. And the poet whose soul ascends to the divine source “from whom all

¹⁹ John Milton, Paradise Lost, Book V, 469. Quoted, and with the emphasis “REASON”, by S. T. Coleridge in Chapter XIII of Biographia Literaria, “On The Imagination, or esemplastic Power”.

things proceed” is able to represent the true order of things in art.

If in HYMNS George demonstrated the creative order of the soul that is also mirrored in art, in PILGERAMAGES he explored the destruction caused by the soul that has lost its orientation. In “Warning” George examined such a soul “deprav”d from good” with regard to the disorder it brings into the sphere of politics.

Finally, in ALGABAL George explored the tyrant’s soul in detail. In the first section we saw the underground world that Algabal created in a vain flight from reality in pursuit of the illusion of “complete” control. Or, as Plato says in the Republic²⁰: “The deranged person undertakes to rule not only over other human beings, but also the gods” (573A?B).²¹ Consequently, despite the divertissements of a hall filled with the “looted stores... of kingdoms” and other toys, reality continued to break into the emperor’s private world.

The second section of ALGABAL showed how the emperor confronted the real world and other people. The slave who disturbed him killed himself for having committed the “crime” of accidentally demonstrating to Algabal that he was not in control of all events. Only for a short time, when a ball (“kugel”²²) reminded Algabal of the wholeness of his life as a child, did he desist from his excesses.

²⁰ The quotations from Plato have been taken from Alan Bloom’s translation of the Republic. I cite the Stephanus pagination. Online at: <http://www.archive.org/details/PlatosRepublicAlanBloomTranslation>.

Accessed July 12, 2012.

²¹ Naturally we are not dealing with the “gods” in a traditional sense, even if ALGABAL is based on the vita of a Roman emperor. In Unterreich we have the modern ersatz religion of technical control and mastery over nature.

²² In Neo-Platonism the sphere symbolizes the wholeness and perfection of the universe. In subsequent years the George-Circle adopted the symbol and spoke of the “spherical-human” (“Kugelmensch”) as the individual who embodies human attunement to the cosmos. Cf. Friedrich Gundolf, George (Berlin: George Bondi, 1921) 27f. For the “Kugel” in Neo-Platonism, see Werner Beierwaltes, Proklos: Grundzüge seiner Metaphysik, 2 ed. (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1979), esp.184ff. (The symbol of the “Kugelmensch” was first introduced by Plato in Aristophanes’ speech in the Symposium.)

But he soon took them up again, including such an act as killing his fellow revelers by smothering them in a deluge of roses. Algabal's "career" followed the pattern of the tyrannical soul described by Plato: "Once a tyranny is established by love" [i.e. here by the perversion of the *ordo amoris*—W.P.] "what he had rarely been in dreams, he becomes continuously while awake. He will stick at the terrible murder ... or deed" (574b.). Algabal's "Tage" became the scene where the monstrosities of his underground dreams were realized. However, as Plato points out, the tyrant has no friends, only slaves and is himself a slave to disordered desire. Consequently, he is the "most wretched" of men(576a-b).²³

The third next section described the disorder that took place when the emperor tried to take his dream world into the real one. Algabal sent his wife back to the temple from which he took her because a small flaw on her skin showed that she was not perfect. He poisoned two sleeping lovers so that they would not awake to the world he hated. But finally he had to acknowledge that his worship of a "pillar's marble breast", had turned him to stone. These ruminations brought him to acknowledge the disorder of his soul which up to that time he had tried to hide from himself.

The fourth and final section which consists of one poem reflected on the course of the entire narrative which began in the dark underground region of Algabal's soul and mounted to the self-recognition and disillusionment of the third section. The poem ended by pointing to the sober light of reason, what Algabal had not possessed and the absence of which had sealed his destruction.

The course of the poems in *ALGABAL*, the incidents and their consequences, and the delineation of the protagonist's soul, show that George fulfilled the requirement that Plato has laid down for the kind of person it takes to be able to diagnose spiritual disorder: one who has established the right *ordo amoris* in his own soul.

²³ The tyrant's soul is always impoverished because it is "insatiable" (578a).

