“Escape to Life”

"Escape to Life"

German Intellectuals in New York: A Compendium on Exile after 1933

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De Gruyter

This publication is based on the symposium "Escape to Life. German Intellectuals in New York," which was funded by the Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung (support code 01UG0712).

ISBN 978-3-11-025867-7
e-ISBN 978-3-11-025868-4

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

A CIP catalog record for this book has been applied for at the Library of Congress

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available in the Internet at http://dnb.dnb.de.

© 2012 Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co. KG, Berlin/Boston

Typesetting: Apex CoVantage, LLC

Printing: Hubert & Co. GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
♾ Printed on acid-free paper

Printed in Germany

www.degruyter.com

Contents

Eckart Goebel/Sigrid Weigel
Introduction 1

Birgit R. Erdle
"Sticking to our language" / "an unserer Sprache festhalten:"
ADORNO in NYC. 9

Jacques Lezra
ADORNO's Monsters 27

Sigrid Weigel
Sounding Through – Poetic Difference – Self-Translation:
Hannah ARENDT's Thoughts and Writings Between Different
Languages, Cultures, and Fields 55

Liliane Weissberg
From Königsberg to Little Rock:
Hannah ARENDT and the Concept of Childhood. 80

Karlheinz Barck
Erich AUERBACH's Second Exile 100

Vivian Liska
Walter BENJAMIN's Farewell to Europe. 111

Falko Schmieder
No Place Yet: Ernst BLOCH's Utopia in Exile. 128

Robert Cohen
Bertolt BRECHT, Joseph Losey, and Brechtian Cinema 142

Daniel Weidner
"Without knowing America, you cannot say anything valid about democratic politics."
Hermann BROCH and the Ethics of Exile 162

Robert Stockhammer
"Lesen Sie before the letter:"
Oskar Maria GRAF in New York 182

Eckart Goebel
Eclipse of Reason:
Max HORKHEIMER's New York Lectures, 1944 195

Michael W. Jennings
I'm not there:
New York as Displaced Psychogeography in Uwe JOHNSON's *Jahrestage*. 208

Paul Fleming
Bodies: Ernst H. KANTOROWICZ 221

Anton Kaes
Siegfried KRACAUER: The Film Historian in Exile 236

Stephan Braese
Identifying the Impulse:
Alfred LION Founds the *Blue Note* Jazz Label 270

Jerome Bolton
A Flaschenpost Recast:
Leo LÖWENTHAL's Late Writings 288

Rodolphe Gasché
On An Eastward Trajectory Toward Europe:
Karl LÖWITH's Exiles. 305

Jonathan Kassner
Ethics of Imagination: On Erika MANN's Works in Exile 331

Nicola Behrmann
You Can't Go Home Again: Exiles in Klaus MANN's *The Volcano* 353

Anne-Kathrin Reulecke
Voyage with Don Quixote: Thomas MANN between European Culture and American Politics. 371

Elke Siegel
The Returns of Herbert MARCUSE. 391

Paul North
Exile is a Flop: Soma MORGENSTERN over Central Park 414

Andreas Beyer
Stranger in Paradise: Erwin PANOFSKY's Expulsion to the Academic Parnassus 429

John T. Hamilton
The Flight Into Orgonomy: Wilhelm REICH in New York. . . . 445

Martin Treml
Reinventing the Canonical: The Radical Thinking of Jacob TAUBES 457

Thomas Stachel
"Almost American:" Ernst TOLLER Abroad. 479

Chadwick Smith
"Inter, but not national:" Vilém FLUSSER and the Technologies of Exile 499

Dawn Freer
Fred STEIN (1909–1967): A Retrospective. 510

Fred Stein
Portraits 521

About the Authors 547

Introduction

Eckart Goebel/Sigrid Weigel

For those who succeeded in escaping from Nazi Germany or other European countries annexed or occupied by the Nazis, this escape first and foremost meant survival. But it also marked the entrance to a new life within another culture, where a different language was spoken and where people behaved differently, following unfamiliar customs, ideas, and values – a country in which unknown policies obtained. In citing the title of the book Klaus and Erika Mann published in Boston in 1939, *Escape to Life*, this compendium on "German Intellectuals in New York" pays tribute to this famous publication produced in exile, and on exile, but from an entirely different perspective.

While Erika and Klaus Mann described their contemporary *Schicksalsgenossen* in order to depict the situation of these refugees and to introduce them as authors and intellectuals to the U.S.-American audience, our portraits of the same group (although not presenting exactly the same names) differ from the Manns' publication not only in that they are written from a historical distance of more than seven decades, but also since from this retrospective perspective we seek to examine further the figure of 'escape to life,' and to pursue the following questions: Escape to what kind of life? What effects did the linguistic and cultural transition have on intellectual work, on writing, acting and thinking? What consequences did exile have for one's language and position within cultural, social and academic life?

In countless movies and autobiographical memories of exiled persons the appearance of the Statue of Liberty in the New York Harbor functions as a sort of emblem for both survival and the promise of a new life. The first footstep on the ground of the immigrant's new country forms a mythological scene of American exile. However, the lives that follow this initial step – when made voluntarily, for the promise of economic opportunity, adventure, or the mythical 'better life' – are significantly different from the stories of the persons portrayed in this compendium. So much more than other American cities, New York

with its promising Statue functions not only as a shimmering metonymy for immigration from all over the world, but also specifically, indeed dramatically and painfully, as an emblem for German and German-Jewish exile after 1933. The impact of German émigrés can be traced throughout the city in many ways, reaching from spectacular buildings such as the *Bruno Walter Auditorium* at the Lincoln Center on the Upper Westside to NYU's storied Department of German near Washington Square in Greenwich Village. Here the memory traces and remnants of exile meet and intersect with historical research on, firstly, the impact of the Jewish and non-Jewish German intellectuals on American culture and, secondly, the effects access to American culture had on these intellectuals' work, language, and thoughts. The NYU department forged its academic identity as a place where the lasting and traumatic psychological, intellectual, and social consequences of the murderous so-called *Third Reich* are the subject of ongoing discussion and research. The department is approached regularly by descendents of German émigrés from the Nazi period asking whether it would take care of German books no one in the family can read, or wants to read anymore. As a consequence, books such as Goethe's precious *Ausgabe letzter Hand*, Walther Rathenau's writings, first editions of Ernst Toller's plays, and *Mein Kampf* (with its frontispiece scratched out), found their way into the department's library as the scattered and unsettling remnants of exile.

These books, themselves lost in exile, are a symptom of a specific pattern of migration that distinguishes the German exile after 1933 from most other parts of the heterogeneous immigrant culture of the city. The unreadability of these books, which emerges already in the second or third generation, marks the gap between these descendants and the lived exile of intellectuals, authors, and academics: For they brought particular necessities with them that are usually handed down not within the family but rather in publications, journals, university classes, theaters, and other public institutions. The most important part of the belongings they brought with them was comprised of thoughts, ideas, philosophies, methodologies, and terminology – in fine, their intellectual language. Therefore the cultural and intellectual remains of these immigrants follow other trajectories than those of generational transmission and travel through various steps of translations and transformations, of forgetting and remembrance, of belatedness and reconsideration. This compendium presents a series of portraits of German intellectuals, most of them Jews who escaped from Germany as a consequence of the Nazi regime, supplemented by one person who never arrived in America (Walter

Benjamin), one who instead of reaching NYC was exiled in South America (Vilém Flusser), and two who came to New York only after the war had ended yet who were still confronted with its aftermath (Jacob Taubes, Uwe Johnson). New York here stands as a metaphor for exile to the promised land of America.

Some of the articles in this volume deal with public figures, such as Thomas Mann, who considered New York primarily a highly symbolic threshold on their way into the New World. It was immediately after his arrival at the Bedford Hotel in NYC on February 21, 1938, when the acclaimed Nobel laureate in an interview with reporters from *The New York Times* uttered the famous and at times heavily debated words about his being exiled from Germany:

> It is hard to bear. But what makes it easier is the realization of the poisoned atmosphere in Germany. That makes it easier because it's actually no loss. Where I am, there is Germany. I carry my German culture in me. I have contact with the world and I do not consider myself fallen.[1]

In order to give a full picture of exile, we considered it reasonable to also integrate articles on intellectuals who did not stay in New York City but were related to those who stayed. Good examples for this decision are the articles on Herbert Marcuse and Leo Löwenthal, which highly contribute to a better understanding of the situation of the Frankfurt School in exile, as well as to a historical reconstruction of the impact critical theory exerted in the United States during and after WWII.

Most of the articles, however, focus on intellectuals, scholars, and writers on whose life, thinking and writing the city of New York had a crucial impact; who decided to stay in this city for the rest of their lives, where they would pursue a career under, mostly, difficult conditions. This was the case with Hannah Arendt, Siegfried Kracauer, and Oskar Maria Graf. Others again, most prominently Max Horkheimer, Theodor W. Adorno, Bertolt Brecht, and Ernst Bloch, decided to return to the divided Germany soon after 1945. Since Uwe Johnson and Jacob Taubes (whose work is unthinkable without the experience of New York City) exerted an important influence on German intellectual culture after WWII, the editors decided to add articles on these two authors who actually belong to the next generation.

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1 Cf. Anne-Kathrin Reulecke's article on Thomas Mann in the present volume.

John T. Hamilton reconstructs Wilhelm Reich's tragic New York trajectory that lead from fame to jail; Thomas Stachel reports on Ernst Toller's life, which dwindled from the magical existence of a shooting star to suicide in a Manhattan hotel. An uncanny and bleak New York scenario is unfolded in Anton Kaes' compelling article on Siegfried Kracauer, which presents new and unpublished material from the archives:

> Kracauer, the foremost film critic of the Weimar Republic, sits in a projection room at the Museum of Modern Art, re-viewing films from the Weimar era, most of which he himself had reviewed before. He revisits them with the benefit (or curse) of hindsight. He watches the films with the knowledge of Weimar democracy's slide into the dictatorship of the Third Reich. In this process of "back-shadowing," Weimar films appear as unwitting documents for the psychological conditions that made fascism possible.[2]

This compendium is based on a symposium that was organized by the German Department of New York University (NYU) together with the Berlin *Zentrum für Literatur- und Kulturforschung* (Center for Literary and Cultural Research, ZfL) and took place in Manhattan at various venues from September 29 to October 1, 2010. Against the backdrop of New York City and the glittering, dramatic, or sad lives of German and German-Jewish émigrés for which it was the setting after 1933, the character of the symposium on "Escape to Life" stood out from other conferences the department had organized in previous years. Due to the extraordinary public interest, the makeup of the conference audience was remarkably diverse: Besides classes from local high schools many people from outside of academia attended, even joining the over-crowded roundtable discussion featuring Avital Ronell, Liliane Weissberg, Richard Wolin, Michael Jennings, and Peter Stein as part of an exhibition opening.

In addition to the talks, "Escape to Life" produced a show presented at NYU's new *Open House*. We displayed a series of portraits shot by Dresden-born and highly acclaimed New York photographer Fred Stein. An article with recollections by Dawn Freer in this volume informs us about Fred Stein's biography: Expelled, as a Jew and socialist activist, from his country of birth in 1933, he first escaped to France and later to the United States. Trained as a German lawyer, he was unable to

2 Cf. Anton Kaes' article in the present volume.

work in his profession but he discovered his great talent as a photographer. His portraits of famous intellectuals, artists, and other public figures from various fields and national backgrounds became part of our collective memory, and yet the artist who created them is nearly forgotten. The Fred Stein exhibition also documented the lasting presence of the past on a personal level, for Fred Stein's son, Peter Stein, who is currently Professor for cinematography at NYU's highly regarded Tisch School, also took part. We would like to cordially thank Peter Stein for his willingness to participate in our symposium, for which he provided his father's precious art works.

The present volume reconstructs for the first time parts of a project Fred Stein pursued and which has not been fully disclosed and researched yet: a documentation of prominent cultural representatives of exile in a series of photographic portraits. By publishing a selection of twenty-five portraits in this volume, the editors hope to contribute to the rediscovery of Fred Stein's work, including a masterful series of street photographs and many more portraits never shown in public.

The Fred Stein exhibition triggered strong reactions, with critical ones among them: One elderly lady left a note criticizing the fact that the title of the exhibition was merely "German Intellectuals in New York" instead of "German Jewish Intellectuals." Numerous articles in the present volume indeed pivot around this painful and haunting question of address, approaching it in various forms or taking it as the starting point of their analyses. Paul Fleming's article, for instance, provides us with a reconstruction of Ernst Kantorowicz's transformation from an ultra-nationalist volunteer in WW I and fanaticized *Freicorpskämpfer* after 1918 into a highly regarded, if reluctant, Princeton professor. This metamorphosis articulated itself in his writings. Thus Kantorowicz's first book on medieval emperor Frederick the Second, written under Stefan George's spell and published in 1928, was considered a political prophecy of returning German grandeur. It found admirers among the extreme right in Germany such as Nazi-leader Hermann Göring. In the United States by contrast, Ernst Kantorowicz, who had, as Jew, lost his position as Full Professor in 1934, decided to never write in German again and published his masterpiece on *The King's Two Bodies* in masterful English prose.

The deep shock about being brutally stripped of their German citizenship is one of the many earnest leitmotifs in the present volume. There is outrage to be found about the fact that a dubious party and its uneducated "Führer" should be in charge of deciding who was to be

considered German and who was not. This outrage is poignantly palpable in the case of German citizens who had risked their lives in the trenches of WW I, who had severely suffered at the home front or had strongly contributed to the international reputation of German culture, scholarship, and science. The experience of the utterly insulting loss of citizenship and of having to bear the resulting serious legal problems is a fate that German and German-Jewish émigrés shared after 1933.

Beyond the troubling human aspects of emigration addressed in this book, it also pursues a theoretical interest concerning a problem that has become ever more urgent in an increasingly globalized world. Thus the articles not only explore the impact the United States, and NYC in particular, had on the life of these writers, but also the influence they in turn exerted on American intellectual life. In addition, the essays analyze the transformations, or even metamorphoses, that took place in the exiled intellectuals' *thinking* when it was translated into another language and aimed at an American audience. This is the reason why the editors refrained from adding articles on actors, painters, directors, musicians, and art managers (with the exception of Alfred Lion, the founder of the *Blue Note* Jazz label). This decision was made to be able to focus on language as the medium of literature and thought:

What were the consequences for an author once the readers of his or her native tongue could not be reached, when his or her thoughts were carried over into a foreign language and offered to an unknown audience? What happens to the chains of thought and to intellectual creativity once a professional author cannot perform stylistic tight-rope-walking or the fine play of allusions anymore, the way he or she was accustomed to? In a famous interview with Günter Gaus, Hannah Arendt mentions the universe of poetic references sounding through her work. This resource, constitutive for her thinking and imagination, was lost in the foreign language she decided to primarily use after 1933:

> I write in English, though I have never lost the distance. There is an enormous difference between mother tongue and all other languages. In my case I can explain this very clearly: In German I know quite a great deal of German poems by heart. They are constantly there – *in the back of my mind** – ; the same can never be achieved for another language. Thus I take liberties in German that I would never possibly take in English.[3]

3 Cf. Sigrid Weigel's article on Hannah Arendt in this volume.

Klaus and Erika Mann were unable to anticipate, when they published their book in 1939, to what an unthinkably large or even obscene extent "Escape to Life" was, and will remain, a euphemism: For very few people were actually able to escape, and more than six million Jews were murdered during the Holocaust. The editors are therefore very grateful to Vivian Liska for providing her article on Walter Benjamin for this book. Sadly, Benjamin postponed his necessary 'Farewell to Europe' until it was too late and he saw no other way out than to commit suicide at the French border with Spain in 1940. As Vivian Liska shows, Benjamin in fact unfolded over many years an intellectual game of chess about leaving Europe for Palestine or, later, the United States, in letters to his worried friends. Benjamin's fragile art, which constantly produced aporias in the interest of a permanent deferral of exile, gives us a tragic example of a deep attachment to Europe held up against the merciless machinery of Nazi decision-making.

Since most of the authors discussed here developed radically new forms of writing and would protest against the traditional cut of academic disciplines, it did not seem appropriate to order the articles according to any standard labels. The editors preferred to present them in alphabetical order instead. Since the volume unites American and European, mostly German, scholars, we tried to balance in a productive way the different perspectives that result from the authors' various and divergent intellectual contexts. In the case of Adorno and Arendt we decided to publish two essays on each author since the influence both writers exert on critical theory and political thought, in both the U.S. and in Germany, can hardly be overestimated.

An exception from the alphabetical arrangement of essays was made with Chadwick Smith's article on Vilém Flusser, which we put at the very end as a brief theoretical outlook. Flusser was able to escape the Nazi regime via England to South America with his wife's family. He always longed, however, for a life in New York, but was never able to make it there. Flusser drafted a 'philosophy of emigration' pointing, as an element of his media theory, far into the future. As the article on Flusser underscores, the present volume in its entirety is also intended as a book on the *concept* of exile, addressed from various angles. Jacques Lezra's article, for example, takes Edward Said's critique of Adorno as a starting point and constant point of reference, thus linking our project to current debates on migration. Paul North's contribution on Soma Morgenstern can also be read as a succinct deconstruction of exile as a questionable, comforting badge:

> Whatever else it may do or mean, at different times and in different contexts, this word, "Exil," gives a name and a determinate description – does it not? – and thus confers a more permanent status on a contingent historical event. To some extent then in every use, in very general terms, the word fulfills an intention to sidestep contingency and change, and loan experience the constancy of a meaning and a reference beyond a unique or unstable event. It transforms a blow of experience into an article of knowledge. The great interruption of habits and identifications that "Exil" means to say becomes with this word, at least in part, habituatable once more, making an expulsion into a destination, turning a voyage without a final terminus into a reference to a return.[4]

The editors and contributors hope to have avoided the blunder of turning the misery of exile into a comforting narrative by means of using the term "Exil" in the problematic sense that Paul North so convincingly criticizes. Indeed the present volume reminds us of deep wounds still open today. The epistemological work on exile after 1933, i.e. work on what the pronounced metamorphosis of life, language, and ideas actually signifies, remains unfinished.

Both the symposium and this book, adding a number of articles to the talks presented in NYC, are the result of a productive cooperation between the *Zentrum für Literatur- und Kulturforschung,* Berlin and the Department of German at New York University. The New York-based *German Center for Research and Innovation*, established in 2010, co-sponsored this event, and we would like to thank its director, Joann Halpern, for her wonderful support on many levels: Dr. Halpern also made it possible that the first day of the symposium could take place in the auditorium of the German Consulate General in midtown Manhattan, and we respectfully thank the consulate for its hospitality. We would also like to thank *Deutsches Haus* at NYU and its former director, Dr. Kathrin Di Paola (now at DAAD), for hosting the subsequent talks of the symposium.

The editors and contributors would like to express their sincere gratitude to Jerome Bolton and Chadwick Smith (NYU) and Tine Kutschbach (ZfL) for editing the essays of the present volume.

4 Cf. Paul North's article in this volume.

"Sticking to our language" / "an unserer Sprache festhalten:" Adorno in NYC[1]

Birgit R. Erdle

On February 16, 1938, Theodor W. Adorno and his wife Gretel left London and embarked on an ocean liner to New York. Adorno took with him an unfinished manuscript of his essay on Richard Wagner, parts of which were to be published in 1939 under the title of "Fragmente über Wagner" in the *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*. He had discussed some earlier drafts of this essay with Walter Benjamin when he and Gretel were staying in San Remo at the turn of the year 1937/38. While working on this essay, Adorno had a kind of dream vision which could be said to symbolise the leap he was to undertake when he moved from Europe to America. This vision is described in Adorno's *Dream Notes*, in a piece entitled "London 1937," and was written while Adorno was working on his "Versuch über Wagner." At the end of this piece Adorno writes:

> Brünhilde then appeared in the background as the New York Statue of Liberty. Sounding like a nagging wife, she screamed, "I want a ring, I want a beautiful ring, don't forget to take her ring from her." This was how Siegfried obtained the ring of the Nibelung.[2]

Europe, "the crumbling continent," as Walter Benjamin called it in a letter to Gretel and Theodor Adorno dated August 28, 1938,[3] protrudes as

1 Transl. Gabriele Rahaman.

2 Adorno, Theodor W., *Dream Notes*, Cambridge 2007, 3 (transl. amended). In the German original this reads as follows: "Da erschien Brünhilde im Hintergrund, in Gestalt der New Yorker Freiheitsstatue. Sie rief im Ton einer keifenden Ehefrau: 'Ich möchte einen Ring haben, ich möchte einen schönen Ring haben, vergiß nicht, ihr den Ring abzunehmen.' So gewann Siegfried den Ring des Nibelungen." Adorno, Theodor W., *Traumprotokolle*, ed. Christoph Gödde/Henri Lonitz, Frankfurt/M. 2005, 9.

3 Adorno, Gretel/Benjamin, Walter, *Correspondence 1930–1940*, ed. Henri Lonitz/Christoph Gödde, Cambridge 2008, 242. In the original text the term "collapsing

topography and as a reference – in direct, explicit form – into Adorno's writings, dreams, letters, and thought processes. In his letters, hybrid locations are created through the transposition of remembered and experienced spaces. As Adorno reports to Benjamin on March 7, 1938, shortly after their arrival in New York:

> As we both expected, it has not proved all that difficult getting used to our new situation. It is, *sérieusement*, much more European here than it is in London, and 7th Avenue, which is very close to where we live, rather gently reminds us of boulevard Montparnasse, just as Greenwich Village, where we live, similarly reminds us of Mont St Geneviève.[4]

This description of the city is, without a doubt, also meant to lure Benjamin to follow them to the United States; the single French word in this otherwise German letter, *sérieusement*, seems to point to this. It is here, when describing the streets of New York, that Adorno switches to the language of Benjamin's country of exile. This becomes all the more evident in the attached letter by Gretel Adorno, which stresses the "contrast between the extremely modern and the downright shabby:"

> One does not have to search for surrealistic things here, for one stumbles across them all the time. In the early evening the high rise blocks are very imposing, but later on, when the offices are all closed and the electric lighting is much reduced, they remind me of badly lit European tenements. And just imagine, there are stars here too, with a steady moon and wonderful sunsets like those of early summer.[5]

A few months later, while vacationing in Bar Harbor, Maine, Adorno writes to Benjamin:

> As far as American conditions generally are concerned, we have found an exceptionally pleasant location here: on an island resembling something between southern France, Rügen and Cronberg.[6]

Similarly, in a dream vision which appears in the *Dream Notes* under the title "Los Angeles, 22 May 1941," places such as Amorbach, the west

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continent" is used at this point. Adorno, Theodor W./Benjamin, Walter, *Briefwechsel 1928–1940*, Frankfurt/M. 1994, 356.

4 Adorno, Theodor W./Benjamin, Walter, *The Complete Correspondence 1928–1940*, ed. Henri Lonitz, Cambridge 1999, 241 (emphasis in original).

5 Ibid., 241.

6 Ibid., 265.

coast of America, and the *Platz der Residenz* in Bamberg merge together in a complicated mingling of space and time, a *chronotopos* full of sudden, vertiginous drops and openings in which various levels of time collide and shift about with familiar and strange phenomena.

With the increasingly terrifying news about the persecution of the Jews in Germany, to which Adorno's parents were also exposed, as well as with the news about the collapse of the judicial system in Europe and the stance taken by other European governments vis-à-vis National Socialism, Europe mutates more and more (in Adorno's mind) into a site of catastrophe. In November 1937, while still in London, Adorno writes in one of his letters to Benjamin about the "entire European predicament," he defines this as a "permanent catastrophe" from which only catastrophe itself could provide an escape.[7]

One did not have to stay in Europe in order to defend the last abandoned European post. "[T]he post we have to defend," Adorno writes in November 1937, assuring Benjamin in a comment both ironic and consolatory, "will prove a lost one everywhere under all circumstances."[8] America becomes the place not only for Horkheimer but also for Adorno to preserve their intellectual legacy for posterity. In London, the midpoint between Europe and America, the "thought of being gassed"[9] already appears in one of Adorno's letters, an image of anguish perhaps triggered when remembering the gas warfare in the First World War. For Adorno, America, and especially the city of New York, becomes his "hiding place," his "*Schlupfwinkel*," enabling him "to secure some of our insights, which might in future times prove not entirely worthless

7 "[. . .] it really seems to me that such a catastrophe is the only way out of the entire European predicament, and indeed I am almost tempted to regard this as a solution to the other alternative of a permanent catastrophe." Ibid., 228f. "Es scheint mir aber, daß wirklich aus der Verstrickung der europäischen Dinge kein Ausweg bleibt als die Katastrophe, und fast möchte ich diesen gegenüber der Katastrophe in Permanenz in der Tat für einen Ausweg halten." Adorno/Benjamin, *Briefwechsel*, 298.

8 Adorno/Benjamin, *The Complete Correspondence*, 229. "Es mag uns dabei zum ironischen Troste gereichen, daß der Posten, den wir zu beziehen haben, überall und unter allen Umständen ein verlorener sein wird." Adorno/Benjamin, *Briefwechsel*, 298.

9 Adorno, Theodor W./Horkheimer, Max, *Briefwechsel 1927–1969. Band II: 1938–1944*, ed. Christoph Gödde/Henri Lonitz, Frankfurt/M. 2004, 27 (February 8, 1938).

for humanity."[10] With regard to the depressing news from Europe (German occupation of the Netherlands and Belgium, advance of German troops into Northern France), Adorno again points out the support he derives from the "necessity of dealing exclusively with pedantic questions of formulation in a foreign language"[11] – a remark that refers to his work at the radio research project, which was at that point soon to be concluded.

For Adorno, then, America is a "hiding place" for the production of the "sacred texts" as he describes, in some of his letters, the works he is yet to produce. At the same time America is, for him, also "the most advanced observation point."[12] However, this well-known and concise term is applied to America only in hindsight, when Adorno, now returned to Europe, is casting a backward glance at America. This concept is further developed in Adorno's essay "Scientific Experiences of a European Scholar in America," published in 1968, in which he proclaims: "Within the total development of middle-class civilization, the United States has undoubtedly arrived at one extreme. She displays capitalism in a state of almost complete purity, without any pre-capitalistic remnants."[13] The view developed in this article is one that is looking back to America from the vantage point of Europe after a gap of nearly thirty years and within the context of the various student movements' discourses of the late 1960s. It is thus a view that is set within a shifting framework of time and place that focuses on the perceptions of culture itself: it concentrates on that perception of culture which is grounded in empirical research, in the norms and methods of measuring and "collecting data."[14] It is the type of researching cultural phenomena with which Adorno was confronted while working with Paul Lazarsfeld. I shall not dwell on this aspect here, as it has already been discussed in much detail.

