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SPEAKING IN TONGUES OF A LANGUAGE CRISIS: RE-READING HUGO VON HOFMANNSTHAL'S "EIN BRIEF" AS A NON-MONOLINGUAL TEXT

Abstract:
Although Hugo von Hofmannsthal's "Ein Brief" (1902), better known as the "Chandos letter," has received sustained attention as a paradigmatic example for the language crisis of German modernism, the question of the specific language(s) in which the text is written has curiously remained a blind spot. In a detailed contextualising analysis of the languages (and their medial representations) at play in both the fictional, private communicative situation between Lord Chandos and Francis Bacon in 1603 and in Hofmannsthal's first publication of "Ein Brief" in the German newspaper *Der Tag* in 1902, this article argues that the Chandos letter speaks in tongues of a language crisis resulting from the restrictive unities of a monolingual paradigm. "Ein Brief," oscillating constitutively between more than one speaking position and explicitly addressing ever changing reading contexts, performs non-monolingual language use that begins with translation.

Keywords:
monolingual paradigm ◆ non-monolingual ◆ pseudotranslation ◆ modernism ◆ Hofmannsthal

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German is my first academic language. It is also the language in which I have mainly thought about this specific topic, and the language of most of the texts I quote here. Yet I am writing this article in English. This is neither an uncommon process nor an uncommon choice, readily explained by the status of English as de facto lingua franca in academia.[1] It is, however, less common to draw attention to the multilingual genesis, to the many conversations in more than one language leading up to this seemingly monolingual published article, which you might otherwise be reading without conscious awareness that the text in front of you is in English. There is a flip-side to the pervasiveness of *academic English*: it creates a focus on "academic"—on the contribution of a book or paper to global research—and marks the language used as an unnoteworthy default, making "English" transparent. The "monolingual paradigm" obscures specifics and turns "English" into "language."[2] This holds not only for the default language of scholarship, but also for the respective default language of literary texts: researchers in English or German studies "naturally" know but do not often reflect on the fact that Austen writes in English and Goethe in German. Hugo von Hofmannsthal's "Ein Brief" (1902), a canonical text of German modernism known specifically for its fundamental problematizing of language, provides a pertinent

[1] One of the important arguments Michael Gordin makes in his ground-breaking book on the complex history of language use in the sciences, *Scientific Babel*: *How Science was done before and after global English*, concerns the unlikeliness of the current status of academic English: "The story ends with the most resolutely monoglot international community the world has ever seen—we call them scientists—and the exclusive language they use to communicate today to their international peers is English. The collapse into monolingualism is, historically speaking, a very strange outcome, since most of humanity for most of its existence has been to a greater or lesser degree multilingual. The goals of this book are not only to show how we came to this point, but also to illustrate how deeply anomalous our current state of affairs would have seemed in the past." (2015: 2)

[2] See Dembeck & Mein 2012. In her book *Beyond the Mother Tongue: The Postmonolingual Condition*, Yasemin Yildiz (2012) analyses the force of the monolingual paradigm and reads texts by Tawada, Özdamar and Zaimoğlu that transcend it, drawing attention to a postmonolingual condition that asks for a postmonolingual paradigm.

example. Revolving around the capacity of language to adequately express experience, the prolific research on Hofmannsthal's text fits into the monolingual paradigm by discussing "language" without paying attention to the specific languages of the text. This systemic blind spot toward the particulars and pluralities of language in this case contributes, I think, to the mesmerizing conundrum as to how a writer can lament a complete loss of his command of language in highly polished prose. Offering a possible solution with a re-reading that approaches these language-related questions via a close textual analysis of the particular language(s) of "Ein Brief," I hope to make plausible that the philologies could benefit from a conscious structural shift towards a non-monolingual paradigm.

Hugo von Hofmannsthal's short prose work "Ein Brief" ("A Letter"), first published in the Berlin newspaper *Der Tag* in 1902 and often called the "Chandos letter,"—with reference to Philipp Lord Chandos, the fictitious writer of its main epistolary part—opens with a title, byline and short introductory paragraph that place the body of the text simultaneously within two different, precisely specified contexts.[3] Following established newspaper conventions, the title "Ein Brief" is accompanied by the byline "Von Hugo von Hofmannsthal" ("A letter. By Hugo von Hofmannsthal"), and the one-sentence editorial introduction plausibly addresses readers of the newspaper *Der Tag* in 1902 by supplying the information they need to understand the subsequent letter:[4] "This is the letter Philipp Lord Chandos, younger son of the Earl of Bath, wrote to Francis Bacon, later Lord Verulam and Viscount St. Albans, to apologize to this friend for completely refraining from poetic activity." ("Dies ist der Brief, den Philipp Lord Chandos, jüngerer Sohn des Earl of Bath, an Francis Bacon, später Lord Verulam und Viscount St. Albans,

[3] Hugo von Hofmannsthal's "Ein Brief" was first published in two parts, on subsequent days: Part One: "Ein Brief. Von Hugo von Hofmannsthal." *Der Tag* 489 (18 October 1902): n.p. [1–3] and Part Two: "Ein Brief. Von Hugo von Hofmannsthal. (Schluß)." *Der Tag* 491 (19 October 1902): n.p. [1–3]. All of my references to texts from *Der Tag* rely on digital images taken from the microfilm copy in the Berlin State Library. References in brackets in the main text refer to this edition, with a Roman numeral for the Part and an Arabic numeral for the page; after the semicolon follows an additional page reference to the critical edition of "Ein Brief" in Hugo von Hofmannsthal. 1991. *Sämtliche Werke XXXI. Erfundene Gespräche und Briefe*, edited by Ellen Ritter. 45–55. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer. Where not specified otherwise, translations into English are mine.

[4] The one-sentence introduction is general enough to be easily portable and works well also in later publishing contexts, such as editions of selected works by Hofmannsthal. It fits most smoothly, however, within the context of a newspaper, which as a medium handily supplies the editorial function to which the introduction can easily be attributed, whereas the context of the collected works demands from the reader the additional supposition of a fictitious editor. The byline following the title is dropped in these later editions.

schrieb, um sich bei diesem Freunde wegen des gänzlichen Verzichtes auf literarische Bethätigung zu entschuldigen," I,1; 45). With a visual break, "Ein Brief" shifts from the editorial introduction to Chandos' elaborate answer to Bacon's query. Thanking Bacon for his concern, Chandos reminisces about his past as a poet-prodigy and the many plans for future projects he then entertained. That phase ended when he lost his trust in language, causing him to emotionally disengage from his writing and, except for intense bursts of brief euphoric epiphanies, from most aspects of his life. Full of gratitude, Chandos' closing best wishes come with the premonition that this will be the last piece of his writing that will ever reach Bacon. The date and signature ending Chandos' letter double as the last words of the whole text: "A. D. 1603, this 22nd of August. *Phi. Chandos*." (II,3; 55) The minimal frame—title, byline, one-sentence editorial introduction—unobtrusively and effectively inserts "Ein Brief" into the publishing context of a modernist high-brow German-language newspaper, addressing in a published, printed form an audience reading German at the very beginning of the 20th century, and introduces the remaining published and printed body of the text as a private handwritten communication by a (fictitious) younger friend to one of the most illustrious writers of the English Renaissance.

1. A crisis of *langage*

On the day after the publication of "Ein Brief," Fritz Mauthner, the author of *Beiträge zu einer Kritik der Sprache* (*Contributions to a Critique of Language*), writes to Hofmannsthal, asking with guarded but palpable hope whether he is justified in reading the Chandos letter as "the first poetic response" to his own recently published work.[5] Mauthner's private response foreshadows the canonical reading of the Chandos letter as a key text of the modernist crisis of language. As Rudolf Helmstetter documents exhaustively, the prolific discussion of Hofmannsthal's text mainly revolves around questions of language crisis—that of Chandos or Hofmannsthal, of the time around 1900, or of language in general.[6] In fact, the topic of language crisis dominates the research so decidedly that the organizers of the Chandos letter's anniversary conference at the

[5] Hofmannsthal responded to Mauthner's letter on 3 November from Venice in a friendly but noncommittal manner, acknowledging shared ideas and concerns rather than a direct influence.