Such a person sees through the tyrant's façade and recognizes its perverse nature (577a). In *ALGABAL* Stefan George has clearly depicted and been able to criticize the Eros tyrannos²⁴ because his soul was formed by the Eros that leads to the ascent to the ground and by the Agape that leads to the community of equals.²⁵

II. Stefan George's Platonism

The view that I have taken, that attributes a more than casual knowledge of Plato or Platonism to Stefan George at the time when he published his first books, is not generally accepted. The majority view, reflected in the recent biography by Thomas Karlauf, is that the George first acquired a deeper knowledge of Plato in 1909 or 1910. Karlauf quotes Ernst Glöckner regarding his first impression of George who he met in 1913. To Glöckner George seemed to so fully exemplify the spirit of Plato's Symposium that he was convinced that at some time in his youth George "must have read Plato's Symposium and on the same day decided" to lead the life it depicts.²⁶

Karlauf feels he must correct Glöckner and does so in a rather school masterly fashion. He writes that the "tendency" of Glöckner's remark is correct, but George didn't engage in an intense study of Plato ("sich...eingehender... befassen") until 1909/10. The biographer points out that in what remains of George's personal library there is no school edition or copy of the Symposium. Because there is no copy of the Symposium in the admittedly only partially preserved library that

²⁴ On the „Eros tyrannos“ see, Eric Voegelin, Order and History, vol. III, 177ff.

²⁵ For a discussion of the role of Eros and Agape in the poet's life, see Kurt Hildebrandt, „Agape und Eros bei George“ in „Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte“, 28 (1954), 84-101.

²⁶ Thomas Karlauf, Stefan George: Die Entdeckung des Charisma, 2. ed. (Munich: Karl Blessing Verlag, 2006). Here 401.

contains some of the works that George owned as young man, Karlauf concludes that George did not read the Symposium as a young man.

All we know, Karlauf writes, is that in 1909 the forty-two year old George read all of Plato's dialogues, and some attributed to him, with his close friend Ernst Gundolf. But, even if that is all we know, in contrast to Karlauf, I still think we may venture the conjecture that George had a considerable interest and knowledge of Plato before 1909. To me it seems more likely to suppose that when an individual sits down at the age of forty-two to read all of Plato in Greek, this is rather a sign that a long and enduring interest has reached a new intensity and not that the individual is still in the early stages of discovering Plato.

Above I tried to show that references to the Symposium and the Republic are implicit in George's early work. To this I would add the following three points:

First the general one that George, by all accounts a serious youth and student, who learned Italian with the help of a neighbor while still in primary school, and who subsequently translated Petrarch's sonnets, who taught himself Norwegian to read Ibsen while he was in secondary school, who studied French, Spanish, and English authors, and on several occasions, beginning in his childhood, developed his own "private" languages based on ancient Greek, Latin, and the Romance languages, should not be judged in terms of what one might expect of the "average" 19th century student at the German Gymnasium. And a youth who translated several books of the Odyssey into an artificial language that he invented (supple enough to translate Homer into) may reasonably be assumed to have also read more texts in Greek than the secondary school's required minimum.

Second, and more specific, for years George read and studied Dante's Divine Comedy, publishing a forth of it in German translation beginning in 1912. The foremost authority on Plato in Germany from the middle of the 19th century until World War I, Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, does not find it superfluous to

quote Dante in his biography of Plato. In his discussion of the Republic, he cites the final Canto of Paradise from line 138 to the end and observes that Dante's mysticism of the soul's ascent, despite all transformations that the idea had undergone under the influence of Christianity, is Platonic in origin.²⁷

And indeed it is impossible for one of George's knowledge of European literature not to be acquainted with the tradition of Platonism found in many of its major figures—in English literature alone, in Spenser, Sidney, Shakespeare, Donne, and Milton, among others. When George met Friedrich Gundolf in 1899 he encouraged the younger man to translate Shakespeare's sonnets, a project which George also took up, publishing a complete translation of them in 1909. And Shakespeare's sonnets are one of the main channels through which Plato of the Symposium entered English letters.²⁸ In these two specific examples of George's literary interests we see how a serious student of European literature cannot help but be acquainted with Plato.

