

Bad Day at Baden-Baden · *Hugo de Hasenberg*

edited by L. Wilton Dippstick

Introduction

COSMOPOLITAN IN HIS background, the only child of an Anglo-German father and a Hungarian mother, Hugo de Hasenberg (b. nr. Brno [Brunn], Moravia, Austria-Hungary, 23 October 1844; d. Mount Street, Mayfair, London, 26 March 1923) has until recently been known only to connoisseurs of late-nineteenth-century *petites histoires* and known to them only as a shadowy figure of no particular significance, a typical Victorian “Heavy Swell” or playboy-dilettante. It is in this guise that he makes his occasional appearances in the published memoirs of the period. The anonymous *Uncensored Recollections* mentions him, for example, as does the same author’s *Things I Shouldn’t Tell*, among the friends of the Beresford brothers and as a vague hanger-on in the Sandringham (as opposed to the Marlborough House) Set; and he is known from other published sources to have been at one time close to Crown Prince Rudolf, though the friendship appears to have lapsed at about the time Kicsem, the Goodwood winner of 1878, retired from racing, several years before the tragedy at Meyerling. There is additional record of Hasenberg among the published and unpublished ephemera of pre-1914: signed menus, dance programs, guest-lists, photographs of country-house picnics and shooting parties, where he figures as a minor light among luminaries of much greater magnitude, distinguishable sometimes by the elegant tilt of a cigar emerging just to the left of a royal or princely shoulder, but more often lost in a row of equally white shirt fronts and fashionably cut beards, signing himself on a margin only with a heavy black “H de H.”

To delve at this point further into the intricacies of Hasenberg’s life would be to intrude upon grounds thoroughly covered in the late Gloria Stanley’s definitive biography, which was largely complete at the time of her death and will be published within the next few months. Suffice it to say here that in the mid-1960’s this ludicrously limited awareness of Hasenberg began to change, largely as the result of a single literary event: Garbidge’s republication of a novella, *Short Shrift in the Schwarzwald*, that had first appeared in 1893, seventy years earlier, under the

imprint of the Falstaff Club, with the author's name given as "Hugo Heidekraut." The Garbidge edition, as is usual in such cases, was launched with no fanfare in a rather murky literary market as a nasty-looking paperback octodecimo, moronically prefaced by an MA candidate in sociology, who testified to the redeeming social value of the work in question.

No one, it seems, was more surprised than Garbidge when this mini-book became both a popular and a critical success. The first printing was exhausted within three weeks; a second printing was cautiously advertised and sold out in one; a third printing took the risk of dropping the asinine introduction; and five more printings succeeded before the end of the year, when hardback rights—reversing procedures usual in the trade—were sold for the highest figure in publishing history, even though Garbidge admitted they had no idea who or what "Hugo Heidekraut" could have been. The legal imbroglio that ensued once Garbidge had pocketed the money was therefore followed with as much interest in the universities as in the publishing trade, since it involved Garbidge's claim to copyright, which ultimately hinged in turn upon the life-span and thus the identity of the actual author of *Short Shrift*. By now the book had been reviewed in *Time*, *Newsweek*, and on the front page of the *New York Times Book Review*, while the question of the author's identity had become the center of an academic controversy that occupied several pages regularly in a dozen quarterlies. Finally, more than a year after the book's first publication, a lengthy essay appeared in the youthful *New York Review of Books*, in which "Hugo Heidekraut" was absurdly identified with Ferdinand Lassalle.

The next issue of *NYRB* carried a deluge of correspondence from scornful academics, among whom probably the most eminent and certainly the most scornful was the late Professor Victor March, then in the process of editing a critical edition of *Short Shrift*. Head of the Verbal Creation Development Studies Unit at the City University of Nueva Tiajuana, March had been able to establish, by characteristically painstaking research that *Short Shrift* could only have been written some years after Lassalle's death. The actual identity of "Heidekraut," however, March left still hanging, while other correspondents offered passionate arguments on behalf of Olive Schreiner, G.S. Street, Robert Hichens, George Meredith, and even Marie Corelli. Such was the tumult that it could be heard as far away as London.

At this point the Old World came rumbling in from the East to

redress the balance of the New, with a lengthy letter to the *Times Literary Supplement* in which everything was at once cleared up—so it seemed—by no less a figure than Sir Rufus Gowte. Dismissing from the outset the as-yet-unmentioned notion that the book might be a literary hoax, the grand old man of the popular social novel declared in his now-famous letter that he had known “Heidekraut” personally and identified him, with conclusive particulars, as Hugo de Hasenberg. The letter related one or two anecdotes, incidentally mentioning three of Hasenberg’s other published works: *Parrot’s Dusk* (“written under the name Ishmael Legion; he used to refer to it as *The Dämmerung of the Budgerigar*, an instance of the somewhat heavy-handed whimsicality, supposed to be very *English*, that was one of the hallmarks of Hugo’s personal and literary style”); a collection of thirteen verse-epistles, *French Letters* (“written under the name Hugo de Balzac”), describing a Parisian episode of the eighteen-seventies; and a sporting memoir printed in fascicles for private circulation only, *The Lyons Coach Postillion* (“written under the name Harry Houndstooth, a staple of smoking rooms in my youth”). “But Hasenberg’s undoubted masterpiece,” the letter concluded,

