PETSCH’S THEORIES AND GRILLPARZER

ELIZABETH E. BOHNING

In various articles in fairly recent German publications Robert Petsch attacks the traditional “one-dimensional” interpretation of the drama and substitutes his own “three-dimensional” concept. His theory is based upon the drama of the German Classicists. The purpose of this study is to ascertain whether it can be equally well applied to plays of a later period, specifically to Grillparzer’s historical dramas, “König Ottokars Glück und Ende,” “Ein treuer Diener seines Herrn,” and “Ein Bruderzwist in Habsburg.”

Petsch rejects the popular tendency to stress the plot in a play, saying: “Das Drama will immer von vorn herein als Ganzes gesehen werden, und jede flächenhafte Darstellung muss den Blick für das Wesentliche eher verbauen als schärfen.” He regards the drama as a cosmos, a sphere, “mit Wechselbeziehungen nach allen Dimensionen hin.”

“Die dramatische Bewegung entfaltet sich, für unser Gefühl, in unendlicher Mannigfaltigkeit und Vielseitigkeit nach schlechtweg allen Seiten und schlingt sich von allen Punkten der Kugeloberfläche immer wieder ins Zentrum zurück, um von da aus wieder nach allen möglichen Richtungen vorzustossen und neue Wirkungen und Rückwirkungen hervorzurufen.”

In fact Petsch asserts that too great lucidity, consequence and coherence in the plot diverts us from the deeper truths expressed in the work. Grillparzer himself represents the point of view that only an invented plot needs the support of strict motivation:

“—wie in der Natur sich höchst selten Ursache und Wirkung wechselseitig ganz decken, so ist, in der Behandlung eine gewisse Inkongruenz beider durchblicken zu lassen vielleicht die höchste Aufgabe, die ein Dichter sich stellen kann.”

1 R. Petsch. “‘Drama und Theater.’” In Deutsche Vierteljahresschrift, V. 14, p. 583.
2 R. Petsch. “‘Von der Szene zum Akt.’” In Deutsche Vierteljahresschrift, V. 11, p. 169.
3 R. Petsch. “‘Zur inneren Form des Dramas.’” In Euphorion, V. 30, p. 34.
4 Ibid., p. 21.
The linear interpretation of Freytag, for example, has reference only to the plot, only to what Petsch designates as foreground ("Vordergründiges") or breadth ("Breite") and Otto Ludwig as pragmatic nexus. In "Ottokar" we find two aspects of such foreground action: the hero's conflict with both his personal and his political enemies. The personal conflict revolves about the seduction of Ottokar's wife by Zawisch and the political about the undermining of his influence as state administrator. Likewise in the "treuer Diener" the foreground action branches off into both a personal and a political conflict between Banehan's family and Otto. The foreground action is reflected in the title of the third play: the dissension among the Habsburg brothers. Secondary pragmatic action is found in the Don Cäsar episode.

Significance is lent to this foreground action by the so-called "background":

"Zwischen dem handgreiflichen Vordergrund und dem letzten, nur der 'Ahndung' zugänglichen Tiefengrund der dichterischen Welt, die sich im Vorgang vor uns entfaltet, muss immer noch der 'Hintergrund' sichtbar werden, von dem sich alle unmittelbaren Wahrnehmungen abheben, in dem sie ihren Zusammenhang, ihre Ordnung und damit ihre nächste Deutung finden. Ohne diesen Hintergrund würden die vordergründigen Vorgänge trotz aller assoziativen und selbst kausalen Verknüpfung von Punkt zu Punkt oder in kleineren und grösseren Bögen uns 'nichtssagend' erscheinen."  

The background is also the dramatic nexus or the dimension of height in Petsch's terminology. In "Ottokar" it consists in the condemnation of the autocratic, arbitrary ruler, in the "treuer Diener" in Baneban's fidelity to his duty and in "Bruderzwist" in the inability of all members of the Habsburg family to rule and in the regrettable conditions consequent upon their reign.