In the correspondence between Eric Voegelin and Leo Strauss we find the scholars in agreement that George understood more of Plato than the "entire guild of Wilamowitz, Jaeger, etc". Strauss locates the source of George's deeper understanding of Plato in the poet's openness to Eros.²⁹ And love, Eros or Agape, is at the heart of the Platonism of European literature. Thus, in my view, to try to pin George's understanding of Plato to the evidence of when he might have read specific dialogs, misses the point. Whatever the date of his reading of a specific dialog may have been, from an early age he was continuously engaged with the Platonism of European literature.

²⁷ Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, Platon vol. I Leben und Werke (Berlin:Weidman, 1920 2. ed.),420f.

²⁸ Sir Ernest Barker, "The Education of the English Gentleman in the Sixteenth Century", in: Essays in Civility: Eight Essays (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1948), 124-159, here 148.

²⁹ Letter of Leo Strauss to Eric Voegelin from pril 4, 1951, in Eric Voegelin et. al., Briefwechsel über“Die Neue Wissenschaft der Politik“, ed. Peter J. Opitz (Freiburg: Karl Alber Verlag, 1993), 46-52, here 50.

Finally, the reception of Plato in the George-Circle after 1910, that resulted in more than twenty books and articles, also casts light on the depth of George's understanding of Plato before 1910. Kurt Hildebrandt, the author of Platon. Der Kampf des Geistes um die Macht (1932)³⁰, wrote in 1930 that it was the appearance of a book about George—Friedrich Wolters' Herrschaft und Dienst³¹ in 1909—that expressed in a convincing way:

“the forgotten truth that it is the vocation of the poet to revivify a dead world and to found a new ‘empire of the spirit’. Once this level of understanding had been reached it became possible to produce a series of works on Plato out of the new ethos.”³²

In other words the George-Circle's works on Plato that are valued by such scholars as Leo Strauss and Eric Voegelin have as their starting point the “ethos” of Stefan George himself. It was George's relationship to his friends that served as a model for their works³³ on Plato. Ernst Glöckner was right, and long before his experience in 1913 a number of others had had the same experience. George's life did exemplify the life of the Symposium and his example and friendship won others to that life. This fact has also been noted by Hans Georg Gadamer. In a discussion of Kurt Hildebrandt's Platon. Der Kampf des Geistes um die Macht, Gadamer wrote:

Hildebrandt's „own experience in the relationship of disciple to master and his participation in the cultural and educational influence (bildende Wirkung)

³⁰ Kurt Hildebrandt, Platon. Der Kampf des Geistes um die Macht (Berlin: Georg Bondi, 1932).

³¹ Friedrich Wolters, Herrschaft und Dienst (Berlin: Georg Bondi, 1909)

³² Kurt Hildebrandt, “Das neue Platonbild” in: „Blätter für Deutsche Philosophie“, 4 (1930/31), 193.

³³ A full list can be found in Ernst Eugen Starke's Das Platon-Bild des George-Kreises, Dissertation, Univ. Cologne, 1957, 11-20.

that the poet had on his younger friends, allowed him to rediscover a great deal that is important in Plato's dialogues".³⁴

Therefore, while there are still questions concerning the extent of George's knowledge of some of Plato's dialogues before 1910, there are plausible grounds for concluding that he had a deeper knowledge of Plato, and at an earlier date, than is generally assumed. I therefore take George's side of the argument in which others maintained that he had only gradually turned to Plato after an early period as an "aesthete" or a "decadent", to which George replied that he had followed the same path from the beginning:

„Tag und nacht hab ich nur dies getan
Seit ich eignen lebens mich entsinne:
Dich gesucht auf weg und steg“ (GA: VIII, 18).³⁵

III Stefan George's Intentions

In the examination of George's first three books of poetry in the first section of this paper, I did not discover an "aesthete" or a "decadent", but a Platonist. In the second section I tried to supply corroborating evidence of George's Platonism with reference to two examples of his knowledge of Platonism in European literature and with reference to the Plato-reception of the George-Circle. In this third section I will offer further support of my interpretation with reference to George's early statements regarding his literary intentions.

³⁴ Hans Georg Gadamer, "Die Wirkung Stefan Georges auf die Wissenschaft", in ebd., Gesammelte Werke, vol. 9, (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1983), 258-270. Here 269.

³⁵ „Day and night, since I have had a life/ Of my own, I did this only: /search For you [i.e., God—W. P] on every way and quay”.

In the first issue of the literary journal that Stefan George called into life in 1892, the year *ALGBAL* appeared, he explained the journal's intentions in eight short introductory remarks ("Einleitungen und Merksprüche")³⁶.