was a work he never published *in toto*—“Bad Day at Baden-Baden,” of which this book that has created such a stir actually represents, to my admittedly dimming recollection, just about half. I remember going to see Hugo many times in Mount Street during the early years of the century and being allowed to read parts of “Baden-Baden,” while he sat in an arm-chair, stroking his mustache and watching my youthful reactions. He had extraordinary eyes, like a cat’s. He told me that a portion of the work had already been published years before—pseudonymously, of course—but that what I was allowed to read was the complete unexpurgated version. It was then the penny dropped, for I had actually read *Short Shrift in the Schwarzwald*, and read it more than once or twice. It had a certain popularity in my “set” possibly because it was a little “dated,” and we used to quote from it. So I knew the book quite well already and was only astonished to learn that Hugo was its author. He pointed out to me once his own copy of *Short Shrift*, a slim little thing in mauve high up in his bookshelves, but I confess I never looked at it. I saw him

many times, though his style was too different from mine—I was very consciously “modern” in those days—for me to find him very interesting for long or useful to me as a writer. And in the course of my work during the War I lost touch with him altogether. Like many Englishmen of similar background at the time, he changed his name by deed-poll during the War, so that when a few years later someone told me Hugo Haremount had died, the name meant nothing to me. Recalling Hugo de Hasenberg now, though, I can say that knowing him was possibly more important to me than I may have thought at the time. It is certainly pleasant that *Short Shrift in the Schwarzwald* has been republished and the old roué would certainly be delighted at all the brouhaha it seems to be creating now. My club used to have three copies in the old days, but they all seem to have been pinched. It would be a service to literature if all of “Baden-Baden” could be found and published too.

At the time his letter appeared Sir Rufus had just celebrated his ninety-fourth birthday. The next day he suffered a massive stroke, lapsing into a coma; and his death a few weeks later convinced even younger academics that he was no longer in a position to serve as a source of information. Acting on his letter’s hints, however, and nothing daunted, the scholars set to work at once with renewed purpose, Victor March inevitably taking the lead. His edition of *Short Shrift* was abandoned, but a spate of articles appeared over March’s name during the next three years and the list of works mentioned in the Gowte letter was rapidly extended by him and others to include four fugitive pieces written under Hasenberg’s own name: three essays on the minor arts of Japan (“Comment nettoyer les netsukés,” published in *Graphos* for December 1897; “A Shy Samurai” and “Rin-No-Tama in Ukiyo-e,” both published in *The Studio* for 1901); and the introduction and captions for the (posthumous) 1911 Vienna edition of the drawings of Michael von Zichy (1827-1906). A small group of miscellaneous poems in Magyar and German, mostly erotic, was unearthed in various long-defunct journals originating in Dresden and Budapest; and, until it was exposed with much scandal as a hoax, a lengthy poem in English, privately printed, known as *The Fly* (from its opening words: “O, if I were a fly high on the thigh / Of my Thaïs . . .”) was also thought to have been penned by Hasenberg’s hand.

Among major works in the canon *Parrot's Dusk* was meanwhile rediscovered and published (1970) by a VCDSU/CUNT team under the energetic leadership of March—thanks to whose taste and pertinacity the work is now better known under what he always contended was the original title, *The Dämmerung of the Budgerigar*,— in an edition that was thought for a time to have set the standard for all future publication of the oeuvre. A battered and much used *French Letters* found meanwhile relict in the back row of a Brighton cinema became the basis for an equally impressive edition (1972) of that charming work, again by March's team. And in 1973 certain hitherto elusive parts of *The Lyons Coach Postillion's* fascicles were uncovered in the long abandoned rear quarters of a country house in Dorset, enabling March's team at last to assemble a complete set as *textus receptus*. It was on the knotty crux of the *Lyons Coach Postillion* that March was still pounding away, in fact, at the time of his unfortunate death in 1975—a loss to scholarship only in small part made up by the posthumous edition of the work that his team produced in 1978, just before their own final dissolution.

Throughout this period, from 1963 to late 1975, it will be noted, a central piece of what we might call the Hasenberg puzzle was still missing: either a manuscript or published text of the complete *Bad Day at Baden-Baden*, which Sir Rufus Gowte had referred to as Hasenberg's masterpiece.

It is the tragedy of Victor March's life that he should have died with this ultimate prize lying just beyond his grasp. There is reasonable hope, however, that March's last seconds were not marred by consciousness that fate had withheld this final guerdon, but was coloured instead by a sense of satisfaction at what he had already achieved: two apparently definitive editions completed and a third largely done, with the assurance of continued support from financing agencies whose contributions both to research and to publication had already been, as he once contentedly described them to me, "on a scale little short of Neronian" (private communication, 6 January 1974).

It has been left to the present writer to complete and thereby solve the Hasenberg puzzle, for by a series of accidents, which must be very briefly described, the complete and now incontestably original manuscript of *Bad Day at Baden-Baden* came into my own hands.

The story begins with another literary event, the publication in autumn 1975 of Gloria Stanley's exhaustively researched *Wedgie: A Life*, a biography of Mrs. Coverly Ripple-Mohun (1875-1939), née Silvia

Katz of New York, revealed in the book as the authoress of a series of rather lurid novels (*Sylvie*, *The Return of Sylvie*, *Sylvie of the White Breasts*, *Vive Sylvie*, etc.) that were published under the pen-name Wedgie during the years between 1914 and 1922. Miss Stanley found evidence that for several months in 1892 Silvia Katz had served Hugo de Hasenberg as mistress-amanuensis. "She would sit up in his enormous gilt bed with its silken coverlets," wrote Miss Stanley, "a large red-morocco-covered board across her knees, writing his letters from dictation. . . . Their friendship was to last for many years." Descriptions of such scenes were found by Miss Stanley not only in Silvia Katz's diaries, faithfully kept throughout her long and quite eventful life, but also in her novels, where her heroine Sylvie is described as performing the same service for several characters (e.g., the Sultan of Turkey) with whom she has fictional *rencontres*. The Honourable Coverley Ripple-Mohun was Wedgie's sixth husband, her last only because of a fatal heart attack suffered in Capri in August 1939, on the eve of her wedding to a young Italian businessman, Giovanni (Gian-Gian) Giovanelli, to whom and on whose advice she had prudently made over the sole interest in all her property a week before the ceremony was to take place.