[6] For a detailed documentation of the dozens of different approaches to "Ein Brief" from the perspective of a crisis of language, see Helmstetter (2003: 447–454). Helmstetter calls for a reading that situates the text within the media context of its publication.

Hofmannsthal Society in 2002 explicitly asked for contributions on other aspects of the text.[7]

"But what is language, the attentive observation of which I have set myself as a task and promised my readers?"[8], asks Mauthner; and indeed the contemporaneous philosophical and linguistic discussions probe the very terms language provides to think about language. Mauthner sets for himself the task of creating even the slightest leeway within what he pessimistically describes as the tyranny of language. To better understand the implications involved in the term, he compares "die Sprache," "language," with two other abstract terms, "eine Sprache," "a language," and the plural "die Sprachen," "languages." Mauthner argues that while the latter two, in contrast to the most general term "language," still allow one to think of something ostensibly real, namely one or several languages such as "German," even the seeming graspable concreteness of their referent does not hold up to scrutiny.[9] The supposed unity of "a language" such as "German" is ever-changing and cannot be fully known by anyone; if at all, it could only exist "in the air" between speakers.[10]

Mauthner's Swiss contemporary Ferdinand de Saussure likewise approaches the same question very much aware of its complications. For Saussure, as for Mauthner, a decisive difficulty lies in the process of abstraction, which necessarily obscures some linguistic characteristics. Both Saussure and Mauthner counter this by introducing and contrasting several abstract terms, each of which focuses on different aspects. While Saussure's triad of *langage*, *langue* and *parole* as presented in the *Cours de linguistique générale* is a

[7] "So waren die Vortragenden und Arbeitsteilnehmer gebeten worden, Hofmannsthals Brieffiktion nicht nur als ein Dokument der Sprachkrise zu lesen, als welches es die germanistische Aufmerksamkeit bisher fast ausschließlich gefesselt hatte, sondern Spuren zu verfolgen, die diese in einem neuen Licht und einem erweiterten Kontext erscheinen ließe. Die Tagung über den Chandos-Brief sollte von jenem Punkt ihren Ausgang nehmen, wo man am Ende angekommen zu sein schien […]." (Vogel 2002: 401)

[8] "Was aber ist die Sprache, die aufmerksam zu beobachten ich mir vorgenommen und meinen Lesern versprochen habe?" (Mauthner 1901: 3).

[9] "Welchen Sinn das Abstraktum 'die Sprache' habe, das wird deutlicher werden, wenn wir vorerst erfahren haben, wie abstrakt und unwirklich eigentlich dasjenige ist, was wir eben vorläufig mit gutem Glauben als etwas Wirkliches hingenommen haben: die Einzelsprachen." (Mauthner 1901: 5)

[10] "Wo ist also das Abstraktum 'Sprache' Wirklichkeit? In der Luft. Im Volke, zwischen den Menschen." (Mauthner 1901: 18, "Where, then, is the abstract term 'language' reality? In the air. Between people.")

staple of introductions to linguistics,[11] he continually refines these distinctions which, as Saussure himself reflects, are based on the distinctions the French language offers.[12] As evidenced by the changes he made to his lectures, traceable in his own and his listeners' notes spanning from his inaugural lecture in 1891 to his third and last series of lectures on general linguistics given in 1910–1911, Saussure in his later years uses *langage* and *la langue* (in the singular) as terms that abstract in different ways from *les langues* (in the plural), i.e., the particular languages. *Langage* as the most general abstraction possible from languages, and *la langue* as an abstraction from any particular language, while keeping the particularity of any language in mind (see Stockhammer 2014: 348–352):

> Telle étant notre notion de la *langue*, il est clair qu'elle ne nous est représentée que par la série des diverses langues. Nous ne pouvons la saisir que sur une langue déterminée quelconque. *La langue*, ce mot au singulier, comment se justifie-t-il? Nous entendons par là une généralisation, ce qui se trouvera vrai pour toute langue déterminée, sans être obligé de préciser. Il ne faut pas croire que ce terme général *la langue* équivaudra à langage. (Saussure 1967: 158)[13]
>
> This being our notion of "the language," it is clear that it shows itself to us only in the series of different languages. We cannot know it other than through some specific language. How does "the language," this word in the singular, justify itself? We understand it as a generalization, as that which is found to be true for every specific language, without a need to specify one. One ought not believe that the general term "the language" is equivalent to "language."

The general term "language," as Mauthner's and Saussure's (by no means analogous) contrasting differentiations make evident, tends to mask the plurality of languages and the particularities of each language. "Ein Brief" is sometimes read as probing alternatives to language as a medium of expression, such as images.[14] Often remarked upon is its

[11] See Saussure 1916. For a short discussion of the problems of this influential edition, which remained seminal for decades, see Rudolf Engler's introduction to his own edition presenting various versions and notes in parallel (Saussure 1967: ix–xii).

[12] "Il est à remarquer que nous avons défini des choses et non des mots; les distinctions établies n'ont donc rien à redouter de certains termes ambigus qui ne se recouvrent pas d'une langue à l'autre. Ainsi en allemand *Sprache* veut dire 'langue' et 'langage'; *Rede* correspond à peu près à 'parole,' mais y ajoute le sens spécial de 'discours.' En latin *sermo* signifie plutôt 'langage' et 'parole,' tandis que *lingua* désigne la 'langue' et ainsi de suite." (Saussure 1967: 41).

[13] For a similar argument, see also Saussure 2003: 63.

[14] See for example Matala de Mazza 1995; Schneider 2006.

seeming performative paradox, with Chandos writing about his fundamental detachment from language in graceful prose.[15] Yet, the many various readings of "Ein Brief" as a contribution to a discussion of a language consider language—in Saussurean terms—as *langage*, and not as *langue*.[16]

This article presents a complementary approach to Hofmannsthal's text. I would like to show that the Chandos letter—similarly to Mauthner's and Saussure's contemporary theoretical grapplings with language as an abstract concept—questions the notion that either "language" or "the language" refer to a bounded unit. Consequently, rather than contributing directly to the debate on how the Chandos letter talks about a language crisis, I will instead focus on the *langues* and the *langue* of the text. In the second section, "*langues* of the letter," I begin by drawing out the linguistic implications of the fictitious setting of Hofmannsthal's text in the English Renaissance, followed by the parallel perspective upon its publishing context in a German newspaper in 1902. From both perspectives, the text is shown to be markedly multilingual. These two perspectives on the double framing of the Chandos letter combine to show a more radical form of non-monolingualism, as "the" language of the text oscillates between (mostly) German and (mostly) English and cannot be reduced to one. In the third section I argue that, in addition to this linguistic oscillation, the Chandos letter plays with the change in the meaning of phrases when they are "thrown across the chasm of centuries" (II,3; 53f) into a different constellation of texts, producing another kind of linguistic oscillation. I conclude by claiming that this oscillation between languages and between contexts also affects the referential stability of the personal pronoun "I"—and thus the grounds for "nosce te ipsum" (I,2; 47) and the identity of the speaker. It is the speaker's non-identity, figured as "speaking in tongues" (I,2; 47) that opens up identitarian restrictions—one speaker using one language to express one (true) meaning—and thus resolves the seeming paradox that someone should write about a language crisis in polished prose.

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[15] In the formulation of Thomas Kovach, editor of the *Companion to the Works of Hugo von Hofmannsthal*, "we must also suggest some answers to the anomaly that this letter, which depicts a failure of language, a lapse into total silence, in fact makes most eloquent use of the very language it purports to renounce." (Kovach 2002: 91)

[16] Timo Günther seems to make a similar observation when he notes that despite linking this text to a crisis of language: "the language of the fictitious writer himself has rarely been paid attention to, which led to some confusion." (21) His subsequent argument clarifies, however, that Günther uses "language" to distinguish rational from figural or poetic language use, referring to "Hofmannsthal's metaphorical understanding of language, based on 'transfer,' similarity, association." (Günther 2004: 41; see also Helmstetter 2003: 475)

The letter shows the problems inherent in the concept of an abstract universal *langage* and of a concept of *langue* that isolates individual languages by using *langues* in a manner that makes it impossible to sort them into fixed units or to attribute the utterance to a single writer. The crisis of *language* can be both shown and overcome by the performance of *langues*. The *langue* of the letter is the *langue* of the letter, which changes with each reading.