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10 Adorno, Theodor W., *Letters to His Parents 1939–1951*, ed. Christoph Gödde/Henri Lonitz, Cambridge 2006, 54 (May 28, 1940).

11 Adorno, *Letters to his Parents*, 53. "[. . .] der Zwang, sich ausschließlich mit peniblen Darstellungsfragen in einer fremden Sprache abzugeben, hat mir geholfen [. . .]." Adorno, Theodor W., *Briefe an die Eltern 1939–1951*, Frankfurt/M. 2003, 84.

12 Adorno, Theodor W., "Scientific Experiences of a European Scholar in America," in: Donald Fleming/Bernard Bailyn (ed.), *The Intellectual Migration. Europe and America, 1930–1960*, Cambridge 1969, 338–370, 369.

13 Adorno, "Scientific Experiences," 369.

14 "I considered it to be my fitting and objectively proffered assignment to *interpret* phenomena – not to ascertain, sift, and classify facts and make them available as information." Ibid., 339 (emphasis in original).

A second aspect rather seems to me more interesting, namely that the American experience, as Adorno says in the above-mentioned article of 1968, forced him to cease regarding "as natural the circumstances that had developed historically in Europe," that is, he was forced "not to take things for granted."[15] Even in the German version of this essay Adorno uses this English phrase.

In his essay on foreign words, "Wörter aus der Fremde," written ten years earlier (around 1958), a similar figure of thought appears: according to Adorno, the uncomprehended foreign word interrupts the naturalness of speaking itself. The foreign word thus interrupts the "conformist momentum of language," as Adorno has it. Therefore foreign words in particular represent, or call to mind, the basic artificiality of linguistic utterances. In a similar way, his American experience, as described by him in the above mentioned essay of 1968, seems to have caused an interruption in his life, tearing apart the assumed 'given' nature of his own cultural preconditions. Such preconditions (here Adorno especially emphasises "the European presuppositions of musical cultivation in which I was immersed"[16]) are exposed as being not just a given and, further, as not simply being natural. He points out that it "seems to me a fundamental distinction whether one bears these along unreflectingly or becomes aware of them precisely in contradistinction to the standards of the most technologically and industrially developed country."[17] In the original German text, the phrase is "*der kulturellen Voraussetzungen inne werden*" or, as the English translation has it, '*becoming aware*' of these cultural preconditions: the difference between the two languages at this point stresses that moment in time when the mother tongue is, so to speak, seen from outside, and becomes an artificial, i.e., non-natural object.

On February 29, 1940, Adorno writes in a letter to Benjamin that he, Adorno, might well say "that, since I have been here in America, all of my reflections on materialist anthropology have come to centre upon the concept of the 'reflex character.'"[18] At that time, Adorno had just finished reading Benjamin's work on Baudelaire and is thus referring in particular to Benjamin's description of the reflex mechanism the machine triggers in the 'worker' – a mechanism that Benjamin connects with the experience of "Choc," which in turn is compared with the shock

15 Adorno, "Scientific Experiences," 367.
16 Ibid.
17 Ibid.
18 Adorno/Benjamin, *The Complete Correspondence*, 320.

the passer-by experiences in the crowd. The connection between the theoretical motifs of shock, forgetting, and reflexivity, which Adorno observes Benjamin developing in his text, is now taken over by Adorno and, as his letter shows, used for his own purposes and applied directly to his own field of expertise, i.e. music; particularly to popular hit songs and advertising. In this letter, Adorno refers to his own essay "On the Fetish Character in Music and the Regression of Listening," published two years before, in 1938, or, to be precise, he refers to a point in this text which is concerned with the connection between forgetting, remembering, and advertising.

However, I would like to introduce another text at this point which is to be found in part one of Adorno's *Minima Moralia. Reflections from Damaged Life* (1944). I find this piece particularly interesting because it makes a connection between thoughts on hit songs and a discussion of the interplay between two languages, namely English and German. Even in the German original of this essay the title is kept in English: "*English Spoken*." It starts with a memory from childhood: "In my childhood, some elderly English ladies with whom my parents kept up relations often gave me books as presents" – books in English containing indecipherable texts, but with "glaring pictures, titles and vignettes."[19] The persona speaking here then tells of his "belief," triggered by this experience, "that in general objects of this kind were not books at all, but advertisements, perhaps for machines like those my uncle produced in his London factory."[20] Adorno continues as follows: "Since I came to live in Anglo-Saxon countries and to understand English, this awareness has not been dispelled but strengthened."[21] This sentence, for all intended purposes, explodes the concept of understanding since it becomes evident that the confusion of "books" with "advertisements" is not based on Adorno's incomprehension of the English language. Rather, it seems to be the case that knowledge of English, in particular, and familiarity with cultural life in the UK and USA causes an "awareness" (grounded in his earlier childhood belief) that what appears to be a book is in reality an advertisement. At this point in the text, there is an abrupt change to another topic, namely that of translating literary language. The text itself becomes

19 Adorno, Theodor W., *Minima Moralia. Reflections from Damaged Life*, London, New York 2005, 47. This edition is in the following shortened to Adorno, *Minima Moralia* (e).

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid.

bilingual here, speaking, one could say, in two voices: "There is a song by Brahms, a poem by Heyse, with the lines: *O Herzeleid, du Ewigkeit! / Selbander nur ist Seligkeit.* In the most widely used American edition this is rendered as: 'O misery, eternity! / But two in one were ecstasy.'"[22] Here, language itself, or the difference between the two languages, demonstrates a shift that is not simply a shift of meaning. Adorno is not only content with pointing out how "*Herzeleid*" is turned into "misery," and "*Seligkeit*" into "ecstasy" while the pairing of "*Ewigkeit*" with "eternity" remains strangely neutral. In the final passage of "English Spoken," Adorno formulates what is actually happening in this translation from German to English: "The archaic, passionate nouns of the original have been turned into catchwords for a hit song, designed to boost it. Illuminated in the neon-light switched on by these words, culture displays its character as advertising."[23]

If one takes seriously Adorno's assertion that America is the most advanced observation point from which it is possible to decipher the future of culture, it becomes clear at this point – through the shift that takes place as a consequence of the difference between the two languages, that is, through the material of language itself – that one indeed finds here the very nullification and destruction of passion, experience, and expression Adorno attempts to describe when he borrows the concept of reflexivity from Benjamin. The place that "*English Spoken*" takes within the series of texts that constitute *Minima Moralia* is exactly between "*To them shall no thoughts be turned*" ("*Nicht gedacht soll ihrer werden*") and *"On parle français.*" This position underlines how the experience of emigration and the topic of destruction of experience are entwined with each other. One may speak English or French, but both texts deal with rules of thought that are inherent in each language, something that languages themselves disclose if one attempts (as Adorno does in his dedication to Horkheimer) "to know the truth about life in its immediacy," which necessitates that one "must scrutinize its estranged form, the objective powers that determine individual existence even in its most hidden

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid., 47. "Aus den altertümlich leidenschaftlichen Hauptwörtern des Originals sind Kennworte für Schlager geworden, welche diesen anpreisen. In ihrem angedrehten Licht erstrahlt der Reklamecharakter der Kultur." Adorno, Theodor W., *Minima Moralia. Reflexionen aus dem beschädigten Leben*, Frankfurt/M. 2003, 53. This edition is in the following shortened to Adorno, *Minima Moralia* (g).

recesses."[24] Whereas in French, as described by Adorno in "*On parle français,*" words are still able to name and call up the captured passions, this is no longer possible in English: here the words are, according to Adorno, simply catchwords – catchwords for hit-songs which "advertise" the song in question – that is, the words themselves are advertisements embedded in the sphere of consumption; they are already part of capitalist circulation.

The way in which reflex character and American culture are linked in Adorno's discourse can be explained by taking a closer look at hit songs. What does 'reflex character' mean in the context of hit songs? An answer to this question becomes apparent in Adorno's description of a phenomenon contained in a letter to Horkheimer, written in the spring of 1940, where he defines the conscious perception of a hit song as a "sudden recognition, as if lit up by a spotlight, which is marked by libidinal cathexis."[25] This sudden recognition corresponds to what Benjamin in *On Some Motifs in Baudelaire* calls the "shock-experience [Chockerlebnis] which the passer-by has in the crowd" and "what the worker 'experiences' at his machine."[26] According to Adorno, such sudden recognition – and the libidinal cathexis that goes with it – can only happen "against a background of the indifferent." The decision, however, of "what is indifferent and what is characteristic" can only be made by "the manipulating powers themselves."[27] Only against such a background of the indifferent, against, as Adorno has it, "a never-ceasing musical current, do pieces deemed to be hit-songs have a chance to distinguish themselves as such."[28] In this argument, language and words fade into the background altogether. Walter Benjamin, in contrast, and in answer to Adorno's comment on the concept of the 'reflex character,' returns to the relationship

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24 Adorno, *Minima Moralia* (e), 15. "Wer die Wahrheit übers unmittelbare Leben erfahren will, muß dessen entfremdeter Gestalt nachforschen, den objektiven Mächten, die die individuelle Existenz bis ins Verborgenste bestimmen." Adorno, *Minima Moralia* (g), 13.

25 "Libidobesetzung durch plötzliches, scheinwerferhaftes Wiedererkennen." Adorno/Horkheimer, *Briefwechsel*, 66.

26 Benjamin, Walter, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," in: id., *Illuminations. Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt, New York 1968, 178.

27 "[. . .] die Apperzeption der Schlager [. . .] funktioniert nur gegenüber einem Hintergrund des Indifferenten, wobei die Entscheidung über das, was indifferent und was charakteristisch ist, selbst bei den manipulierenden Mächten liegt." Adorno/Horkheimer, *Briefwechsel*, 66.

28 "Nur gegenüber einem ununterbrochenen Musikstrom haben die als Schlager designierten Stücke eine Chance, sich als solche abzusetzen." Ibid.

between words and music in hit songs: in a letter dated May 7, 1940, Benjamin writes that "[t]here is no better example for the methodical destruction of experience than when the popular lyric is set to the melody."[29] One barely fails to recognise, here, how Benjamin is trying to bridge the gap between Adorno's thoughts on regressive listening and his own work on a "theory of experience."

America: the most advanced observation point – La Guardia airport is another example for this. This point is made in a letter addressed to Max Horkheimer by Adorno dated July 29, 1940. He writes: "Lotte and Egon" – that is, Egon Wissing and his wife Liselotte Karplus, Gretel Adorno's younger sister –

> have dragged me to the new, huge La Guardia airport which could just as well be in Germany. Obviously the competing airlines are simply part of a corporate group – even if not expressly so – and the airliners are so modern that they cannot be distinguished from bombers and dive bombers [Stuka].[30]

This passage is of interest because it demonstrates how a concrete location (La Guardia) becomes, for Adorno, a place of perception where he discerns traits of identity. It is a matter of describing not similarities but approximations which produce an image of totalitarian rule. It is this impossibility to distinguish between things (after all, there is such a close resemblance of this airport to similar ones in Nazi Germany despite being located on different continents, thousands of miles apart, geographically, politically and juridically) which is prominent in Adorno's report as an observed fact. The site of the airport, then, may be regarded as exemplary when it comes to how alienation manifests itself: not through ever increasing distances but through the fact that distances vanish and fall away altogether. Beyond this, one can observe in this passage the way

29 Adorno/Benjamin, *The Complete Correspondence,* 326. "Es gibt kein besseres Beispiel der die Erfahrung zerstörenden Registrierung als die Zuordnung eines Schlagertexts zur Melodie." Adorno/Benjamin, *Briefwechsel*, 424.

30 "Lotte und Egon haben mich auf den neuen riesigen La Guardia-Flughafen geschleppt. Er könnte in Deutschland sein. Die konkurrierenden Fluglinien sind offensichtlich nur noch Sektionen eines ausdrücklichen oder unausdrücklichen Konzerns, und die Verkehrsflugzeuge sind so modern, daß sie von Bombern und Stukas schon nicht mehr zu unterscheiden sind." Adorno/Horkheimer, *Briefwechsel*, 77.

in which La Guardia becomes a place of perception that generates theoretical concepts.

The question of whether that which is qualitatively different has a right to exist or, rather, whether it has a future, is picked up again by Adorno twenty-five years later in his postscript to "Scientific Experiences of a European Scholar in America," when he again focuses on international airports: "Already the airports are interchangeably alike in all parts of Europe, America, and the countries of the Third world."[31] The "deeply disturbing question how far qualitative differences matter in the present social world"[32] is ascribed to Europe, but the *possibility* of asking this question is ascribed to what Adorno calls "American experience." Here, the telling detail is the fact that in the German version Adorno talks of the American experience as an experience that one's consciousness has to 'acquire' [sich zueignen].[33] He uses this term instead of the term 'to appropriate' [sich aneignen], which one might expect here – i.e. 'aneignen' in the sense of an experience that one has made one's own; the difference between *Aneignung* and *Zueignung*, represented in the German version by a small shift in the prefixes of the rootword, again creates an instance of difference.[34]

In Adorno's letter of July 1940 to Horkheimer, the reference to La Guardia is immediately preceded by the sentence: "That's why there is such a feeling of inevitability."[35] Adorno's thoughts on La Guardia, gained from the concrete place of perception, 'La Guardia,' are at this point resumed, and the topic of inevitability is developed further – a topic that is concomitant with the horror, the horrific violence, happening "today," that is, at the time when the letter is being written. This is because, as Adorno says, "political horrors are only a formality when seen from a societal perspective," a formality "through which that is confirmed

31 Adorno, "Scientific Experiences," 369.

32 Ibid.

33 Adorno, Theodor W., "Wissenschaftliche Erfahrungen in Amerika," in: id., *Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft II, Gesammelte Schriften* 10.2, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, Frankfurt/M. 2003, 702–738, 737.

34 In the English translation this 'instance of difference' disappears completely; the full sentence runs like this: "It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that any contemporary consciousness that has not appropriated the American experience, even if in opposition, has something reactionary about it." Adorno, "Scientific Experiences," 369f.

35 "Daher wohl auch das Gefühl der Unausweichlichkeit." Adorno/Horkheimer, *Briefwechsel*, 77.

what has in fact already happened."[36] The act of violence itself, then, (i.e. when it is actually perpetrated) hardly appears at all. In this letter, Adorno dares to put forward the case that there is a "prestabilised harmony between the system and its victims," and adds that he has the impression that "everything depends on how one escapes from this cycle."[37] The concept of "victims" is completely abstract here – there is nothing concrete about it – and seems to be still steeped in Marxist thinking. This abstraction points to the continued use of Marxist figures of thought in Adorno's work, which are hardly ever punctuated by other kinds of wording – an example for this would be his letter from August 5, 1940, to which I shall return later. But in the quoted remark by Adorno, the cycle seems to encompass two things: not only the actual relationship between the system and its victims but also, and beyond this, the perception itself, which regards this relationship as being one of convergence or unity. If everything depends on how one escapes from this cycle and the illusions attached to it, then the possibility of thinking itself is at risk.

Adorno's train of thought in the above-quoted letter to Horkheimer is accompanied by complaints about the summer heat in New York and his plan to travel to a cooler holiday destination in August (namely, Bar Harbor) so that, as Adorno tells Horkheimer, "I shall not be too weak-minded when you return." This is followed by a sentence with a half-ironic undertone: "Weak-mindedness is, by the way, one of the topics my theoretical interest is focused on at the moment."[38] This sentence is, so to speak, the headline above the passage in this letter in which the train of thought regarding prestabilised harmony between the system and its victims, the feeling of inevitability, and the observations regarding La Guardia airport are developed. Further along in the letter, in the paragraph following the above mentioned passage, Adorno underlines the importance of their common projects – he talks of "our programmatic things" – and adds: "I am not losing sight of these even for one second and am still of the opinion that we should stick to our language for

36 "Die entsetzliche Gewalt dessen, was heute geschieht, hat den Grund, daß die Formen des politischen Grauens gesellschaftlich gesehen nur eine Formalität sind, durch die das bestätigt wird, was eigentlich schon geschehen ist." Ibid.

37 "Es drängt sich mir immer mehr die prästabilierte Harmonie zwischen dem System und seinen Opfern auf, und ich habe immer mehr das Gefühl, daß alles daran hängt, wie man aus diesem Zirkel herauskommt." Ibid.

38 "Schwachsinn ist im übrigen das Stichwort meiner augenblicklichen theoretischen Interessen." Ibid.

our sacred texts."[39] 'Our language' – this refers to a postulated theoretical language which Adorno and Horkheimer would have in common: Adorno here explains – carefully and by way of implication – his claim to membership of the "homogenous centre of the institute," as Friedrich Pollock and Max Horkheimer call it in a memorandum of a discussion that took place in August 1935.[40] 'Our language:' this means German language and thinking in terms of dialectical materialism, but the expression also refers to the defensive stance, in the psychoanalytical sense, vis-à-vis theoretical thinking which Horkheimer is able to discern even amongst the emigré intellectuals. What Adorno calls, in a comment to Horkheimer in July 1940, "an unserer Sprache festhalten," is formulated in English quite differently: in a letter written in Los Angeles and addressed to Virgil Thomson, a critic at the *New York Herald Tribune*. Here the talk is of isolation caused by the decision "to stick without compromise and 'adjustment'[41] to our convictions," but there is also the desire to "bring[ing] me closer to the actualities of American cultural life."[42] Looking at these two passages, there seems to be a contraflow of concepts at play when comparing 'language' and 'convictions.' While 'convictions' refer to something already formulated, 'language' is something that has the *potential* of producing formulations.

But, as Adorno points out in a note written in the summer of 1938, language itself is exposed to horror, namely "that the actual violence has turned into horror to such an extent that all theory appears to be just mockery in the face of it – a mark burnt into the organ of theory itself,

39 "Diese [unsere(n) programmatischen Dinge(n)] verliere ich keine Sekunde aus den Augen und meine im übrigen nach wie vor, daß wir für unsere heiligen Texte an unserer Sprache festhalten sollten." Ibid.

40 Horkheimer, Max: "Materialien für die Neuformulierung von Grundsätzen," in: id., *Gesammelte Schriften 15: Briefwechsel 1913–1936*, ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, Frankfurt/M. 1995, 380–389, 387f.

41 Adorno again takes up the concept of "adjustment" as an English-language concept in "Scientific Experiences of a European Scholar in America," doing so from a perspective which distances itself critically from the concept of 'being identical with oneself:' "We Europeans are inclined to see the concept of 'adjustment' as a purely negative thing, an extinction of the spontaneity and autonomy of the individual. But it is an illusion sharply criticized by Goethe and Hegel that the process of humanization, of becoming civilized, necessarily proceeds from within out. Basically it is accomplished precisely through what Hegel calls 'alienation.'" Adorno, "Scientific Experiences," 368.

42 *Adorno. Eine Bildmonographie*, ed. Theodor W. Adorno Archiv, Frankfurt/M. 2003, 103 (October 20, 1942, originally written in English).

that is [burnt] into language [itself]."[43] But exactly because of this, so much depends on language. What theory, "our theory" as Adorno calls it, is meant to achieve becomes apparent in a letter that Adorno, then living in London, sends to Horkheimer. He writes that it is becoming more and more a problem of political analysis

> that on the one hand the dialectician must not take anything at its face value but that on the other hand he must not use Marxist theory in such a breezy and careless manner as to manipulate facts according to the theory, forgetting in the process the actuality of horrific brutality and absurdity which our theory *itself* has to reckon with as the integrating momentum of the situation.[44]

The word "itself" is emphasised in the German original; theory is thus not something apart from actuality but is required to consider actual horrific brutality and absurdity as being an integrating factor while at the same time being conscious that it is itself exposed to such integration.

The concept of integration mentioned in the February 1938 letter, that is, before the November pogrom, seems in actuality to refer to the terrifying stabilisation and expansion of Nazi Germany. In subsequent letters sent from New York, especially in letters to his parents, Adorno often refers to a dialectic driven to extremes, to a much increased opacity of the world, which, paradoxically, gives rise to hope nonetheless. In a letter of December 1939, Adorno writes: "For everything is so opaque that even something good is not beyond the realm of possibility."[45] In another letter, written immediately after the invasion of Poland, Adorno addresses the question of stupidity in a more direct way: "true thinking," he says,

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43 "Daß die Gewalt der Fakten so zum Entsetzen geworden ist, daß alle Theorie, und noch die wahre, sich wie Spott darauf ausnimmt – das ist dem Organ der Theorie selber, der Sprache, als Mal eingebrannt." Adorno, Theodor W., "Notiz. Sommer 1939," in: *Frankfurter Adorno Blätter* IV, Munich 1995, 7.

44 "[. . .] wie es mir denn überhaupt immer mehr zum Problem der politischen Analyse zu werden scheint, daß zwar auf der einen Seite der Dialektiker nichts at its face value nehmen darf, andererseits aber auch nicht die marxistische Theorie so frisch fröhlich operieren, daß er die Tatsachen nach ihr befiehlt und darüber das Moment der grauenvollen Roheit und Sinnlosigkeit vergißt, mit dem gerade unsere Theorie *selber* als einem integrierenden Moment der Situation zu rechnen hat." Adorno/Horkheimer, *Briefwechsel*, 27 (emphasis in original).

45 Adorno, *Letters to his Parents*, 28 (translation amended). "Es ist ja alles so undurchsichtig, daß nicht einmal das Gute aus dem Bereich der Möglichkeiten ist." Adorno, *Briefe an die Eltern*, 49.

"proves powerless in the face of the absurd senselessness of this war."[46] Months later, in June 1940, he informs his parents that he is trying "not [to] be dumbed down by horror."[47] Yet he then adds that "this horror has meanwhile taken on such proportions that even that is no easy matter, and one falls into a sort of frozen state, like the bird staring at the snake."[48] At another point, Adorno also talks about how "disoriented" he is because of the shock caused by the collapse of culture, and he traces the impact of this shock on his thinking back to the fact that "in a certain sense" he thinks "more with my nerve-ends than with my calculatory faculty."[49] For Adorno, in June 1940, because of the situation he finds himself in, there seem to be only two options: to be made to feel desolate or stupid: "we are making every effort not to be entirely engulfed by sorrow, yet without letting ourselves become dulled in the process."[50] Stupidity, therefore, does not consist of not-thinking, but of thinking that has succumbed to paralysis. One may gather from this that one succumbs to that which one cannot think or recognise. It is therefore a question of making a redoubled effort: of directing one's thinking against the events and towards thinking through the events. Thinking is formulation within language – decades later, in a radio lecture on *Resignation*, Adorno talks about "enunciation." Enunciation is based on a never ceasing claim on language. He expressly connects thought with the idea of happiness: "[thought] is happiness even where it defines unhappiness: by enunciating it. By this alone, happiness reaches into the universal unhappiness."[51]

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46 Adorno, *Letters to His Parents*, 17.

47 Ibid., 56. "Wir versuchen, [. . .] uns vom Entsetzen nicht dumm machen zu lassen." Adorno, *Briefe an die Eltern*, 88.

48 Adorno, *Letters to His Parents*, 56. "Aber das Entsetzen hat ja mittlerweile solche Dimensionen angenommen, daß selbst das nicht mehr leicht fällt, und daß man in eine Art von Erstarrung verfällt wie der Vogel, der auf die Schlange blickt." Adorno, *Briefe an die Eltern*, 88.

49 Adorno, *Letters to His Parents*, 50. "Und da ich nun einmal ein Seismograph bin, und in gewissem Sinn mehr mit den Nerven als mit dem kalkulatorischen Vermögen denke, so bin ich von dem Chock einstweilen völlig desorientiert." Adorno, *Briefe an die Eltern*, 80 (May 20, 1940).

50 Adorno, *Letters to His Parents*, 57. "[. . .] wir geben uns alle Mühe, nicht vollkommen in der Trauer zu versinken, ohne doch darum uns dumm machen zu lassen." Adorno, *Briefe an die Eltern*, 90 (June 16, 1940).

51 Adorno, Theodor W., "Resignation," in: id., *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*, New York 1998: 289–293, 293. This edition is in the following shortened to Adorno, "Resignation" (e). [Glück ist der Gedanke], "noch wo er das

Adorno writes in the above mentioned lecture that thinking is something different from the "intellectual reproduction of what already exists anyway." Thinking is insatiable because "as long as it doesn't break off" it keeps a hold on possibility.[52] In this definition, thinking is located in the tension between the thoughts that we cannot entirely think through and the thought that is paralysed by fear, the mutilated power of thinking. In the correspondence between Adorno and Horkheimer there are many points that show their desperate attempts at formulation. Close to the time when Adorno wrote about the topic of "stupidity," a shift took place in his thinking which then began to focus on the persecution of the Jews. In a letter to Horkheimer dated August 5, 1940, Adorno writes:

> Gradually, after receiving the latest news from Germany, I am finding it impossible not to think of the fate of the Jews. It often seems to me that everything we were accustomed to seeing under the aspect of the proletariat has now been transferred in horrific concentration onto the Jews. I ask myself whether we should not say the things we really want to say – regardless what becomes of the project [by which he means the antisemitism study the financing of which was not secured at that point] – with respect to the Jews who represent the counterpoint to the concentration of power.[53]

In his research project on anti-Semitism (1940 version),[54] it is striking how Adorno attempts to think about what is new regarding the actual shape of antisemitism by describing it as being 'total:'

Unglück bestimmt: indem er es ausspricht. Damit allein reicht Glück ins universale Unglück hinein." Adorno, Theodor W., "Resignation," in: id., *Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft II*, 794–799, 799. This edition is in the following shortened to Adorno, "Resignation" (g).

52 Adorno, "Resignation" (e), 292.

53 "Mir geht es allmählich so, auch unter dem Eindruck der letzten Nachrichten aus Deutschland, daß ich mich von dem Gedanken an das Schicksal der Juden überhaupt nicht mehr losmachen kann. Oftmals kommt es mir vor, als wäre all das, was wir unterm Aspekt des Proletariats zu sehen gewohnt waren, heute in furchtbarer Konzentration auf die Juden übergegangen. Ich frage mich, ob wir nicht, ganz gleich wie es mit dem Projekt wird, die Dinge, die wir eigentlich sagen wollen, im Zusammenhang mit den Juden sagen sollten, die den Gegenpunkt zur Konzentration der Macht darstellen." Adorno/Horkheimer, *Briefwechsel*, 84.

54 In July 1939, Adorno wrote in a letter to his parents about a "research project on anti-Semitism." The text of this draft was first published in English in 1941 in *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, which at that time was entitled *Studies in Philosophy and Social Science*.