The ultimate philosophical import of a play is designated as ideal nexus or as the dimension of depth in Petsch's terminology. In "Ottokar" we find this dimension in the incapacity of the hero to adapt himself to the community of his fellow men, where everyone has his function, a function often demanding the sacrifice of his personal desires. The key to the ideal nexus in the "treuer Diener" lies in the Biedermeier theory that influence and effective-

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ness in wide circles demands the sacrifice of personal ties and personal happiness. The "Weltanschauliches" in "Bruderzwist" is very aptly expressed by Stefan Hock in the introduction to his edition of the play. He stresses the conflict between power and happiness:

"Aber dieses Problem erschien hier sofort in einer besonderen und lockenden Variante. Wenn Rustan, Jason und Ottokar die Tragik des Ehrgeizigen verkörpern, wenn sie ihr Glück verlieren, weil sie nach Macht streben, weil sie ungestüm handelnd ihren Wirkungskreis überschreiten, so ist es bei Rudolf umgekehrt. Er möchte ein Leben nach Innen führen, aber er kann es nicht, weil ihn das Schicksal auf den Kaiserthron gesetzt hat. Nicht der Wille zur Macht ist das Tragische an ihm, sondern der blosse Besitz der Macht." 9

Rudolf's problem is closely related to Bamban's.

Grillparzer's plays are divided into five acts, but there is no division into scenes. Petsch, however, regards the drama as a structure composed of numerous scenes, apparently self-sufficient and yet in reality closely interrelated. 10 Of these scenes some are subordinate, and some are main scenes.

The subordinate scenes are by no means non-essential. On the contrary:

"Die weitgespannten Verbindungen gegenständlicher Art, die sie mindestens symbolisch andeuten, geben auch für die grossen Szenen erst jenen Hintergrund her, von dem sie sich für uns mit voller Rundheit abheben. So sind sie keine 'nebensächlichen' Teile des Ganzen, sie stehen nur an unmittelbarer Dynamik hinter den Hauptszenen zurück." 11

Petsch classifies these subordinate scenes as: 1) preparatory, 2) explanatory or report and 3) end scenes. The preparatory and end scenes constitute the frame around the main scenes, and the explanatory or report scene serves as a bridge within the pragmatic nexus. 12 Its chief function is to interpret the action:

"Auch sie können reines Tatsachenmaterial bringen oder einmal angeschlagene Gefühlssnoten ausklingen lassen; in der Hauptsache aber wollen sie doch die Hauptfiguren vorstellen, in ihrem Wesen verständlich machen und werten und uns

zugleich in die tieferen Notwendigkeiten des Gesamtvorgangs einweihen."

The subordinate scenes are grouped around the main scene: "In dem (geistig und dynamischen, nicht notwendig auch zeitlich-räumlichen) Mittelpunkt der neuen Gruppe steht dann die Haupptszene, neben die oder um die herum sich die Nebenszenen ordnen." In the category of main scenes we find the following types: 1) the play ("Spiel") scene, characterized by a symbolic outward act, 2) the "inner" scene, in which a character divulges his inmost thoughts and feelings, 3) the persuasion scene, "die wirklich auf Ueberzeugung (oder besser: Ueberredung) ausgeht; mag die führende Partei Erfolg haben oder nicht, sie wird immer die dramatische Bewegung auf eine andere Ebene drängen und ihr eine irgendwie entscheidende Richtung geben," 4) the debate, reproach or fight scene, which shows "das Auflodern von lange verhaltenem und verborgenem Groll" and creates "eine neue Situation, die für die ganze Fortentwicklung des Dramas von Bedeutung ist" and 5) the torture or threat scene. Petsch says in regard to the torture scene: "ein Redner kann seinen Zuhörer in die höchste Erregung versetzen und ihn auf die Folter spannen, während er selbst ganz ruhig bleibt; wir haben dann die einseitige 'Qualszene' (besser Quällszene) vor uns. . . . Reiner wirkt natürlich der Qualmonolog, wo zwei Schichten im Innern des Sprechers den Kampf miteinander aufnehmen."