2. *Langues* of the letter

2.1. Latin, English, Italian, Spanish: "A. D. 1603, Phi. Chandos"

The letter, imagined as written by Chandos to Bacon in 1603, characterizes the English Renaissance to which it supposedly belongs as a genuinely multilingual period. As part of an imagined correspondence and a broader literary exchange consisting of both real and fictitious texts in a variety of languages and forms of multilingualism, the letter evokes, constructs and situates itself within a markedly multilingual textual network.

Imagining the scope of reading among Renaissance authors, Hofmannsthal foregrounds a deep engagement with classical antiquity. Chandos not only displays his own extensive knowledge of Greek and Roman literature in the course of mentioning several authors and texts en passant—among them Hippocrates (I,1; 45), Sallust (I,1; 46), Caesar (I,2; 47), Cicero (I,2; 47 and I,3; 50), Livy (II,1; 51), and Plutarch as source for the Crassus anecdote (II,3; 53)—, but clearly expects his addressee to share this knowledge, implying a much broader common classical corpus. This intense engagement, in turn, as evidenced in Chandos' finished works and the projects he once planned, shapes Renaissance literary production linguistically, formally and thematically.[17] Early on, in the second paragraph of his letter, Chandos mentions titles of his own finished works, "New Paris" ("Neuer Paris") and "Dream of Daphne" ("Traum der Daphne"), telegraphing the thematic influence of classical literature on Renaissance works in the choice of character names. The third title in that series, "Epithalamium," places this wedding poem in a formal tradition stemming from antiquity, as the etymology of the genre term itself points to its Greek models and their Latin reception. Linguistically, the preoccupation with classical literature motivates the continued active use of Latin in parallel to the (by then) established literary use of English. As the letter makes clear, both the fictitious Chandos

[17] As Stefan Schultz (1961) has meticulously shown, Chandos' projects correspond to works actually written by the real Francis Bacon.

and the real Bacon write for the public in both languages, English and Latin. Chandos mentions English pastorals for the court of Elizabeth I (I,1; 45), and during a stay in Venice finds "in himself that construction of Latin phrases" ("in sich jenes Gefüge lateinischer Perioden," I,1; 45) that successfully competes with the architecture of Palladio and Sansovin. The English-Latin constellation of these two fictitious texts is supported by Chandos' description of one of his unrealized projects, "unlocking the fables and mythical narratives of the ancients […] as the hieroglyphs of secret, unfathomable wisdom" ("die Fabeln und mythischen Erzählungen, welche die Alten uns hinterlassen haben […] aufschließen als die Hieroglyphen einer geheimen, unerschöpflichen Weisheit," I,2; 46f). This phrase corresponds to the introduction of Bacon's *De Sapientia Veterum*, published in Latin in 1619 and in Arthur Gorges' English translation *The Wisedome of the Ancients* two years later, indicating a simultaneous market for printed books both in Latin and English.[18] Through its reworking of classical antiquity, Hofmannsthal's "Ein Brief" thus characterizes the literary production and consumption of the English Renaissance as thematically and formally shaped by Greek or Latin precursors even in its English texts, and as constitutively multilingual.

Chandos' planned "collection of 'apophthegmata,'"—inspired, as he reminds Bacon, by those "written by Caesar: you remember it mentioned in a letter of Cicero" ("wie deren eine Julius Cäsar verfaßt hat: Sie erinnern die Erwähnung in einem Briefe des Cicero," I,2; 47)—provide an excellent example for the complex multilingualism sketched above: 1) like "Epithalamium," its Greek genre name points to a formal tradition traced back to antiquity; 2) Chandos chooses as title *Nosce te ipsum*, the Latin version of one of the Delphic maxims, γνῶθι σεαυτόν, know thyself; 3) his very reference to a work by Caesar via a letter by Cicero exhibits intimate knowledge of Roman literature and, as with others of Chandos' unrealized projects, a corresponding book by Bacon exists. Bacon's *Apophthegmes New and Old* (1625) opens with a sentence nearly identical to Chandos' reminder to Bacon (see Schultz 1961: 6–7), "*Julius Caesar*, did write a *Collection* of *Apophthegmes*, as appears in an *Epistle* of *Cicero*" (Bacon 1625: 1), showing how closely Hofmannsthal follows his Renaissance sources, and yet how differently this sentence works in relation to a different co-text, attributed to a different speaker and as a line somewhere within a private letter rather than as the opening of a published introduction. Moreover, Chandos sketches a far more ambitious project than the one Bacon realized. He envisions an assemblage of heterogeneous material from

[18] See Schultz (1961: 8–10) for a far more detailed account tracing sources for this passage.

ancient and contemporary printed and handwritten texts, as well as from oral sources collected during his own travels across the continent, showcasing the broad medial, historical, spatial and social spectrum of input to which he exposes himself and which he considers worthy of being gathered, arranged and published—as well as the range of different languages needed in order to do so:

> Here I thought to set alongside each other the most noteworthy remarks which I would have succeeded in collecting from my dealings with learned men and witty women of our time or with notable common people or with well-educated and extraordinary people during my travels; in this way I wanted to bring together fine maxims and reflections from the works of the Ancients and the Italians, and other thoughtful ornaments which would have presented themselves to me in books, manuscripts, or conversations; also the arrangements of especially beautiful celebrations and parades, noteworthy crimes and cases of frenzy, descriptions of the greatest and most peculiar buildings in the Netherlands, in France and Italy, and much more besides.
>
> Hier gedachte ich die merkwürdigsten Aussprüche nebeneinander zu setzen, welche mir im Verkehr mit den gelehrten Männern und den geistreichen Frauen unserer Zeit oder mit besonderen Leuten aus dem Volk oder mit gebildeten und ausgezeichneten Personen auf meinen Reisen zu sammeln gelungen wäre; damit wollte ich schöne Sentenzen und Reflexionen aus den Werken der Alten und der Italiener vereinigen, und was mir sonst an geistigen Zieraten in Büchern, Handschriften oder Gesprächen entgegenträte; ferner die Anordnung besonders schöner Feste und Aufzüge, merkwürdige Verbrechen und Fälle von Raserei, die Beschreibung der größten und eigentümlichsten Bauwerke in den Niederlanden, in Frankreich und Italien und noch vieles andere. (I,2; 47)

Chandos' description of this idiosyncratic project draws attention to an additional aspect of Renaissance multilingualism. There are strong interrelations between different European countries, with their respective well-developed "vernaculars," and reading books on topics such as Dutch or French architecture, engaging in conversations during journeys on the continent, or more official diplomatic relations will require some competence in those languages. Chandos, when sketching a project resembling Bacon's posthumously published fragment *Historie of the Reigne of King Henrie The Eighth* (1629; Schultz 1961: 7–8), mentions a collection of notes, bequeathed to him by his grandfather, "on his negotiations with Portugal and France" ("über seine Negoziationen mit Frankreich und Portugal," I,1; 46) which call to mind the close political dealings

between European powers beginning to stake their interests amid a global colonial expansion. As contemporaneous English dictionaries attest, the vernacular languages were accordingly gaining importance and status. While Latin still remains the lingua franca in many professions—in 1589, John Rider advertises his Latin-English "double dictionarie" *Bibliotheca scholastica* on its title pages as "Verie profitable and necessarie for scholars, courtiers, lawyers and their clarkes, apprentices of London, travellers, factors for marchants"—, dictionaries and grammars from the middle of the sixteenth century onwards start to appear for Italian (1550), for French (1571), for Spanish contrasted with French (1590), and tri- and quadrilingual dictionaries (1574 / 1580) combining Latin and vernacular languages, called *alveries* in reference to the Greek word for 'beehive.' These dictionaries indicate the growing importance and attention lent to vernacular languages.[19] One motivation for learning these languages was to gain access to their budding literatures. William Thomas' *Principal Rules of the Italian Grammer with a dictionary for the better understanding of Boccace, Petrarcha, and Dante* (1550) stresses as its main selling point the ability to read these three Italian authors in the original. Accordingly, the reading horizon of a Renaissance author as constituted by Hofmannsthal's text encompasses the growing "vernacular" literatures in addition to those of classical antiquity. In the description of his "Apophthegmata" project quoted above, Chandos consequently refers in one breath to "the works of the Ancients and the Italians." The Chandos letter thus situates itself in a dense web of biographical, philosophical, poetological and poetical texts, written in different millennia and read in several languages including Latin, English and Italian, comprising many reworkings which combine thematic and formal elements of classical literature with a vernacular language and, as exemplified by Bacon's fictitious letter to which Chandos responds,