By the time war broke out in September, only a month later, Wedgie was safely buried, and Gian-Gian Giovanelli had moved to New York, where he was now, under the terms of the settlement, the owner of a considerable estate. Legal proceedings took several months, however, and by the time Giovanelli's position was clarified, the United States had entered the war against the Axis. Therefore no sooner had his ownership been established—two FBI agents attended the final hearing—than the entire estate left to him by Wedgie was sequestered as the property of an enemy alien: the flat overlooking Central Park and the house in Connecticut were sealed, moveables were put in locked storage, and all her papers, including her literary remains, were crated and shipped to Ellis Island, where they remained under armed Federal guard for more than a decade. With what appears to have been his habitual foresight, Gian-Gian Giovanelli himself had by this time already removed to Argentina, where he seemed to have disappeared.

Hasenberg scholarship received this information with considerable interest. Victor March had been sent an advance copy of *Wedgie* for review and within twenty-four hours, acting on the idea that no stone should remain unturned, had begun trying to track down what had happened to Silvia Katz's papers. Miss Stanley's bibliography was un-

revealing and she could not be reached at her home in California, but a day of telephone calls disclosed the fact that all alien property held on Ellis Island had either been destroyed or deposited with the Library of Congress; further telephone calls informed March that Washington had no relevant deposits under *Katz*, *Wedgie*, or any of Silvia Katz's married names, but that there was a holding under the name *Giovanelli*. The same night Victor March drafted several letters, a press release, an article for the *Atlantic Monthly*, and an imprudently savage review of *Wedgie: A Life*, for *The New York Times Book Review*. Then he flew to Washington.

Miss Stanley, of course, had been there before him. She was, in fact, just about to enter the doors of the Library of Congress when he arrived. A somewhat heated scene is reported to have taken place, with Victor March refusing to accept Miss Stanley's initially mild assurances that she had already sifted through the papers, which included *Wedgie's* journal, quite competently herself. Bitter words passed between them and in the course of their exchange it emerged that there were materials extant in the Library of Congress relevant to Hasenberg that Miss Stanley had deliberately kept unannounced, preferring to reserve them for future purposes of her own. Challenged on this point, rather brutally, it was said, she further confessed that these materials seemed to consist of a manuscript of *Baden-Baden*. "He actually snarled," she later wrote, "then brushed past me as if I weren't there. I was so hurt, I very nearly wept" (private communication, 30 November 1975).

What Victor March found after so much exertion, however, and what Miss Stanley had already discovered, was no more than a manuscript of *Short Shrift in the Schwarzwald* virtually identical with the published version, written as might have been expected, in Silvia Katz's unmistakable hand as she prepared it at Hasenberg's dictation for the press. There was nothing new here, in other words, for Hasenberg scholarship to feed on. A train was laid, however, that was almost to prove explosive at a later date.

The present writer had meanwhile for several years been approaching Hasenberg on a slightly different tack. In 1970 I had been fortunate enough to discover *Datura Days*, a fictionalized travel-memoir now considered central to the Hasenberg canon. As first published in 1890 by Gwinn and Barrett, the book had carried no author's name at all on the title page and copies were exceedingly rare. When I saw the little volume among other secondhand titles outside a shop in London, howev-

er, a kind of intuition came over me; I bought the book and, with a great deal of patience, was eventually able to argue, to my own satisfaction at least, that on stylistic evidence alone it was indeed one of Hasenberg's works, being based upon the voyage he is known to have made to the Far East in the company of the Princesse de Mercy Argenteau. I foresaw that differences and a certain amount of difficulty would inevitably arise between me and my colleagues in the field, however, if I insisted that in the work this journey had been extensively fictionalized.

An early and persistent cliché of Hasenberg scholarship has been that everything he ever wrote is strictly autobiographical. If it were merely a fictionalized account, the critical gospel used to run, no book could have been written by Hasenberg, despite what might be indicated by stylistic analysis. Victor March held tenaciously to this opinion (see his seminal essay "Hasenberg: Life or Art?" *PMLA*, LXXXIV [September 1969], 663-679), which lingers even now as an apparently ineradicable fantasy among the lumpenintelligentsia who make up the latest generation of university textbook writers (see, e.g., the chapter on Hasenberg, "Hasenberg," in Stern and Higginbotham's *The Well-Warped Loom* [New York: Fun City Press, 1979], pp. 147-168; L.S.D. Lang's *Birth Pang or Primal Cry: The Creative Act in Modern Literature* [Akron: Farina-Latex International, 1979], pp. 41-52; Sister Honoria Klein's *Menses in Defiance: The Feminist Stance in History, Art and Life* [Boulder, Col.: Our Lady of the Rockies Press, 1979], pp. 546-623; *et al., et al., et al.,*). To oppose this cliché in 1970 would have been hopeless, the more so as exasperatingly little was actually known about Hasenberg's life.

It was obvious, on the other hand, that no matter how barely credible the life of the Princesse de Mercy Argenteau may have been in fact (and I knew a good deal about her, from her romance with the young Duc de Fitz-James to her discovery of a half-brother working as a private detective in Havana, with whom she ultimately set up a dog-farm in Southern California) Hasenberg had added further touches that could only be fictional. The course I took was to publish an edition of *Datura Days* at my own expense under the pseudonym "Harry de Lipp." Sales eventually paid the book's costs and I had the satisfaction of noting that one eminent reviewer found it "stylistically reminiscent of the best of Hugo de Hasenberg." With this oblique support I began tentatively to argue, without much initial success, the position I then held and still hold to in Hasenberg studies, which in regard at least to *Datura Days* now seems generally accepted. *Baden-Baden*, as will be seen below, offers

further support for my views, which stand of course opposed to those of the late Victor March.