> The demand to represent German antisemitism in its totality arises from the nature of this antisemitism. It is 'total' [in the sense that] it considers it as its task to penetrate each and every aspect of life and its goal is the destruction of the Jews. In this it differs in principle from every previous form of antisemitism.[55]

This aspect of German antisemitism, as being "new in principle," implies, as the study emphasises, "that the problem of antisemitism" thus cannot be reduced to "the general concept of the 'other' [des 'Fremden']."[56]

In the previously quoted letter to his parents dated May 20, 1940, Adorno refers to the feelings of shock he is experiencing and how he is "thinking with my nerve-ends." This is an example of how, in Adorno's work, a thought that at first appears in a letter is then, at a later stage, developed further in a theoretical context; in this instance in the third part of *Minima Moralia* (concluded only after the end of National Socalism, that is, in 1946/47). Adorno writes: "[. . .] just as in Hebbel's 'Haideknabe:' even the most dreadful fear fantasies are still surpassed by reality."[57] Hebbel's ballad of 1844 starts with a boy dreaming; this boy, the *Haideknabe*, awakens from his dream sweating with fear – he dreamt he had been murdered. Not only does everything that happens in the dream come true in every detail but it is exactly the boy's attempt to escape the fate prophesied in his dream which delivers him into the hands of his murderer. Hebbel's ballad presents reality as fulfilling the boy's prophetic dream while the quoted passage from Adorno's letter describes reality not as fulfilling but as surpassing the prophesy: what is happening in reality goes beyond the worst imagined fears, the experience of reality by far surpasses the truth the ballad conveys. To turn fear into a matter for reflection which in turn tries to give shape to the horror of persecution – this is the effort of thinking expressed by the *Haideknabe* text in *Minima Moralia*, which borrows its title from Hebbel's poem.

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55 "Die Forderung, den deutschen Antisemitismus in seiner Totalität darzustellen, geht aus dem Wesen dieses Antisemitismus hervor. Er ist "total:" er setzt es sich zur Aufgabe, alle nur denkbaren Bereiche des Lebens zu durchdringen und zielt auf den Untergang der Juden ab. Darin unterscheidet er sich prinzipiell von allen früheren Formen des Antisemitismus." Adorno/Horkheimer, *Briefwechsel*, 541.

56 Ibid., 554.

57 Adorno, *Letters to His Parents*, 50. "[. . .] es ist wie in Hebbels Haideknaben, die entsetzlichsten Angstphantasien werden immer noch von der Wirklichkeit überboten." Adorno, *Briefe an die Eltern*, 79.

The topic of 'stupidity' returns several times in various forms, namely with reference to the location where thinking takes place. And with this I am returning once again to America as the "hiding place," as Adorno once called it. In his dedication prefacing *Minima Moralia*, which he wrote in Frankfurt am Main after having finished the text, Adorno comments about the necessary conditions for the possibility of understanding that guided him when working on the texts in this book: "The major part of this book was written during the war, under conditions enforcing contemplation. The violence that expelled me thereby denied me full knowledge of it."[58] This formulation expresses how texts are created under conditions, as Adorno says, of contemplation and with an attitude of observation and interpretation, which a place "out of the firing line" ("weit vom Schuß")[59] and at a safe distance from danger, makes possible. The quoted formulation also expresses what thinking under such conditions is witness to: it is itself involved in violence; it remains marked by violence in the sense that it has been denied insight [*Erkenntnis*]. Through the very fact that violence does not allow itself to be fully known, its continuation is guaranteed.

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58 Adorno, *Minima Moralia* (e), 18."Ich habe das Buch großenteils noch während des Krieges geschrieben, unter Bedingungen der Kontemplation. Die Gewalt, die mich vertrieben hatte, verwehrte mir zugleich ihre volle Erkenntnis." Adorno, *Minima Moralia* (g), 16.

59 Adorno, *Minima Moralia* (e), 53 and Adorno, *Minima Moralia* (g), 59, respectively.

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Adorno's Monsters

Jacques Lezra

> The civic degradation of the *pretenders*, that is what is intended! It is desired to rob them of their halo, of the last majesty that is left to them, the *majesty of exile*!
>
> Karl Marx, *The Class Struggles in France, 1848 to 1850*

> That which is irreducible about the objects in film is itself a mark of society, prior to the aesthetic realization of an intention. By virtue of this relationship to the object, the aesthetics of film is thus inherently concerned with society.
>
> Theodor W. Adorno, "Transparencies on Film"

In the introduction to the marvelous pieces on music that Edward Said collected as the Wellek lectures in 1991 Said writes: "Adorno is a creature of the Hegelian tradition, which presumes an inescapable historical teleology that incorporates everything in its relentless path. This," Said continues, "I find unacceptable for all sorts of reasons."[1] In place of this "unacceptable" Hegelian historical teleology, Said advances a different notion of historical change. His great model is music; its escapability, its escapism, its condition of non-teleology – all of these, for Said, resemble nothing more than the condition he finds himself in and will write about so movingly in his last years, the condition of exile. "Transgressive" in a geographical sense, as the exile and émigré are also, "music has [the faculty] to travel, cross over, drift from place to place in a society, even though many institutions and orthodoxies have sought to confine it."[2] Where the Hegelian tradition sees teleology, the aesthetic tradition that Said invokes in its place sees an "unhoused," "exilic" vulnerable wandering. To all that which in Hegel or Adorno requires the "relentless" assimilation of the aesthetic sphere into the sphere of representation, where it can become subject to the grinding, mechanical laws of contradiction,

1 Said, Edward, *Musical Elaborations*, New York 1991, xviii.
2 Ibid., xix.

negation, and incorporation – to all this, Said says, he opposes a "romantic view," almost a Schiller-esque view: "music," he says, "possesses a separate status and place that is occasionally revealed but more often withdrawn."[3] Victor Frankenstein "manufactures" a "creature," "infusing life into an inanimate body." Hegel's creature, Theodor Adorno, represents the unacceptable, mechanical after-life of the determinate dialectic – a device for de-animating what is living about history, for "confining" whatever there is about it that wanders. Hegel's Adorno: a machine for turning what drifts from place to place into a place-holder, into a thing defined by and confined to the space and time it occupies.

It comes as a bit of a surprise, then, to find that Said *also* claims to derive his account of this "romantic" "separate status and place" to which music belongs *from* Adorno – who is enrolled both in the monstrous and unacceptable "historical teleology" of the Hegelian tradition, and in the "romantic," Schiller-esque, humanist tradition that Said's last works embrace. I say "a bit of a surprise," since of course one could make the reasonable, if rather weak, point that Adorno is hardly a philosopher without contradictions (and a similar, equally weak point about Said himself, of course), and that he might very well be found to take antagonistic positions over the course of his career, or indeed within a single work. Or one could point to the specific contradiction in Adorno's career – between the condemnation, on historico-political terms, of the "dialectics of Enlightenment," and the massive deployment of its concepts in his philosophical writing. Or one could make the stronger point that Adorno's conception of history allows, even requires, that images, historical figures or events, like the figure or image that we call "Adorno" or indeed like Adorno's great "romantic" precursor, Victor Frankenstein's monster, embody significant contradictions that can be both dialectically resolved and non-dialectically juxtaposed at once – images or figures that call upon us to proceed toward them, as Walter Benjamin had put it, by means of "dialectics at a standstill" because such images *are* "dialectics at a standstill."[4] So really, Said's ambivalence

3 Ibid., xviiif.

4 "It's not that what is past casts light on what is present, or what is present its light on what is past: rather, image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation. In other words, image is dialectics at a standstill. For while the relation of the present to the past is a purely temporal, continuous one, the relation of what-has-been to the now is dialectical: is not progression but image, suddenly emergent. – Only dialectical images are genuine

toward Adorno seems of a piece with Adorno's work, and might even be said to represent a nicely dialectical aspect of Said's *own* work. To line Adorno up both on the side of the "unacceptably" teleological, voracious Hegelian tradition, and on the side of the errant and "exilic," humanistic, even liberal tradition is not a mistake, but the result of a particularly good reading of the German philosopher. In short, we recognize in Said's Adorno a "dialectical image," and the spots of greatest instability in that "image," the aspects where the great mechanisms of dialectical reasoning meet up paradoxically and grindingly with unrepresentable negations, excesses, enjoyments, liberties, drives – the terms are all inadequate, and we will see why in a moment – are precisely where "Adorno" stands in for something like "the philosophy of modern music" and for something like "the exile" or "the émigré."

I can imagine two ways of approaching the "dialectical image" that is "Adorno." The road I will not follow for the moment takes as its occasion the spot in Said's thinking where "Adorno" stands in for the first of these, "the philosophy of modern music," or more generally, for something like "philosophical thought about music," or even where Adorno stands in for "thought about the relation between thought and music;" the spot at which, as it would seem, Adorno's thought *about* music concludes on a "dialectical image," dynamic and unsettled at the same time as it is fixed, an interval rather than a note, a species of tritone whose characteristics are then transferred to the figure of "Adorno" himself, a devil or a monster in the machinery of 20th century philosophy. For now, however, I will take the other of these roads: the road on which the exile and the monster walk in hand, or meet, or struggle, like Victor and his creature – but which is which? Which of the two is the monster? The exile? What do we mean by each of these terms? Why does the term

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images (that is, not archaic); and the place where one encounters them is language." Benjamin, Walter, *The Arcades Project*, transl. Howard Eiland/Kevin McLaughlin, conv. N2a3, Cambridge 1999, 462. This is the original, from Tiedemann's 1982 edition: "Bild ist dasjenige, worin das Gewesene mit dem Jetzt blitzhaft zu einer Konstellation zusammentritt. Mit anderen Worten: Bild ist die Dialektik im Stillstand. Denn während die Beziehung der Gegenwart zur Vergangenheit eine rein zeitliche, kontinuierliche ist, ist die des Gewesenen zum Jetzt dialektisch: ist nicht Verlauf sondern Bild (,) sprunghaft. – Nur dialektische Bilder sind echte (d.h. nicht archaische) Bilder und der Ort, an dem man sie antrifft, ist die Sprache [. . .]." Benjamin, Walter, "Das Passagen-Werk," in: *Gesammelte Schriften* 5, ed. Rolf Tiedemann/Hermann Schweppenhäuser, Frankfurt/M. 1982, 576f.

"exile," like the exiled "Adorno" himself, ring for us today, in the shadow of the 20th century's exiles, in such contradictory registers? Why has the condition of "exile" acquired such thick, contradictory values in the symbolic economy of the post-war period? What are the conditions under which the commodity-value of the term and the condition of "exile" change, in that symbolic or cultural economy? And finally, how might those concrete conditions inflect the character and characterization of this dialectical image we call "Adorno"?

This is vast, so I will be irresponsibly narrow in my own focus. Here is a preliminary way to characterize the contradictoriness of the exile's position and of the position of the dialectical image of "exile" in today's culture. The words are Adorno's. "The American government," Adorno wrote in his late radio-talk essay on Kracauer,

> was superior to that of many European nations during the Hitler era in that it granted all emigrants the possibility of working and did not reduce any of them to the permanent status of welfare recipients. Conversely, the burden of conformity, which weighed upon the natives as well, was especially harsh. Intellectual immigrants who were already successful were enthusiastic advocates of that conformity. Adjustment became again the norm it had been in the early development of most of them, internalized by all those who would hardly have been able to cope with their external and internal difficulties other than through the psychological mechanism Anna Freud called identification with the aggressor.[5]

What seems especially striking about this retrospective assessment is the oddly fated circuit it describes for the "intellectual immigrant," whose earlier "success," presumably the result of "conformity" and "adjustment" in his or her native setting and environment, found in America a norm that exactly and easily translated a previous disciplinary, or legal, or ethnic "conformism" or "adjustment" into "conformity" with American society, values, and so on. The "aggressor" with whom the émigré might have been *forced* to identify was now embraced, in the tropic form of the welcoming society. Emigration and exile obeyed a logic of repetition and reenactment; the émigré repeated the pathological

5 Adorno, Theodor W., "The Curious Realist: On Siegfried Kracauer," in: *Notes to Literature* 2, transl. Shierry Weber Nicholsen, New York 1992, 159–177, 72. The German essay may be found in: Theodor W. Adorno, "Der wunderliche Realist. Über Siegfried Kracauer," in: *Noten zur Literatur. Gesammelte Schriften* 11, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, Frankfurt/M. 1997, 388–408.

relation to instituted power that had both made him a success in the first place, and marked him with the abject identity of the victim. From this perspective, the position of the exile – the émigré – attests for Adorno *both to* an opening, to the possibility of "working," of achieving the "protection given by a certain bourgeois solidity," as he wrote in August 1941 to Horkheimer; *but also* to a pathology of repetition and, more gravely still, to the reinstatement of and re-submission to, to a re-identification with, the position of the "aggressor."[6] In the slightly different economic register that Adorno's late comment also employs, the psychological ambivalence that attaches to the position of the émigré or the exile corresponds to an unsettled or divided value-form: the exile or émigré who finds himself in this new country, this America, settles in both by assuming the value-form granted him by the market to which he is transported, *and* by retaining and seeking to repeat the value forms he trails from his native land, environment, market. The two can never coincide in fact; it is the condition of each to differ from the other, and the exile or the émigré lives this unsettled condition. What Adorno calls "conformity," what he calls the "enthusiastic advocacy" of conformity by the "successful" intellectual émigré, works on the psychological level as a form of denial (as does, in Anna Freud's conception, the mechanism of "identification with the aggressor") and on the economic level as a mystification of the instability of the exile's value, when the exile is understood as a commodity.[7]

And finally – what was exile, or the émigré position, understood not psychologically, or even economically, but as a philosophical-disciplinary matter? Does it too present the sort of complex contradictions found on those other registers? Of course, the three registers cannot readily be disentangled from one another; a complicated flow of mutual determinations, thickenings and substitutions runs among them, passing each through the other two, the psychology of exile through the economics of the exile's value-form, both of these through the philosophical questions the condition (or perhaps the concept) raise, and so on. Here, for now, is another way into the running braid, or perhaps the three-part invention, that the three registers form.

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6 Adorno to Max Horkheimer, 17 August 1941, Horkheimer-Pollock Archive, Stadt- und Universitätsbibliothek, Frankfurt am Main. Cited in Müller-Doohm, Stefan, *Adorno: A Biography*, Cambridge 2005, 272.

7 Freud, Anna, *Das Ich und die Abwehrmechanismen*, Vienna 1936 (English transl. Freud, Anna, *TheEgo and the Mechanisms of Defence*, New York 1946).

Consider these prescient lines from Said's last major work, published ten years before the second Iraqi war, before the events of September 11th, 2001, before the second *Intifada,* before the rise of MSNBC and Fox News, before the military hegemony of the United States had assumed its current unilateral shape. These are Said's words, at the close of *Culture and Imperialism.* He is describing a particular disciplinary-mediatic formation.

> On the one hand we have the co-optations of foreign-area expertise by the academy (only experts on India can talk about India, only Africanists about Africa), and on the other reaffirmations of these co-optations by both media and the government. These rather slow and silent processes are put in startling evidence, revealed impressively and suddenly, during periods of foreign crisis for the United States and its interests – for example, the Iranian hostage crisis, the shooting down of Korean Airlines flight 007, the *Achille Lauro* affair, the Libyan, Panamanian, and Iraqi wars. Then, as if by an open sesame as unarguably obeyed as it is planned to the last detail, public awareness is saturated with media analysis and stupendous coverage. Thus experience is emasculated. Adorno says:
>
> The total obliteration of the war by information, propaganda, commentaries, with cameramen in the first ranks and war reporters dying heroic deaths, the mishmash of an enlightened manipulation of public opinion and oblivious vacuity: all this is another expression for the withering of experience, the vacuum between men and their fate, in which their real fate lies. It is as if the reified, hardened plaster-cast of events takes the place of events themselves. Men are reduced to walk-on parts in a monster documentary-film.[8]

This is the German of the thought-image from *Minima Moralia* that Said is citing:

> Die vollständige Verdeckung des Krieges durch Information, Propaganda, Kommentar, die Filmoperateure in den ersten Tanks und der Heldentod

8 Said, Edward, *Culture and Imperialism,* New York 1993, 322. Said is citing from Adorno's *Minima Moralia*, the group of fragments called "Out of the firing-line," dated 1944. I have consulted Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflexionen aus dem beschädigten Leben*, Frankfurt/M. 1969. Two instructively different English translations of *Minima Moralia* are available. The standard print edition, and the one referred to by Said, is Adorno, *Minima Moralia,* transl. E.F.N. Jephcott, New York, London 1974. A more recent translation is Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, transl. Dennis Redmond, 2005, at http://www.efn.org/~dredmond/MinimaMoralia.html (December 12, 2011). Throughout (except as marked), references in German are to the Suhrkamp edition, to the English to the Jephcott translation.

> von Kriegsberichterstattern, die Maische aus manipuliert-aufgeklärter öffentlicher Meinung und bewußtlosem Handeln, all das ist ein anderer Ausdruck für die verdorrte Erfahrung, das Vakuum zwischen den Menschen und ihrem Verhängnis, in dem das Verhängnis recht eigentlich besteht. Der verdinglichte, erstarrte Abguß der Ereignisse substituiert gleichsam diese selber. Die Menschen werden zu Schauspielern eines Monstre-Documentairefilms herabgesetzt [. . .].[9]

Here, at the end of an intricate treatment of what Said calls "the internalization of norms used in cultural discourse" (323), concluding a concluding chapter called provocatively "Freedom from Domination in the Future," Adorno is given a walk-on part, "as if by an open sesame," in

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9 Adorno, *Minima Moralia,* transl. Jephcott. Redmond's translation of the crucial lines "Die vollständige Verdeckung des Krieges durch Information, Propaganda, Kommentar, die Filmoperateure in den ersten Tanks und der Heldentod von Kriegsberichterstattern, die Maische aus manipuliert-aufgeklärter öffentlicher Meinung und bewußtlosem Handeln, all das ist ein anderer Ausdruck für die verdorrte Erfahrung, das Vakuum zwischen den Menschen und ihrem Verhängnis, in dem das Verhängnis recht eigentlich besteht. Der verdinglichte, erstarrte Abguß der Ereignisse substituiert gleichsam diese selber" is a little different from Jephcott's: "The total concealment of the war through information, propaganda, commentary, the film crews in the leading tanks and the heroic death of war reporters, the mishmash of manipulated-enlightened public opinion and unconscious action, all this is another expression for desiccated experience, the vacuum between human beings and their doom, in which their doom actually consists. The reified, frozen mold of events, as it were, substitutes for this itself. Human beings are turned into the actors of a monster documentary film, which no longer knows any viewers, because even the very last one has to participate on the silver screen. The genesis of the belabored talk of the 'phony war' lay in precisely this moment. It originated to be sure from the Fascist technique of dismissing the real horrors of the war as 'mere propaganda,' precisely in order to facilitate those horrors. Yet like all tendencies of Fascism, this too has its origin in elements of reality, which ends up prevailing only by virtue of that Fascist attitude, which sneeringly hinted at such. The war really is 'phony' [in English], but its "phonyness" [in English] is more terrifying than any terror, and those who make light of this only contribute that much more to the calamity. Had Hegel's philosophy of history encompassed this epoch, then Hitler's robot-bombs would have taken their place, next to the death-scene of Alexander and similar images, among the empirically selected facts in which the symbolic state of the world-spirit is immediately expressed. Like Fascism itself, the robots are self-steering and yet utterly subjectless. Just like the former, they combine the utmost technical perfection with complete blindness. Just like the former, they sow the deadliest panic and are completely futile. – 'I have seen the world-spirit,' not on horseback but on wings and headless, and this at once refutes Hegel's philosophy of history."

Said's argument, enlisted to the project of showing how this "internalization of norms" "emasculates" experience (Adorno's term, generally translated as "withering," is the slightly less gender-specific *verdorrt*). The hollowed-out, reified "plaster-casts" of events stand in place of the event (of the experience of the event), as the monster-documentary's *scripted* "walk-on" part (*Schauspiel*) awaits the "extra" who will fill it. Adorno's lovely, subtle and entirely appropriate thought-image is a complicated sort of oxymoron – a "monster-documentary," both fictional, in being about "monsters," a documentary, claiming realism for the "monsters" it represents (and in 1944 we must credit Adorno with a bitter sense of just how "monstrous" the merely "real" could show itself to be); and "monstrous," generically or technically, in being, for instance, monstrously *long*, or monstrously de-monstrative. This portmanteau-word surely chimes, in its very *instability*, with the avenue for hope that Said finds at this moment, the vehicle for producing a "future" free, as he will have it, from domination. What is the nature of this *instability*? It is tacitly associated with the very next section of the Adorno citation: with what these monster-documentaries represent. For Said, as his last writings on humanism suggest, this instability is both a formal and an ethical imperative, as well as a circumstance of post-modernity: in place of the massification of media *but also* in place of an exhausted modernism, in place of "the elaborate interpretative strategies of critical theory or the self-consciousness of literary and musical forms," Said suggests we should turn to "more reliable" accounts of resistance, which will provide a kind of mixed monster-documentary, if you will: "More reliable now are the reports from the front line where struggles are being fought between domestic tyrants and idealist oppositions, hybrid combinations of realism and fantasy, cartographic and archaeological descriptions, explorations in mixed forms (essay, video or film, photograph, memoir, story, aphorism) of unhoused exilic experiences."[10]

In order to achieve this "hope" Said places the concept and the experience of "instability" in the consciousness of the culture that regards itself, at these moments, as if from outside as well as within these scripted parts – from both positions, expressed in a "hybrid" form corresponding to the "unhoused exilic experience" of, say, the Palestinian intellectual, the German refugee, or the deterritorialized subject. This "unhousedness" is both fundamental to the experience of seeing oneself as a husk, and the content

10 Said, *Culture and Imperialism,* 330.

of what one "sees," as the condition for "transgressing" the geographico-cultural boundaries of the enclosing, imprisoning subjectivities offered in late-stage capitalism: it is the opposite, for Said, of the "withered" or "shriveled" or "emasculated" experience peddled by the culture- and information-industries; "unhousedness" is the opposite of the movie-house. Paradoxically, we would not be wrong to detect in Said's explicitly anti-Hegelian words an association of wandering externality, of an identity productively negated by its being-away-from-itself, with self-awareness and aesthetic appreciation that smacks strongly of passages in Hegel's *Aesthetics,* or in Bradley's work, or indeed in Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory.* We wouldn't want to be perverse about this: Said would insist, as he understands it *contra* Adorno, that the necessary moment of externalization or exiling is not the same as, and does not lead necessarily to, a determined re-inscription of that experience within a set, already given form of identity. (For instance: the émigré would not necessarily find himself repeating the pathologies of assimilation and conformity that had made him a success in his lost home; the value of the exile commodity-form could be carried with that form, and be, as it were, immanent to it or transportable alongside it.) Nevertheless, Said's work on humanism does indeed turn on something like an economization of the experience of exile. The two-step required for Said's "instability" to produce, from the ashes of domination, a "future" *without* domination, means taking the "romantic" aestheticization of culture as a vehicle for the production (*a* vehicle, rather than *the* vehicle, mind you – there are others) of hybrid forms in which "unhousedness" can be "housed" or experienced. Said's argument, in brief, requires a sort of Hegelianism without determination, and his account of the future perfections of the exile's culture depends on the conversion of "experience" into "consciousness" in much the way that Hegel's account does (*Geist* is the first truly modern exile). In this context, then, Adorno is Said's proxy and model (and not, or not only, his Hegelian antagonist, the monstrous creature of the Hegelian tradition): he represents, in this very specific way, the precursor experience to Said's own unhousedness. (I am not saying that Adorno is the only such "house," precursor, plaster-cast, reified husk – "verdinglichte, erstarrte Abguß der Ereignisse" –, or model – Said has many of them: Freud, Wittgenstein, . . .). Adorno's image and his thought are the "husk" into which the unhoused Palestinian intellectual will migrate, temporarily, a "husk" that is welcoming and paradoxically homey precisely because it, too, designates a way of thinking from the place of the exile; a kind of plaster cast into which Said fits himself despite its edges and roughness, knowing he can never be fully conformable to

Adorno's thought concerning the disconformity of the exiled, "successful" and conformable intellectual.