[19] In a counter-movement, these dictionaries also establish and mark linguistic difference, helping to define, demarcate and separate languages. They lay the foundation for an awareness of languages, for comparing and studying other languages in detail, but with a focus on describing them as unified systems and thus for a multilingualism that counts languages. Although these dictionaries foster the knowledge of several languages, one might see them as early gestures towards reestablishing a version of the monolingual paradigm. One of the very first English dictionaries, published by William Salesbury in 1547, showcases this impulse bluntly: "A dictionary in Englyshe and Welshe moche necessary to all suche Welshemen as wil spedly learne the englyshe to[n]gue thought vnto the kynges maiestie very mete to be sette forthe to the vse of his graces subiectes in Wales." This dictionary is not meant to foster multilingualism and mutual exchange; it is meant to assimilate the Welsh. While one can in retrospect frame this as the beginnings of a return to a more dominant monolingualism, and while nearly all of these dictionaries literally count languages in the title, the actual boundaries drawn between languages are still quite tentative, and several languages seem to be have equal status. In addition, as the first "hard word" dictionaries show, English itself is seen as an intrinsically multilingual language.

texts written in more than one language.[20] Chandos' letter is imagined as part of a constitutively multilingual communicative literary network.

Consequently, Chandos is writing a multilingual letter. Consider the beginning of the second paragraph: "You close with an aphorism by Hippocrates: 'Qui gravi morbo correpti dolores non sentiunt, iis mens aegrotat,' and believe that I am in need of medicine not only to keep my illness in check, but even more so to sharpen my sense for my internal state." ("Sie schließen mit dem Aphorisma des Hippokrates: 'Qui gravi morbo correpti dolores non senitunt, iis mens aegrotat' und meinen, ich bedürfe der Medizin nicht nur, um mein Uebel zu bändigen, sondern noch mehr, um meinen Sinn für den Zustand meines Innern zu schärfen," I,1; 45). Within "Ein Brief," the colon and the quotation marks here also mark a linguistic difference; in contrast to the main clause of the sentence, the direct quote is in Latin. This passage is the most obvious instance of linguistic difference made explicit; the title of Chandos' Apophthegmata project, "Nosce te ipsum," provides a second one, again in Latin. A third instance is less clear; I quote from the original: "wenn ich in der dem Fenster eingebauten Bank meines studio sitzend, aus einem Folianten süße und schäumende Nahrung des Geistes in mich sog."[21] The word that concerns me here is the noun "studio." Grimms' German dictionary lists "das studio," defining it as an artist's workplace, and traces it to the Italian word "studio" with the same meaning. In the original version of the dictionary's example sentence,[22] taken from Goethe, the word is capitalized and thus treated as a German noun: "Ein Mahler sitzt […] in seinem Studio."[23] Hofmannsthal, however, against German orthographic norms of his time and in contrast to all other nouns in the sentence and throughout the

[20] Chandos repeats two sentences from Bacon's letter verbatim, separated from his own text by quotation marks: one of them—a quote from Hippocrates—in Latin, the other not. Juxtaposing the two direct quotations marks a linguistic difference: Bacon's fictitious letter addresses Chandos in at least two languages.

[21] With slightly more context: "wenn ich auf meiner Jagdhütte die schäumende laue Milch in mich hineintrank […] so war mir das nichts anderes, als wenn ich in der dem Fenster eingebauten Bank meines studio sitzend, aus einem Folianten süße und schäumende Nahrung des Geistes in mich sog" (I,2; 47). In a semantic translation: "when I gulped down the frothing warm milk at my hunting lodge […] so was this no different to me than when, sitting on the window bench of my studio, I took in sweet and frothing food for thought from a tome."

[22] The *Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm*, in a push for orthographic reform, uses lower case throughout, even in its quotations.

[23] The full quotation, taken from a fragment by Goethe entitled "Rezension einer Anzahl französischer satyrischer Kupferstiche," reads: "Ein Mahler sitzt in einer antiken Kleidung in energischer Stellung in seinem Studio." (Goethe 1896: 361)

letter (with the exception of the Latin phrases), uses lower case for "studio." This orthographical difference could here indicate linguistic difference and hence mark the word "studio" as Italian. Not counting "Epithalamium" and "Apophthegmata," Chandos' letter is written in at least three languages. When, towards the end of his letter, Chandos explains to Bacon that he can neither write nor think in any one of the languages available to him, he enumerates and rejects four: "neither Latin nor English nor Italian or Spanish" (II,3; 54).[24] Neither for Bacon nor for Chandos is there a monolingual default, a single language in which to "naturally" write and think. Even though he denounces all four, Chandos' struggle with language is a struggle with, and in, several equally available specific *langues*.

2.2. Latin, Italian, German?: "Von Hugo von Hofmannsthal" 1902

"At this point it may be well to remember that Hofmannsthal's Lord Chandos writes to Bacon in German" (Schultz 1961: 15). This reminder, coming in the last paragraph of Stefan Schultz' insightful article on Hofmannsthal's Baconian sources for Chandos' projects, is one of the rare passages in Chandos letter scholarship that explicitly references the *langue* of the text. German as the main *langue* of the letter is clearly attributable to the context in and for which it was written. Therefore it is also well to remember that, as Rudolf Helmstetter phrases it, "the medial vehicle of the Chandos letter did not deliver it 'A.D. 1603' to Francis Bacon, but rather to the public of the year 1902" (Helmstetter 2003: 480). As all German-language newspapers of the time aimed at an audience in the German-speaking countries, the "medial vehicle" *Der Tag* generally is set in blackletter type, with the option of using Roman type to indicate that a word or phrase belongs to a language other than German.[25] This is a case of digraphia. The use of Roman type for non-German words within *Der Tag* is uneven, with some articles designating words as linguistically different in this way, while others are set in blackletter throughout.[26] Whereas, for example, a short story by Henry Urban, "Der Letzte der

[24] In its original context: "[…] weil die Sprache, in welcher nicht nur zu schreiben, sondern auch zu denken mir vielleicht gegeben wäre, weder die lateinische noch die englische noch die italienische oder [GW: und] spanische ist […]" (II,3; 54). Note the divergence in brackets between the original publication and the *Gesammelte Werke*.

[25] I owe this information to Christoph Albers, head of the customer service department of the Berlin State Library's newspaper archive, for whose support of my research for this article I am immensely grateful. Any mistakes or misrepresentations are of course my own.

[26] Comparing several groups of articles by the same author respectively, the decision against or for using Roman type in *Der Tag* seems to rest largely with the author of the individual article.

Panhattans" ("The Last of the Panhattans," Urban 1902, n.p.), set in New York and using English names and terms such as "Long Island," "Avenue," "Dock," and "Stewart," does not make any use of Roman type, a short notice entitled "Ostasiatisches Deutsch" ("East-Asian German," Anon. 1902: n.p.), providing examples of the language use of Germans who have lived in Asia for a sustained amount of time, does so heavily and switches between types even within a single word, for instance:

> **Ich habe gar keine** objections **dagegen, daß der** turn **einmal ge**-changed **wird**. (ibid)

The tone of the notice suggests that the correspondent who collected these specimens, himself an expat, is distancing himself from his compatriots' code-switching. He calls the result "seltsame Phrasen" ("weird phrases") and "eine ganz wunderliche Sprache" ("a very curious language"); the minimal editorial framing seems to affirm this stance. This example provides a limit case in the frequency of type-switching and its resulting segmentation, as well as for the level of tolerance towards a non-normative mixed language use, even in private conversations.