I was in London, as it happened, when Miss Stanley's book appeared and I read it with great interest. I had not yet had the inestimable privilege of meeting her, but a brief note elicited a lengthy response describing the fracas with Victor March and in a follow-up telephone call she let me know that there was a considerable batch of Wedgie papers in England that had come to her attention too late to be included in the research for her book. These papers were still in the possession of the Ripple-Mohun family, she informed me, but had been consigned for sale to a Bond Street art dealer and were soon to come up for auction. She knew enough of the papers from hearsay, she said, to guess that they were of no special interest to her at the moment, but she was letting me know about them because she felt they might have some crucial bearing on my work. All she asked in return for this information was that I say nothing about them to Victor March, whose review of her book had come to her attention just the day before.

When I contacted Lord Letcher, the head of the family, at Divots, the Ripple-Mohun estate near Wrung Withers in Berkshire, however, he told me that it would be impossible to examine the papers there, since they had already been sent to London. The auction was to take place only three days later.

Officials at the art dealers, whom I contacted next, would only allow me a brief examination of them. I was taken by elevator down to a rather damp but well-lit basement, then ushered along a corridor and into a vault, where a young assistant director met me, checked my identity, opened a metal bin in one wall of the vault, and casually lifted out a small green monogrammed morocco case, which he handled as if it were a crate of eggs and set on a baize-covered metal table in the center of the floor, handing me a small brass key as he did so. "Look under the brushes," he said.

Inside the case were two closely fitted trays, the top one containing a jumble of old half-full or empty perfume bottles and cosmetic jars, the lower one a hand-mirror and a pair of hairbrushes backed in tarnished silver. I lifted out both trays and there were the papers, still flecked with Wedgie's lavender face-powder, which made them so slippery that I had quite a time fishing them up from those silk-lined depths. Within five minutes, however, I had spread them out on the table, where I could see almost at a glance that they contained what I had been seeking, as

I shall describe in more detail later. A few photographs and miscellanea merely confirmed the genuineness of the provenance. Among the latter, for example, was a small pamphlet, *The Child Prodigy, being a Translation of the Sieur de Montcul's Mémoires d'un Enfant Prodigue*, which I recognized immediately as merely a narrative arrangement of the (rather saucy) captions Hasenberg had written for his edition of the drawings of von Zichy.

My excitement communicated itself to the young assistant director, who sympathetically remarked that the gallery was morally committed to the sale of the papers, observed that I had been given a most unusual privilege in being allowed to examine them thus privately at all, and suggested that the only open course now to take for a close study of them would be either to purchase them myself or make an arrangement with their buyer—whoever he might be. I thanked him and returned to my hotel both elated and discouraged.

That night I came down with an incredibly virulent case of 'flu, which laid me up with raging chills and fever until the morning of the auction, when I staggered out of bed and made my way down to Bond Street, determined to see things through. The auction room was hot and crowded, but I managed to stumble into a seat just as bidding on the first lot began. Steaming from my own body-moistures as produced by a heavy overcoat, the unusual exertion, a hyper-conscientious central-heating, and my still raging fever, I struggled out of the overcoat, mopped my face, and blinked about me, feeling very ill. I vaguely noted a distinguished-looking gentleman of about sixty seated just to my right and a petite but rather solid-looking woman of early middle years on my left with elegantly blue-rinsed hair and a pleasant face behind large rose-tinted glasses. She smiled at me as if through a haze. I attempted to smile back, wondering if she thought I was drunk.

Lot 239, the small green morocco case I had seen two days before, was not due to appear for some time. My head swimming, I saw lot after lot wheeled in briskly and disposed of, with minimal fuss, at prices that struck me as no more than reasonable while I wondered if I would have strength to stand the waiting. The seated crowd, chattering quietly to itself, seemed hardly interested in the proceedings, though I noticed that the gentleman on my right bought several lots, including some hideous crepe de chine bed draperies.

When Lot 239 finally appeared I felt suddenly revived. My buzzing brain registered the lowness of the opening bid as well as the fact that

it was made by the lady on my left, who winked at me as she made it, leaned over and whispered, "There's no reserve price." Encouraged, I raised my hand to make my own bid; and when the auctioneer nodded my way, she actually grinned at me. Then the gentlemen on my right made a bid, higher but still well within the range of what I thought I could afford, though I probably hesitated for a moment before reaching that conclusion. And as I hesitated a whisper came to my left: "If you don't have enough money, I'll help you buy it. We can always share."

Intent on this business and on coping with my fever, I almost failed to hear the sudden commotion in the doorway behind me at the entrance of the room. As the auctioneer bobbed an acknowledgement of my second bid, however, the noise broke through, some sort of ferocious altercation, and I turned my head to look. There was Victor March, shouting, striding down the aisle, shaking off the two morning-suited attendants who were trying unsuccessfully to restrain him. Behind them trailed one of Victor's willowy ash-blonde research assistants, holding his famous black astrakhan hat.

With no break in his stride, he ploughed directly to where I sat, stared down at me, nodded, then turned in a fury upon the little woman at my left. "Gloria!" he shrieked. "This is a fine piece of treachery!" I thought my head would split. I tried to keep my attention firmly fixed on the sale, but it was impossible. I was feeling faint.

"What's the matter, Victor!?" she said. My brain was a whirl; my grip on events was slipping; I no longer knew who had the last bid. For a few split-seconds I even caught myself wondering where I was and what I was doing there.