Just where the plaster-cast of Adorno does not fit, just where the two exiles' conceptions of exile's mixed value, mixed or contradictory philosophical and affective import diverge, becomes clear when we look a little further. For the passage from the *Minima Moralia* that Said's *Culture and Imperialism* employs does not end where Said leaves off – and the balance of Adorno's fragment screens for us a much scarier "monster-documentary," as it were, than Said allows us to "see." In the spirit of the thought-image, one might say that Said has decapitated this little fragment to prevent us (or to prevent himself) from "seeing" something far worse. For in Adorno's "monster-documentary," the *Minima Moralia* passage continues, "men are reduced to walk-on parts in a monster-documentary film which has no spectators, since the least of them has his bit to do on the screen." The fragment continues:

> It is just this aspect that underlies the much-maligned designation "phony war." Certainly, the term has its origins in the Fascist inclination to dismiss the reality of horrors as 'mere propaganda' in order to perpetrate it unopposed. But like all Fascist tendencies, this too has its source in elements of reality, which assert themselves only by virtue of the Fascist attitude malignantly insinuating them. The war is really phony, but with a phonyness more horrifying than all the horrors, and those who mock at it are principal contributors to disaster. Had Hegel's philosophy of history embraced this age, Hitler's robot-bombs would have found their place beside the early death of Alexander and similar images, as one of the selected empirical facts by which the state of the world-spirit manifests itself directly in symbols [*unmittelbar symbolisch sich ausdrückt*]. Like Fascism itself, the robots career without a subject. Like it they combine utmost technical perfection with total blindness. And like it they arouse mortal terror [or horror] and are wholly futile [*Wie jener erregen sie das toedlichste Entsetzen und sind ganz vergeblich*]. "I have seen the world spirit," not on horse-back, but on wings and without a head, and that refutes, at the same stroke, Hegel's philosophy of history. [Jephcott's translation, p. 55] The genesis of the belabored talk of the "phony war" lay in precisely this moment. It originated to be sure from the Fascist technique of dismissing the real horrors of the war as "mere propaganda," precisely in order to facilitate those horrors. Yet like all tendencies of Fascism, this too has its origin in elements of reality, which ends up prevailing only by virtue of that Fascist attitude, which sneeringly hinted at such. The war really is "phony" [in English], but its "phonyness" [in English] is more terrifying than any terror, and those who make light of this only contribute that much more to the calamity. [Dennis Redmond's translation]

> Die Menschen werden zu Schauspielern eines Monstre-Documentairefilms herabgesetzt, der keine Zuschauer mehr kennt, weil noch der letzte auf der Leinwand mittun muß. Eben dies Moment liegt der vielgescholtenen Rede vom phony war zugrunde. Sie entspringt gewiß aus der faschistischen Stimmung, die Realität des Grauens als "bloße Propaganda" von sich zu weisen, damit das Grauen einspruchslos sich vollziehe. Aber wie alle Tendenzen des Faschismus hat auch diese ihren Ursprung in Elementen der Realität, die sich nur eben gerade kraft jener faschistischen Haltung durchsetzen, die hämisch auf sie hindeutet. Der Krieg ist wirklich phony, aber seine phonyness schrecklicher als aller Schrecken, und die sich darüber mokieren, tragen vorab zum Unheil bei. Hätte Hegels Geschichtsphilosophie diese Zeit eingeschlossen, so hätten Hitlers Robotbomben, neben dem frühen Tod Alexanders und ähnlichen Bildern, ihre Stelle gefunden unter den ausgewählten empirischen Tatsachen, in denen der Stand des Weltgeists unmittelbar symbolisch sich ausdrückt. Wie der Faschismus selber sind die Robots lanciert zugleich und subjektlos. Wie jener vereinen sie die äußerste technische Perfektion mit vollkommener Blindheit. Wie jener erregen sie das tödlichste Entsetzen und sind ganz vergeblich. – "Ich habe den Weltgeist gesehen", nicht zu Pferde, aber auf Flügeln und ohne Kopf, und das widerlegt zugleich Hegels Geschichtsphilosophie.[11]

Now the beheading of Hegel that Adorno accomplishes by means of the wholly-futile [*ganz vergeblich*] is precisely what Said is not willing to accept, not now, and not where he most closely deals with Adorno. Adorno may be Said's anti-Hegelian proxy in some respects, but not in this one: for the plaster mask to fit, Adorno must be anti-Hegelian in a sense that Said can recognize and turn to advantage. For Said cannot quite see how to achieve a "future" free of domination, without building the path to that "future" upon the minimal norm, the regulative idea, provided by the concept of "unhoused exilic experience." The normative mediation of (the figure, the experience of) exile, then – this is Said's residual dialectic, the monstrous mask of his closeted Hegelianism. It is against this *positive* dialectical norm that Adorno is arguing here. What occurs historically will emerge from the present under the trope of, on the wings of, a different sort of movement than Said's dialectic imagines: Adorno's monstrous mediations are not just blind, but headless. They fly on wings but without direction; theirs is a specifically non dialectical (and not anti-dialectical) movement. Adorno's wild mediations move: not, certainly, in the way that "robot bombs" move, but also not by

11 *Minima Moralia*, translated by Jephcott, 55. Compare Redman's translation at http://www.efn.org/~dredmond/MinimaMoralia.html (December 12, 2011).

means of an unhoused or exilic aesthetic principle that carries its value on its back with it, country to country.

Let me try to be more specific about the nature of Adorno's critique of the normative figure of exile. We ask: what sort of mediation *is* Adorno proposing, under the aspect of the wholly-futile, of the headless? Consider two of Adorno's expressions: the "monster documentary," used to characterize war-films and war-propaganda; and the expressions "phony war" and "really phony" war. Where does Adorno get these words from abroad, these images or turns of phrase, marked off as slightly foreign in the text of *Minima Moralia,* émigrés or exiles from other languages, ringing out in English from the German text – "phony war" – or echoing in French – *monstre-documentaire*? Can one ask the question "Where does Adorno get this image?" without falling into the positivist temptations that so nettle Adorno during his time at the Radio Project? What sorts of mediations, factual interferences, alternative medialities, wild materialisms disturb and condition our analysis of Adorno's argument? Our experience of his prose? I am going to defer my explicit answer to the second, methodological questions for a bit, and provide what will seem like positive grounds for answering the first question. (In fact the search for these positive grounds runs us necessarily into the methodological quandary.)

About the sinister notion that Europe was merely engaged in a "phony war" we can be brief. The notion had a great deal of currency in isolationist camps in Britain and, obviously for much longer, in the United States – where one heard about the "phony war" from 1938 until the attack on Pearl Harbor. Senator William Borah is most often associated with the notion that Great Britain and France "pulled their punches" on the Western front, in 1938 and 1939, and that this indicated *at least* some sort of weak-willed response to aggression on the part of Russia and Germany, but more probably, Borah and others darkly intimated, a secret wish, hidden behind the "phoniness" of the response to Fascist belligerence, to provoke the United States to join the war precisely *because of* the failure to contain aggression. "Phony" here meant not only, in short, "false," but also *deliberately and perniciously* false: a mask of weakness assumed to lure the United States into the theatre of war.[12] This sort

12 The isolationist sentiment in the years running up to the attack on Pearl Harbor was strong. On September 14, 1939, Borah delivered a radio address urging Congress to "Retain the Arms Embargo: It keeps us Out of War;" on September 15, Charles Lindbergh appealed by radio from Washington D.C. for "isolation" and called for the United States to "Look To Our Own Defense." On September 19,

of innuendo, persistent and demoralizing, did not sit well with the people fighting. The British War Secretary, Oliver Stanley, made headlines in March 1940 when he angrily denounced those who called the European theatre, "in language culled from the ringside, a phony war. This is a phrase," Stanley said, "used by people who, after a good dinner, sit down and urge two fighters to tear each other to pieces."[13] Adorno's use of the expression "phony war" – "The war is really phony [*Der Krieg ist wirklich phony,* it "really *is* phony" and it is "really phony," not just a little bit . . .], but with a phonyness more horrifying than all the horrors, and those who mock at it are principal contributors to disaster" – builds on this tragic ground. *Minima Moralia* turns the device used by Borah, Lindbergh and other isolationists to promote neutrality – the phoniness, the claims regarding the unreality of the war's supposed facts – into the "reality" of the state of affairs under Fascism and in the "neutral"

1939 the *Los Angeles Times* reported that "Senator William E. Borah today accused Great Britain and France of 'pulling their punches' against Germany on the western front, and asserted that there is something 'phony' about the European war . . . Borah, who took the cause of the isolationists to the country in a radio speech last week, has received approximately 2800 telegrams . . ." In: "Allies 'Pulling Their Punches' on Western Front, Says Borah," in: *Los Angeles Times* (September 19, 1939): 4. On September 21, 1939, President Roosevelt addressed congress and requested that the Arms Embargo, the last element of the so-called Neutrality Law prohibiting full-throated support for England and France, be lifted.

13 "Stanley Excoriates American Critics of British War Effort," in: *Los Angeles Times* (March 21, 1940): 8. The supposed "phoniness" of the war effort was the subject of an influential 1939 column by Walter Lippmann, which read in part: "It is being said that this is a phony war. But we shall understand the war better if we remember that it was preceded by eight years of phony peace . . . The phony peace was in fact a war, or more exactly a campaign of aggression, in which the smaller, weaker neutral states were to be captured in order to found great new empires that would then be able to dictate a new order of things throughout the greater part of the world. But at long last this campaign encountered effective resistance, and that resistance is what the superficial are pleased to call a phony war." Lippmann, Walter, "Today and Tomorrow," in: *Los Angeles Times* (October 27, 1939): A4. By 1941, memoirs like Robert J. Casey's *I Can't Forget: Personal Experiences of a War Correspondent in France, Luxembourg, Germany, Belgium, Spain and England* (New York 1941) were making the case that, as one reviewer put it, "the 'phony' war was genuine – and nothing was done to bulwark the weak spot [the Maginot line, in this case] through which it would crash in blazing earnest." Howden, Benjamin, "Newsman Who Witnessed it Explains French Collapse," in: *Los Angeles Times* (November 16, 1941): C10.

or isolationist bands. To be a witness to the "monster-documentary" is in reality to play a part in it: the part of the spectator who, shown "monstrosities" as if they were "documentary" evidence and invited to reject them therefore as far-fetched pseudo-facts, is acting a more terrible part still – a part made the more terrible inasmuch as there is no-one to watch it, inasmuch as it plays for no objective public. *This* "monster-documentary" no longer seeks even to persuade: it folds its public into itself, and enacts thereby not only the liquidation of any "objective" standpoint with regard to the "facts" it claims to document, but also any "subjective" experience of the (second-order) "fact" of its projection, of its documentariness, of its presumed objectivity, even of its objectality. Adorno's oxymoronic expression "really phony" carries an immense charge, then: misread, it may be understood to describe a sort of lexical neutralization, of the "real" by the "phony" and vice-versa. In this sense, the two terms, combined, promote isolationism, the catastrophe. Yes, the inclusion of the spectator within the film has a total or totalitarian effect – here Adorno seems to be echoing Kracauer's comments regarding the function of film in the rise of National Socialism – but it also and for this very reason spells the end of a certain model of reflection, of a certain economization of the experience of terror or horror that is cast by Adorno as a specific critique of Hegelianism.[14]

So how *are* we to read the expression "really phony," against this risk of catastrophic neutralization? How should Adorno's readers understand the non-neutralizing, non-dialectical contradiction between the "phony" and the "real"? What sort of fact, object or event can be both "phony" and "real," without condemning both terms and the spectator, the political agent or the critic that they modify, to the thoughtlessness of the empty movie-house?

The "monster-documentary" we find in this same section of *Minima Moralia* provides a first answer to these questions; the figure of the exile, the more extended and conceptually precise one. The German word "monster" isn't uncommon in Adorno's work; even in *Minima Moralia* we run into it a number of times – for instance, in the fragment called "Mammoth," which opens observing that

> [s]ome years ago, the report circulated in American newspapers about the discovery of a well-preserved dinosaur in the state of Utah. It was emphasized that the specimen in question had outlived its species and was a million

14 In Kracauer, Siegfried, *From Caligari to Hitler, a Psychological History of the German Film*, Princeton 1947.

> years younger than any hitherto known. Such reports, like the repulsively humorous craze for the Loch Ness monster and the King Kong film, are collective projections of the monstrous total state.

We find it again in "Customer service," which concludes linking opera and film, "The cadence of every film however is that of the witch, who serves soup to the little ones she wants to ensorcel or devour, with the hideous murmur, 'Yummy soup, yummy soup? You'll enjoy it, you'll enjoy it . . .' In art," Adorno continues,

> this kitchen fire-magic was discovered by Wagner, whose linguistic intimacies and musical spices are always tasting themselves, and who simultaneously demonstrated the entire procedure, with the genius' compulsion of confession, in the scene of the Ring, where Mime offers Siegfried the poisoned potion. Who however is supposed to chop off the monster's head, now that its blond locks have lain for a long time under the linden tree? [*Wer aber soll dem Monstrum den Kopf abschlagen*?]

Adorno's monsters crop up in "Small pains, great songs," which opens observing that "Contemporary mass culture is historically necessary not merely as the consequence of the embrace of the entire life by monster enterprises [*als Folge der Umklammerung des gesamten Lebens durch Monstreunternehmen*], but as the consequence of what today seems most utterly opposed to the prevailing standardization of consciousness, aesthetic subjectification." Monstrosity, too, makes an appearance: "Gala dinner" ends:

> If 19th century connoisseurs sat down only for one act of an opera, with the barbaric aside that they wouldn't cut their dinner short for any spectacle, then meanwhile the barbarism, which has cut off the possibility of escape to dinner, cannot stuff itself enough with its own culture. Every program must be sat through to the end, every "best seller" [in English in original] must be read, every film must be seen during its first release in the movie theater. The abundance of what is consumed without choice becomes calamitous. It makes it impossible to find one's way, and just as one looks for a guide in a monstrous department store, so too does the population, penned in by attractions, wait for a leader of their own. [*Die Fülle des wahllos Konsumierten wird unheilvoll. Sie macht es unmöglich, sich zurechtzufinden, und wie man im monströsen Warenhaus nach einem Führer sucht, wartet die zwischen Angeboten eingepeilte Bevölkerung auf den ihren.*]

"Vandals" speaks of the "monstrous apparatus of pleasure" [*Darum allein erhält der monströse Vergnügungsapparat sich am Leben und schwillt immer mehr auf*], "Extra edition" of

> Concepts like sadism and masochism no longer suffice. In the mass society of technical dissemination they are mediated by sensation, by the comet-like, far removed, to-the-extreme new. It overwhelms the public, which squirms under the shock and forgets who the monstrosity is being perpetrated on, oneself or others [*Es überwältigt das Publikum, das unterm Schock sich windet und vergißt, wem das Ungeheure angetan ward, einem selbst oder anderen*];

the 5th "Thesis against Occultism" maintains that

> Occultists rightly feel drawn to childishly monstrous natural-scientific fantasies. [*Mit Recht fühlen die Okkulten von kindisch monströsen naturwissenschaftlichen Phantasien sich angezogen.*] The confusion they create between their emanations and the isotopes of uranium, is ultimate clarity. The mystic rays are modest anticipations of the technical ones.

Monsters bear unexpected weight conceptually, as one of the many places in which an alternative to the sort of "relentless" machinery of deterministic Hegelianism is being exposed. For the dialectic in its classic sense there are no monsters – if by "monster" we mean a singularity, an unclassifiable term, a being characterized by its immediacy, to be pointed out without the hope that this indexical gesture will return us to history or to consciousness, by means of the dialectic of sense-certainty, of pointing and indexicality, we find (for instance) at the opening of Hegel's *Phenomenology*. The monstrous in *this* Hegelian sense – the immediate singularity of a term or a sense-datum – is destined to come to rest in the documentary – in the schematic plane of representation, where it can be presented for consumption – and to this extent it reveals itself to have been, always and already, *less* than monstrous, a commodity. As in *King Kong,* when the "eighth wonder of the world," as the ape was called, in coming to New York is reinscribed into the filmic paradigm from which the project of going to Skull Island in the first place took shape, a circular journey, a total domain from which there are and can be no exiles. In this circle, from New York to Skull Island and back, from the domain of the romance film to that of the documentary and back, the real and the phony are immediately in contradiction: and this immediacy, signaled by the circular relation that binds the two terms, leaves no room for the *truly* monstrous. Hegel has in mind this non-monstrosity of what immediately appears when *he* discusses the huge, tremendous or frightful, *ungeheure*: "monstrous," quality of the *negative*, in the Preface to the *Phenomenology*. We have not even encountered

the drama of sense-certainty, and already Hegel famously warns us against an immediate apprehension of the singular:

> To break an idea up into its original elements is to return to its moments, which at least do not have the form of the given idea, but rather constitute the immediate property of the self. This analysis, to be sure, only arrives at thoughts which are themselves familiar, fixed, and inert determinations. But what is thus separated and non-actual is an essential moment; for it is only because the concrete does divide itself, and make itself into something non-actual, that it is self-moving. The activity of dissolution is the power and work of the Understanding, the most astonishing and mightiest of powers, or rather the absolute power. The circle that remains self-enclosed and, like substance, holds its moments together, is an immediate relationship, one therefore which has nothing astonishing about it. But that an accident as such, detached from what circumscribes it, what is bound and is actual only in its context with others, should attain an existence of its own and a separate freedom – this is the tremendous power of the negative, it is the energy of thought, of the pure "I" . . . ([D]*ie ungeheure Macht des Negativen; es ist die Energie des Denkens, des reinen Ichs.*)[15]

This analytic, divisive, negative enormity is *not* the primary sense that the term "monster" has when qualifying the word "documentary" in this section of *Minima Moralia* (though it is not far from Adorno's argument). It is likely that the film *King Kong,* though it is set to work in the earlier parts of the group of fragments, is similarly *not* the only "monster documentary" that Adorno is envisioning here. Again, however, such monsters are not far from *Minima Moralia.* This section of Adorno's work is devoted to the "firing line," and it describes, not the pseudo-ethnographic monster-documentary featuring Fay Wray, etc. – not the figure of King Kong, whose monstrous assimilation into the figure of Hitler he advances a little later – but "documentaries" whose "monstrosity" is of a different sort from this. (It should be noted, not unrelatedly, that the path leading from New York to Skull Island and back is only to be conceived as a circle when we set off from the metropolis. The ape does not return to the Island; starting off from the colony, the monster's path is sadly linear. King Kong only returns to Skull Island posthumously, when his immense

15 Hegel, G.W.F., *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Preface), Frankfurt/M. 1971–73, 36; Hegel, G.W.F., *Phenomenology of Spirit*, transl. A.V. Miller, Oxford 1977, 18f. Adorno returns to this passage in *Negative Dialectic;* understanding them perhaps as a description of Adorno's procedure, Hegel's lines seem to me to underlie much of the analysis we find in *Minima Moralia.*

body has been reduced to bones and, precisely, skull. He returns, we might say, tropically as well as tropologically, when the name of the Island is taken, in a manner of speaking, literally. A wild critique of the violent Eurocentrism of dialectical reason could be built upon the dissymmetry, the mutual untranslatability, of these two movements.)

It seems likely that Adorno's "monster-documentary" engages *also* and more directly, in addition to Hegel's figure for immediately reflexive thought and the great simian and other filmic monsters that preoccupy Adorno elsewhere in *Minima Moralia,* with Kracauer's 1942 pamphlet "Propaganda and the Nazi War Film," "made possible," Kracauer tells his readers somewhat later, "by a Rockefeller grant" and "originally serving the purposes of psychological warfare."[16] In this pamphlet Kracauer had analyzed the weekly newsreels put out by the Nazi office of propaganda, as well as two feature-length campaign films, *Feuertaufe* and *Sieg im Westen,* which opened in New York and Los Angeles in 1940 and which had played in Europe and Turkey to notorious effect.[17] Each of the

16 Kracauer, Siegfried, "Propaganda and the Nazi War Film," collected in *From Caligari to Hitler,* 274. The subject of Adorno's own relation to film is controversial. A good review of the different positions critics have taken, along with an informed account of Adorno's own efforts to make his way in the Hollywood film industry, and an argument against the picture of the exiled community furnished by Martin Jay in *Permanent Exiles: Essays on the Intellectual Migration from Germany to America*, New York 1985, may be found in Jenemann, David, *Adorno in America*, Minneapolis 2007.

17 The bibliography on film propaganda during the Second World War is extensive. I have consulted, among others, Culbert, David (ed.), *Film and Propaganda in America. A documentary history* 5: *Microfiche Supplement, 1939–1979*, New York 1993; the useful anthology edited by Gregory Black, *Hollywood Goes to War: Patriotism, Movies and the Second World War from Ninotchka to Mrs Miniver*, London 2000, as well as the more recent work by Luigi Bruti Liberati, *Hollywood Contro Hitler: Immagini Cinematografiche Di Una Guerra Giusta, 1939–1958*, Milano 2010, and Jo Fox's *Film Propaganda in Britain and Nazi Germany: World War II Cinema,* Oxford, New York 2007, 16–92. About *Sieg im Westen* and *Feuertaufe* in particular, see Graham, Cooper C., "Sieg im Westen (1941): Interservice and Bureaucratic Propaganda Rivalries in Nazi Germany," in: *Historical Journal of Film, Radio & Television* 9.1 (1989): 19–44 (especially helpful for its comments on Kracauer's analysis of the film, and for providing a "Closing Report on the Film *Sieg im Westen*" listing the different venues it was shown in, along with remarks from the Propaganda office regarding the film's reputed effects there). The report concludes, tellingly: "The last proof of the thorough success of the film is a report dated May 8, 1941 from the Military Attaché in Rio, which states: 'In this connection, it is interesting to note a report that the *Nación* sent from New York on

full-length propaganda films presented a rather thorny problem – what Thomas Pryor, writing in the *Times* on May 18, 1941, called "a puzzler:" "whether the German war film, 'Sieg im Westen' is a newsreel or a 'feature film which should have been submitted to the State Board of Regents for censorship.'"[18] The matter was legally delicate, but also fascinating as a work, one might say, of cultural criticism *avant la lettre*. Ultimately, the challenges mounted by the Non-Sectarian Anti-Nazi League to the showing of *Sieg im Westen* were denied, on the court's judgment that the film was indeed to be classified as a newsreel, and hence constituted a protected form of expression, like newspapers. The Non-Sectarian League had objected on four grounds to the films' distribution when they brought the case against UFA. "1) The film," the League maintained, "does not consist completely of news 'shots.' Several scenes were posed; 2) a musical score was 'dubbed in'; 3) the film lasts for almost two hours; 4) there is a connected narrative." The Customs Bureau of New York had classified the film as a "feature picture." *Sieg im Westen* opened in New York at the Ninety-Sixth Street Theatre on May 7, 1941, to "anti-Nazi pickets pacing the sidewalk outside the theatre," as the *Times* stringer reported it – pickets organized by the German-American Congress for Democracy, the group Friends of Democracy, and the Non-Sectarian Anti-Nazi League.[19] Bosley Crowther, writing for the *Times* three days later, called the occasion "A perfect opportunity to study the technique of the propaganda film," and went on to identify *Sieg im Westen* as

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May 1, 1941, according to which the ›Antifascist Organization of the Friends of Democracy‹ asked Secretary of State Cordell Hull by wire to forbid the showing of this film in the USA.' In the interest of German military propaganda, it can only be recommended that a similar film be prepared and finished about the Balkans, Africa, and the Campaign in the East" (44); see also Thomas Sakmyster's excellent article "Nazi Documentaries of Intimidation: *Feldzug in Polen* (1940), *Feuertaufe* (1940) and *Sieg im Westen* (1941)," in: *Historical Journal of Film, Radio & Television* 16.4 (1996): 485–513.

18 Pryor, Thomas M., "Film News and Comment," in: *New York Times* (May 18, 1941): X3.

19 *New York Times* (May 8, 1941), "Anti-Nazis Picket Uptown Theatre Here as German Propaganda Newsreel Opens." The 96th-Street theatre had a rather checkered history on the whole. As the Yorkville Theatre, it had specialized in foreign-made films. It reopened as the National Theatre in 1936, and after 1940 began showing exclusively German films as the "96th Street Theatre." The theatre, which had by this point acquired the unsavory reputation of showing primarily Nazi films, closed when the United States entered the war.

> undoubtedly the famous picture which Franz von Papen is supposed to have shown the Turks in an effort to frighten them into signing upon the Axis line. It is earmarked for Latin America, if it hasn't already been seen there. And the purpose quite obviously of releasing it to the United States is to whip up the Nazi converts and win as many more new ones as possible . . . But whether it will frighten anyone who doesn't want to be frightened remains to be seen.[20]

Feuertaufe opened in Berlin on April 5, 1940, to an invitation audience hosted by Goering, and on April 4th in Rome. The unpleasantly admiring *New York Times* correspondents, George Axelsson in Berlin and an unnamed stringer from Rome, seem to agree on the point best expressed by the Roman correspondent:

> Members of the audience to whom your correspondent spoke agreed that the impression made on them was one of respect for German might but also of sympathy for the Poles. The picture was not intended to inspire good-will for Germany, it was said, but to strike terror. From that viewpoint, it was a great success. The audience, in fact, seemed to have been horrified.[21]

Feuertaufe was used in Norway, the neutral European press as well as the United States press reported, "to strengthen confidence inside Germany itself [and] produce such shattering effects abroad in the neutral countries as to keep alive a wholesome respect for the military machine which is capable of striking such terrible blows."[22] In Denmark, *Feuertaufe*, described by the *Washington Post* correspondent as "portraying a grim baptism of fire which was Poland's penalty for daring to resist, was promptly installed in one of Copenhagen's biggest theatres to help persuade the Danes they had chosen the wisest course."[23] The German films provided material for counter-propaganda films like *The World at War*. About this film, one reviewer said in September 1942 that "Most of the footage [for a section of *The World at War*] has been

20 Crowther, Bosley, "Crime and Crumpets: A Note on English Melodrama – One New Comedy and a Nazi War News Film," in: *New York Times* (May 11, 1941): X3.

21 Axelsson, George, "Airmen Seen Blasting Polish Cities in Film Shown in Berlin and Rome," in: *New York Times* April 6, 1940, 3.

22 "A Movie Warning to Neutrals," in:*Living Age* (June 1940): 360.

23 Hersch, Joseph C., "Awakened by Hobnailed Boots: Broken-Hearted Danes Face Destruction of Livelihood," in: *Washington Post* (April 21, 1940): 7.

taken from confiscated Nazi films – two of which, 'Feldzug in Polen' [which Kracauer consistently confuses, it should be said, with 'Feuertaufe'] and 'Sieg im Westen' have been seen in this country. Too brutal almost for realization are the pictures here of cities destroyed . . . Spread across the face of America, 'The World at War' should stimulate a grim resolve."[24]

The section of *Minima Moralia* before us, and before Said, concludes again invoking the diabolical, in the context of a "newsreel" depicting "the invasion of the Marianas, including Guam." Adorno asks his reader to envision an economy, even a physics of infinite loss:

> The logic of history is as destructive as the people that it brings to prominence: wherever its momentum carries it, it reproduces equivalents of past calamity [*Die Logik der Geschichte ist so destruktiv wie die Menschen, die sie zeitigt: wo immer ihre Schwerkraft hintendiert, reproduziert sie das Äquivalent des vergangenen Unheils*] [. . .] Satanically, indeed, more initiative is in a sense demanded here than in old-style war: it seems to cost the subject his whole energy to achieve subjectlessness [*Dabei das Satanische, daß in gewisser Weise mehr Initiative beansprucht wird als im Krieg alten Stils, daß es gleichsam die ganze Energie des Subjekts kostet, die Subjektlosigkeit herbeizuführen*].

This thought-image is not quite in accord with the companion trope of the headless "history," though both draw upon and are fleshed in by means of the same reservoir of "monstrous" figures and figures of monstrous mediation – Hegelian, Hollywood-esque, documentary. The "reproduction of equivalents of past calamity," a "Satanic" momentum driving the subject towards subjectlessness – these are precisely *not* "headless," aleatory, blind or contingent movements such as would characterize the robot-bomb deprived of a steering mechanism, or the headless horseman that the Spirit of History appears to become. Rather, Adorno's physics of endless loss rests upon a mediating figure, a trope for mediation acting "behind," and devising the entropic erosion of, subjectivity, a monstrous twin of Maxwell's demon: "Satan," Adorno calls it, or as we might also observe, the roughly Freudian structure of "reproducing equivalents," that is, of repetition. For "equivalents" are such only when they are measured against a standard of value that one can approach precisely, and which doesn't vary (one can apply a rule and say "this catastrophe is the equivalent of that, under these conditions, in these

24 Crowther, Bosley, "'The World at War,' a Powerful Documentary Survey of the Past Decade, at Rialto," in: *New York Times* (September 4, 1942): 19.

circumstances:" for instance, the Holocaust is "reproduced" or can be made equivalent to other catastrophes, which is why, as Adorno writes in this section, it is only an "interlude" and not the catastrophe itself).