In Hofmannsthal's "Ein Brief," Roman type is used sparingly to indicate linguistic difference. Only the two Latin phrases "Qui gravi morbo correpti dolores non senitunt, iis mens aegrotat" (I,1) and "Nosce te ipsum" (I,2), the abbreviation "A. D." (II,3), i.e., the Latin phrase "anno domini," the last two words of the letter, "Phi. Chandos," (II,3), and the previously mentioned single word "studio" (I,2) are set in Roman type. The change in type corroborates the hypothesis that "studio" is here used as an Italian word. This linguistic differentiation by way of a typographical distinction is elided in later editions, including the critical edition in *Sämtliche Werke*, resulting in a much weaker indication of linguistic shifts. As a glance at Hofmannsthal's manuscript of "Ein Brief"[27] confirms, the digraphia of print at the time finds its equivalence in a digraphia of handwritten scripts, with a choice between the alternatives Kurrent (also called German cursive) and English cursive. Analogous to Roman type in print, English cursive is used for non-German words within a German handwritten text. In Hofmannsthal's manuscript, the frequency of English cursive is much higher than that of Roman type in the version of the text in *Der Tag*. In addition to all the instances mentioned above, he also employs it for example in most of the Roman, Greek, Italian and English names, for the genre terms "Epithalamium" and "Apophthegmata," and for some words with clearly non-German

[27] I use the facsimile edition, Hofmannsthal 1975.

roots, such as "Chiffern" ("ciphers").[28] Rules and conventions on whether and how to mark the difference between languages—which are both governed by and shape the perception of linguistic difference and hierarchy—are historically and culturally specific and changing. The digraphia for German around 1900 always provides the option to visually set off a word as foreign, without standardized rules for obligatory use. With this alternative available, one is forced to make a more or less conscious, more or less habitual decision which script to use for each word one writes, keeping the distinction between German words and non-German words latently present in the moment of text production as well as while reading.[29] In the case of the Chandos letter, an impression of Renaissance English and its relationship to other languages is created within the rules, constraints, and conventions of handwritten and printed German and its relationship to other languages, as made visible around 1900. The "studio" example makes obvious how closely the relationship between typography and linguistic difference is bound to changing cultural conventions: without the mark of digraphia, it is difficult to build a convincing case that this word is marked as non-German (and, by extension, non-English) only by its absence of capitalization. In English, even this slight mark of linguistic difference would be missing, as non-capitalization is the norm, and a translator into English might instead resort to italics. Orthographic and typographic conventions are shaped by and influence the distinction made between "one's own" language in a constellation with "other" languages.

Der Tag expects its readers to be interested in complex and detailed international news, whether it be trade routes in the Persian Gulf, the oratory powers of a French socialist politician, the narration of a correspondent's visit with the Sultan of Johore in Singapore, or a report of robberies in Chile (see Wagner 1902; Kerr 1902; von Rauch 1902; Anon. 1902). The world is presented as an interconnected globe. At the same time, clear-cut borders and distinctions are drawn and judgements made with a matter-of-fact sense of a

[28] The centuries-long digraphia in German literature, with its implications for the perception of German in constellations with other languages is surprisingly understudied. Susanne Wehde's detailed and enlightening chapter on the quarrel between blackletter and Roman type in her insightful *Typographische Kultur. Eine zeichentheoretische und kulturgeschichtliche Studie zur Typographie und ihrer Entwicklung* (2000) does not cover the time around 1900; Matthias Schulz convincingly showcases the advantages of a corpus-based approach (targeting seventeenth-century printed texts), which could provide quick inroads into this research gap (Schulz 2012). For a typology developed with reference to an impressively broad spectrum of languages, see Bunčić et al. 2016.

[29] Neither in German nor in English handwriting is this still the case. Automatic spell-checks, often singling out words or phrases not in the main language of the text, could be seen as a contemporary equivalent that latently keeps the distinction 'own / other language' present during text production.

common identity shared among readers, palpable in racist descriptions and unabashedly partisan-nationalist political perspectives. This stance also informs language policy, a topic frequently discussed in *Der Tag*. An article by Leopold Schönhoff printed right above a part of Hofmannsthal's "Ein Brief" sketches different policy propositions for determining the official languages for the Bohemian parts of the Austrian empire (Schönhoff 1902),[30] an intractable political challenge. Just a few years earlier, in 1897, prime minister Badeni's edict establishing both Czech and German as the languages of administration in Bohemia was used by German nationalist groups as political leverage to obstruct Parliament, resulting in the eruption of the so-called "Badeni language riots" with long-lasting repercussions still felt in 1902.[31] Paul Roland, in a short article on the "Polish language question," suggests German officials learn Polish when governing in regions with a Polish-speaking populace. Roland sees the need to defend this proposition as neither threatening the dignity of those German officials nor inspired by un-German sentiments, hastening to add that this constitutes but an intermediary step facilitating the ultimate aim of assimilating the Polish people by turning them, within a generation, into German speakers (Roland 1902). Two days later, a short note, quoting a translated excerpt from the French newspaper *Echo de Paris*, celebrates how German seems to be taking the upper hand in Alsace, with school children preferring German to French during play-time (Anon. "Die Sprachenfrage in Elsaß-Lothringen." 1902). These three articles in *Der Tag* appear within a span of merely two months, indicating that the "language question" is recurring frequently, as a symptom and an effect of forceful territorial expansion that is creating a linguistic gap between the new (in all these cases German-speaking) rulers and the ruled populace. Each of these language policy stances seems to envision monolingualism as the optimal outcome, with regulated multilingualism as a temporary compromise. While this brief snapshot, taking into account only articles published within a few weeks in the summer of 1902 in a single newspaper, cannot claim to represent discussions of language policy in German-speaking countries at the time, it nonetheless sketches an immediate context colored by a monolingual impulse feeding

[30] Helmstetter mentions and quotes from this text (Schönhoff 1902) when arguing for the relevance of the publication context for an interpretation of the Chandos letter.

[31] Peter Haslinger shows convincingly how language policies are discursively entangled with the concept of the nation (Haslinger 2002: 161–179). For detailed sources on the Badeni language riots, including the complete wording of various edicts, see Sutter 1960. I am grateful to Michael Gordin for drawing my attention to the Badeni language riots.

plans and fantasies of an unmixed and expanding German. It is in the context of this discussion in which Hofmannsthal's "Ein Brief" is first read.

"At this point," as Schultz reminds us, "it may be well to remember that Hofmannsthal's Lord Chandos writes to Bacon in German" and thus contributes to these negotiations of attitudes towards language and language policy. When Schultz stresses that Hofmannsthal's Lord Chandos writes in German, he does so within the frame of only two possible alternatives, rejecting the other option that Hofmannsthal's Chandos writes to Bacon in English. Specifically, Schultz argues that because the text is poetry and hence in a fundamental way untranslatable, it is emphatically in German: "However, even a translation as excellent as that by Tania and James Stern cannot conceal the fact that it is a translation. The reason lies in the very nature of poetry, which does not depend on the content but is surely inseparable from language" (Schultz 1961: 15). Faced with the decision whether Hofmannsthal's Chandos writes in English or in German, Schultz chooses German to acknowledge the grace and force of the text. While I agree with Schultz' appreciation of Hofmannsthal's syntactical elegance, I hesitate to conclude that therefore "Ein Brief" can only be and can only ever really be in German, embalmed in German, untranslatably so. Instead I would argue that some of the impact of the text is due to it being already-translated (see Stockhammer 2009; Rath 2013): Hofmannsthal's mostly-German is also, simultaneously, Chandos' mostly-English. One could claim that Hofmannsthal's text is mainly in German and that this German is the original language of the text; one could also claim that the German text is a tacit translation of Chandos' original English text.[32] This is what I propose to call *original translation* (see Rath 2016: 185): a mode of reading that explores a linguistic not-just-one, reading a text as if it were written in a present original language (here mostly modernist German) and an absent, imagined original language (here mostly Renaissance English). The original text can simultaneously be read as a translation. Each word, every sentence is both (mostly) "German" and (mostly) "English." It could be called a postmonolingual text in the sense