Several scenes constitute a group, for the individual scene frequently expands to:

"einer grösseren Gesamtheit von scheinbar selbständigen, in Wahrheit eng zusammengehörigen szenischen Gebilden; oder sie schliesst sich mit mehreren ihresgleichen, die aber von anderer Färbung und von anderer Beziehung auf die letzte Ganzheit des Dramas sind, zu einer engeren Einheit innerhalb des dichterischen Kunstwerks zusammen."

Or a number of scenes can form a "Grosszene,"

"ein Stück dramatisch geformten Lebens für sich, und steht in gewissem Sinne für das Leben selbst. Die Art, wie die

13 Petsch, p. 183.
14 Ibid., p. 174.
15 Ibid., p. 178.
16 Ibid., p. 174.
17 Ibid., p. 179.
18 Ibid., p. 180.
19 Ibid., p. 173.
mancherlei Kraftbeziehungen dargestellt und ausgenutzt werden, vollendet in uns von selbst die Vorstellung jener dynamischen Einheit, die für den dramatischen Vorgang so bezeichnend ist.’’ 20

In the first part of Act I in ‘‘Ottokar’’ and the ‘‘treuer Diener,’’ in the first part of Act II in the ‘‘treuer Diener’’ and in the whole first act in ‘‘Bruderzwist’’ we find no main scene. Instead of a group of subordinate scenes revolving about a main scene we have what Petsch calls ‘‘open form’’: ‘‘Die Situation ist durch eine Fülle von Strahlen beleuchtet,’’ which ‘‘von allen Seiten auf das Bild zu fallen scheinen.’’ 21

The dramas, which these scenes and groups of scenes compose, Petsch pictures as a dynamic world of sudden reverses and contrasts. 22

The following outline represents an attempt to apply these theories to Grillparzer’s historical dramas, showing the divisions into scenes, the classification of the scenes, the treatment of the various dimensions, the changes of scene and examples of ‘‘Grosszener,’’ open form, sudden reverses and contrasts. Where possible, the groups of scenes are given abstract titles, such as Petsch suggests for Schiller’s ‘‘Jungfrau.’’ 23 An attempt is also made to indicate upon what Grillparzer depends for his dramatic effects, whether upon causality, intensification or the contrasts so stressed by Petsch. After a study of this outline we shall be in a position to draw conclusions regarding the applicability of Petsch’s system to non-Classical drama.

‘‘König Ottokars Glück und Ende’’

Act I

I. 1–192
   a) 1–9 preparation, report
   b) 10–52 preparation, interpretation
   c) 53–91 preparation, persuasion, debate
   d) 92–192 report, scorn

II. 193–383 report, interpretation—height and depth

III. 384–533 report, interpretation—height
IV. 534–686 report, interpretation

Intensification
V. 687–780 24 play, debate; sudden reverse

20 Petsch, p. 170.
21 Ibid., p. 177.
22 Petsch. ‘‘Zur inneren Form,’’ p. 33.
23 Petsch. ‘‘Von der Szene zum Akt,’’ p. 173.
24 The italicized numbers indicate main scenes.
Act II

I. 786–1001
   a) 786–799 preparation, interpretation
   b) 800–858 report, debate, persuasion—breadth 1
   c) 859–1001 reproach—breadth 2
II. 1002–1033 report—breadth 2
III. 1034–1069 persuasion—breadth 1, 2
IV. 1070–1091 report—breadth 1
V. 1092–1129 interpretation, persuasion, debate—breadth 2
VI. 1130–1155 interpretation, reproach—breadth 1, 2