1. The name of the periodical— "Journal for the Arts"— expresses what it intends to do: further the arts, particularly literature ("dichtung und Schrifttum") and avoid all matters affecting the state and society ("alles Staatliche und gesellschaftliche auscheidend").

2. The journal will promote spiritual (or intellectual) art ("die GEISTIGE KUNST"[large case in the original- W.P.]). It does this on the basis of the new feeling and form of art ("fühlweise und mache"), "art for the sake of art" ("eine kunst um die kunst"). For this reason the journal's contents will be found to be in contrast, (or opposition), ("gegensatz") to the "used up and inferior school [of literature] which emerged from a false notion of reality" ("zu jener verbrauchten und minderwertigen Schule die einer falschen auffassung der wirklichkeit entsprang"). By "false notion of reality" George refers to the dreams of improving the world and the utopias that promise happiness to everyone. Such dreams, so George, are currently found everywhere, but they do not belong to the sphere of literature ("in ein andres gebiet gehören als das der dichtung").

3. The journal does not begin with propositions ("Lehrsätze") but with works themselves, from which one can derive rules later, should one want to.

4. Although the journal will critically introduce new currents found in German and foreign literature, it will try as much as possible to avoid the catchphrases that confuse more than they elucidate, for example "symbolism, decadence, occultism".

³⁶ Copies of the "Blätter für die Kunst" are rare. The texts that interest us were later published in a single volume, *Einleitungen Und Merksprüche der Blätter für die Kunst* (Helmut Küpper: Berlin, 1964). I will quote from this publication. Unless otherwise noted the quotations are from page 7.

5. The journal will try to avoid conflicts (“fehde”). And it is distributed [not sold publically-- W.P.] in order to give it to those who share the journal’s views and in the hope that [by word of mouth] more people who share them will be found.
6. The journal cannot predict what form (smaller or larger) it will take in the future.
7. It will avoid all arguments about and mockeries of life, of which Goethe says, they never lead anywhere.
8. We believe in a glorious re-birth of art (“In der kunst glauben wir an eine glänzende wiedergeburt“)

We can pass over point six concerning the journal’s format. The other points are relevant to our enquiry into the literature of “reality”.

George’s first two points are often misunderstood to mean that he thinks that art is superior to the other domains of life³⁷. But this is not what George says. Quite the contrary, he is in fact defending the autonomy of the various spheres—art, politics, social life, science, etc. Nor does his second point, on the contrast of spiritual art to other schools of literature, mean that spiritual art takes a “position” against those schools. George is not opposed to the generally progressive positions that the artists of realism and naturalism have taken, rather he does not believe that art should take positions, neither “progressive” nor “reactionary” ones. Part of George’s “return to reality” is to liberate literature from being the handmaid of external interests, however noble.

In George’s view such schools take positions because their concepts of literature are based on “false notions of reality”. This statement goes to the heart of the

³⁷ Such interpretations generally refer to George as an “aesthete” in his early works and see George first distancing himself from this position around 1907 with the publication of *Der Siebente Ring*. Manfred Durzak criticized this interpretation in ebd., *Der junge Stefan George* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1968). See esp. 179ff. However some recent articles on George remain unconvinced and still treat George as an exponent of “aestheticism” in his early works. See for example, Volker Riedel, “Ein problematischer ‘Einstieg’: Zum Umgang Stefan Georges mit der antiken Überlieferung“ in: *George-Jahrbuch* v. 7 (2008-2009), 20-49.

matter that concerns us. At the beginning of this paper I quoted Eric Voegelin's view that the superiority of literature over history is due to the fact that the literary artist works with human nature while history works with the real, living, human being who, as life teaches us, never realizes his full humanity, and in T. S. Eliot's words, who lives in the realm in which: "Between the idea/And the reality/Between the motion/And the act/Falls the Shadow". When literature submits to the judgment of political or social movements, it descends from the noumenal world into the world of shadow and practical interests. But literature's only "interest" is to express reality.

