

University of London School of Advanced Study
INGEBORG BACHMANN CENTRE FOR AUSTRIAN LITERATURE
At the Institute of Germanic & Romance Studies

The Nameable and the Unnameable Hofmannsthal's *Der Schwierige* in Context

An International Conference at the University of London
Co-Ordinators: Dr Martin Liebscher (IGRS, University of London) and Dr Christophe Fricker (Duke University)

Thursday, 22 - Friday, 23 May 2008

CALL FOR PAPERS

On the occasion of the publication of a new translation of Hugo von Hofmannsthal's play *Der Schwierige*, this conference intends to reopen the discussion on language and modernity in Hofmannsthal's work. *Der Schwierige* marks Hofmannsthal's attempt to both depict and overcome the language crisis he himself recognized in the 'Letter' to Lord Chandos. Written between 1909 and 1920, the play reflects Hofmannsthal's experience of the atrocities of war, unnameable but constantly present behind the chatter in the Viennese salons. This shallow surface provides an insufficient cover for the numinous character of the existential crisis suffered by an individual faced with nothing less than the twilight of mankind. The concept of language-crisis is worth re-examining: recent scholarship has come to define it in broader epistemological terms, and attempts to proclaim a post-hermeneutical era have failed.

Focusing on *Der Schwierige*, this conference proposes looking at the relationship between poetological and poetic texts, and should shed new light on Hofmannsthal's contribution to literary modernity and its aftermath, on the position of *Der Schwierige* in his work, and on the play as Hofmannsthal's reaction to war and the downfall of the Habsburg Empire.

Possible topics include, but are not limited to:

- * Hofmannsthal and the language crisis of modernity in relation to *Der Schwierige*
- * The numinous in Hofmannsthal's texts and in particular in *Der Schwierige*
- * *Der Schwierige* and Hofmannsthal's return to the classical tradition
- * Translating Hofmannsthal
- * Hofmannsthal and the war in the light of *Der Schwierige*
- * *Der Schwierige* in the context of Hofmannsthal's work
- * Meaningful silence vs hollow phrases

Please send proposals (no longer than 300 words) and a short cv (no longer than 1 page) to BOTH Martin Liebscher martin.liebscher@sas.ac.uk and Christophe Fricker cef15@duke.edu by **31 July 2007**.

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