Intensification

VII. 1156–1341 debate, report; sudden reverse
VIII. 1342–1347 end

"Grosszene"

Act III

I. 1348–1375
   a) 1348–1361 preparation, interpretation
   b) 1362–1375 report

Intensification

Question:

II. 1376–1420
   a) 1376–1406 fight, reproach
   b) 1407–1420 report—height

III. 1421–1515 report, persuasion—height
IV. 1516–1604 persuasion—breadth

Change of scene

Intensification

V. 1605–1720 report, interpretation

Answer: the

VI. 1721–1776
   a) 1721–1955 debate, persuasion—depth; sudden reverse
   b) 1956–1976 play; sudden reverse

King does not submit

Act IV


Intensification

II. 2022–2090
   a) 2022–2039 interpretation
   b) 2040–2059 report, interpretation
   c) 2060–2090 persuasion, reproach

"Humiliation"

III. 2091–2202 reproach—depth, breadth

Causality

IV. 2203–2238 debate
V. 2239–2286 debate, decisive monolog
VI. 2287–2389 fight

"Recovery"

VII. 2390–2421 reproach
VIII. 2422–2524—breadth 1
   a) 2422–2438 fight
   b) 2439–2479 interpretation
   c) 2480–2524 interpretation, end, report

Act V

I. 2525–2553 report, interpretation
II. 2554–2620 interpretation—breadth 1, 2

"Preparations"

Change of scene

III. 2621–2691 reproach, report, interpretation, inner—depth; sudden reverse
   Change of scene
IV. 2692–2715 interpretation

Causality

V. 2716–2796
   a) 2716–2754 interpretation—height
   b) 2755–2776 interpretation—height

"Grosszene"
"Fulfillment"
    c) 2777-2788 interpretation
    d) 2789-2796 fight
    Change of scene
VI. 2797-2874 report, inner—depth
VII. 2875-2933 fight—breadth
VIII. 2933-2988 interpretation—height, depth

    "Ein treuer Diener seines Herrn"

Act I
Open form
"Family relationships"
I. 1-121—breadth 1 exasperation/calm superiority
    a) 1-49 preparation anticipated reaction/actual reaction
    b) 50-115 interpretation anxiety/calm

Exposition
II. 121-212—breadth 1
    a) 121-138 interpretation
    b) 138-187 interpretation
    c) 187-212 end

    "Grosszene"
III. 213-349 interpretation, persuasion, debate—depth; sudden reverse

    "Political relationships"
IV. 349-430 report, debate, play—breadth 2

Act II
Open form
I. 431-530 preparation
    a) 431-484 preparation diligence/frivolity
    b) 484-530 preparation, interpretation—breadth 2(1)

II. 531-603
    "Bancban’s calmness"
    a) 531-570 interpretation (persuasion)—breadth 1(2); height
    b) 571-603 interpretation—depth

III. 603-613 transition—breadth 1(2) composure/unrest

    "Grosszene"
IV. 613-650 interpretation—height, depth duty of administrator/duty of husband

    "Erny’s excitement"
V. 650-668 decisive monolog
VI. 669-771 torture, debate
VII. 772-786 torture, decisive monolog
VIII. 787-800 debate wife as self-sufficient individual/wife as husband’s property
IX. 800-827 fight 891-909

Act III
Open form
I. 910-991 preparation
    a) 910-952 preparation
    b) 953-991 interpretation—breadth

Intensification
II. 992-1140—breadth 1
    a) 992-1000 fight, debate
    b) 1000-1044 reproach strength of will/self-induced weakness
    c) 1045-1140 torture, persuasion; sudden reverse

    "Grosszene"
III. 1140-1321 fight, debate, play, torture—depth; sudden reverse treachery/sincerity

    "Unsuccessful execution"
IV. 1322-1346 end solution of the personal intrigue

Act IV
"Dreigliedrigkeit"
I. 1347-1361 preparation, interpretation
    Bancban’s patient suffering/
    Simon’s thirst for revenge