The instability Adorno has devised operates, tropologically, between the headless figure and the satanic one, which are confused, but radically incompatible: indifferent, yet utterly different; and to operate between a conceptualization of history dependent upon the headless contingency of occurrent facts, and a conceptualization of history in which things can and necessarily do repeat themselves according to pernicious or evil, even satanic designs, rhythms or intervals. A stable understanding of history is its first casualty; a positivist account of the "fact," its second; a humanistic account of the exile, that plaster cast or *facies hippocratica* (as Benjamin would say, and Adorno would echo) that the cultural critic inhabits, is its third casualty. In the fragment of *Minima Moralia* that we are reading, the burden of reconciling these two movements, these two conceptualizations of history, falls to the exceptionally knotty verb *tendieren,* to tend, incline, lean toward something – neither an intentional nor a nonintentional verb, but rather something fruitfully intermediate or indeterminate (*Die Logik der Geschichte ist so destruktiv wie die Menschen, die sie zeitigt: wo immer ihre Schwerkraft hintendiert, reproduziert sie das Äquivalent des vergangenen Unheils*, weakly translated by Jephcott as "wherever *its momentum carries it*, it reproduces equivalents of past calamity," my emphasis).[25]

25 The closest Adorno comes to providing a definition of "tendency" – that massively important term in the Marxian tradition – is this late observation, from "Late Capitalism or Industrial Society?:" "A dialectical theory of society concerns itself with structural laws, which condition the facts, in which it manifests itself and from which it is modified. By structural laws we mean tendencies, which more or less stringently follow the historical constitution of the total system. The Marxist models for this were the law of value, the law of accumulation, the law of economic crisis. Dialectical theory did not intend to turn structures into ordered schemata, which could be applied to sociological findings as completely, continually and non-contradictorily as possible; nor systemizations, but rather the procedures and data of scientific cognition of the already-organized system of society. Such a theory ought least of all to withhold facts from itself, to twist them around according to a thema probandum. Otherwise it would in fact fall right back into dogmatism and would repeat conceptually what the entrenched authorities of the Eastern bloc have already perpetrated through the instrument of Diamat: freezing into place what, according to its own concept, cannot be otherwise thought than as something which moves. The fetishism of the facts corresponds to one of the objective laws. Dialectics, which has had its fill of the painful experience of such hegemony, does not hegemonize in turn,

It is here too – where the figure of the mediating demon meets the "headless" principle of historical change, and the resulting substantive "acts" on the wings of the personal-impersonal, determinate-indeterminate verb "tendieren," that we understand most clearly the difference between Adorno's notion of "exile" and Said's later, humanistic one. Imagine, in this empty theater to which Adorno has consigned us, that the "really phony" events of this divided history appear to us (that we appear to ourselves as the "really phony" actors in the "monster-documentary" we find ourselves in). They are, of course, the "plaster casts" of events, presented to our sight, to the eyes our *facies hippocratica* bears allegorically. The "plaster-casts" we see are always the death-masks or the traces of the event already past; the walk-on-parts Adorno describes for us, walk-on parts that empty out the theater, are those scripted parts into which the audience-member fits him-or herself. The positive "fact" in general is now divided, subjectively as well as objectively – the sort of fact that might be adduced in answer to a question like "Where did Adorno get this image?;" a statement of fact like "Adorno's 'monster-documentary' comes from a reading of Kracauer's reviews of *Feuertaufe,* of his concern to understand *King Kong,* out of his engagement with the monstrosity of immediacy in Hegel's *Phenomenology.*"

But say we want to make this divided fact, this division of the fact, into the ground of an experience, an identity; into some sort of subjectivity to which the *tendential* act would belong, an indeterminate predication corresponding to an indeterminate or mobile subject. Let's say we choose, with Said, to refer to this sort of tendential, unhoused subjectivity under the term of "exile." Adorno is still unconvinced that this dialectical recovery *works.* The fact of exile, the condition and the noun, are walk-on parts, a *facies hippocratica,* a plaster mask, the pre-existing script into which the émigré must step in order to bear value and identity, however he understands them. The affective trap that this unhousing of the

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but criticizes this just as much as the appearance, that the individuated and the concrete already determine the course of the world hic et nunc. It's very likely that under the spell of the latter the individuated and the concrete do not even exist yet. Through the word pluralism, utopia is suppressed, as if it were already here; it serves as consolation. That is why however dialectical theory, which critically reflects on itself, may not for its part install itself domestic-style in the medium of the generality." From Adorno, Theodor, "Late Capitalism or Industrial Society?"(Opening Address to the 16th German Sociological Congress, 1968), transl. Dennis Redmond, 2001. At: http://members.efn.org/~dredmond/AdornoSozAddr.PDF (December 12, 2011).

positive fact puts us in is disabling, for the two positions to which it leads, melancholia or mourning on one side, automatism on the other – are equally problematical. Adorno may be one of Said's proxies, assigned a walk-on part in the Palestinian critic's theatre of memories; a stand-in for a specific sort of thought about exile, whose Hegelianism Said now inhabits, now seeks to cast aside. But Adorno's thought is also the death-mask, the plaster mask, the posthumous trace, *avant la lettre*, of Said's conception of "unhoused," "exilic" identity and experience. Adorno and *Minima Moralia* assume in advance the tension between these two positions, between these two facts the work and its author will each become, futures they understand themselves already to have. In that agony at a stand-still, from that mediated tension between melancholia and automatism, Adorno and the *Minima Moralia* screen for us a *radically* exilic picture of the real phonyness, the monster documentariness of all positive facts.

Let's put it another way still. The émigré's disposition to remain attached, for his value or sense of self, to the home he left but must recall; and to the new one, for a value he will make for himself according to patterns conformable to those he abandoned, assimilated to them, repeating them – these are the forms of the psychology of exile we see in Said's treatment of Adorno, and in Adorno's later comments on Kracauer, but which each, the Jewish exile from Europe and the Palestinian exile from Palestine, must surely have been reserving also for himself, for that commodity-value he had also become. In this theatre a sort of double-feature is playing: we see that Kracauer stands to Adorno, with regard to film, as Adorno does to Said with regard to music and with regard to the critic's efforts to understand the great movements of history. But this position, this stance, is, as we have seen, both divided and (as if in compensation) over-signified. Toward the older critic, the younger one stands as the exile does toward the lost homeland which is the source of his value and the condition of his estrangement, and toward the new land in which these, a transported value and the estrangement on which it rests, become a new form of identity. Each, Kracauer for Adorno, Adorno for Said, is at the same time the lost home from which he is exiled, and the location at which he arrives, anew and bearing a different value. The exile, estranged, but understanding his intellectual value to derive now, reciprocally, from his willingness and ability to estrange from itself the land, or the conceptual program, economy, or affective dispositions he now finds himself in. We have seen how Adorno's monsters are never one, but pass always through the messy sociality of the

cinema, of the philosophy text-book, of the field of literature, of the sidewalk before the moviehouse. In the monster-documentary that *Minima Moralia* screens for us, the psychology of exile is similarly determined and overdetermined by the dynamics of economic value and by the lexicon of disciplinary authority and competence – each of which passes through the others as well, determined and overdetermined each by the others: the condition of exile is an object or a token named, valued, traded and exchanged in the three domains (in the three markets). This is why Kracauer is as much a figure of ambivalence for Adorno as Adorno is for Said.[26] Kracauer walks onto Adorno's late writings as the occasion of the comment, made in the 1964 essay "Der wunderliche Realist," that "[o]ne looks in vain in the storehouses of Kracauer's intellectual motifs for indignation about reification" – and the none-too-veiled suggestion is that this lack of indignation reveals an otherwise masked positivism, Kracauer's understanding of an audience's relation to filmic objects taken to be what Hegel refers to, in the passage I cited from the *Phenomenology,* as the "immediate relation" of "substance holding its moments together."[27] But Kracauer is *also* the occasion for the almost simultaneous recognition, in Adorno's *Die Zeit* article of November 18, 1966, that became "Transparencies on Film," that the search for such "indignation" obscures something about films, and something genuinely novel about Kracauer's method and about his understanding of filmic objects, that exceeds Kracauer's infantile efforts to redeem those objects by understanding them as immediate facts in a visual field. In "Transparencies on Film" Adorno no longer seeks to find "indignation" at reification, at the objectality of films and their technique. Now, Kracauer's argument no longer represents for Adorno an infantile attachment to objects, and no longer purports to supply an immediate relation to the positive reality of the medium; Kracauer's method is no longer a search for the redemption of the object as a mere fact of experience or immediate given in the field of vision. That, one might justly suggest, was a description that mapped the melancholia, the nostalgia of exile upon the field of vision; to seek to redeem the bare object in the filmic medium, that real of the visual field, was to be prey to an infantile nostalgia for the lost homeland from which one had been expelled, the homeland of positive facticity, of naked and

26 A searching treatment of this ambivalent relation – in a different vein from my own remarks here – may be found in Miriam B. Hansen's *Cinema and Experience: Siegfried Kracauer, Walter Benjamin, and Theodor W. Adorno*, Berkeley 2011.

27 Adorno, "The Curious Realist," 75.

immediate objectality. The American Adorno would understandably have recognized that map for what it was, and rejected it – as he does in the movie-house in *Minima Moralia*. In later years, however – at the time he is writing both "Der wunderliche Realist" and "Transparencies on Film" – Adorno finds that the "really phony" objects that Kracauer seemed to wish to redeem work to produce quite a different vision of exile and home as well, of the real object and the filmic object. "That which is irreducible about the objects in film," Adorno startlingly writes in 1966, "is itself a mark of society."[28] The qualifier "in film" is crucial: it is Adorno's way of acknowledging the status of an object that is both "real," *qua* object; and "phony," inasmuch as it is an object in a film. From his second exile, his exile at home from his exile in America, now exiled from the "plaster cast" he had assumed on American soil, Adorno reserves for the irreducible objectality of objects in film *both* the creation of a nostalgic attachment to "real" objects *and* the "mark of society."

This is also the mark, and the condition, that he reserves finally for the exile that he at last becomes, estranged from that commodity-value he now understands his work, and himself, to have become for others' uses. Let's call this a form of radical exile, or perhaps better, of wild exile. Like the wild exile and like the condition of radical exile, films' objects now bear irreducibly the social mark that makes them "really phony:" the unending automatism, the rhythmic physics of loss and incommensurable gain, formed between the domains of self (the psychology of exile), economy, and cultural and professional authority among which bodies, objects, or tokens like "exile," travel, not so much unhoused as never at home.

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Sounding Through – Poetic Difference – Self-Translation: Hannah Arendt's Thoughts and Writings Between Different Languages, Cultures, and Fields

Sigrid Weigel

I. The Sound of Arendt's Writing

Every time I read Hannah Arendt, I get the impression of hearing *her* voice speaking the words and phrases I read, like a performance. It is not that I want to get rid of this effect; I very much appreciate the mode of her speaking and presenting arguments. The only drawback of this presence of her soundless voice is the fact that it compels me to follow that mode of relatively slow reading which in ancient Greek was introduced as 'reading inwardly.' This is regarded as a silent reading performed on an inner stage,[1] but – taking into account the metaphorical character of all sayings about the 'inner' or 'inward' – actually occurs as a soundless reading of any single word as if one was reading aloud. In order to find out the reason for this phenomenon I listened again to several of her recorded radio speeches and to the few interviews that Hannah Arendt, who hated to have her face represented and reproduced in the public sphere, consented to give.[2] After listening again to Arendt's recorded voice, I have come to the conclusion that it is the rhythm of her thoughts that attracts my mind to such an extent that I can't separate it from the lucidity and rhetoric of her analyses.

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1 See Svenbro, Jesper, *Phrasikleia. Anthropologie des Lesens im Alten Griechenland*, Munich 2005.

2 Namely the famous interview by Günter Gaus in 1964 in German and the (originally English) interview by Roger Errera for French TV in 1973. Both published in German in: Arendt, Hannah, *Ich will verstehen. Selbstauskünfte zu Leben und Werk*, ed. Ursula Ludz, Munich, Zurich 1996.

As soon as one's attention is alerted to the voice, the rereading of Arendt's writings immediately yields new discoveries – this one, for example, in one of the centerpieces of her theory, namely in the chapter on *Acting* (*Handeln*) in her book *The Human Condition* (in German: *Vita activa oder Vom tätigen Leben*):

> In acting and speaking, men show who they are, reveal actively their unique personal identities and thus make their appearance in the human world, while their physical identities appear without any activity of their own in the unique shape of the body and sound of the voice.[3]

Arendt thus considers the voice as belonging among the phenomena of that involuntarily revealing and personal "Who-somebody-actually-is," which remains to a great extent veiled to oneself while appearing "so clearly and unmistakably" to others. The fact that any person only makes an appearance as "someone" or "somebody" in the realm of togetherness forms the centre of Arendt's theory: it is the *inter-est* of inbetweenness, or the interspace between humans from which her concept of the political emerges.

In what follows I will discuss this persistent reverberation of the author's voice as a symptom of the very characteristic *sound* of Arendt's political theory in order to examine the specific historical and epistemological conditions from which her unique thinking emerged. The sound underlines not only the eminent role language plays in her thoughts – as confirmed by her repeatedly expressed confession that even in exile she remained close to her German mother tongue – I also refer to a particular scenario from which her reflections emerge. This can be called tragic in that it might be compared to the counter rhythmic structure of the ancient theatre, based on a constellation of irreconcilable parts. In his *Essay on the Tragic* (1978),[4] Peter Szondi argued that the enlightened subject/person may be described as the heir of the antithetic character of ancient tragedy in as much as the *agon* of ancient drama has turned into an irresolvable tragic constellation to which the modern subject is bound. Thus, it is this Szondian sense of the tragic to which I refer when describing the tragic scenario of Arendt's work, rather than to the sentimental meaning it has acquired in ordinary language. It forced

3 Arendt, Hannah, *The Human Condition* (1958), Chicago 1998, 179.

4 Szondi, Peter, *Versuch über das Tragische*, Frankfurt/M. 1978. Engl. transl. Paul Fleming, *An Essay on the Tragic*, Stanford 2002.

her to develop her unique reflections on the concept of the political and the human condition. She translated the latter herself as "menschliche Bedingtheit" when arguing: "Men are conditioned beings because everything they come in contact with turns immediately into a condition of their existence."[5]

The main challenge her work presents is the incommensurateness between philosophy and politics. It not only forms a leitmotif in her writings, but has also been elaborated theoretically by her reflections on acting and thinking. Arendt regarded *acting* (*Handeln*) as the realm of "human affairs," based on the plurality of human being, their *Miteinander* that is to say their being, speaking and acting together forming an inbetweenness and space for the political. *Thinking*, as an activity (*Tätigkeit*) which takes place in a distance from acting (*Handeln*), is described as a dialogue of "two-in-one" or of a "Self" with the "Other of the Self."[6] Instead of merely contemplating and developing theoretically sophisticated examinations of the limits of philosophy and politics – and of other realms, systems, concepts and institutions, such as the legal system with respect to the Nazi crimes – Arendt's work took place *in* the very tension between them, taking philosophy as resistance against existing politics and vice versa. In other words she was working above the abyss, thus turning the existing contradictory constellation into a life *with* and a work *on* them. The traces of such work, which does not leave the person uninjured, are audible in the voice and discernable in the face of Hannah Arendt, especially in the last decade of her life.

In one of her last addresses, the Sonning Price Speech of 1975, Arendt reflects on the discontent of being a public figure and explains the etymology of *persona* – a word deriving from the mask in antique theatre:

> But in this mask, which was designed and determined by the play, there existed a broad opening at the place of the mouth through which the individual, undisguised voice of the actor could sound. It is from this sounding through that the word *persona* derived: per-sonare, "to sound through."[7]

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5 Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 9.

6 See Arendt, Hannah, *Denktagebuch 1950–1973*, ed. Ursula Ludz/Ingeborg Nordmann, Munich, Zurich 2002, 246, 725 et al.

7 The speech is published as "Prologue" in: Arendt, Hannah, *Responsibility and Judgement*, ed. Jerome Kohn, New York 2003. German transl. Ursula Ludz in: *Hannah Arendt. Text und Kritik* 166/167.9 (2005): 3–11.

First appearing in a public speech, these reflections on the *persona* have had a 25-year-long latency, during which they slumbered in her notebook (*Denktagebuch*). Reflections on the relationship between "Person – Ich – Charakter"[8] can be found in the second entry of her notebook and consist of reflections, written mostly in German, which she started in June 1950 after having finished the manuscript for her first English book, i.e. the book on totalitarianism partly written and originally published in English. The *Denktagebuch* thus forms a German *Parerga* to the work of a German-speaking English-writing author. Referring to the theatrical primal scene of *per-sonare* one could describe the unique tone of Arendt's political theory as a sort of sounding through, namely a sounding of German through English, a sounding of poetic language through theory, and a sounding of experiences through political concepts. And these experiences were first and foremost those of immigrants, Jewish refugees and stateless human being.

II. The Metamorphosis of an Author – From Philosophy to Politics

In May 1968, while simultaneously supporting the students' movement with her conceptual critique of their slogans, regularly participating in the heated discussions organized at the *Theatre for Ideas* in Manhattan,[9] and expanding on the plan for her book *On Violence* (in German *Macht und Gewalt*, both 1970), she wrote a remarkable entry in her *Denktagebuch*, reflecting the crucial challenge of her whole commitment: "Any 'political philosophy' must be preceded by a comprehension of the relationship between philosophy and politics. It might be that 'political philosophy' is a Contradictio in adjecto."[10] Arendt's work is stamped by the insight and acknowledgment of this *contradictio* at the same time as it is by the conviction of the necessity to act and think in spite of it, and in full awareness of it. This, I want to argue, was forced upon her and made possible first and foremost by her emigration and the experience of entering into a totally foreign political and intellectual culture. This both forced and enabled her to turn the polar opposition of philosophy and politics

8 Arendt, *Denktagebuch*, 8.

9 "The discussion took place in the 21st Street loft where the Theatre for Ideas, a gathering place for New York intellectuals since 1961, had its house." Young-Bruehl, Elizabeth, *Hannah Arendt. For Love of the World*, New Haven, London 1982, 413.

10 Arendt, *Denktagebuch*, 683.

into a counter-striving productivity, akin to those two arrows pointing in different directions and, though opposed to one another, nevertheless propelling each other forward which Walter Benjamin depicted in his so-called *Theological-Political Fragment*.

Arendt shared the overall experience of exile with many other refugees and Jewish-German intellectuals in New York – many of whom were struck by depression and standstill, falling into silence and an inability to act at all, some of them busy with their mutation into the 'perfect American,' others stuck in their home customs and language and in their enclosed circles of German-speaking émigré friends, and yet others struggling to develop a bilingual and bicultural life as was customary in the United States with its long history of immigration. In the case of Hannah Arendt, however, the escape from Nazi Germany took the shape of a genuine *metamorphosis*. Leaving Germany in 1933 as a gifted, promising young philosopher she was unprepared and abruptly dropped into practical political work during her eight years in France, when working for the Youth-*Alijah*. After arriving in New York in 1941 she immediately turned herself into a writer of political analyses, starting with committed commentaries on the Palestinian situation and the question of a Jewish army, commentaries which may be interpreted as a sort of compromise between the two preceding periods of her life. During the subsequent years her commentaries proceeded step by step toward analyses of politics and political concepts. Although arising from the current political situation, they surpassed the actual problems in formulating fundamental reflections on the conditions of human acting as such.

The way in which Arendt was politically educated by historic events may be studied in her article, "We Refugees," published in January 1943 in *The Menorah Journal*. There she not only reflects on the experience of the refugees alienated from their "language, which means the naturalness of reactions, the simplicity of gestures, the unaffected expression of feelings" and the experience of being the "first non-religious Jews persecuted."[11] Confronted with the historically new situation of the refugees and the stateless in WWII who, "unprotected by any specific law or political convention, are nothing but human beings,"[12] she also reflects on the collapse of both the existing historical and political concepts and the "kind of human beings." The need for a fundamental reconsideration

11 Arendt, Hannah, "We Refugees," in: *The Jew as Pariah. Jewish Identity and Politics in the Modern Age*, ed. Ron H. Feldman, New York 1978, 55–66, 59.

12 Arendt, "We Refugees," 65.

of political thought deriving from this breach finds its point of departure in the insight that "for the first time Jewish history is not separate but tied up with that of all other nations"[13] – that is to say that Jewish history has turned into an epistemological viewpoint for developing general, universal political concepts.

In short: In the case of Hannah Arendt the *escape to life* turned out to take the form of an *entrance into the language of politics*, the latter occurring in the form of the American idiom of English. However, this did not happen without letting the German *backstage* of her mind play an active role. It functioned as a resistance against getting assimilated to the order of the real existing American policy and its conventional codes. I use the word "backstage" here quite literally as a site of speech for the performance of words and thoughts. This constellation forms one of the facets of *per-sonare*, namely a sounding through of her awareness of language and concepts through the voice of the author of political theory into whom Arendt turned herself in the United States.

This metamorphosis took exactly one decade – from her arrival in New York until 1951 when her first book was published in the U.S., namely *The Origins of Totalitarianism*[14] – four years before the German version. This she translated herself, although it might not be called a true translation, as the author herself remarks in the foreword to the first edition in 1955:

> It is not a literal translation of the English text. Some of the chapters I had originally written in German and later translated them into English. I am now giving the original version where this was the case. However, there were more instances here and there where in the process of re-working the text into German changes, cuts and additions occurred, which, however, are not worth pointing out.[15]

While single chapters were translated from original German texts, the main part was written in English as the formation of this book reaches

13 Ibid., 66.

14 Arendt, Hannah, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, New York 1951.

15 Arendt, Hannah, *Elemente und Ursprünge totaler Herrschaft* (1955), Munich 1986, 13 (Arendt's own transl.). As regards the complex genesis of the book see Ludz, Ursula, "Hannah Arendt und ihr Totalitarismusbuch. Ein kurzer Bericht über die schwierige Autor-Werk-Geschichte," in: Antonia Grunenberg (ed.), *Totalitäre Herrschaft und republikanische Demokratie. Fünfzig Jahre The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Frankfurt/M. 2003, 81–92.

back to her very first articles in the U.S. in 1942 from which her analysis of anti-Semitism in "From the Dreyfus Affair to France today"[16] turned out to become the seed for the first part of the book.

In the course of the decade during which the author's metamorphosis took place, a German-American tension was superimposed upon the underlying contradiction between philosophy and politics, a framework within which Arendt ascribed a philosophical attitude to German culture and a political one to American. The crucial *contradictio* of her thought and writing thus appeared to the emigrant in the guise of cultural differences. Arendt, far from thinking in *pros* and *cons*, reflected upon this constellation as an epistemological *chiasmus* concerning the intellectual habitus. In January 1949, after almost eight years of residency in the U.S., she wrote to Karl Jaspers in Basel: "Sometimes I wonder which is more difficult: to instill an awareness of politics in the Germans or to convey to Americans even the slightest inkling of what philosophy is all about."[17]

This statement has to be evaluated as more than just the impression of an immigrant using the common rhetoric of a cultural comparison which opposes the old homeland to the new; rather, it is based on widespread and intense experiences in writing, teaching, and political activities during her first years in the U.S.[18]

III. The Sounding Through of Poetry

The sentence in the letter to Jaspers is an emblematic statement for Arendt's thought. It indicates her *doubly-focused gaze* that makes use of the intellectual and political possibilities and disadvantages of both cultures and both languages without resulting in a binary scenario. This

16 Arendt, Hannah: "From the Dreyfus Affair to France today," in: *Jewish Social Studies* 4.3 (1942): 195–240.

17 Arendt, Hannah/Jaspers, Karl, *Correspondence 1926–1969*, ed. Lotte Köhler/Hans Saner, transl. Robert Kimber/Rita Kimber, New York 1992, 129.

18 Immediately after her arrival in New York Arendt was intensely engaged in writing and in politics: After only a six months stay she started being busy with different activities: working for the monthly German-Jewish journal *Aufbau*, teaching at Brooklyn College, delivering lectures, working as an executive director of the *Jewish Cultural Reconstruction Corporation* (JCR) and, since 1946, as the editor of the Schocken publishing house – all this besides writing countless articles for various journals, like *Jewish Social Studies, Contemporary Jewish Record, Menorah Journal, Partisan Review, Commentary, Nation* and *Aufbau*.

was guaranteed by the voices from the backstage of her mind (she talked of her "Hinterkopf" and the "back of my mind" in the famous Gaus-interview)[19] which consisted mainly of poetry, and, for a long period, exclusively of words and phrases from German poems with Goethe, Heine and Rilke playing the leading parts. But later on, after long years of living in the U.S. and maintaining close friendships and exchanges with several writers and poets (W.H. Auden, T.S. Eliot, Mary McCarthy, for example) there are also words and phrases of poems by American or English poets appearing from the backstage of her mind to act out and sound through in Arendt's speeches and articles.[20]

One of the earliest of these friendships grew from an encounter with Randell Jarell, the poet, literary critic, novelist, and translator of German literature.[21] This was in 1946 when Jarell was in charge of the book reviews of the journal *Nation*, for which she wrote some reviews. Their friendship started with an exchange of language or even just words. He grew accustomed to translating or "polishing" her articles – what she called "verenglischen" or "Englishing" – and she helped him with his translations of German poetry, though apparently he knew less German than she did English. Her collection of portraits, *Men in Dark Times* (1968),[22] includes a memory image written after his death in 1965. It is a description of him introducing her to English/American poetry during his regular visits at her home, which they called "American Poetry Weekend":

> He opened up for me a whole new world of sound and meter, and he taught me the specific gravity of English words, whose specific relative weight, as in all languages, is ultimately determined by poetic usage and standards. Whatever I know of English poetry, and perhaps of the genius of the language, I owe to him.[23]

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19 See Arendt, Hannah, "Fernsehgespräch mit Günter Gaus" (1964), in: id., *Ich will verstehen. Selbstauskünfte zu Leben und Werk*, ed. Ursula Ludz, Munich, Zurich 1996, 58.

20 See for example the lines of W.H. Auden in the Sonning Price Speech which Arendt delivered in the last year of her life in April 1975 (cf. footnote 7).