This fundamental difference between George and the literary schools of his time accounts for the other points of the introductory remarks: The journal begins with works of art not with propositions about art. When it comments on literary works it tries to avoid the abstractions that take the discussion into the political or social sphere by suggesting that art propagates a world-view ("decadence", "naturalism" etc.). In this way art also avoids being embroiled in the conflicts that take place where position is pitted against position. And finally, it is because the artist deals with a realm beyond any positions that the journal is not sold publically, but circulated among friends.

George knew that where the deepest human interests are concerned—the interest in truth and reality—the necessary basis of communication can only be a shared *ordo amoris* that is adequate to the task. It was George's faith that the soul can ascend and attune itself to the ground of being that led him to conclude that "we believe in a glorious re-birth of art".

IV. Stefan George in the „Sozialistische Monatshefte“

The interpretation I have offered of Stefan George as a poet striving to “return to reality”, is not without precedent. It is also found, and at an early date, in what might seem to be an unusual quarter, in a monthly journal of the Socialist Party of Germany; unusual because, of course, socialism is certainly a “political position”. But in all political movements one can find people sufficiently clear headed to know that cultural phenomena cannot be subordinated to political interests without falsifying their nature. And the “Socialist Monthly”³⁸ that appeared between 1895 and 1933 was edited by people who were not “vulgar Marxists”—by 1902 the journal had become a spokesman for the “revisionist” wing of German Social Democracy— and whose interests extended beyond the realm of practical action. The journal covered a wide range of topics including such areas as economics and social science, philosophy, literature, and the arts.

In 1902 the “Socialist Monthly” devoted an article to Stefan George.³⁹ The author, Ria Claassen, argued that in a time of tumultuous change a poet who spoke not from a particular point of view, but unfettered by the contemporary ‘climate of opinion’ (“zeitlich unpersönlich”), and who spoke with the voice of necessity (“Stimme der Notwendigkeit”) because he had plumbed the depths of his own soul and knew the disorders of the time first hand and had overcome them, was one to awaken society, at least to awaken those who were not addicted to sleep (“Schlafsüchtig”).⁴⁰

³⁸ Die “Sozialistische Monatshefte” is available online in its entirety at <http://library.fes.de/sozmon/>. I have taken the information on the journal’s history from the “Einleitung” found on that page.

³⁹ Ria Claassen, “Stefan George” in “Sozialistische Monatshefte 6=8 (1902) nr. 1, 9-20. Online at http://library.fes.de/cgi-bin/digisomo.pl?id=03912&dok=1902/1902_01&f=1902_0009&l=1902_0020. Accessed July 12, 2012.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 10.

According to Claassen contemporary European culture found itself in a state in which its values were dissolving. [A well known position of Max Weber.⁴¹—W.P.] But, from the very beginning (“von allem Anfang an”) George has sought a new certainty in his poetry. Claassen speaks of the “spirit” of George’s poetry that has risen above struggles of the contemporary materialist world-views and their interests and conflicts. (She does not use these words but speaks metaphorically of the conflicts’ “dumpfen blutgebunden Taumel” (“spiritless [dull] blood-bound frenzy”))⁴².

The role of ALGABAL among the works she discusses was to analyze the despot’s erring fire (“Glut”), [i.e. perverted ordo amoris—W. P.]. The emperor’s murderous brutality stemmed from the narcissism that prevented him from recognizing or acknowledging anything outside of himself (“nichts kennend und erkennend ausser sich selbst”)⁴³. George was able to analyze this figure and in the last poem, “Augury”, point the way to a clear spiritual horizon because George has overcome the conflicts of the depth and ascended to attain unity with the whole: he is at one with nature (“Einssein mit... Natur”).⁴⁴

Without referring to Plato Claassen has made the same point that the Republic makes, and which we quoted above, that it is the soul whose ordo amoris is intact that is able to see through the tyrant’s façade. Similarly Claassen has seen that

⁴¹ See Max Weber’s thesis concerning the “disenchantment” of the world in: ebd., “Science as a Vocation” in H.H. Gerth and C. W right Mills, From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 129-159.

⁴² 10f. A similar diagnosis of Europe at the end of the 19th century under the domination of the materialist world-views was given by Max Scheler who spoke of the post-Enlightenment shifts in the understanding of humankind: it has descended from that of imago Dei to one that sees the human being as part of the “natural world” and which produced conflicting groups who follow their “instinctual interests” of race, nation, state, or class. See: ebd., “Die Christliche Liebesidee in der gegenwärtigen Welt” in Vom Ewigen im Menschen, Gesammelte Werke, Vol. 7 (Bern:Fank Verlag, 1954). Here 370. Vide The Eternal in Man, trans. Bernard Noble (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1960), 372.