II. 1361-1446 debate, play—height, breadth 2
    Peter’s quiet sadness/Simon’s instigation to revenge

New conflict:
"Dissension between Banchan and his relatives"
III. 1446-1449 transition
"The Queen’s distress" IV. 1450–1503 preparation
V. 1503–1540 preparation
VI. 1541–1588 interpretation—breadth 2, height

VII. 1688–1609 interpretation, play grouping is according to ideas expressed

boundary of series of scenes if grouping is

boundary of group of scenes if grouping is

"Attempted rescue" VIII. 1610–1632 transition
IX. 1633–1647 decision
X. 1647–1684 play, debate; sudden reverse—breadth 2, height

No main scene

"Dissension and entanglement" I. 1685–1740 interpretation, report gentleness/rebuke; fidelity/mutiny
II. 1741–1766 subordinate with elements of reproach remorse/defiance
III. 1767–1802 report remorse/defiance
IV. 1802–1857 subordinate with strong elements of a main scene

"Baneban against the insurgents" a) 1802–1834 debate
b) 1836–1857 debate

"Unity and disentanglement" V. 1858–1949 inner, play, interpretation past/present
VI. 1950–2122 debate appearance/reality
a) 1950–2070
b) 2071–2122

"Baneban’s victory and justification"

"Ein Bruderzwist in Habsburg"

Act I

I. 1–81
a) 1–44 persuasion, fight despair/defiance
b) 45–81 scorn, threat Change of scene

II. 82–135 interpretation—height

III. 136–195
a) 136–153 persuasion
b) 154–171 interpretation
c) 172–195 persuasion

IV. 196–220 interpretation, unsuccessful persuasion
V. 221–231 interpretation, transition
VI. 232–307 persuasion, reproach
VII. 308–313 transition
VIII. 314–501 debate, report, interpretation—depth
IX. 502–525 end

* The boundary differs according to whether we consider the act from the point of view of the staging or the expression of ideas. From the latter viewpoint the first group represents the new political conflict to which Erny’s death gives rise: Otto’s defense against Simon’s and Peter’s revenge, while the three scenes comprised by the second (1450–1588) deal with the queen’s distress. The stage setting permits a division only after the seventh scene (1450–1609), however. Since this seventh scene, which then concludes the group, is a main scene, we have another example of intensification.
Act II

I. 526–626
   a) 526–567 report
   b) 568–626 interpretation, fight
II. 627–661 debate
III. 662–690
   a) 662–673 interpretation
   b) 674–690 interpretation; sudden reverse
   Change of scene
IV. 691–765 report, debate, persuasion
V. 766–1067 persuasion—depth
VI. 1068–1081 interpretation
   Change of scene
VII. 1082–1099 threat
VIII. 1100–1112 report
IX. 1113–1127 fight; sudden reverse
X. 1128–1138 end

Act III

No main scene

"Protestant cause"

I. 1139–1345 reproach, interpretation, report, debate—height, depth; sudden reverse
II. 1346–1409 report—height, depth
III. 1410–1509 report—height
   relationship unclear; structure unsymmetrical
IV. 1510–1691
   a) 1510–1667 debate—depth
   b) 1668–1691 interpretation—depth
V. 1692–1717 interpretation, inner—depth
VI. 1718–1799
   a) 1718–1742 persuasion
   b) 1743–1786 interpretation
   c) 1787–1799 interpretation
   Change of scene

Intensification

VII. 1800–1818 preparation, interpretation
VIII. 1819–1834 persuasion

Act IV

I. 1835–1850 preparation
II. 1851–1858 fight

"Disorder"

III. 1859–1872 preparation, transition
   Change of scene
IV. 1873–1883 inner—depth
V. 1884–2014 reproach, murder—depth
VI. 2015–2022 interpretation, transition
   Change of scene