"You know damn well. That green douche kit, vanity case, whatever you call it. Where the hell is it?" At this moment there was a crack like thunder as a gavel banged, then a long silence. Victor March raised his head and glared round so wrathfully at the roomful of variously disapproving faces that most of them dropped their eyes. "Where is it?" he said in a furious stage whisper.

"It is I who bought it," I heard the gentleman on my right say so softly he seemed to whisper, in an accent I could not immediately identify. "Would you please leave now?"

"Would the gentleman please leave?" came the echoing voice of the auctioneer. Another long silence, then Victor stalked out, the ash-blonde in his wake.

"I'm so sorry," murmured the little lady, whom I now knew to be Gloria Stanley. "Perhaps . . ."

Her sentence remained unfinished. The auction had nearly ended and the gentleman on my right, the lucky purchaser of Lot 239, was already on his feet, slipping into his overcoat. Other people rose, the room began to clear, and while Miss Stanley and I hastily exchanged telephones and addresses, I tried to watch him out of the corner of one feverish eye, looking for an opportunity to have a word with him. When I lost him in the crowd, I must have looked dismayed. Miss Stanley tried to comfort me.

“Never mind,” she said. “Maybe we’ll find him outside. Do you feel sick? Let me help you.”

She took my arm—I needed her help—and together we made our way to the foyer, peering this way and that, looking for the new owner of Lot 239. Other people were looking for him as well: in the middle of the foyer stood an incensed Victor March, flapping a thick checkbook and shouting—“Where the hell is he? I’ll buy the son-of-a-bitch out!”—while his research assistant cowered, attempting to blush.

Then I saw the buyer of Lot 239 come through a side door and step across the foyer, actually carrying the little green leather case, making his way quietly towards the street. Victor March apparently saw him too and went plunging through the crowd, snatching at the gentleman’s sleeve just as they emerged ahead of us into the glare and bustle of the pavement.

When Miss Stanley and I finally managed to get through the crowd at the door, they were standing face to face on the curb, Victor waving a check in one hand and with the other snatching at the green morocco case, while its new owner, looking angry and bewildered, seemed to resist. As we edged closer I could hear Victor’s voice, raised almost to a scream, make the most preposterous offers. The crowd thickening behind us pushed me and Miss Stanley almost on top of them, so close that my feverish eyes seemed confronted with every enlarged pore on Victor’s enormous red-mottled face. Just behind him was a patch of ash-blonde and over his shoulder I could see Miss Stanley, shaking her head.

Then Victor disappeared, the place where he had stood being filled by a shower of computer cards, while a single scrap of paper fluttered to my feet.

With a screech of brakes and a sickening thump, a twelve foot steel wall had flashed into being inches away from us along the curb as a gigantic lorry came to a halt. Its white-faced driver leaned down from

the cab. "Where is he, mate?" he said to no one in particular. "Where the hell is he? I saw him standing all right, right there, and then I didn't see him."

It was as quick as that. Death had almost certainly been instantaneous. I felt my fever begin to turn to a chill. Before the shower of software had settled and Victor's remains had been collated and carried away, Miss Stanley and I introduced ourselves to the buyer of Lot 239, who was none other than Gian-Gian Giovanelli. His interest, it appeared, was in the case alone, not its contents, and was purely sentimental: Wedgie had been using it in 1939 when he was a waiter at the Ritz and they had first met. Since he was now in easy circumstances, we soon reached an accommodation. I borrowed a shopping bag and filled it. Then, having surrendered to Victor's assistant, who was dazedly retrieving computer cards, the particular scrap of paper I had found at my feet after the accident, a blank check bearing the authorized signature of one of our largest and best-endowed foundations—in one little mitten she still clutched his black astrakhan hat—with Miss Stanley's help, and on trembling legs, I made my way back to my hotel.

Rumor to the contrary, it will now be seen that I acquired the complete manuscript of *Baden-Baden* quite legitimately from its rightful owner, whom Victor March never even really met. Nor is it to be wondered at that after the completion of the critical edition of *The Lyons Coach Postillion*, Victor March's last project, the Verbal Creation Development Studies Unit, of which he had been unchallenged head and mainspring, should be dissolved, its extramural funding being transferred to the support of individual scholars in somewhat closer touch with the core of Hasenberg's oeuvre, such as the late and deeply lamented Gloria Stanley, who was unimpeachably pre-eminent in the biographical field, and, of course, the present writer. Miss Stanley's labours will soon provide us with the definitive *Life of Hasenberg*; the Taj Lam Waw Dal Research Center, located in Rome, of which the present writer is founder and chief executive, will shortly have completed the definitive edition of Hasenberg's masterpiece. The task remaining to me here is merely to sketch the difficulties and pitfalls involved in editing the canon's central text preparatory to the publication of this interim edition.

The first difficulty appeared initially to be a substantial one, since it arose around the question of authorship.

The manuscript in my possession, still smelling of lavender, running

to three hundred and fourteen carefully numbered pages of various dimensions ranging from foolscap to bookmark-size, is written in two different hands: an elegant, rather childish backsloping roundhand, often in green ink, and a crude italic, sometimes nearly illegible and so broadly laid on that it frequently looks as though it were done with a brush rather than a pen. The text of the first half is virtually identical with the published version of *Short Shrift in the Schwarzwald* and is entirely written in the roundhand, unhesitatingly identified for me by Miss Stanley as that of Wedgie. The portions written by Wedgie, however, account for considerably more than just this half of the manuscript, including in addition not only the text for those portions of it that were suppressed when *Short Shrift* was published in 1893 but also certain sections of the remaining hitherto unpublished portion of *Baden-Baden*, its second half.

Given the information supplied by Miss Stanley in her biography, of course, this fact was perfectly understandable, explicable by Wedgie's having been Hasenberg's amanuensis.