21 Jarell was the author of the early campus novel *Picture of an Institution* (1954), a novel which includes figures modelled on Arendt and her husband Heinrich Blücher.

22 A collection of profiles intended to illuminate the darkest times by means of the "uncertain, flickering, and often weak light that some men and women, in their lives and their works, will kindle under almost all circumstances and shed over the time span that was given them on earth," as Arendt puts it in her preface to Arendt, Hannah, *Men in Dark Times*, San Diego, New York, London 1983, IX.

23 Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*, 264.

Although in one of his letters Jarell says that nobody has ever said such things about his poems as Hannah Arendt had,[24] she, with her typical modesty, explains that he was attracted to her house not just because of her but due to "the simple fact that this was a place where German was spoken." To confirm this she cites a line of one of his poems: "The country I like best of all is German," a citation immediately to be followed by Arendt's commentary: "The 'country,' obviously, was not Germany but German."

This episode illustrates that her friendships to poets were based on a kind of elective affinity. Long before living in exile and before writing in a second language, Arendt considered the language to be her actual country. Belonging to the first generation of women and Jews in Germany with general access to universities, she was already forced to constantly explain and consider her intellectual position before her exile. Her teacher in Heidelberg, Karl Jaspers, with whom she finished her dissertation on the concept of love in Augustine[25] in 1928, permanently addressed her German Jewish position and its impact on philosophy. In January 1933, five years after her Ph.D. and in the context of her critical remarks to his reference to the dubious category of "deutsches Wesen" in his book on Max Weber (1932), Arendt spends more effort than before on explaining her viewpoint and position from which she speaks. Here, on the one hand, she enunciates a clear distance to a German identity in which he, Jaspers, saw her self-evidently involved. On the other hand, she highlights the role of the German language for her as a Jew grown up in German culture:

> For me, Germany means my mother tongue, philosophy, and literature. I can and must stand by all that. But I am obliged to keep my distance, I can neither be for nor against when I read Max Weber's wonderful sentence where he says that to put Germany back on her feet he would form an alliance with the devil himself. And it is this sentence, which seems to me to reveal the critical point here.[26]

This letter, by a twenty-seven year old Jewish intellectual expressing her distance to any German issue if it appears in a nationalist mode, shows that

24 Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt*, 191.

25 Arendt, Hannah, *Der Liebesbegriff bei Augustin: Versuch einer philosophischen Interpretation,* Berlin 1929, engl. transl. *Love and Saint Augustine*, Chicago 1996.

26 Arendt/Jaspers, *Correspondence,* 16.

due to her awareness of her Jewish position Arendt resisted the demand of assimilation already before the experience of Nazi-Germany and exile. Instead she substituted a country of words for the nation – similarly to many other German speaking Jews in modern Europe.[27] More than three decades later she makes a similar statement, though under totally different conditions. And here I refer to her famous answer she gave in the interview with Günter Gaus:

> I write in English, though I have never lost the distance. There is an enormous difference between mother tongue and all other languages. In my case I can explain this very clearly: In German I know quite a great deal of German poems by heart. They are constantly there – *in the back of my mind** – the same can never be achieved for another language. Thus I take liberties in German that I would never possibly take in English.[28]

What separates both statements is the specific attitude of distance: In 1933 she claims that "I am obliged to keep my distance," and then in 1964 that "I have never lost the distance." Whereas in 1933, the attitude of distance was addressed to the country as a nation, later, in 1964, it is addressed to a total assimilation into the second language. In both situations it is the language of poetry that forms the counterpart, thus providing her with the ability to remain at a distance – at a distance from the nation state and from conformism. Writing under bilingual conditions, the words of poetry are there to *per-sonare*, to sound through the text of the refugee who has become a leading as well as a controversial figure of political theory.

The two statements are separated not only by three decades but by a breach of civilization and a new epoch in the life of refugees like Arendt. A striking feature of recognizing the correspondences between the two citations is the fact that the danger of assimilation has apparently switched levels in that the necessity of distance has shifted from a national issue to that of language. In her further answers to Gaus, Arendt mentions people who have managed to forget their mother tongue and to learn the mimicry[29] of American English:

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27 Cf. Braese, Stefan, *Eine europäische Sprache. Deutsche Sprachkultur von Juden 1760–1930*, Göttingen 2010.

28 Arendt, "Fernsehgespräch mit Günter Gaus," 58. * in English in the original German interview.

29 Already her 1943 article "We Refugees" includes a sarcastic critique on such mimicry: "After a single year optimists are convinced they speak English as

> I am still speaking with a heavy accent, and often I don't speak idiomatic. They all are used to that. But it becomes a language riddled with clichés because that kind of productivity that one has in one's own language is cut off when one forgot that language.[30]

This statement is reflective of the experience that when speaking a second language one tends to use a less complex and more conventional idiom. What she does not explain in the interview, and instead keeps to herself, is that it is not just to a second language, but specifically to English she needs to maintain a distance. She entrusted such critical comments solely to her *Denktagebuch*, where, in April 1970, an entry can be found: "On the difficulties I have with my English readers." A main reason for her distance emerges in what she calls a "thesaurus-philosophy," that is that "the notion that words 'express' ideas which I supposedly have prior to having the words." Arendt, in contrast, doubts "that we would have any 'ideas' without language."[31] Here again, it is the echo of language from the backstage of her mind that rescues her thinking from sheer assimilation – this time from being assimilated into an existing conventional terminology.

To summarize up to this point: The scenario of Arendt's work, which was shaped by the counterparts of philosophy and politics, was superimposed twice: first by the tension between German and American intellectual culture, and second by the antagonism between poetry and conventional language full of idioms.

IV. Politics Controverting Philosophy

At this point I need to shift the perspective within her doubly-focused gaze in order to recognize the other side of the difficulties connected to the American language/culture. There we will encounter the role of the political history of the United States as the embodiment of a concept of politics Arendt considers to be a proper concept neither occupied by nor mixed up with non-political concepts. The demarcation of the

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well as their mother tongue; and after two years they swear solemnly that they speak English better than any other language – their German is a language they hardly remember." And lost language means the loss of the "naturalness of reactions, the simplicity of gestures, the unaffected expression of feelings." Arendt, "We Refugees," 56.

30 Arendt, "Fernsehgespräch mit Günter Gaus," 59.

31 Arendt, *Denktagebuch*, 770f.

political in her theory is built upon its distinction from both the realm of *Arbeit* (labor/reproduction of life) and the sphere of *Herstellen* (work/making, where humans struggle with nature, a sphere dominated by tools and techniques), the two realms which in *The Human Condition* she distinguishes from *Handeln* (acting). The fact that she developed her political theory in close relation to the constitution and the founding model of the United States is accompanied by her appraisal of America as being a republic, a "government of law and not men," and as a country which does not call for the immigrants' assimilation because in a country populated solely by immigrants there is nothing into which to be assimilated. Her statements, articles, and books written after her arrival to New York are marked by the leitmotifs of the U.S. as being a country that is explicitly not a nation state. She dismisses precisely that catalogue of criteria that Ernest Renan critically discusses in his 1882 speech, "*Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?*" when she explains:

> This country is united neither by heritage nor by memory, nor [by language], nor by origin from the same [soil]. There are no natives here. [The Indians were the natives, the others] are citizens [and these citizens are united only by on thing – however, this thing is very much: it is the fact you can become a citizen of the United States] by simple consent to the Constitution.[32]

Also her emphasis on the sheer consent to the constitution which characterizes a citizen of the United States recalls Renan's reference to a voluntary moment of the unity and his metaphor of the state being the result of a daily plebiscite.[33] This concerns the differences between the various forms and concepts of nation states acuminating in the opposition between the European model of a homogenous nation state based on an origin, and the nation state formed by a constitution and considered to be a voluntary unity, which mainly exists in immigration countries.

In this respect Arendt's book *On Revolution* (1963)[34] is her most American book. Here she interprets the American revolution in the

32 TV-Interview with Roger Errera. Ursula Ludz transcribed the English interview from the French broadcast and translated it into German; see Arendt, *Ich will verstehen*, 115, here quoted after Ludz' original manuscript transcript.

33 Renan, Ernest, *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation? Conférence faite en Sorbonne, le 11 mars 1882*, Paris 1882, 35.

34 Arendt, Hannah, *On Revolution,* London 1963, German transl. *Über die Revolution*, Munich 1965.

18th century as a kind of model because it was dedicated exclusively to the struggle for a constitution whereas she analyzes the breaking-in of the social question, of pathos, and passions in the French revolution as the moment of distortion and decline, namely a fall of acting from political aims, that is to say as a sort of fall of man from politics. It seems as if it was necessary for Arendt to protect this role of the American constitution for her concept of the political. Elisabeth Young-Bruehl regarded Arendt's emphatic reference to the founding fathers to be a "political fable," and Bernard Crick explained it as the gratitude that German-Americans are wont to express.[35] It is obvious that such a discussion of the U.S. as a political model doesn't acknowledge many aspects of American reality – be it the heavy obstacles one has to overcome in order to earn the U.S. citizenship, or the enormous constraints for assimilation which Arendt herself mentioned in her critique of the social life in the U.S. However, what the American experience taught Arendt with respect to her political thinking was much more than a model of a state. This can be observed in her correspondence with Jaspers.

In 1960 Jaspers expressed a fundamental critique of the Eichmann trial scheduled to take place in Israel arguing that Eichmann's crime lies beyond what can adequately be reached by a legal procedure conducted by a single state.[36] And in an even more general argument concerning the incommensurability between law and politics, he stated that the political has a status that can't be captured by legal concepts: "Das Politische hat einen mit Rechtsbegriffen nicht einzufangenden Rang"[37] (The political has a dignity which cannot be caught by legal concepts).[38] The statement is accompanied by a remarkable comment in brackets: "(the attempt to do so is Anglo-Saxon and a self-deception that masks a basic fact in the functionings of political existence)."[39] In her answer, Arendt confronts this general philosophical statement with the specific and unusual historical conditions. The Eichmann trial is confronted with crimes that lie beyond what has been thought yet, even beyond what is conceivable or can be thought, and is thus also beyond any political supposition that the state of Israel can act as a representative of the victims and

35 Sir Bernard Rowland Crick (1929–2008), famous British author of political theory, as quoted in Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt*, 403.

36 Arendt/Jaspers, *Briefwechsel*, 449.

37 Arendt/Jaspers, *Briefwechsel*, 450.

38 Arendt/Jaspers; *Correspondence*, 413.

39 Ibid.

survivors of Nazi crimes, which cannot be left without being litigated, the murders left without penalty. Additionally, in admitting that, in respect of the law, she might be "angelsächsisch angesteckt" (which means 'infected,' but can also mean 'to be driven by passion'), she argues that nothing but the law is available in order to judge and condemn that which can not even be described adequately, neither through legal concepts nor political categories. While arguing on the theoretical level that the controversy concerns crimes that surpass any existing concepts, both in politics and law, she simultaneously counters it on the level of concrete political acting. The only concrete possibility for responding to a crime that exists beyond any legal definition is a lawsuit under the heading of 'crime against humanity,' as she emphasizes: "nicht: Verbrechen gegen die Menschlichkeit, sondern die Menschheit."[40] Her reflections on the concept of humanity and mankind go back to her article "We Refugees," where she had already analyzed the crucial caesura experienced by the persecuted and Jews during the Second World War as an assault against the concept of man, against "the kind of human being." In her letter to Jaspers she writes:

> The concept of *hostis humani generis* – however one translates it, but not: crime against humanness; but, rather, against humanity – is more or less indispensable to the trial. The crucial point is that although the crime at issue was committed primarily against the Jews, it is in no way limited to the Jews or the Jewish question.[41]

This is just one example of the political lessons to be studied in her letters to Jaspers, in which philosophy is controverted. In this dialogue, Jaspers appears as a sort of embodiment of the voice of philosophy. When seeking a controversial dialogue with philosophy, Arendt found one in her former academic advisor. When they met again after the end of the war, he became a friend to her when his house in Basel became her European refuge, located, as it was, in a place outside the territory of her linguistic homeland. The rhetoric of her letters to Jaspers is quite remarkable, written with intimacy yet without hesitating to contradict and criticize she always remains within the limits of the concrete question at hand and never touches his way of thinking as such – although there were enough opportunities to do so. Thus, for example, she doesn't comment on

40 Arendt/Jaspers, *Briefwechsel*, 459.
41 Arendt/Jaspers, *Correspondence*, 423.

his problematic expression, "politisches Dasein," which he used in the above-mentioned controversy on the Eichmann trial. Instead she takes a debate over concepts that had become obsolete and abstract by historical experience as an opportunity to reflect on possibilities of politics after migrating through the lesson of philosophy.

The lesson she taught herself with this controversy sharpened her specific theoretical approach. Situated at various intersections of historical phenomena and central concepts of philosophy, policy, and anthropology, it gained its epistemological precision from the examination of the often hidden or forgotten origin and genesis of concepts. One of the primal scenes (in the Freudian sense) for this is the already-mentioned 1943 article, "We Refugees." This article is remarkable not only in that one can already discern the tone of Arendt's political thought (although it was written shortly after her arrival in New York and published in English), but also for the fact that it is characterized by a sarcastic "threat of conformism."[42] The article is an early example of the *per-sonare* of personal experience sounding through her lucid analysis and her conclusion about the Jewish history getting for the first time "tied up with that of all other nations."[43]

V. Writing, Self-Translation and Working-Through

The characterization of Arendt's written English in scholarship alternates between two poles. While it is sometimes qualified as "awkward English,"[44] elsewhere it is appreciated precisely because of its idiosyncrasies, whether for her style or for her semantic and rhetorical peculiarities. Instead of going further with such a debate about qualifications (that is in any case seldom staged on a stable ground), in what follows I will develop a reading of Arendt's bilingualism beyond criteria like style or alleged

42 "The Threat of Conformism" is the title of an article by Arendt published in *The Commonweal*, September 24, 1954, in: id., *Essays in Understanding 1930–1954. Formation, Exile, Totalitarianism*, ed. Jerome Kohn, New York 2005, 423–427.

43 Arendt, "We Refugees," 66.

44 In his analysis of *The Human Condition*, Arendt's second book written in English, the Canadian scholar Bauer has argued against the later evaluation in talking of a low readability, of many incoherences, and ill-conceived concepts. Bauer, Gerhard Walter, *Is There an Educational Problem With Reading Hannah Arendt's 'The Human Condition' in English Only?*, The University of British Columbia 2007.

linguistic failures. In order to get rid of such value judgment it is worthwhile to study the discourse of *self-translation* used by authors in a bilingual and bicultural status, i.e. authors who are accustomed to translating their own texts originally written in a second language into their mother tongue.

This practice is often mistakenly considered a kind of 'back-translation.' In an analysis of self-translations (by Klaus Mann, Stefan Heym, Rudolf Arnheim and Hannah Arendt), Verena Jung, for example, has argued against the common interpretation of self-translations as being simply "freer, less literal translation[s]," which liberate creative potential. Instead she discusses two different tendencies. The first is a pragmatic, reader-oriented strategy wherein authors refer back to the different cultural contexts and the presupposed intertexts with which readers are familiar. Within this paradigm, she presents a comparison of the English version (5th edition 1972) and the German first edition (1955) of Arendt's book on *Totalitarianism*, reading a passage from the 12th chapter on "Totalitarianism in Power" and showing how Arendt restructured her arguments in the German translation and put them in a different order.[45]

Such observances of her different addressees are, in fact, to be found frequently in Arendt's work, albeit in a much more subtle manner than a simple reordering of a paragraph. It is mainly to be found in places where she refers to historical phenomena from far enough back that she couldn't expect her American audience to be familiar with them. For example, in her article, "Franz Kafka: A Revaluation," which appeared in 1944 "on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of his death" in *Partisan Review*, Arendt reads *The Castle* as an interpretation of the situation of the Jews in modernity, whereas the German version refers to a specific historical constellation, namely to the simultaneous exclusion and privilege of Jews as embodied in the figure of 'court Jews.' Such a privilege is valued like the "Gnadengeschenk" (gift of mercy), which K. in Kafka's novel considers the legal residence to be, and which he therefore refuses; he could solely accept it as his right, as Arendt's reading of the novel puts it.[46]

The second tendency of self-translation as mentioned by Jung is more relevant with respect to a theory of self-translation; however, it is also more problematic. Here she assumes an "inner language version of the

45 Jung, Verena, "Writing Germany in Exile – the Bilingual Author as Cultural Mediator: Klaus Mann, Stefan Heym, Rudolf Arnheim and Hannah Arendt," in: *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 25.5/6 (2004): 529–546.

46 Arendt, Hannah, "Franz Kafka," in: *Die verborgene Tradition*, Frankfurt/M. 1976, 88–107.

English original that preceded the writing process."[47] This category of an 'inner German' or an 'inner text' functions as a sort of pre-text for a book written in the second language. Yet this assumption corresponds to the idea of a pre-written, already linguistically-constituted signified that Jung shares with a common linguistic approach to self-translation.[48] This idea is not only extremely problematic with regard to language theory, it will also provide another occasion for Arendt's problem with her English-speaking readers reflected in her above cited notes from the *Denktagebuch*. If this idea presumes the existence of a meaning already completed in a pre-written state, it at the same time legitimizes the goal of reconstructing a so-called inner pre-text, in actuality intending to make an inner invisible text visible and readable:[49] Thus the so-called inner German text, identical neither with the written English text nor with the translated German version,[50] in this way assumes the position of the 'true original' through which the text originally written in English becomes displaced into a second state, a sort of secondary original. Based on the notion of a lasting and seemingly eternally fixed hierarchy of first and second language, any text written in the second language thus becomes a sort of distorted original. It may, as it were, be healed when – through the detour of a self-translation into the first language – it is brought back to the true original that always already existed in a dormant pre-verbal state, awakened through the analysis of the scholar.

In contrast to such a construction I would suggest to take the *belatedness* of the self-translation seriously and to use it as the point of departure for an alternative theory of self-translation. Referring to the dream as a "translation without an original" in psychoanalysis,[51] one could consider

47 Jung, "Writing Germany," 530.

48 See also Bauer's (footnote 44) and Gössmann's construction of an inner language: Gössmann, Wilhelm, "Das literarische Schreiben als Zentrum von Schreiberfahrungen," in: Wilhelm Gössmann/Christoph Hollender (ed.), *Schreiben und Übersetzen*, Tübingen 1994, 11–29.

49 "An author who edits his own text during the translation process by using his pretext as a basis allows the pretext to surface during the translation process." Jung, "Writing Germany," 532.

50 "Yet it is neither the English original nor the German translation in itself, but the differences between them that enable us to attempt a reconstruction of the possible pre-text." Jung, "Writing Germany," 530.

51 As Jacques Lacan does in his return to Freud. Cf. Weber, Samuel, *Return to Freud-Jacques Lacan's Dislocation of Psychoanalysis*, transl. Michael Levine, Cambridge 1991, 2, 4.

writing in a second language as a translation without original – that is to say as writing literally in an *other* language. There, the author can never be completely sure of acting as the master in the house of meaning/language, where the author can never be sure of actually saying what he/she wishes to express. In contrast to the psychological insult to the self diagnosed by Sigmund Freud in 1917, that the "ego is not the master in its own house,"[52] the uncertainty that comes with writing in a foreign language is not caused by one's own unconscious. It instead comes from a linguistic unconscious, namely from a limited familiarity with the ambiguity, nuances, and the subtones and overtones of the foreign language. The self-translation into the first language can thus be interpreted as a process of working-through: working through the words, the concepts and metaphors, the arguments, examples and explanations.

This process might well be described by analogy with the Freudian procedure of "Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through."[53] When remembrance in this case concerns the question of "what was it what I wanted to express," it receives its color from the current desire of expression, as in the practice of psychoanalyses. The aim, however, is not to reconstruct a previous text (or experience or affect) but to overwrite a text written in a foreign language with a text worked-through in the first language. The result of this repeated working through that always accompanies self-translation should by no means be confused with a supposed pre-existing original – rather, it is a belated text that repeats, reworks, *and* comments on the meaning of the original written in English. Authors who, like Arendt, are accustomed to practicing self-translation as a working-through after the first publication of a book written in the second language, are able to profit from a kind of ongoing rewriting in order to differentiate, explain and specify certain aspects and meanings. The differences between the English original and the German self-translation can thus be understood as symptoms of partially unclear and unsolved questions within the first edition.

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52 Cf. Freud, Sigmund, "A Difficulty in the Path of Psycho-Analysis," in: id., *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* 17, ed. James Strachey, London 1953–74, 135–144, 143.

53 Freud, Sigmund, "Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through," in: id., *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* 12, ed. James Strachey, London 1953–74, 147–156.

VI. Arendt's Bilingual Writings

In Ursula Ludz' bibliography of all of Arendt's publications in both German and English, one repeatedly comes across the note stating that both versions differ considerably: "Deutsche und englische Fassung weichen erheblich voneinander ab."[54] This actually is the case in many texts which appeared during Arendt's lifetime – whether she translated them herself from German into English (as during the first years of her arrival in New York) or from English into German (as is the case for the main part of the book on totalitarianism (1950/1955), the *Human Condition/ Vita Activa* (1958/1960), *On Revolution* (1963/1965) and for many articles). It is also the case for the many texts that were translated by others (often Charlotte Beradt[55]) and later revised by Arendt, as for example the book *On Violence* (*Macht und Gewalt*, 1970) and many articles. The specific bilingual character of Arendt's work is still a largely obscure phenomenon that has not yet attracted adequate attention.[56] It means that any dialogue or symposium on Arendt in which German and English readers and scholars participate refer to two quite different works by the same author – mostly without the participants being aware of it. In general the 'German Arendt' is regarded as an intellectual whose philosophical thoughts are shapped through metaphors and a poetic language whereas the 'American Arendt' is a more political thinker. Since both images are due to two different but equally limited readings of her work it is only through an analysis of her bilingual writings that one can perceive the 'full Arendt.' And this is much more than just an addition of both her German and her English work; it rather results from a constant exchange

54 "Bibliographic survey of all German and English publications," in: Arendt, *Ich will verstehen*, 255–332.

55 Charlotte Beradt is the author of *Das dritte Reich des Traums*, Frankfurt/M. 1981.

56 See my article "Dichtung als Voraussetzung der Philosophie. Hannah Arendts Denktagebuch," in: *Text und Kritik* 166/167 ("Hannah Arendt") (2005): 125–137. (English translation: "Poetics as a Presupposition of Philosophy: Hannah Arendt's Denktagebuch," in: *Telos* 146 (Spring 2009): 97–110.) In the same volume of *Text und Kritik*, B. Hahn discusses Arendt's bilingual work, see Hahn, Barbara, "Wie aber schreibt Hannah Arendt?" in: *Text und Kritik* 166/167.9 (2005): 102–113. And after the completion of this article appeared a small book by M. L. Knott including a comparison of some passages of *The Human Condition* and *Vita activa*: Knott, Marie Luise, *Verlernen. Denkwege bei Hannah Arendt*, Berlin 2011, 116–130. However, an intense and systematic analysis of Arendt's bilingualism is still lacking.

between different languages: between Greek, German and English, between poetic language, philosophical reflections and the idiom of political theory, between antique concepts, metaphors and modern ideas. The most productive site for this work was her writing and thinking in transition initiated by her arrival in New York.

During the first period of her stay in America it is obvious that Arendt's English publications (which were either written in English or translated by her and always polished by others) don't reach the linguistic complexity of her German writings. For example, *Die verborgene Tradition,* although written in German, appeared first in an English translation in *Jewish Social Studies* 6 (1944) as "The Jew as Pariah: A Hidden Tradition" because Arendt hesitated to publish it in German. In the preface to the German version published four years later, the reasons for the delay are expressed in the guise of a "Dedication to Karl Jaspers:" "In the face of what has happened, the appealing opportunity to write in one's own language again counts for very little, although this is the only return to home from exile that one can never entirely ban from one's dream."[57] In the body of Arendt's writings, the text *Die verborgene Tradition* probably shows the clearest traces of what I call the poetical difference distinguishing her German works from the American. Whereas the English translation reads like an historical narrative recounting something which took place in the past, the German text succeeds in setting the stage for the appearance of those historical figures whom she considers to be "Konzeptionen des Paria"[58] – not "types" or "forms," as the English text says. The German original is full of historical irony and images which is lacking in the English version. When she describes, for example, the attempt of some Jews, "die frohe Botschaft der Emanzipation so ernst zu nehmen, wie sie nie gemeint war, und als Juden Menschen zu sein,"[59] in English she writes: "to make the emancipation of the Jews that which it really should have been," and complements this obviously insufficient translation later with the comment that this conception of emancipation was a misconstruction and also a vision.[60] Where the translation is stamped by a tone of ideological critique, the German text presents a productive

57 Arendt, Hannah, "Dedication to Karl Jaspers," in: id., *Essays in Understanding*, 212.

58 Arendt, *Die verborgene Tradition*, 48.

59 Ibid., 46ff.

60 Arendt, Hannah, "The Jew as Pariah: A Hidden Tradition," in: *The Jew as Pariah*, 67–90, 69.

misunderstanding from which a magnificent process emerged, namely a history in which single Jews "in der Einbildungskraft von Kopf und Herz, gleichsam auf eigene Faust, Volksnähe realisierten"[61] – which in the translation reads: "as individuals they started an emancipation of their own, of their own hearts and brains."[62]

Things changed during the following period as Arendt got used to writing her articles, lectures, speeches, and books in English and started to translate her own texts into German. When trying to find an overall characterization of her bilingual writings, one could summarize that Arendt's English written texts practice a more conceptual mode of writing, while her German texts make more use of the metaphorical ground of thinking. But this cannot be explained solely by an insufficient linguistic capability as colorful as in German. Several of her texts written in English disprove such a simple explanation and are thereby reminiscent of the vivid portrayal of Randell Jarell. More significant is the fact that the more conceptual mode of her writing in English coincides with the language of political theory, whereas the more metaphorical one, practiced in German, refers to the important epistemological role of language, etymology, and the history of concepts in her thought. The metaphor also plays a central role in Arendt's understanding of language, as one may see in her *Denktagebuch*: "Thinking and writing poetry are linked by the metaphor. What is called a term in philosophy, is called a metaphor in poetry. Thinking creates its 'terms' from the visible in order to name the invisible." She writes further: "The role of the metaphor: to link the visible with the invisible, the known with the unknowable etc."[63] Following another note – "Die Metapher spricht das Selbe im Nicht-Gleichen aus"[64] ("The metaphor says the same by the non-equal") – Arendt's self-translation may be characterized as a transferal of the *same* into the *non-equal* in the course of which the metaphorical character of the text is augmented. In any case, her German self-translations tend toward a more metaphorical, polyphonic, and at the same time more philosophical language.