[32] Thomas Kovach, in the context of the much-discussed performative paradox, makes a similar observation, which he then turns into a brief, more general argument about fictionality, not multilingualism: "The letter is of course written in German, so technically speaking, Chandos has not in fact violated his pledge in the writing of the letter. […T]he language discrepancy serves once again to underline the fictionality of the text. Together with the opening sentence, which suggests the presence of an editor who is presenting the text for publication, one might view the text we have as a translation from an original text which, alas, does not exist. However one view it, this conundrum reinforces not only the fictionality of this text, but the elusiveness of any text, the precariousness of the entire enterprise of writing which seeks to encompass a reality outside itself." (Kovach 2002: 91)

Till Dembeck and Georg Mein propose, when they write: "The original itself becomes thus visible as crossed by internal linguistic boundaries and deeply ambiguous in its lingualism (*Sprachigkeit*)."[33] The text is not in one language, but oscillates between different language systems and puts their respective medial and political conditions into sharp relief. "Ein Brief" is a multilingual text in the sense that it combines several definable languages: Chandos writes in English and Latin and Italian and quotes and alludes to texts in several languages; Hofmannsthal writes in German and Latin and Italian imagining a multilingual Renaissance English. More radically, "Ein Brief" can be read as original translation, with the linguistic oscillation between mostly-Renaissance-English and mostly-modernist-German creating an unsortable, non-countable language amalgam. Read this way, "Ein Brief" is a paradigmatically *non-monolingual* text. This seems to me the reason why, as Schultz claims, even in a good English translation "Ein Brief" does not read like a text originally written in English: Hofmannsthal does not mimic a Renaissance English text, but rather imagines the pluralist multilingualism of the English Renaissance from within the more monolingual linguistic conditions, conventions and discussions informing German publications around 1900. By making the reader aware of the conditions for its *langues*, the *langue* of the letter shows and shapes its own conditions.

3. "Thrown across the chasm of centuries": August 22, 1603; October 18, 1902

"It is only in this historical horizon that the right notion emerges."[34] The historical horizon, as many different approaches to the Chandos letter seem to agree, is key to understanding the notions and concepts to which it refers. This poses the question of how to date the Chandos letter. Two options compete. Most of the research, focused on the modernist language crisis, places it solely in the context of 1902 and regards its setting in

[33] "Das Original selbst erscheint so als von inneren Sprachgrenzen durchzogen und in seiner Sprachigkeit zutiefst uneindeutig." (Dembeck & Mein 2012: 142)

[34] This sentence is taken from a passage by Rolf Tarot: "Chandos is a fictitious historical subject of enunciation. That means that his utterances are anchored in the space of his quasi-present. All utterances are not only part of a subjective horizon, but also of a historical one. […] It is only in this historical horizon that the right notion emerges." The original quotation reads: "Chandos ist fingiertes historisches Aussagesubjekt. Das bedeutet, daß seine Aussagen in den Raum seiner Quasigegenwart eingespannt sind. Alle Aussagen stehen nicht nur in einem subjektiven, sondern auch in einem zeitgeschichtlichen Horizont. […] Wir sind leicht geneigt, die 'literarische Betätigung' [this is a quotation from the introductory sentence by the fictitious editor of the Chandos letter and thus not from 1603, which somewhat weakens Tarot's argument here] als Dichten zu verstehen und immer schon zu wissen, was wir unter Dichtung zu verstehen haben. Erst im zeitgeschichtlichen Horizont ergibt sich die richtige Vorstellung." (Tarot 1970: 363–364)

1603 as mere "costume"[35]; on the other end of the spectrum, some, such as Rolf Tarot quoted above, suggest to anchor it exclusively in 1603. Jacques Le Rider, however, argues against a reduction to a single historical context and instead declares the letter to be "undatable":

> Hofmannsthal's historicism finds itself subverted by the montage game that turns the letter of Lord Chandos into a text that is relevant for multiple codes: the "English style" of Shakespeare's time dominates, but the multiple connections with other epochs suggested by the text end up making it 'undatable.' The superimposition of patterns and motives, deftly interwoven by the author, produces also an effect of irony, a hesitation of the author who does not identify himself completely with any of the faces and masks of Lord Chandos, but also a hesitation on the part of the reader who becomes aware that Hofmannsthal's fiction plays with virtuosity with the 'reality effect' (the effect of 'truth') for which a straightforward historical narration would strive.[36]

Paying detailed attention to the some of these superimpositions, I aim to tease out the specific meanings that meet in a single word or phrase as it interlinks with the letter's various contexts—or, to spin out Le Rider's textile metaphor, when it is woven into different textual networks.

The word "Hieroglyphen" ("hieroglyphs") provides a pertinent example. Derived from the Greek and nearly identical in English and German, it stays virtually unchanged and refers to the "same thing" in 1603 and 1902. Yet, not least because of Champollion's break-through in deciphering hieroglyphs in 1822, the meaning of "hieroglyph" changes drastically. Aleida Assmann's article on the hieroglyphs of modernism argues that within a long and fairly stable discursive tradition in which hieroglyphs command a hermeneutic fascination, the Chandos letter paradigmatically transforms the hieroglyphs of the

[35] This is the phrase Leopold von Andrian uses in his letter to Hofmannsthal from November 18, 1902: "I would like to just mention that the poetic costume, the shift into the English past, did not touch me in a pleasant way." / "Ich möchte nur erwähnen, daß die dichterische Einkleidung, das Versetzen in die Englische Vergangenheit, mich nicht angenehm berührte."

[36] "Car l'historicisme de Hofmannsthal se trouve subverti par le jeu de montage qui fait de la Lettre de Lord Chandos un texte relevant de codes multiples: le 'style anglais' d'époque shakespearienne domine, mais les rapprochements multiples avec d'autres époques suggérés dans le texte finissent par rendre le texte 'indatable.' La superposition des trames et des motifs, habilement tissées par l'auteur, produit aussi un effet d'ironie, une hésitation de l'auteur qui ne s'identifie pleinement avec aucun des visages et des masques de Lord Chandos, mais aussi une hésitation du lecteur qui perçoit que cette fiction de Hofmannsthal se joue avec virtuosité de 'l'effet de réel' (de 'vérité') qui serait recherché par une narration platement historique." (Le Rider 1994: 99–100)

Renaissance—promising an experience of the world as infused by divine meaning—into hieroglyphs of modernism as epiphanies of an immediate experience of a mystical present (see Assmann 2003). Schultz traces the use of the word "hieroglyph" in the immediate contexts of the letter, stressing its ties to a Romantic tradition:

> There also occurs in Hofmannsthal the crucial word "Hieroglyphen" which Bacon always used in its concrete sense of pictographic writing in the contrast to the use of letters. […] Hofmannsthal, however, uses "Hieroglyphen" as it was used in the German Romantic tradition […]. Novalis, whom Hofmannsthal read much, assigned the fable to *Hieroglyphistik* and called it "eine hieroglyphische Formel" ["a hieroglyphic formula"]. The first paragraph of our quotation is thus an amalgamation of Baconian ideas and German Romantic thinking which itself owed much to the pansophists of the seventeenth and early eighteenth century. (9)

These two analyses, each on their own and in the juxtaposition of their different readings, draw awareness to the many and diverse aspects of meaning that may be actualized in a single word when historical contexts and textual traditions shift.

Many other examples could be cited. Chandos' enumeration "'spirit,' 'soul' or 'body'" ("'Geist,' 'Seele' oder 'Körper,'" I,3; 48), each term carefully enclosed in quotation marks, reads differently after, for example, Descartes; "algebra" (I,1; 46) changes its meaning radically with Descartes and Leibniz; and as many philosophical studies have shown in detail, this is also true for the concept of "I," of the self or the subject after, say, Kant and, for Hofmannsthal likely already in 1902, Freud.