The nature of his craft, however, demands that a textual critic keep his mind entirely open and that he consider every possible option until all the evidence is in. Only then may a truly just and, one would hope, definitive conclusion be drawn. In all honesty as I began my labours I was therefore forced to put to myself an argument that had been nagging at the back of my mind for some time.

What, I had to ask myself, was the real evidence for the identification of "Hugo Heidekraut"—and for that matter of "Ishmael Legion," "Hugo de Balzac," and "Harry Houndstooth"—with Hugo de Hasenberg? Victor March and his research team had produced a welter of supposed biographical detail (the VCDSU/CUNT edition of *French Letters* alone contains more than three thousand footnotes), most of which, as I became aware from being *au courant* with Miss Stanley's labours on the *Life*, would ultimately be shown to be either inaccurate or nonsensical. Thus the only real evidence we had for the identification therefore lay where it always had lain, in the contents of Sir Rufus Gowte's famous letter, which remained and still remains the basis of all Hasenberg studies. And what, I pursued, if that letter itself were either 1) mistaken, 2) a fake, or 3) some kind of senile leg-pull?

If any of these possibilities pertained, I had at length to confess, Hasenberg studies, as such, were no more than a house of cards or a castle in the sand: perhaps the fugitive pieces alone could then rightly be

identified as the actual work of Hasenberg; and one would have to consider looking elsewhere for the authorship not only of *Short Shrift in the Schwarzwald* but also of the whole of *Baden-Baden*, as well as of all the other works ascribed to Hasenberg—including, I was even forced to admit, my own pet discovery, *Datura Days*. And if one were looking for an author, finally, was Hasenberg himself really the most likely? Was he as likely, for instance, as a writer who had during his own lifetime not only enjoyed distinctive repute, but had also undeniably written out more than half of *Baden-Baden* in her own hand? Who more likely, in other words, than Wedgie?

Such was my train of hypothesis near the outset of my labours, resulting in an argument of which the awful appeal was that it was not merely logical and therefore perhaps convincing, but also devastatingly reversible: if Wedgie were the real “Ishmael Legion,” “Hugo de Balzac,” “Harry Houndstooth,” and even “Harry de Lipp,” none of these shadowy scribblers could possibly have been Hugo de Hasenberg.

The reader may be relieved to learn, however, that I felt personally able to reject all such speculation almost immediately. The Hasenberg style, I was quite convinced, was inimitable, especially on the part of a seventeen-year-old New Yorker, even one destined to attain to a certain literary lushness herself (“‘Ah! Grigori!’ she cried, with all the strength of female being, her white breasts crushing against his thick wine-colored *galstyk* and silver-mounted bandoliers, ‘Do you think the knout alone could ever satisfy a woman such as I!!!’ ”[sic]. *Sylvie Among the Cossacks*, Boudoir Edition, p. 178; an identical passage, with the name *Grigori* changed to *Dimitri*, appears in *Silvie Rides Again*, Boudoir Edition, p. 542).

After many serious discussions Miss Stanley, the acknowledged expert, whose magisterial command of the Wedgie canon has remained beyond dispute and with whom I had of necessity kept in close contact, came emphatically to agree with me. The matter now seems settled beyond dispute, despite what I consider to be the rather shrill accusations made by Sister Honoria Klein and her colleagues in the pages of *Macha*, the feminist monthly, when I published my preliminary conclusions last year. Since it was the present writer who after all first raised the issue, my denial of authorship to Wedgie should, I think, have been accepted as a sincere effort on behalf of truth. It was certainly not intended, I should like to state quite clearly, as a red flag to the bloody-mindedness of women’s monthlies, whose writers might occasionally do

well to recall what has been said of dogs, walnut trees, and gongs. I have the permission of the editor of this journal to add that I would be most grateful for an end to anonymous and threatening phone calls, especially those with reference to specific parts of the human (or perhaps one should say the *hu-person*) body.

To reach this stage in my labours, since it required a mastery of Wedgie's complete oeuvre almost equivalent to Miss Stanley's, consumed several months. At the end, having disposed of this particular obstacle, I was merely confronted with another, as the alert reader will have seen.

Presuming now that Wedgie was not the author of *Baden-Baden*, but only its major amanuensis, would it be possible for me to assume that the other hand in the manuscript, the crude black italic, was that of the real author, i.e., Hugo de Hasenberg?

At the time my editorial labours began the only acknowledged Hasenberg holograph consisted of two love letters with his signature addressed to the Marquise Flavie de Casa-Fuerte, written when Hasenberg was in his unregenerate sixties. These letters reposed in the Bibliotheque Nationale. My researches established that a large crate full of papers had been recorded annually in the inventory of a warehouse belonging to a well-known London department store from the time of Hasenberg's death in 1925 until 26 September 1944, when the warehouse had been totally destroyed by a direct hit from a buzz-bomb, and another cache of papers was supposed to have existed once in Dresden, of which not even a record remained. The crude black italic in my manuscript might therefore be presumed to be possibly the only surviving example, other than in the Paris letters, of Hasenberg's hand. Imagine my dismay when a comparison of the letters in Paris with pages from the manuscript revealed no similarity whatever either to Wedgie's hand *or* to the black italic.

On the basis of the available evidence, I was forced to conclude that whatever in my manuscript had not been written by Wedgie had also not been written by Hugo de Hasenberg, but by some third party, as yet unknown.