What makes her work so fascinating is not just the difference between her writing and thinking in English and German as such, but rather the fact that through its bilingual character her writing turned into an ongoing process of *rewriting* and *working-through*. By comparing

61 Arendt, *Die verborgene Tradition*, 47.
62 Arendt, *The Jew as Pariah*, 68.
63 Arendt, *Denktagebuch*, 728f.
64 Ibid., 744.

both works one gets the opportunity to follow the traces of a practice of writing being pressed and encouraged to permanently reflect the implications of language for thoughts and comprehension. The process of self-translation seemed to provide Arendt with a possibility to permanently differentiate, clarify, and find more precise descriptions as well as to comment and complement and, not seldom, invent new and unique meanings by referring to *the literalness* of words instead of using conventional terms or concepts.

Thus we come across condensed phrases that supplement the original text and function like monads within the whole of the argument. In her book on totalitarianism, for example, in the second paragraph of the chapter on "The Perplexities of the Right of Man" (often translated as "Die Aporien der Menschenrechte"), Arendt inserted the sentence: "Die Rolle der Menschenrechte in diesem Prozeß war, das zu garantieren, was politisch nicht garantierbar oder doch noch nie politisch garantiert worden war."[65] (The role of the right of man was to guarantee that which politically could not be guaranteed or yet never had been guaranteed.) She thus adds a sentence that puts the aporetic structure of the rights of man in a nutshell. One also comes across tiny but meaningful insertions that amplify the whole context – for example, when in the chapter on "Unpredictability and the Power of Promise" of *The Human Condition* the discussion of "the inviolability of agreements and treaties"[66] is expanded in the German translation, *Vita Activa oder Vom tätigen Leben*, into a "*heilige* Unverletzlichkeit von Verträgen und Abkommen."[67] Attributing unpredictability as holy or sacred also condenses a central argument of Arendt's theory of contracts, namely the Biblical origin of the covenant as the historical predecessor of contract.

In other places one may find longer supplements, such as for example in her book *On Revolution*, where Arendt develops her critique of pity – or, more precisely, of the perversion of true compassion into ordinary pity, that is to say to an attitude of "being sorry without being touched in the flesh."[68] The difference is easier to distinguish in English by use of the word compassion rather than pity than it is in the single German word *Mitleid*. To distinguish the two attitudes or affects linguistically,

65 Arendt, *Elemente und Ursprünge totalitärer Herrschaft*, 453.
66 Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 243.
67 Arendt, Hannah, *Vita Activa oder Vom tätigen Leben*, Munich, Zurich 1981, 289. Emphasis mine, SW.
68 Arendt, *On Revolution*, 75.

Arendt writes in German of *Mit-Leiden*, whereas in English she goes back the Latin origin of compassion, using a literal translation and thus speaking of co-suffering. By rewriting and reworking the passage into German during the process of self-translation it has become twice as long as the original, thus enforcing the radical difference of a "bloß mitleidiges Bedauern [. . .] das wohl die Not der anderen sieht und sogar versteht, sie aber nicht eigentlich teilt, von ihr nicht ergriffen wird und die Distanz zu dem Objekt immer wahrt," in contrast to a "leidenschaftliche Betroffenheit von dem Leiden anderer" acuminating in the added statement that both attitudes should not even be considered as related phenomena.[69] And here I cite the whole passage both in the English original:

> [. . .] "The Grand Inquisitor," in which Dostoevski contrasts the mute compassion of Jesus with the eloquent pity of the Inquisitor. For compassion, to be stricken with the suffering of someone else as though it were contagious, and pity, to be sorry without being touched in the flesh, are not only not the same, they may not be related.[70]

and the German self-translation:

> [. . .] der "Großinquisitor" von Dostojewski, in dem das stumme wirkliche Mitleiden Jesu kontrastiert wird mit dem Schwall von Reden und Worten, in denen sich ein bloßes mitleidiges Bedauern kundtut, das wohl die Not der andern sieht und sogar versteht, sie aber nicht eigentliche teilt, von ihr nicht ergriffen wird und die Distanz zu dem Objekt immer wahrt. Denn Mitleiden, die leidenschaftliche Betroffenheit von dem Leiden anderer, als sei es ansteckend, und mitleidiges Bedauern, also Mitleid in dem gewöhnlichen Wortsinn, das nicht eigentlich Leiden ist, sind nicht nur nicht dasselbe, sie dürfen nicht einmal verwandte Phänomene sein.[71]

These were just a few examples and varieties showing the creativity of the constant process of rewriting and working-through in Arendt's practice of self-translation. As regards the role of language and the voices sounding through from the backstage of her mind, her bilingual writing can be described in terms of a metaphorical or poetic difference audible as an echo of literalness in theory – or as a condensation of the different facets of *personare* that are so significant for the genuine sound of Arendt's writings.

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69 Ibid.
70 Ibid.
71 Arendt, Hannah, *Über die Revolution*, 118.

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From Königsberg to Little Rock: Hannah Arendt and the Concept of Childhood

Liliane Weissberg

I. The Specter of Evil

In 2006, Elisabeth Young-Bruehl inaugurated a book series on contemporary political issues published by the Yale University Press with a slim volume entitled *Why Arendt Matters.*[1] Young-Bruehl was a student of Hannah Arendt's at the New School for Social Research in New York and is the author of an impressive biography, *Hannah Arendt: For the Love of the World.*[2] In her new book, she reflects on the reception of Arendt's work and the significance of her writings today. Despite Arendt's many books – such as *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), *The Human Condition* (1958), or *On Violence* (1970) – and despite her numerous lectures and essays on Kant, Lessing, Heidegger, and Benjamin, her work has often been reduced, as Young-Bruehl suggests, to a single catchphrase: "the banality of evil." Arendt used the phrase only once in her study, *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (1963), a book that offers a revised series of articles on Adolf Eichmann's trial that Arendt wrote for *The New Yorker.*[3] The phrase in question concludes her study, but it was also selected to become the subtitle of her book, *A Report on the Banality of Evil.*

Soon after the book's publication, "the banality of evil" had become a four-letter-word of sorts, a phrase that some considered obscene within

1 Young-Bruehl, Elisabeth, *Why Arendt Matters*, (ser.) Why x Matters, New Haven 2006.

2 Young-Bruehl, Elisabeth, *Hannah Arendt: For the Love of the World*, New Haven 1982.

3 Arendt's text appeared in an early version as a series under the rubric "A Reporter at Large," in: *New Yorker* 33 (1963), February 16: 40–113; February 23: 40–111; March 2: 40–91; March 9: 48–131; March 16: 58–134. The book version appeared later that year as *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, New York 1963.

the context of a study that dealt with Adolf Eichmann; one of the main architects of the Final Solution. But to call the evil perpetrated by Eichmann "banal" was not the only provocation of Arendt's book. Arendt discussed the roles of the Jewish Councils (*Judenräte*) in Ghettos and concentration camps, and she questioned whether they had been complicit in the selection of victims and whether they had abdicated their responsibilities towards their own people. Just as she had done in her earlier work, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Arendt deplored Jewish passivity here as well (understood as an absence of protest and a general resistance to fight for civic recognition), and deplored the presumed lack of a Jewish political tradition. Arendt would even describe the revered Berlin Rabbi Leo Baeck as a Jewish *Führer* who had refused to emigrate, but who had led Jews to the camps like sheep to the slaughter.[4] Finally, Arendt hinted at the political capital the Eichmann trial held for the newly established Israeli state when she discussed Israeli president David Ben-Gurion's insistence to view Israel as a safe haven for Holocaust survivors. For many years following the publication of her book, Arendt was *persona non grata* in Israel.[5]

The criticism of *Eichmann in Jerusalem* was loud and strong. Was Arendt's intention perhaps to reduce the enormity of Eichmann's crimes? Was she, moreover, questioning the innocence of his victims in her discussion of the Holocaust events? In the preface to the new edition of *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, entitled "The Excommunication of Hannah Arendt" (a notion that could refer to her social marginalization as well as to her standing within, or rather outside, of the Jewish community), Amos Elon refers to Arendt's phrase, "the Banality of Evil," and describes the heated discussion that followed the publication of her book. He terms it a "civil war [. . .] launched among the intellectuals of America and Europe."[6] For Young-Bruehl, "the banality of evil" has become the mark of this scandal – her own scarlet letter of sorts that would make it

4 To cite just a couple of critical responses to this claim, see Slonim, R., "Did Jews Go Like Lambs to the Slaughter?" in: *Jewish Digest* 27.2 (1981): 20–29, and Rosenberg, Bernhard, "They Went Like Sheep to the Slaughter and Other Fictions of the Holocaust," in: *Martyrdom and Resistance* 10.2 (1983): 4–16.

5 The first scholarly conference on Arendt's work and the Eichmann trial in Israel was held about forty years after the publication of the book, see Aschheim, Steven E., *Arendt in Jerusalem*, Berkeley 2001; Arendt's work is now being translated into Hebrew.

6 Elon, Amos, "The Excommunication of Hannah Arendt," introduction to Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, Harmondsworth 2006, vii.

impossible for many readers to reconsider Arendt's work. For many years after the publication of her book, it would overshadow the importance of her political theory, and prevent its proper reception.

The scandal lingers even today, as historians of Nazi Germany, political scientists, psychologists, and philosophers have come to reconsider the phenomenon of mass murder in the age of technological warfare and bureaucratic systems. As recently as 2009, Bernard Wasserstein published an article in the *TLS* that bears the title "Blame the Victim – Hannah Arendt Among the Nazis: the Historian and Her Sources," in which he refers to *Eichmann in Jerusalem* as well as to the *Origins of Totalitarianism*.[7] In his attempt to show that Arendt's studies had relied on the work of authors with a national-socialist background, Wasserstein argues that Arendt internalized anti-Semitism, and that this stance influenced her judgment in regard to Eichmann and his deeds. Ron Rosenbaum's response to Wasserstein's essay, published a couple of weeks later in the internet journal, *Slate*, bears the title "The Evil of Banality." Rosenbaum extends Wasserstein's argument to a discussion of Arendt's early, and by now much cited, relationship with Martin Heidegger and their renewed friendship after WWII, pointing at Heidegger's early membership in the NSDAP: "My hope is that these revelations will encourage a further discrediting of the most overused, misused, abused pseudo-intellectual phrase in our language: *the banality of evil*." Rosenbaum continues, "The banality of *the banality of evil*, the fatuousness of it, has long been fathomless, but perhaps now it will be consigned to the realm of the deceitful and disingenuous as well."[8]

But if Arendt's study of Eichmann, his trial, and her reading of the events of the Holocaust, produced and still produce a strong reaction, this study was by no means the only text by Arendt that caused a heated discussion, if not scandal. Never shy to take a stand or express unpopular opinions, her articles on the Eichmann trial for the *New Yorker* were preceded by her comments on a contemporary American legal decision, and a consideration of its consequences. At stake was not Germany's institution of racial discrimination that led to murder, but what would seem to be quite the opposite move: a government's attempt to end racial discrimination.

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7 Wasserstein, Bernard, "Blame the Victim. Hannah Arendt Among the Nazis. The Historian and Her Sources," in: *TLS* (2009): 13.

8 Rosenbaum, Ron, "The Evil of Banality. Troubling New Revelations about Arendt and Heidegger," in: *Slate* (October 30, 2009), http://www.slate.com/id/2234010/ (October 1, 2011).

II. Civil Rights

On May 17, 1954, the American Supreme Court declared racial segregation in public schools unconstitutional in its decision on Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka, 347 U.S. 483. The student Linda Brown had been denied admission to her local elementary school in Topeka, Kansas, because she was black. Her case – and similar others – were brought before the Supreme Court that had just conferred under a new Chief Justice, Earl Warren. Under Warren's leadership, the Supreme Court overruled the previous "separate but equal" doctrine. The court stated that school segregation would mark black children with a "badge of inferiority," and that it would hinder their educational development. Following this verdict, the Supreme Court declared in 1955 that every State had to comply with its decision by integrating its schools "with all deliberate speed." But what could be considered to be "deliberate speed?"[9]

Also in 1955, Rosa Parks, a 43-year old black woman from Montgomery, Alabama, refused to give up her seat on a bus to a white man. Following her indictment, Civil Rights leader Martin Luther King called for the Montgomery Bus Boycott that was to hurt the public transportation system severely by cutting its revenue. King was fined, but the matter of bus segregation was brought to the Supreme Court and, half a year after this incident, the Court decided that bus segregation would violate the constitution. The decision on school segregation, issued a few months earlier, served as a precedent here.

Yet in the American South, school segregation lingered on, and the "deliberate speed" agreed upon moved at a snail's pace. In 1957, two years after the decision that called segregation unconstitutional, the court decided that schools in Little Rock, Arkansas, were to be integrated despite the protests by the city's white population, and even despite the protests by Arkansas's conservative Democratic Party. The first school day of the new academic year, September 4th, was to mark this new fact.

Nine black students were admitted to Little Rock High School due to their excellent school performance: Thelma Mothershed, Elizabeth Eckford, Melba Pattillo, Jefferson Thomas, Earnest Green, Minniejean Brown, Carlotta Walls, Terence Roberts, and Gloria Ray – it is important to name them. The Associated Press quickly supplied their photographic portraits, as school pictures of a peculiar sort.

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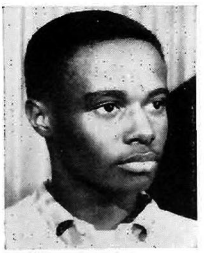
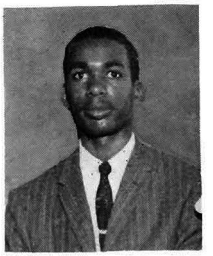
9 See Daugherty, Brian J./Bolton, Charles C. (ed.), *With All Deliberate Speed: Implementing Brown V. Board of Education,* Fayetteville 2008.



Jefferson Thomas

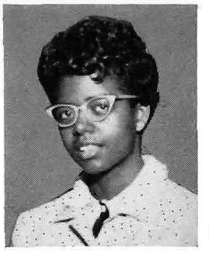
Minnijean Brown



Ernest Green

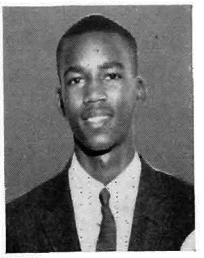
Gloria Ray

Carlotta Walls



Elizabeth Eckford

Melba Pattillo



Terrance Roberts

Thelma Mothershed

Images of the "Little Rock Nine," published by Associated Press, 1957.

Will Counts, Protest against "Race Mixing" in support of Governor Faubus, Little Rock, State Capitol, August 1959. Arkansas Democrat and United Press International. Counts Archive, Indiana University.

Demonstrations were expected and conservative local politicians called for strong measures. The local Governor, Orval Faubus, rejected the court decision, and on September 4th, called on the Arkansas National Guard to prevent black students from entering the high school building; the National Guard was thus cooperating with the segregationists. Faubus was called to Washington and, after a meeting with President Eisenhower, agreed to use the National Guard as protection for the students only. Upon returning to Little Rock, however, he dismissed the National Guard.

A mob gathered to attack the students and, as Faubus was unable to restore order, Eisenhower sent the 101st Airborne Division paratroopers to Little Rock. Soldiers surrounded the school, state troopers were brought under federal command, and National Guardsmen and 1,000 paratroopers stood in protection of the nine black students who could finally enter their new high school on September 25th.

Photo by Larry Obsitnik, *Arkansas Democrat* and Associated Press, September 25, 1957. Special Collections, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville.

Already early on, the school administration tried to prevent racial violence and looked for ways of dealing with this situation. Calls were placed to the nine black students. As a matter of security and protection, they were supposed to enter the school building by its side entrance, to avoid an angry crowd. In eight of the cases, the phone calls were successful. However, the family of one of student, Elizabeth Eckford, did not own a telephone. Thus, the fifteen year old Elizabeth walked to the main entrance of the high school. For part of the way, she was accompanied by a white family friend. Soon, however, she was shouted at and threatened, and had to be guarded by the soldiers. The photographs by Will Counts, a photographer working for the *Arkansas Democrat*, showed the young woman confronted by a white mob and armed men. His images were soon reprinted in many newspapers both in the United States and abroad.

Photograph of Elizabeth Eckford by Will Counts, published in the *Arcansas Democrat* and distributed by United Press International; Counts Archives, Indiana University.

Ernest Withers, "Desegregation of Central High School by 'Little Rock Nine,'" 1957.

Indeed, Counts' pictures would be nominated for a Pulitzer Prize that year, which, however, he did not win. Instead, Harry Ashmore, a journalist who also covered the events, won the prize in 1958. Ernest Withers, who later became the most important black photographer of the civil rights era and who recorded Martin Luther King on his freedom rides, documented these events as well.

While Eisenhower could enforce the High School's integration, its success was limited. Black students were able to finish their school year in high school under federal protection. In the following academic year, however, Faubus closed the Arkansas schools and privatized them; black students were then left with the option to be home schooled, take correspondence courses, or seek an out-of-state education. When the schools reopened in the fall of 1959, violence continued, and only two of the nine students (Jefferson Thomas and Carlotta Walls) returned to school, still under police protection.

The fight for school desegregation has passed into history. Little Rock High School, now Central High, was named a National Historic Site and part of the building houses a civil rights museum. In 2005, a monument recalling the events of the first school day of 1957, entitled "Testament," was placed in front of the Arkansas State Capitol in Little Rock.

The events of September 1957 were in the press quite recently as well. One of the nine students, Jefferson Thomas, 67, passed away in September 2010.[10] And it was discovered that the photographer Ernest Withers became an FBI spy.[11] Howard Bryant recently wrote in the *New York Times* that:

> Central High may be the most recognizable high school name in America; at Central in 1957, the nation witnessed the full fury of the Southern resistance to school desegregation, as images of soldiers escorting black children to their classes became as famous as the students nickname: the Little Rock Nine. [. . .] Little Rock will uncomfortably mark the 50th anniversary of its infamous school desegregation; yesterday's besieged children now encounter one another as grandparents, with history having concluded that most of

10 See the obituary, Bernstein, Adam, "Jefferson Thomas, 67, Member of Little Rock Nine, Dies," in: *Washington Post*, September 7, 2010, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/09/06/AR2010090603672.html (October 1, 2011).

11 Brown, Robbie, "Civil Rights Photographer Unmasked as an Informer," in: *New York Times*, September 13, 2010, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/14/us/14photographer.html (October 1, 2011).

John Deering, Memorial, *The Little Rock Nine*, Arkansas State Capitol Grounds. Courtesy of the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism.

> their classmates stood on the wrong side of the moral ledger. A half-century of white flight has turned most urban school systems overwhelmingly black, but Central's record of academic achievements allows it to maintain a sizable white population.[12]

III. Arendt in America

In 1957, the German immigrant Arendt, a proud new U.S. citizen, had become well-known in New York intellectual circles with her recently published monumental study of the *Origins of Totalitarianism*. Arendt read about the September events in Little Rock in articles published in the *New York Times* and other papers, where they made headlines.

She knew little about the American South except what she could glean from history books or novelists like William Faulkner. But Arendt was struck by the images that accompanied the articles and by one image

12 Bryant, Howard, "A Town, A Team, A Dream Deferred. A season with the Central High football team of Little Rock, Ark., a half-century after the school's tumultuous integration," in: *New York Times Book Review* (September 19, 2010): 18.

"All the News That's Fit to Print" **The New York Times.** LATE CITY EDITION

PRESIDENT THREATENS TO USE U. S. TROOPS, ORDERS RIOTERS IN LITTLE ROCK TO DESIST; MOB COMPELS 9 NEGROES TO LEAVE SCHOOL

"All the News That's Fit to Print" **The New York Times.** LATE CITY EDITION

VOL. CVII No. 35,000 NEW YORK, WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 1957 FIVE CENTS

PRESIDENT SENDS TROOPS TO LITTLE ROCK, FEDERALIZES ARKANSAS NATIONAL GUARD; TELLS NATION HE ACTED TO AVOID ANARCHY

New York Times, front pages September 24 and 25, 1957.

in particular: that of Elizabeth Eckford facing and trying to avoid a hostile white crowd while on her way to school.

Arendt had been a regular contributor to the journal *Commentary*, where she had published many essays on Jewish affairs. Now, the journal's editors asked her to write a piece about the incidents in Little Rock and Arendt agreed. Guided by a photographic image documenting the event, Arendt completed an impassioned essay in October 1957. *Commentary*, however, refused to publish it. Arendt was only able to publish it in another American journal, *Dissent*,[13] in 1959; the year in which Little Rock High School reopened. In the meantime, however, Arendt penned a second essay that responded to the events (if indirectly) called "Crises in Education;" it was printed by the *Partisan Review* in 1958.

The New York publication, *Commentary Magazine* views itself as a "general" publication, "yet Jewish. Highly variegated, with a unifying perspective." The editors describe its history and mission as follows:

> Since its inception in 1945, and increasingly after it emerged as the flagship of neoconservatism in the 1970's, the magazine has been consistently engaged with several large, interrelated questions: the fate of democracy and of democratic ideas in a world threatened by totalitarian ideologies; the state of American and Western security; the future of the Jews, Judaism, and Jewish culture in Israel, the United States, and around the world; and the preservation of high culture in an age of political correctness and the collapse of critical standards.[14]

Commentary has shifted politically in recent decades, and became a host of neo-conservative voices. The editors of *Dissent Magazine*, founded a decade later, in 1954, in New York, define their publication as true to its critical leftist stance today still:

> Founded in 1954 by a group of independent-minded radicals, the magazine set out to "dissent from the bleak atmosphere of conformism that pervades the political and intellectual life of the United States . . . The accent of *Dissent* will be radical. Its tradition will be the tradition of democratic socialism." Inspired by their opposition to both McCarthyism and

13 See Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt: For the Love of the World*, 311.

14 *About Us – Who We Are*, http://www.commentarymagazine.com/abouthistory.cfm (September 13, 2010).

> communism, its early editors "wanted to speak for the spirit of democratic utopianism that runs like a bright thread through America's intellectual life."[15]

Arendt's article, "Reflections on Little Rock," rejected by *Commentary* and finally accepted by the newer journal *Dissent*, was, and still is, a quite puzzling piece for many readers of the American Left as well as the American Right. Arendt, a political theorist who fought against anti-Semitism and racism and cherished the American constitution, extolled views here that *Commentary* had found difficult to accept.[16] While she was always eager to claim that people should stand up for their citizens' rights, in this article Arendt argued clearly *against* a forced integration of Little Rock's – or any – public schools. Indeed, she would repeatedly refer to Faulkner whom she cites from memory as saying that "enforced integration is no better than enforced segregation."[17] Arendt agreed with this stance.

Arendt's point of departure for her "Reflections" was her reading of a photographic image of "a Negro girl on her way home from a newly integrated school: she was persecuted by a mob of white children, protected by a white friend of her father, and her face bore eloquent witness to the obvious fact that she was not precisely happy" (193). She refers to a photograph by Counts that shows Elizabeth Eckford, followed by a white mob as well as hunted by white journalists. For Arendt, Elizabeth was not a young woman or a high school girl, but simply a *child*, and an unhappy one at that. She was a child who was turned into a victim.[18] For her, the question is not one of racial equality, but of the adults' relationship towards their children. "My first question was, what would I do if I were a Negro mother?" (193), writes Arendt, and although she was neither a black nor a mother, she already knew what she would do: protect her child.

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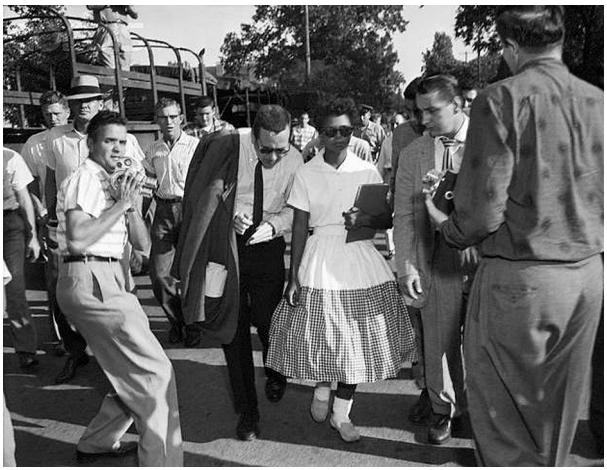
15 *About Dissent Magazine*, http://www.dissentmagazine.org/display.php?id=about (October 1, 2011).

16 Arendt, Hannah, "Reflections on Little Rock," in: *Dissent* 6 (1959): 47–58 and "A Reply to Critics," in: *Dissent* 6 (1959): 179–181.

17 Arendt, Hannah, "Reflections on Little Rock," in: Jerome Kohn (ed.), *Responsibility and Judgment*, New York 2003, 193–213, 202. Subsequent page references from this volume in parantheses in the main text.

18 In regard to the photographs, see also Lebeau, Vicky, "The Unwelcome Child: Elizabeth Eckford and Hannah Arendt," in: *Journal of Visual Studies* 3 (2004): 51–62.



Will Counts, Elizabeth Eckford surrounded by journalists, September 6, 1957.

According to Arendt, children should not fight an adult's political struggle; instead, they should be guarded from hostilities rather than be exposed to them. But this is just one of several arguments that she offers. The new law demanding school segregation violated the independence of the individual States, Arendt further argues, as education is a matter for local governments. Her third argument is probably the most poignant and the most problematic one, leading back to Arendt's notion of a child and childhood. According to Arendt, forced school integration is something like a category mistake, it mixes up two very different realms – the social one and the political. An adult acts in the political sphere; a child, on the other hand, does not yet act politically. School education should be subsumed to the private realm, and not the public one; it is part of family life. As Arendt tries to argue as a political theorist who imagines herself in the role of a black mother, she wants to keep both identities apart. But can the social be distinguished from the public realm this clearly?

Arendt no doubt condemns the early American institution of slavery that had led to the "color question" (196), which is a particularly urgent one in the segregated South. What Arendt knew about the South, she had learned from books, and often from literary ones, like novels by William Faulkner. In contrast to New York, the city in which she lived, the south was "more homogeneous" (199) – indeed, she repeats this description – and less of a melting pot of nations. It is also more "rooted in the past than any other part of the country" (199). She could have attributed

these characteristics to her experience of Europe as well, to a Germany in which she saw herself simply as a minority.