⁴³ Claassen,13.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 14.

George is able to diagnosis the spiritual poverty of the contemporary Social Darwinist and other materialist ideologies.

V. CONCLUSION

By the “return to reality” we refer to the philosophical, mythical, and religious, turning away from the things of the world toward the ground of being, and in the light of that ground, to the understanding of order in the most comprehensive sense of the term, which of course includes political reality. The turn away from the world of things that Plato depicts in the parable of the cave, and the ascent to the ground of being that Plato depicts in the Symposium, outline the structure of the individual’s and society’s path to reality. I have tried to demonstrate that this structure is present in Stefan George’s early works.

The poems I analyzed in HYMNS and PILGRIMAGES demonstrated the turn away from the world of things and the ascent to the ground. The changes in the individual who undertakes—and undergoes—this act of love take place at the center of his being and forms his character. An individual’s ordo amoris is mirrored in his acts and in his works, the poet’s in the creative process. I demonstrated this connection in the analysis of the poem “Fra Angelico”.

The right order of the soul is also the necessary pre-requisite for being able to see through, illuminate, and criticize the soul’s disorders. In the analysis of ALGABAL I tried to demonstrate that because George was moved by the Eros that leads to the soul’s ascent to the ground of being, he was also able to diagnose the perversion of this love, the Eros tyrannos.

Both George’s depiction of the right order of being and his diagnosis of a depraved ordo amoris were expressed in Platonic symbols. I take the presence of these

symbols in George's poetry for the strongest argument in favor of interpreting George as a poet concerned with the "return to political reality". I also employed several other arguments in support of this interpretation.

To those who suggested that George was not better acquainted with Plato at an early age than his contemporaries in Gymnasium, I replied that one cannot judge George by such general criteria. More particularly I tried to show that he had been reading the literature of Platonism since his boyhood. To illustrate my point, I adduced two examples of his interest—Dante and Shakespeare.

I also referred to Leo Strauss and Eric Voegelin who thought that George's profound knowledge of Plato—a depth of understanding that in their view exceeded that of the foremost contemporary scholars—was based on his understanding of Eros. And it is precisely love, and the *ordo amoris* of the lover of being, that constitutes the great tradition of Plato in European literature, and, as Hans Georg Gadamer explained, constituted the spiritual bond between George and his friends in what has come to be known as the "George-Circle".

I referred to Stefan George's remarks concerning the intentions of his literary journal in order to demonstrate that the "return to political reality" did not mean that one takes a "position" against other "positions", but that one tries to get "out of the cave" altogether. The literary artist is concerned with the reality of human-being, and this interest, which it shares with the other primary symbolic forms, cannot be subordinated to more limited interests without distorting it.

Finally, in the last section, I tried to show that among George's contemporaries some recognized the poet to be an ally and leader in the struggle to return to political reality.

APPENDIX

Initiation (Consecration)

The river calls! Where stately reeds unfurl
Their slender flags in gentle wind and hedge
The tender throng of ripples in their swirl
Of eagerness to bathe the mossy ledge,

Pause in your frantic vehemence, immersed
In vigorous, primeval scent unscored
By thought, with every alien breath dispersed
Fix your divining eyes upon award.

Do you discern the faint and rhythmic veer
Of leaves? The glow of glassy waters lance
The fragile wall of mist? And do you hear
The song the elves are singing in their dance?

The branches proffer in their angled frames
Star-cities in the regions of the blessed,
The flight of time erases wonted names
And Here and Now are images at best.

This is the hour! Down the goddess gleams,

Her gauzy veils the colour of the moon,
Her lids are lowered by the weight of dreams,
She leans to you and offers you her boon.

Her mouth is trembling closer to your cheeks,
So pure you seem to her, so ripe for bliss,
That now she does not shun your hand which seeks
To turn her lips to yours and to your kiss.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Stefan George, The Works of Stefan George Rendered into English by Olga Marx and Ernst Morwitz, Second, revised and enlarged edition (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1974) [University of North Carolina Studies in the Germanic Languages and Literatures, no. 78.], 10.