Help came at this juncture, as it often does, by surprise. Early in 1977 the first volume of Constantine Privet's life of Sir Rufus Gowte appeared, to considerable critical acclaim. An extensive examination not only of his subject, but of the times in which he lived, Privet's book covered the years from Gowte's birth in 1870 to the publication of

Amazing Grace, his first novel, in 1902, and threw a great deal of incidental cold water on some of the frothier confections that had been served up in the equivalent volume of old Gowte's autobiography, *Salad Days* (U.S. title: *Flaming Youth*), published when he was eighty. The old boy's cunning and audacity had actually increased with age and avarice and Dr. Privet was able to show in detail how the suburban adulteries of Gowte's young manhood had been enriched with gossip, then mythologized in *Salad Days* into a heroic *Kunstlersgeschlechtsleben*, making *Salad Days* as big a best-seller as any of the novels—even *Proud Flesh* and the two Irish novels, *Green Rising* and *Erin Go Blah* (U.S. titles: *Scar Tissue*, *Sweeney Erect*, and *Sweeney Dejected*)—and for the same reasons, thus testifying ironically to the real strength of Gowte's claims to be a major artist. Dr. Privet's book supported these claims and devoted several pages to Hasenberg, suggesting a probable influence that, except in his famous letter, Gowte himself had never once even remotely alluded to, omitting all mention of Hasenberg in *Salad Days* or any of its autobiographical sequels.

I read my advance copy, of course, with considerable gratification, the more so as Dr. Privet was kind enough, in a paragraph and one or two footnotes, to recognize the value of my work. What most attracted my attention in the book, however, was a facsimile of a page of the first draft of *Amazing Grace* that Privet had used as a frontispiece. It had a familiar look about it, which puzzled me for days, until it dawned on me that the handwriting in this draft of Gowte's first novel was nearly identical with the handwriting in the two Paris letters ascribed for years to Hasenberg.

Here was a complication too many. I telephoned Dr. Privet, explained my discovery, and asked him point-blank if he could offer any theory by way of explanation.

The whole story has now been told in the second volume of Dr. Privet's life of Gowte, covering the years from 1902 to 1914, and is briefly as follows: attracted by Rufus Gowte's younger sister Mabel, then appearing as an ingénue in her first West End play, Hasenberg wrote to Gowte in early 1903 professing an extravagant admiration for *Amazing Grace* and invited the budding novelist to tea at Mount Street, where the younger man saw and instantly fell in love with a photograph of the dashing Wedgie, long since departed from Hasenberg's bed and board to embark on her series of marriages, but still in touch with him occasionally as an old friend. The upshot was that a simple agreement

was reached, based on a mutual procurement policy: Gowte introduced pretty Mabel to Mount Street, where she became an habituée, while Hasenberg, using Gowte as his secretary, instituted a correspondence with Flavie de Casa-Fuerte, an old acquaintance whom he knew to be related by marriage to Wedgie and through whose innocent intercession young Gowte was soon invited, at Hasenberg's insistence, to Wedgie's (second) husband's château near Monbazillac. By January 1904 Wedgie had abandoned her husband and run off with young Gowte to Cairo, where they frolicked for a season in the company of the Princess Caraman de Chimay (the former Clara Ward), whose larger-than-life-size full-length portrait in the altogether adorned one wall of the Sphinx Bar, not far from Shephard's. When Rigo, the Princess's lover, a gypsy violinist, showed signs of becoming too attentive to Wedgie, Gowte insisted that they move on to South America. There she left him in the lurch and married Wilfredo, fourth son of the Count-Duke of Carramba-Tortuga, her third husband. By March of that year Mabel had meanwhile married and borne twin sons, one of whom, now General Sir Edwin Fulverin, VC, GCSI, KCIE, CBE, CI, late Colonel of the Glenfiddich Highlanders and former C. in C., H.M. Forces in Muscat, Sharjah, and Dubai, is still living.

Sir Rufus Gowte's mature version of the exchange, as told in *The Burnished Throne* (U.S. title: *The Solid Gold Poop*) eliminates all reference to Hasenberg, suppresses the Egyptian episode, describes Wedgie under the name Dolores as a tempestuous Latin beauty encountered briefly in Brazil, and mentions even Mabel only twice, once in connection with the opening of her play ("but Mabel's extraordinary gifts, as all of us who loved her could plainly see, were not destined to be exploited under the bushel of mere professionalism") and a second time two pages later in connection with her marriage ("My sister Mabel's striking beauty had meanwhile drawn the attention of a suitor who, though a widower with children, many years her senior, and afflicted with a wasting disease of unknown origin, was to win her heart and prove a very sympathetic match; and in February she was married to Geoffrey Lord Fulverin, tenth Lord Calthrop of Glenfiddich, in a quiet ceremony at St. George's, Hanover Square").

What Constantine Privet had thus generously given me with these revelations, which confirmed that the handwriting of the Paris letters was Gowte's, was the virtual certainty of being able to proceed with a manuscript that was not only Hasenberg's holograph, but also the only known Hasenberg holograph in existence.

I need not rehearse here the many months of tedious labour involved in transforming Hasenberg's black italic, with its tortuous additions and emendations, into the reasonable typescript required for publication. Suffice it to say that having produced a text, I feel completely rewarded: there are few accidentals, as the text now stands, with which I would continue to quibble and we are left at last with only the substantives intended by Hugo de Hasenberg as our material for continued analysis and contemplation.

About these substantives, however, a few words must be said. I have earlier referred to the supposed autobiographical nature of Hasenberg's writing, which has become, rightly or wrongly, the central controversy of Hasenberg studies. It is fortunate that Miss Stanley's definitive *Life* was completed before her own recent and untimely death. Its publication, undertaken by the Taj Lam Waw Dal Research Center under my direction, will undoubtedly clarify a great many matters and settle this controversy once and for all. Without anticipating either the late Miss Stanley's presentation of the facts or her conclusions, however, I would wish to draw the reader's attention to a number of details in *Baden-Baden* that would throw serious doubt upon it as a supposed autobiography.