Intensification

VII. 2023–2070 report
VIII. 2071–2108 report (persuasion)
IX. 2109–2201 persuasion, fight
   Change of scene

"Insight"

X. 2202–2236 interpretation
XI. 2237–2271 interpretation

"Collapse"

XII. 2272–2393 interpretation—height, depth
XIII. 2394–2438 interpretation
   Grouping according to stage setting
   Grouping according to stage setting
Act V

Intensification  I. 2439–2587 debate; sudden reverse
   II. 2588–2596 interpretation, transition
   III. 2597–2631 decisive monolog
   IV. 2632–2641 interpretation, preparation, transition
   V. 2642–2680 debate
   VI. 2681–2703 fight (persuasion)

--- Causality ---

Intensification  VII. 2704–2774 report
   VIII. 2775–2814 report

“Helplessness”  IX. 2815–2838 report—breadth (solution)
   X. 2839–2918
      a) 2839–2899 debate
      b) 2900–2918 inner rejoicing/repentance

Conclusions: This outline indicates that Petsch’s theory cannot be satisfactorily applied to the comparatively unschematic drama of Grillparzer.

Grillparzer’s subordinate scenes are much richer than those which Petsch discusses: some subordinate scenes are impossible to classify according to Petsch’s terminology, and subordinate scenes containing elements of main scenes occur frequently (“Ottokar”: I, 1 c and d; II, 1 b and c, 5, 6; III, 2 a, 3; IV, 2 c, 4, 8 a; “Ein treuer Diener”: II, 2 a; V, 2; “Bruderzwist”: I, 1, 3 a and c, 4, 6, 8; II, 1 b, 2, 4, 7; III, 1, 5, 6 a; IV, 2, 4, 8; V, 1, 5). As a result we must either extend the designations of main scenes to cover the subordinate scenes or else invent new terminology for the subordinate scenes. Here and there, moreover (“treuer Diener”: IV, 7; “Bruderzwist”: III, 4 b; IV, 13), a part of a main scene has as its function interpretation, which Petsch ascribes to the subordinate scene. In all three dramas considerable subdivision of scenes into parts is unavoidable if only one designation is to be used.

A comparison of the three plays reveals that Grillparzer departs further and further from the systematic structure of the Classical drama: the division into groups of scenes is still more difficult in “Bruderzwist” than in the “treuer Diener.” Although abstract titles may be applied to the groups of scenes in “Bruderzwist,” the relationship between the groups is quite unclear in the especially unsymmetrical third act. Despite the tremendous antitheses underlying the action (i.e. Protestantism/Catholicism), no grouping from the point of view of contrasts is possible. In the second act the two groups represent an antithesis, but the contrasted elements are by no means equivalent. The Don Cäsar episode, with which the second group is concerned, is not equal in importance to the political aspect of the foreground action, as is the Otto-Erny or
the Zawisch-Kunigunde action in the earlier plays. The fourth act grouping is based entirely upon stage setting rather than ideas.

Petsch speaks of "Dreigliedrigkeit" where the main scene occupies the central position. Such a framing of the main scene by subordinate scenes produces an impression of symmetry. Grillparzer, however, prefers "Zuspitzung": he works toward the climax at the end. All three dramas are characterized by such an intensification of effects: the main scene stands at or close to the end of each group, or the Grosszene stands at the end of the act: "Ottokar": I, II, III, IV (first group); "Ein treuer Diener": I, II, III, IV (two last groups when the division is according to stage setting); "Bruderzwist": III (last group), IV (second and third group), V.