For the brief phrase "Dichtung und Wahrheit," "poetry and truth" (I,1; 46), the change is both more obvious and more specific, and adds a new group to the extensive web of texts read, discussed and alluded to, which form the reading horizon of its real and fictitious writers and inform the real and fictitious audiences' reading of the text, i.e, 1) texts alluded to that indeed exist and are readily accessible by any reader of the Chandos letter, such as Cicero's letters; 2) texts written by the real Bacon, reattributed to the fictitious Chandos as planned projects, such as his *Apophthegmes*; 3) fictitious texts that only Chandos and the fictitious versions of his contemporaries—such as the version of Bacon to whom he addresses his letter—could know, such as Chandos' pastoral for Queen Elizabeth's court and Bacon's letter to Chandos; 4) texts that Hofmannsthal and his readers know, but which Chandos and Bacon could not know. The last group is where

"Dichtung und Wahrheit," "poetry and truth" belongs: for Chandos, this is not a fixed phrase. When writing these three words, he cannot know that they would form the title of Goethe's autobiography and thus become an immensely recognizable collocation, but Hofmannsthal and his readers cannot but think of Goethe's famous text, which explores the relationship between life and poetical work. The phrase "Dichtung und Wahrheit," and the group of texts shared by Hofmannsthal and his readers, but not by Chandos and Bacon, provides an obvious reason why the context of the Chandos letter cannot be reduced to 1603. These webs of texts, woven into the chatoyant fabric of the letter, provide metonymical metaphors for the different languages at work in the text.

In addition to the texts, discourses and experiences one shares with one's contemporaries, individual connotations are part of anyone's always changing idiosyncratic language. The four-year-old daughter of Lord Chandos, Catarina Pompilia (I,3)[37], shares her second name with a drama project on which Hofmannsthal worked hard in 1901 and tried hard to finish in 1902. "Die Gräfin Pompilia" ("The Duchess Pompilia") was to be a "real" dramatization of Robert Browning's *The Ring and the Book* (1868–69), itself a reworking in (English) verse of a real convolute of Italian and Latin documents pertaining to a Roman court case of 1698. "Catarina Pompilia" are also two of the five names of Hofmannsthal's first child, born in May 1902 (see Rauch 1987: 131–132). The two names Hofmannsthal decides to give Chandos' daughter, whose "childish lie" causes her father to realize in a pivotal and highly emotional moment how intangible the concepts of truth and lie have become to him, thus hold dual importance and deep personal connections for him. Chandos knows none of this, most readers will know none of this, but Hofmannsthal does. Every single one of these words and phrases oscillates between different connections and draws different distinctions, depending on the rhetorical situation which one chooses to construct for it.

For Hofmannsthal, as for Chandos and Bacon, new readings of old texts are framed as providing productive additional meaning. Hofmannthal's planned rewriting, in a different language and genre, of Browning's rewriting, in English verse, of Latin and Italian court documents from 1698, as well as many of Chandos' projects and Bacon's corresponding books are examples of a conscious and programmatic reworking of a text from a past culture. In *Sapientia Veterum*, Bacon rewrites fables from classical antiquity with the explicit aim of recovering their even older, mythical truth which, as he states in the

[37] "Katharina Pompilia" in the GW edition, 49.

introduction, had already been mostly lost at the time their oral tradition became a written one. Such superimpositions of a contemporary perspective upon older sources allow for the shadow of a work from the past to be "thrown across the abyss of centuries" ("über den Abgrund der Jahrhunderte hergeworfen," II,3; 53f). Chandos' plans for reworkings of ancient texts mirror in the figure of a *mise en abîme* the superimpositions of Hofmannsthal's Chandos letter.

Aleida Assmann mentions in the conclusion to her article that she cannot read the scene in which Chandos imagines the death throes of the rats he ordered poisoned in his cellar without thinking of the gas chambers of the Shoah; she wonders whether the text contains a dark premonition (Assmann 2003: 279). I would reverse this temporality: I think we cannot help but project our own language, shaped by the present, the recent past, and a past long ago onto Hofmannsthal's language, likewise shaped by its own present and pasts, a language that in turn imagines a different language and its own respective history. To provide an example from my own reading experience: I stumbled when I first encountered the phrase "Haus der Gemeinen" (I,1; 46). I understood to which political institution it referred once I had retranslated the expression word for word into English ("House of Commons"), and at first I thought that this very literal translation and its foreignizing effect was a way for Hofmannsthal to mark his German as German-as-English. However, when I looked it up, it turned out that around 1900 "Haus der Gemeinen" was a lexicalized German term[38] that, according to a corpus of German in 2011, has since completely fallen out of use.[39] It is thus not surprising that "Haus der Gemeinen" had seemed foreign to me in my first reading (and hence a contender for a strong conscious choice on Hofmannsthal's part), and probably would to most of my contemporaries. The case is similar yet different with "Hutweide" ("commons"), another word used extremely rarely today. Although the word "Hutweide" may still have been more widespread around 1900, it referred to a practice of communal and shared resources that even then clearly belonged to the past. The Chandos letter plays very consciously with the spectrum of meanings of the same phrase in 1603 and 1902. How can we account for the new meanings created by reading the text in 2017, none of which Hofmannsthal could have foreseen?

[38] See "Haus der Gemeinen." 1907, Vol. 8: 883.

[39] The *Leipziger Corpus der Gegenwartssprache*, which is based on the results of a 2011 newspaper crawl, returns not a single hit for "Haus der Gemeinen," but 973 hits for "Unterhaus" and 17 for "House of Commons." <URL: http://corpora.uni-leipzig.de/en?corpusId=deu_newscrawl_2011>

Differently put: What status does the inadvertent foreignizing effect of "Haus der Gemeinen" and "Hutweide" have within the disciplinary constraints of reading practices? In an article advocating for the introduction of a "multilingual philology," Till Dembeck analyses a short essay by the Japanese-German author Yoko Tawada about a poem by Paul Celan, "Sieben Rosen später" ("Seven roses later"). Reading a Japanese translation of the poem makes Tawada aware of a connection that links exactly seven keywords of the poem because their respective Japanese signs, which are combinations of smaller, mostly conventionalized parts, all have one of these "radicals" in common. Looking at the German texts through a Japanese translation becomes productive for Tawada because it sparks a new interpretation. Tawada finds a consciously counterintuitive formulation: "The more intensive my reading became, the stronger became my impression that Celan's poems looked into the Japanese language. The poet had to have felt the glance of the translation that was thrown from the future onto the original text."[40] Dembeck comments: "Tawada thus claims no less than a reversal of the direction of reading."[41] Dembeck does not follow Tawada's explanation, but uses the productivity of Tawada's reading to probe the disciplinary restrictions that determine the ways in which philologists should arrive at an interpretation. Assmann's association when reading the rat scene or my initial reaction to the phrase "Haus der Gemeinen" skirt the boundaries of accepted reading practices. These readings push us to deal with the borders of the philological disciplines precisely because they make visible and questionable what the Chandos letter, at least, already performs: no word, no sentence belongs to just one language, neither a national language, nor a historical, social, or regional variant. All distinctions are drawn, and the words of this text gain (and this text gains) new distinctions, new connections, and new interpretations with each reading—just as Chandos planned to re-read ancient myths, and Bacon and Hofmannsthal actually did. Hofmannsthal could not foresee the hesitation of future readers when confronted with "Haus der Gemeinen" or "Hutweide." He could not foresee that this double hesitation would forge a link between them, the pause providing time for me to realize that in the "original" English "Haus der Gemeinen" and "Hutweide" share the word "commons." He could not foresee that the language of Chandos and Bacon would evolve into global

[40] "Je intensiver ich las, desto stärker wurde mein Eindruck, daß Celans Gedichte ins Japanische hineinblicken. Der Dichter muss den Blick der Übersetzung, der aus der Zukunft auf den Originaltext geworfen wird, gespürt haben." (cited in Dembeck 2016: 84)

[41] "Tawada behauptet so letztlich nicht weniger als eine Umkehrung der Leserichtung." (Dembeck 2016: 84)

English, radically shifting the constellation between the languages of the text. Hofmannsthal's text, however, in its own formal, thematic, and linguistic figurations, invites readers to continue the chain of re-readings from pre-classical fables and their formulation in classical antiquity, its Renaissance reworking and its recasting within German modernism, in turn, to include the re-readings shaped by the present context of its future readers.