The year in which the story takes place is given as 1866, i.e. the year in which Hasenberg himself was twenty-two years old, yet the first-person narrator described himself as "little more than thirty-five." In that year, moreover, the "Greek Church" referred to in *Baden-Baden* (actually Rumanian Orthodox) had not yet been built, though Hasenberg certainly saw it many times later in the course of the frequent visits he made there during the eighteen-seventies and eighties. Likewise the Fabergé egg that features so notably in the tale is unlikely to have existed at that date, since the production of such items did not begin until 1884, when it is probable that Hasenberg actually met Karl Fabergé in St. Petersburg, at the same time he met Michael von Zichy.

Such inconsistencies should make the reader wary of treating *Bad Day at Baden-Baden* as a strictly autobiographical document. One would add by way of further caution that many of the medical details offered in the text are highly improbable in light of either past or current medical knowledge. An analysis of these details, which form an important part of the hitherto suppressed portions of *Short Shrift*, will appear as an appendix in the forthcoming Taj Lam Waw Dal critical edition.

To give the other side of the argument its due, however, it must be admitted that virtually every *persona* referred to in the text has now been

identified with a real once-living person. Jeanne de Pougy, Lorraine de Mohun, Louise de Raspail, and Ghislaine de Lorris, for example have all been identified with actual historical figures, as have Leblanc, La Schneider, Hassé, La Gioja, “the proto-Comtesse d’Amboise,” Bellanger, Montaland, and la Cook, “the old Duke of M———,” “his son the Marquess of V———,” Dr. Kneipp, Dr. Bilz, Professor Brownlow, Herr Hans Kastorp (the business is still in the same family), Salamanca, Marini, Cora Pearl, and Duleep Singh. Neither is there now any mystery as to the identity of “the madcap Duke,” “his mother,” or “his aunt.” And certainly it is true that one of Hasenberg’s godfathers was a Count Julius, Count Julius (Gyúla in Magyar) Bardai (1880-1886), infamous for his part in the abortive Hungarian revolt of 1848, who actually did own an estate near Baden-Baden. Count Julius Bardai is recorded, however, as having died peacefully in his bed on a yacht off Corfu while visiting that island in the retinue of the Empress Elizabeth; and the estate left by him to Hasenberg was not the property at Baden-Baden but one at Máriánske Lázne, a smallholding so encumbered by debt that Hasenberg sold it immediately to agents of Crown Prince Rudolf, who later complained of being cheated. Nor do the lists of servants at either estate include a Hans or a Fritz.

All these matters and a wealth of others will be discussed at length in the apparatus of the forthcoming *Taj Lam Waw Dal* critical edition. I am meanwhile profoundly grateful to the editor of this journal for having given me the opportunity to publish this interim edition—an extraordinary service to students of Hasenberg and the general public alike. Although numerous other debts of gratitude acquired during my labours can most adequately and appropriately be acknowledged only with the publication of the *Taj Lam Waw Dal* edition, the specific preparation of this edition has nevertheless entailed the help of many who, because of their special contributions, deserve to be acknowledged here separately as well.

To the Ford Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Solomon Guggenheim Foundation, Mobil Oil, United Technologies, The Schweinfurth Trust, The Rose T. and Clarice M. Fitch Foundation for the Encouragement of the Arts, The John D. Rockefeller III Foundation, UNESCO, USAID, ICOMOS, and ICCROM, for helping me to reconstruct the Emperor Nero’s Aureus Domus in authentic detail at its old site on the Palatine and to establish it as the *Taj Lam Waw Dal* Research Center’s physical home, I therefore extend

my heartfelt thanks, reminding colleagues in the field, fellow labourers in the vineyard, that "many are called but few are chosen" and that "to him who hath shall it be given." See also *Adonais*, Canto XL.

To my staff at the Taj Lam Waw Dal Research Center, for at least appearing to humor what must often seem mere whims, goes my continuing appreciation of their true worth.

To Dr. Constantine Privet, my admiration and thanks.

For generously financing a work-study voyage by yacht through the South Seas following an itinerary that Hasenberg might conceivably have contemplated during the writing of *Baden-Baden*, I am grateful to the R.H.W. Dillard Foundation of Roanoke, Virginia, as I am to Charon Tours, Ltd. who arranged the trip, and to the captain and crew of the USS Squid, who rescued us when we were shipwrecked on Pukatua.

To Mrs. R.D. Lightfoot, who beguiled away many an otherwise tedious hour with her Hawaiian rhythms; to Miss Trixie Finch, my typist, who was heavily employed throughout our stay on the island, especially in ministering to the needs of the crew, and who bore her many burdens without a syllable of complaint; to Master Tadziu Szczepinski, who bore his, as well, with equal cheer; to Miss Marcelle LaVerne, Miss Sunny Skye, and Miss Ava Polk, also shipmates, to whose accomplishments, though even more incessantly called into play following our rescue by the United States Navy than they had been during the days before, seemed virtually inexhaustible; to Mrs. F.X. Cacherra, whose personal support was likewise unfailingly available; and to the Misses Bambi and Heidi, her two charming daughters, whose enthusiastic labours under me, no matter the rigours of our unwilling sojourn, still leave me in retrospect dazed with admiration, go my continued affection and enduring gratitude for having transformed what might have been a sordid physical trial into a veritable symposium.

To the memory of the late Miss Gloria Stanley, finally, whose great spirit was so sadly to prove unequal to the hardships of the voyage, this *opusculum* is humbly and affectionately dedicated: *sors sororis nobis sospiratorum non sortita.*

L. Wilton Dippstick
Taj Lam Waw Dal Research Center
Via Monte Palatina
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