In "Ottokar" contrasts are infrequent, and there are very few sudden reverses. Intensification is the predominating principle, as it is in the "treuer Diener," although in this latter play there are often strong contrasts within the individual scene (cf. outline). The fact that "Bruderzwist" contains even fewer dynamic effects is explained by the subject matter itself; the protagonists are either passive or blindly rash, and the actual action is controlled by the antagonists. We can hardly speak of a dramatic solution, for a real solution presupposes a conflict. The disharmony of the play would estrange the audience if Grillparzer attempted by means of stage effects to make the unheroic plot more dynamic. The strong emphasis upon the unheroic elements is in accord with the Biedermeier background. Each of the members of the House of Habsburg has the capacity to perform a worthwhile function, but he cannot adapt himself to the active rôle which he has inherited. Rudolf, if he were permitted to live a passive, contemplative life in a restricted group, could find complete contentment, but his tragedy is that a mission is enjoined on him to which he is not equal: he is obliged to play a leading rôle in public life; he is not granted the privilege of the Biedermeier resignation.

The most fruitful of Petsch's theories, when applied to Grillparzer's dramas, is perhaps his view of the dimensions. Each of his three dimensions is represented in these historical dramas. The fine nuances are achieved by the fact that each nexus embraces several of the characters. Moreover, there is some interplay among

26 Grillparzer frequently uses the antithesis to motivate the further development of the plot. In such contrasts we find reflected the structural principle which Petsch calls "Wechselbeziehungen nach allen Dimensionen hin" (cf. second paragraph of this study).
the various dimensions: for instance, one aspect of the foreground action, the personal intrigue in "Ottokar" and the "treuer Diener," is a deciding factor in the other aspect, the political plot. Moreover, the relation of cause and effect is frequently to be found between the dimensions ("Ottokar": III, IV, V; "Bruderzwist": V). Here and there ("Ein treuer Diener": II, IV, V; "Bruderzwist": 1082–1138, 1139–1509, 2272–2393) one dimension is reflected in another. In "Bruderzwist" it is even more difficult to separate the dimensions than in the earlier dramas. The Thurn and Schlick scenes, for example, are characterized by an interplay between background and foreground. The norm established by Petsch, the interweaving of the dimensions, is exemplified with extreme delicacy and artistry.

The inadequacies of his system when applied to a drama in which irrational elements predominate lead to the conclusion that Petsch made his greatest contribution as an inciter rather than as a systematist.

27 While the first act belongs mainly to the foreground action, background and depth also play a part. Two conflicts constitute the foreground: political and personal intrigue. The council meeting is concerned with the political plot: Otto disturbs Bancban as administrator of the state. But on the other hand he is attacking Bancban personally by distressing Erny. As far as the foreground action is concerned, the "Grosszene" is dedicated to the private problem, but the decisive influence of the political problem is everywhere apparent. The background is revealed mainly during the consideration of the petitions, in Bancban's recognition of the King's judgment and at the same time in his forbearance toward Otto. This act also allows us a glimpse into the depth, although Bancban is not yet aware of his sacrifice: since he has pledged himself to impersonal public service he must disregard the personal plight of his wife. His philosophy is reflected, too, in his interpretation of marriage: man and wife are not bound together, but each is a self-sufficient individual. As an isolated man, having renounced all personal ties, he is in danger of losing his most precious personal possession.

The function of the last two acts is to clarify both the political intrigue and the background action. The question arises at the very beginning as to whether the hero will recognize that once he has pledged himself to an impersonal mission he may not permit himself any personal reaction, despite the greatest personal loss. This question belongs to the depth, but it necessarily involves the question as to whether Bancban will be true to his lord, not allowing the peace of the empire entrusted to him to be disturbed by attempted revenge. And this background problem in turn involves the political plot of the foreground. This plot undergoes a fundamental alteration when Otto is eliminated as the antagonist. The man who has caused the death of the administrator's wife can no longer play an aggressive part in the political conflict. At the end of the act it is a question only of his defense against Simon's and Peter's revenge.

28 The second group of the second act is concerned with Don Cäsar and therefore belongs in part to the pragmatic nexus. Since, however, the Don Cäsar action reflects the sinister side of the House of Habsburg, we are justified in assigning the group, in part at least, to the background.