How, then, to date the Chandos letter? The question itself implies an interesting presupposition: that there is a common dating system that guarantees a reliably contiguous continuity "across the chasm of centuries." Two dates appear on a single page of *Der Tag*, Chandos' date and signature at the very bottom of the third column on the third page, the publication date of the issue in its header. Their formats show slight variations in convention: The prefix "A.D.," the Latin abbreviation for "in the year of the Lord," is no longer in common use in 1902. More fundamentally, though, dates in England in 1603 still conform to the Julian Calendar, while most of the Catholic continent had already implemented the Gregorian calendar reform in use in 1902 and today. Hofmannsthal's October 19th, 1902 and Lord Chandos' August 22nd, 1603 may be on the same page, but they are not in the same system. In order to make them commensurable, the latter would have to be translated into "September 1, 1603"—that is, if Hofmannsthal, when having Chandos date his letter, did not already account for that shift. Even more literally than meant by Le Rider, the letter of Lord Chandos is indeed undatable. There are many obvious, and likely even more nearly invisible, systems of measurement, thought and belief in play when reading a text, and every reading necessarily involves an unconscious updating. Hofmannsthal's text, I claim, is very conscious of that. There will always be at least a third date competing with the obvious other two, and acknowledging this ineluctable influence seems to be a productive way of dealing with it. The text is aware that the shadow it throws across the chasm of centuries will be seen in a different light.

4. "Nosce te ipsum" versus "speaking in tongues"

The Chandos letter plays with marking, re-marking and unmarking distinctions and connections. This applies not only to phrases like "Dichtung und Wahrheit" or "Haus der Gemeinen," but also to the fundamental pronoun "I," which necessarily always changes its concrete referent when put in a different context, but in the Chandos letter does so a

fortiori: the pronoun "I" as part of the *langue* of the letter is drawn into its play with re-drawn and superimposed contexts, and so questions the concept of a speaker's identity.

The Chandos letter is often read as consisting of two parts, with the first describing Chandos' early, very productive writing phase and the second his silence, interrupted by epiphanies. For both phases, however, Chandos describes experiences of perceiving the world as a seamlessly cohering whole:

> Or it dawned upon me everything were a simile and each creature a key of the other, and I felt myself to be the one capable of grasping each one after the other at its crown and unlock with it as many of the others as it would unlock. From this, the title [nosce te ipsum] that I thought of giving that encyclopedic book [apophthegmata] explains itself.[42]

> If a serving slave filled with impotent horror stood close to the ossifying Niobe, he must have suffered what I suffered, as in me the soul of that creature bore its teeth to its overwhelming fate. […] It was much more and much less than sympathy: an overwhelming participation, a flowing into those creatures or a feeling that a fluidum of life and death, of dreaming and waking, flowed for a moment into them—from where?[43]

What changes between these two quotations? Assmann argues that it is the concept of the self: that the Greek concept of a self which is thought of as separate from the world, implied in the phrase "nosce te ipsum," "know thyself," turns into an Eastern view of the self as a part of the world, expressed in the Sanskrit formula "tat twam asi" ("you are this also," Assmann 2013: 278). As "nosce te ipsum" is the title of one of Chandos' works, the turn in the concept of the self that Assmann describes can be connected to how the pronoun "I" is related to other words. Chandos' planned "apophthegmata" programmatically present a selection and combination of the utterances of others. Any "I" in these collected aphorisms would not be Chandos' "I," but the organizing principle

[42] "Oder es ahnte mir, alles wäre Gleichnis und jede Kreatur ein Schlüssel der andern, und ich fühlte mich wohl den, der imstande wäre, eine nach der andern bei der Krone zu packen und mit ihr so viele der andern aufzusperren, als sie aufsperren könnte. Soweit erklärt sich der Titel [nosce te ipsum], den ich jenem enzyklopädischem Buch [Apophthegmata] zu geben gedachte." (I,2; 48; GW reads "Buche")

[43] "Wenn ein dienender Sklave voll ohnmächtigen Schauders in der Nähe der erstarrenden Niobe stand, der muß das durchgemacht haben, was ich durchmachte, als in mir die Seele dieses Tieres gegen das ungeheure Verhängnis die Zähne bleckte. […] Es war viel mehr und viel weniger als Mitleid: ein ungeheures Anteilnehmen, ein Hinüberfließen in jene Geschöpfe oder ein Fühlen, daß ein Fluidum des Lebens und Todes, des Traumes und Wachens für einen Augenblick in sie hinübergeflossen ist—von woher?" (II,1; 51)

for the artful arrangement of these "most noteworthy" phrases and "thoughtful ornaments" would constitute Chandos' speaking. The phrases of others would be handled as clear-cut elements, and the "I" would be in a definable, stable, and dominant relation to each of them and to their constellation. Chandos' descriptions of his epiphanies, in contrast, are decidedly different: forces are in flux, the direction of their flow cannot be determined, and the boundaries between what "I" refers to and what other words refer to are constantly redrawn. Rather than drawing on Eastern philosophy, I want to read this fluctuating identity with an image that Chandos provides when he describes one of his projects thus: "as the chased hart longs to be in water I longed to be in these naked shimmering bodies, in these sirens and dryads, this Narcissus and Proteus, Perseus and Actaeon: to disappear in them was my wish, and from within them to speak in tongues."[44]

"To speak in tongues" ("mit Zungen reden") relates the pronoun "I" to others' speech in a different manner. "Mit Zungen reden" is not "German," but biblical language. The phrase appears in Luther's version of the bible in two contexts: the first connected to Pentecost, the second in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. These two biblical passages both describe forms of multilingualism, but very different ones. In the context of Pentecost, the message of the gospel, its glad tidings, can be multiplied and sent forth clearly and equally well in any and all languages once one acquires fluency in them. In Paul's letter to the Corinthians, however, "speaking in tongues" is divinely inspired yet opaque speech. It is speech that blends human and divine *langue*, and it is, as Paul repeatedly stresses, a challenge and always in need of interpretation. Neither the identity of the speaker nor the meaning of the utterance is clear or fixed. Hofmannsthal speaks in Chandos' tongue, and Chandos in Hofmannsthal's; neither could ever speak these words wholly on his own. The undatable text oscillates between the English of a multilingual Renaissance and a German that connects the genius of a language to the genius of a people. The letter superimposes several meanings in one word, shifts their accents, and radically includes the word "I" in this play with *langues* and contexts.

Reading the Chandos letter with a sensitivity for this play with *langues* and *langue* shows how Chandos' writing is linked to the language crisis not in a paradoxical, but rather in a literally productive way. The letter anatomizes the language crisis as the inherent effect of an identitarian conception of language that implies that any utterance, governed by the

[44] "[…] wie der gehetzte Hirsch ins Wasser, sehnte ich mich hinein in diese nackten glänzenden Leiber, in diese Sirenen und Dryaden, diesen Narcissus und Proteus, Perseus und Actäon: verschwinden wollte ich in ihnen, und aus ihnen heraus mit Zungen reden." (I,2; 47)

rules of one language, must come from one individual speaker aiming at one meaning, at truth. It exhibits the paradox that an individual's utterance is understood at once as his or her own fully individual expression and as depending fully on a system that precedes that individual. In the face of these restrictions, the letter becomes possible when speaker, language and meaning are specific, but not-one. The language of the letter exceeds the concept of *langage* or any one of the codified *langues*, denounced as they are enumerated. The letter becomes possible by creating its own *langue*, which, transgressing any codified *langue*, opens up a space for the making of poetry and is open to new readings. The Chandos letter performs a theory of non-monolingualism: it speaks, with more than one tongue, in its own *langue*, which always needs to be translated.

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more wordes most necessarie for all such as desire the knowledge of the same tongue.