But unlike the Jewish question, the color question gives this southern minority a very peculiar attribute – an undeniable visibility. "They are not the only 'visible minority,'" Arendt writes,

> but they are the most visible one. In this respect, they somewhat resemble new immigrants, who invariably constitute the most "audible" of all minorities and therefore are always the most likely to arouse xenophobic sentiments. But while audibility is a temporary phenomenon, rarely persisting beyond one generation, the Negroes' visibility is unalterable and permanent. (199)

Clearly, there is no thought of blacks passing for white in Arendt's binary of colors, in which the white, homogeneous majority is thought to maintain the upper hand. In regard to the black children, it is the task of white as well as black citizens, though, to insure their safety. "It will be hard for the white youngsters," Arendt speculates, "or at least those among them who outgrow their present brutality, to live down this photograph which exposes so mercilessly their juvenile delinquency" (203). The tragedy of Little Rock is not only what white adults – the mob – are doing to these black children, but what white children are doing to their black peers. Political responsibility is a matter of maturity, Arendt implies, and the incidents in Little Rock call for the protection of the *social* realm as well as for the education of adults to act within the *public* one.

Instead of concerning itself with schools, desegregation should be considered in the public realm of adults. Arendt calls for a revision of marriage laws, for example, that made intermarriage between whites and blacks impossible in the South. With a remark that seems, at least for a moment, to brush aside her own experience of discrimination, Arendt offers the following comparison of America with (Western) Europe:

> In American society, people group together, and therefore discriminate against each other, along the lines of profession, income, and ethnic origin, while in Europe the lines run along class origin, education, and manners. From the viewpoint of the human person, none of these discriminatory practices make sense; but then it is doubtful whether the human person as such ever appears in the social realm. (205)

Seyla Benhabib, Jean Bethke Elshtain, and other political theorists writing today have questioned Arendt's distinction between the Political and the

Social realm in this essay.[19] Many of her early readers simply voiced outrage and were stunned about her criticism, her support for segregation. The black writer Ralph Ellison voiced some of the strongest criticism. He had moved to New York and had published a novel about a black man living in this city in 1952, entitled *Invisible Man*. Ellison did not argue with Arendt's argument about the blacks' visibility, however, but wondered about Arendt's "Olympian authority" with which she would cast judgment. Thus, he referred both to her ignorance of the American south and, implicitly, to her educational and social background. Arendt was unable, according to Ellison, to understand the lived reality of black adults and children in the south.[20] Being unfamiliar with black life, being a stranger to the south, Arendt was in no position to cast judgment.

Interestingly, Arendt accepted Ellison's reproach. In a personal letter to the writer she confessed to lacking experience.[21] She had simply reacted to a photograph, and to an image. What she had seen was a child who was a victim, but also put into the position of a black parvenu. Was school integration then of interest for black parvenus? In her exchange with Ellison, it is now Arendt who appears not only openly

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19 See Benhabib, Seyla, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*, Thousand Oaks 1996, 246ff.; Benhabib, Seyla, "Hannah Arendt's Political Engagements," in: Roger Berkowitz/Jeffrey Katz/Thomas Keenan (ed.), *Thinking in Dark Times: Hannah Arendt on Ethics and Politics*, New York 2010, 55–61; Bernasconi, Robert, "The Double Face of the Political and the Social: Hannah Arendt and America's Racial Divisions," in: *Research in Phenomenology* 26 (1991): 3–26, and Bohman, James, "The Moral Costs of Political Pluralism: The Dilemmas of Difference and Equality in Arendt's 'Reflections on Little Rock,'" in: Larry May/Jerome Kohn (ed.), *Hannah Arendt: Twenty Years Later*, Cambridge 1996, 53–80.

20 Ralph Ellison writes of an "Olympian authority," and assigns it to Arendt as well as Irving Howe, the editor of *Dissent*, see Ellison, Ralph, "The World and the Jug," reprinted in: id., *Collected Essays*, ed. John Callahan, New York 1995, 155–188, 156. See also his interview with Warren, Robert Penn, "Leadership from the Periphery," in: id. (ed.), *Who Speaks for the Negro?*, New York 1965, 343.

21 See Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World*, 316. In regard to the exchange between Arendt and Ellison, see Posnock, Ross, "Ralph Ellison, Hannah Arendt and the Meaning of Politics," in: id. (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Ralph Ellison*, Cambridge 2005, 201–216; Steele, Meili, "Arendt versus Ellison on Little Rock: The Role of Language in Political Judgment," in: *Constellations* 9 (2002): 184–206, and Leitch, David Gideon, "The Politics of Understanding: Language as a Model of Culture," Dissertation, University of California 2008, 187–210.

white, but a parvenu herself, trying to understand an American reality that she was not quite part of. And despite her confession to Ellison, Arendt did not revise her essay.

IV. Childhood Innocence

In viewing Elizabeth Eckford not only as an innocent child but also as a person in the position of a parvenu, Arendt integrates this reading into her work on Jewish identity. In her biography of a Jewish woman of the early nineteenth century, *Rahel Varnhagen: The Life of a Jewess* (1957), as well as in her *Origins*, Arendt would insist that Jews should be conscious of their identity, and not attempt to assimilate to majority culture. Arendt developed Max Weber's distinction between pariah and parvenu further to distinguish between conscious Jews, and those who were trying to assimilate.[22] And although Arendt would argue for the special visibility of blacks, she would make a similar argument for Jewishness, too. Thus, Arendt remarks in a later interview, "I knew that I looked Jewish. I looked different from other children. I was very conscious of that. But not in a way that made me feel inferior, that was just how it was."[23]

Arendt, who wanted to think like a black mother, takes up the issue of childhood and its innocence again a few years later. The discussion about her essay on Little Rock had subsided, but Arendt had just published her Eichmann book. Following its translation into German in 1964, the German journalist Günter Gaus invited Arendt for a television interview, later published in English translation as "What Remains? The Language Remains." It is in this interview that Arendt comments on her "Jewish" appearance, and on her visibility as a Jew in pre-WWII Germany. But it is also in this interview that a mother appears – namely her own. Asked by Gaus about her first experience of being a Jew, Arendt turns to her own childhood. "I first met up with [being a "Jew"] through anti-Semitic remarks – they are not worth repeating – from children on the street," she explains to Gaus.[24] Soon enough, however, she tells a

22 See the "Introduction" to the critical edition of Arendt, Hannah, *Rahel Varnhagen: The Life of a Jewess*, ed. Liliane Weissberg, Baltimore 1997, 3–69.

23 Arendt, Hannah, "'What Remains? The Language Remains': A Conversation with Günter Gaus," transl. Joan Stambaugh, in: id., *Essays in Understanding 1930–1954*, ed. Jerome Kohn, New York 1993, 1–23, 7.

24 Ibid.

story from school, referring once again to the question of visual identification, and moving smoothly away from taunting children to a tale of the relationship between mother and child:

> I myself, for example, don't believe that I have ever considered myself a German – in the sense of belonging to the people as opposed to being a citizen, if I may make that distinction. I remember discussing this with Jaspers around 1930. He said, "Of course you are German!" I said, "One can see that I am not!" But that didn't bother me. I didn't feel that it was something inferior. That wasn't the case at all. And to come back once again to what was special about my family home: all Jewish children encountered anti-Semitism. And it poisoned the souls of many children. The difference with us was that my mother was always convinced that you mustn't let it get to you. You have to defend yourself! When my teachers made anti-Semitic remarks – mostly not about me, but about other Jewish girls, eastern Jewish students in particular – I was told to get up immediately, leave the classroom, come home, and report everything exactly. Then my mother wrote one of her many registered letters; and for me the matter was completely settled. I had a day off from school, and that was marvelous! But when it came from children, I was not permitted to tell about it at home. This didn't count. You defended yourself against what came from children. Thus these matters never were a problem for me. There were rules of conduct by which I retained my dignity, so to speak, and I was protected, absolutely protected, at home.[25]

Here, Arendt's early report is delivered to her mother. Additionally, she reiterates a theme that would haunt her "Reflections on Little Rock." She describes her home as a world of children that differs from that of adults. She describes her mother issuing letters that not only voice complains but offer protection as well. These were proper *Schutzbriefe*, fortifying the child's extraordinary sense of "home."

Should we then understand her "Reflections on Little Rock" within this context? Was Arendt referring to her own lessons in this work, to her own past in Königsberg – at which was briefly hinted in the Eichmann book as well, when she singled out a witness from that city.[26] Was Arendt identifying with the young Elizabeth Eckford? Or was Elizabeth living a different life altogether, marching to school in her white dress, while Arendt could have stayed at home? Or does Arendt put herself in the

25 Ibid., 8.

26 Arendt, Hannah, "A Reporter at Large: Eichmann in Jerusalem", in: *New Yorker* 33 (February 23, 1963): 111.

position of a mother (Elizabeth's mother, or her own mother) in penning her "Reflections on Little Rock" – her own complaint and letter of protection for a girl who should still be regarded as a child.

For sure, her mother's letter, relating the minutes of an event, evokes a legal report or deposition with its own satisfactory judgment. It is superior to the Supreme Court's decision that simply interfered with a school child's private life and education.

But Arendt does not merely bring Königsberg and Little Rock together here, if only implicitly. A third court case is at stake, and one that would triangulate both experiences. In addition to her mother's judgment, and that of the American Supreme Court, one has to consider the verdict issued in Jerusalem at the trial at which Arendt was present, at least partly. It is another trial to which she would bear witness, and one that she described in her *Report on the Banality of Evil*; a publication that offered the occasion for Gaus's interview and for Arendt's childhood memories. In the book, Arendt considers another letter writer, Adolf Eichmann, who had written and signed letters of another sort; he had followed, and issued, epistolary missives that translated into orders of persecution. Eichmann was the counter-image of a protective mother, a male bureaucrat who unthinkingly sent Jews to their death. And somewhere, beyond all the questions regarding a victim's role and responsibility, Arendt seems to yearn for the protection of the innocent child, and she longs for the caring adult who would be able to become a member of a new Republic.

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Erich Auerbach's Second Exile

Karlheinz Barck

The recent resurgence of interest in the life and work of Erich Auerbach – due to some extent to the academic celebrations of his 100th birthday in 1992, and to the 50th anniversary of the first German publication of *Mimesis* (1996), as well as its new translation into English (2003) – gave Auerbach's legacy and us, as readers of his texts, a chance to see him in a new light: as a *Schlüsselfigur* in the great constellation of Jewish-German intellectuals with their specific destinies during the history of the 20th century. These commemorative events created, for the (very) first time, a type of biogram (in the sense of Jorge Luis Borges) that provided details of Erich Auerbach's personality. In 2004, the Center for Literary and Cultural Research in Berlin (*Zentrum für Literatur- und Kulturforschung*) commemorated Erich Auerbach – a Berlin-born *Bibliotheksrat* at the Prussian State Library on Unter den Linden (1923–29), professor, and dean of the department of Romance Philology at the Philipps-University of Marburg, where he held his positions until being discharged and forced by the National Socialist regime to expatriate, as was the case with all Jewish *Beamte* (civil servants). On the occasion of his commemoration we tried to reconstruct the historical, psychological, and social topography of Erich Auerbach.[1]

In the context of the *Escape to Life* conference, conducted at New York University, which explored the details of the destiny of the exiled or *émigré* German intellectuals in the community of New York, Auerbach represents a rather singular case, having been neither a refugee *pur sang*, nor someone who was invited by an American university or any other such academic institution, nor one who received a call for professorship (a *Ruf*) that would have provided him with the possibilities to continue researching and teaching. Also particular to his case is the fact that it

1 Cf. Barck, Karlheinz/Treml, Martin (ed.), *Erich Auerbach. Geschichte und Aktualität eines europäischen Philologen*, Berlin 2007.

had nothing to do, it goes without saying, with the circumstances of those people who came to the U.S. in the nineteen-thirties after the Nazi seizure of power.

Auerbach's time in Istanbul from 1935 to 1946 was, analogous to those who made Kemal Atatürk's new nationalist Turkey their country of exile, his first exile. The stages of Auerbach's life during his first Turkish exile are well known.[2] It was in those years that he worked out, thought through, and wrote down that which, after WWII, made him known within the international academic community as an initiator of a new discourse (to adopt Foucault's phrase) in the field of literary and comparative studies: the essay on *Figura* (1938) and the book on *Mimesis* (1946), which was translated into English in 1953 and which Geoffrey Hartman considers "perhaps the only real literary history we have."[3]

In comparison to these two fundamental works, the result of the thinking of a *Romanist* (a term for scholars of romance literatures and languages in Germany since its invention as a discipline in the 19th century) during his first exile, we may wish to inquire about the ten-year period of his second exile in the U.S. that ran from September 1947 to October 1957, the year of his death. What, for instance, was he doing during this period? On the occasion of his election as a fellow of Branford in autumn 1951, the Tower Bulletin of Yale University's Branford College published a brief note on his American curriculum:

> In September of 1947, Professor Auerbach came to the United States as visiting Professor of Romance and Literature at Pennsylvania State College. In 1949, he became a member of the Advanced Institute of Science at Princeton,[4] doing research on the influence and importance of the so-called

2 Cf. the fine book by Konuk, Kader, *East West Mimesis: Auerbach in Turkey*, Stanford 2010.

3 Hartman, Geoffrey H., *Criticism in the Wilderness. The Study of Literature Today*, New Haven, London 1980, 235.

4 It was Robert Oppenheimer who intervened in favor of Auerbach, as we know from a letter written April 22, 1949: "Dear Professor Auerbach: With the concurrence of the members of our Faculty, I am very pleased formally to offer you a membership in the Institute of Advanced Study for the academic year 1949–50. We can make available to you a non-taxable grant-in-aid of $4,000 to take care of your expenses during your stay in Princeton. We shall do our best to provide you with comfortable housing and office accommodations. We are always short of all kinds of room; and if you will want a lot of space, it might be well for you to plan to come down to Princeton some day during the summer when it is convenient for you to talk over with Mrs. Eleanor Leary the quarters we have available

> typological interpretation of the Bible on medieval literature. He also inaugurated the Christian Gauss lectures on literary criticism. / In 1950, Professor Auerbach came to Yale as professor of French and Romance Philology. He believes that he owes his present career to a book, *Mimesis*, which deals with the development of realism in European Literature. This book was published in German at Bern, Spanish, English, and will shortly appear in Italian and Hebrew.[5]

This record of Auerbach's professional career in America gives us a rather crude image of his various professional stages. If we consider (and consult) the voluminous correspondence that Auerbach, a fine *Briefschreiber*, produced with his good friends (above all with Werner Krauss, Leo Spitzer, Erwin Panofsky, Martin Hellweg, Benedetto Croce, and Fritz Schalk), we can find a clear and vivid image of everyday life among the German émigrés. The singular case of Auerbach can be characterized as a sort of *mystery tour* (*Fahrt ins Blaue*) that he and his wife Marie planned as their "jump to the USA," after Auerbach had been confronted with the shameless attitudes of several West German universities during the discussion of whether or not he should return to Germany. Auerbach refers to his situation abroad in a letter to Werner Krauss written in Istanbul on April 16, 1947. In it, he comments on the question of whether he should return to his home university Marburg upon Krauss's acceptance of the *Romanistik-Lehrstuhl* at Leipzig in the Russian-occupied zone. Auerbach writes that:

> Gleichzeitig mit Ihrem Brief erhielt ich auch das Schreiben Reidemeisters, der mir, in sehr sympathischer Art, die Rückkehr nach Marburg anbietet,[6] falls Ihre Leipziger Pläne sich verwirklichen und das Marburger Ordinariat wieder hergestellt werden kann. Von den verschiedenen deutschen Möglichkeiten, die für mich vorliegen, ist das immer noch die weitaus beste – aber ich bin fast endgültig entschlossen nicht hier abzuwarten, bis sich diese oder andere deutsche Möglichkeiten realisieren lassen – so bequem das Leben hier ist, es ist kein Leben, und ich will die Arbeits- und

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and to see what can be fixed up. It will give us great pleasure to have you with us for a visit, and your colleagues and I look forward to your coming. Yours sincerely Robert Oppenheimer." The letter can be found under *Nachlaß Erich Auerbach* at Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach.

5 *Tower Bulletin* 15.11 (Jan. 16, 1954).

6 I was told in writing by Hermann Hofer, Professor emeritus of Romance Philology at Marburg, that the then rector of Marburg university, Reidemeister, was not supported by the remaining faculty in his plea for a comeback of Auerbach.

> Atemsmöglichkeiten ausprobieren, die USA bieten, wie sie auch sonst sein mögen. Sie werden es verstehen, dass man genug davon hat immer wieder an zerbröckelndem Material zu arbeiten, immer wieder die kaum aufgebauten Kartenhäuser einstürzen zu sehen, alles Leben, alle Anregungen selbst liefern zu müssen, von nichts getragen zu werden und noch dazu jeder Laune eines grotesk unwissenden Ministeriums oder Rektorats ausgeliefert zu sein. Ich will nicht länger mitmachen [. . .] und will den Sprung nach USA wagen, obgleich ich dort weder Geld noch eine auf mich wartende Stellung habe, und mir eigentlich davor graut mich anzubieten – aber alle Freunde dort schreiben, das täte jeder, man fände bestimmt etwas wenn man da sei, dagegen werde niemand mehr engagiert, den man nicht vorher selbst gesehen hat.[7]

In another letter to Krauss dated October 1, 1947, which informed the good friend from Marburg (*Lieber Krauss*) of the arrival of the *Auerbäche* (the nick-name Erwin Panofsky used in his correspondence with Auerbach), he expressed his expectations that he, as the author of *Mimesis*, would have a good chance to find work somewhere in the American academic community:

> Meine Lage und Aussicht scheint nicht schlecht, ein paar gute Rezensionen von "*Mim.*" erschienen gerade zu rechter Zeit, und man weiß hier in den interessierten Kreisen mehr von meinen Sachen als ich erwartete.[8]

In another letter to Krauss, dated December 13, 1947, Auerbach provided a short report about his first observations and experiences in America:

> Ich lebe hier, oder vielmehr wir beide, noch ganz provisorisch, in einem boarding house, sehr eng, aber bei der Einfachheit der Lebenstechnik doch ganz bequem – alle freie Zeit, die ich von Korrespondenz und Verabredungen wegen meiner Zukunftspläne erübrigen kann, verbringe ich in der Widener Library (so heisst die UB von Harvard), einer herrlichen Institution, mit einem index figurarum für meinen Privatgebrauch beschäftigt. [. . .] Praktisch verkehren wir fast nur mit Emigranten, unter denen hier am bemerkenswertesten der Kunsthistoriker Panofsky, der Philosoph Werner Jaeger, der Mathematiker und Rilke-Sammler v. Mises (Freund aus Istanbul), der phaenomenologische Philosoph Anton Gurwitsch, der Philosoph schlechtweg Ernst Bloch ("Geist der Utopie") – und ähnliche.[9]

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7 Krauss, Werner, *Briefe 1922 bis 1976*, ed. Peter Jehle with the assistance of Elisabeth Fillmann/Peter-Volker Springborn, Frankfurt/M. 2002, 339ff.

8 Ibid., 381.

9 Ibid., 396ff.

Auerbach, as the author of *Mimesis*, then mentions again the problem he discussed in some detail with his very *lieber Freund* Leo Spitzer who, during the decade of Auerbach's second exile, was a kind of *Vertrauensperson*[10] with whom Auerbach first consulted with regard to all questions and problems concerning his integration into American academia.[11] Spitzer, who had been in exile in the U.S. since 1936 as a professor at Johns Hopkins University, tried to convince Auerbach that for a successful American academic career he needed to re-invent himself and therefore needed to find a new field of research and give up any charismatic aura he would retain as "Auerbach the author of *Mimesis*:"

> Nur ein paar Zeilen zur Beantwortung Ihrer Frage: ich würde keine *Übersetzung von Früherem* hier unterzubringen suchen, aus vielen Gründen: 1) setzt das voraus oder ratifiziert es die Idee, daß Deutsch eine exotische Sprache ist, die nicht jeder Philologe beherrschen muß (wer will, *kann* Ihre "Mimesis" lesen), 2) stoßen Sie sich damit die Quellen zu, die Sie selbst für neue Publikationen beanspruchen würden, 3) würde 'Mimesis' in skeptischer Weise beurteilt (was ist es eigentlich? Eine Geschichte des Realismus? Eine Sammlung von expl.(ication) de textes?; es ist besser daß das Buch in der hieratischen Sprache des Deutschen bleibe – das Land ist noch nicht so weit, es aufzunehmen, d.h. die Kritik, die sich dran schlösse, würde nicht produktiv sein, was nur möglich wäre, wenn das Buch von amerikanischen Problemen ausginge, 4) Sie selbst sollten sich nicht mit "Mimesis" identifizieren lassen: "Auerbach – oh the man who wrote 'Mimesis,'" sondern weiterstreben, nach Neuem – das wenigstens ist mein Gefühl. Das wird Ihnen alles nicht einleuchten, aber trauen Sie meinem Fingerspitzengefühl. Zusammenfassend: "Mimesis," soweit es international (auch auf Einzelne hier) wirken kann, ist sehr gut auf Deutsch aufgehoben; um hier Posto zu fassen, auf Englisch, müssen Sie etwas schreiben, was *von hier aus* gesehen ist, im Hinblick auf Amerikaner geschrieben [. . .].[12]

10 This is the opposite of the image Sepp Gumbrecht has painted in his Spitzer-book and in several other places about the friendship between Auerbach and Leo Spitzer.

11 The intensive contact and friendship between Spitzer and Auerbach can be seen in their large correspondence: 45 handwritten letters from Spitzer to Auerbach are preserved in the *Nachlass Auerbach* at Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach. The *Gegenbriefe* from Auerbach are waiting at some place not yet discovered.

12 Leo Spitzer to Auerbach, January 26, 1948, *Nachlass Auerbach* at Deutsches Literatur Archiv Marbach, Signatur K 02 M 18.

Spitzer's recommendation at the beginning of Auerbach's second exile comes to mark a general difference between the two friends united by their engagement with philology. We can say that *Freund Spitzer* did not correctly understand *Mimesis*. "Leo Spitzer, dessen Tätigkeit für die meine schon lange bedeutend ist," wrote Auerbach in the introduction to *Literatursprache und Publikum in der lateinischen Spätantike und im Mittelalter*,[13] the book he drafted during his American years, "Aber es ist doch ein sehr großer Unterschied zwischen seiner und meiner Anwendung der Methode."[14] It is here, in the methodological introduction, that Auerbach, looking back in a kind of rearview mirror, refers to what we could define as the cultural and universal horizon of the *Mimesis* book: "In den USA begann ich daher, sobald es möglich war, das schon vorher angeschlagene Thema des sermo humilis, der christlichen Form des Erhabenen, genauer zu untersuchen und weiter ins frühe Mittelalter zu verfolgen."[15]

In any case, Spitzer's reading of *Mimesis* as a cornerstone of Auerbach's American career leads us to the question of what he had been doing, besides his teaching obligations, during his second American exile. The answer to this question points to the reason why Edward Said – the translator, together with his wife Maire, of Auerbach's seminal essay *Philologie der Weltliteratur* (1952)[16] – called Auerbach an emblematic figure of exile and regarded *Mimesis* as a similarly emblematic exile book. The aura created by Said was a sort of *Ol' Man River* view, presenting the text as "a major theoretical statement on his work and mission as a *Philolog* of the old tradition."[17] This, too, was a rather misleading characterization, but it was symptomatic for what Said, in his anti-Eurocentric attitude, himself deemed a universal (essentialist) figure of exilic experiences in general; for which *Mimesis* represented the *locus classicus*. Said presented his concept of the *exilic book* for the first time in his influential book *Orientalism*. In this work, Auerbach appears alongside *Mimesis* as the author who gave us a synthesis of Western culture as *a dying culture*:

13 Published posthumously Bern 1958.

14 Ibid., 20.

15 Ibid., 22.

16 Under the in some way imprecise translation of the title as "Philology *and* Weltliteratur," Said's translation appeared in *The Centennial Review* 13 (1969), 1–17 (emphasis mine, KB).

17 Ibid., 1.

> The idea of using specific texts, for instance, to work from the specific to the general (to understand the whole life of a period and consequently of a culture) is common to those humanists in the West inspired by the work of Wilhelm Dilthey. [. . .] The project of revitalizing philology – as it is found in the work of Curtius, Vossler, Auerbach, Spitzer, Gundolf, Hofmannsthal – has its counterpart [. . .] in the invigorations provided to strictly technical Orientalist philology by Massignon's studies of what he called the mystical lexicon, the vocabulary of Islamic devotion. [. . .] But there is another, more interesting conjunction between Orientalism in this phase of its history and the European sciences of man (sciences de l'homme), the *Geisteswissenschaften* contemporary with it. We must note [. . .] that the response to the threats to humanistic culture of a self-aggrandizing, amoral technical specialization represented, in part at least, by the rise of fascism in Europe, [. . .] extended to concerns of the internal period into the period following WWII as well. An eloquent scholarly and personal testimonial to this response can be found in Erich Auerbach's magisterial *Mimesis*, and his last methodological reflection as a *Philolog*. He tells us that *Mimesis* was written during his exile in Turkey and was meant to be in large measure an attempt virtually to see the development of Western culture at almost the last moment when that culture still had its integrity and civilizational coherence; therefore, he set himself the task of writing a general work based on specific textual analyses in such a way as to lay out the principles of Western literary performance in all their variety, richness and fertility. The aim was a synthesis of Western culture in which the synthesis itself was matched by the very gesture of doing it, which Auerbach believed was made possible by what he called late bourgeois humanism.[18]

The conviction that Auerbach had intended to document in *Mimesis* a synthesis of Western culture at the moment of its decadence is an outstanding misreading which we may explain as a *Selbstaussage* of Said's own situation as Palestinian author of Egyptian origin exiled to the United States, who was also in search of his identity. Like the flip side of a coin, a similar misreading of *Mimesis* appears in Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht's close reading offered in his well-known essay on Auerbach's legacy:

> Undoubtedly the years between 1911 and 1929 were the formative period in Erich Auerbach's life. Seen from this perspective, the books and essays that he published during his career as a professor of literature appear as an epilogue or, more poetically speaking, as a harvest. I therefore do not believe that his passionate and distanced view of European culture emerged

18 Said, Edward, *Orientalism*, New York 2003, 258.

> during his exile in Istanbul or even after his emigration to the United States in 1947. At most, the experience of expatriation that the National Socialist regime had inflicted upon him gave Auerbach the opportunity to become fully aware of his distanced and sometimes melancholic perspective on Western culture as a culture that had entered its final stage.[19]

At stake here, in this closing, Darwinian perspective within the debate about the status of *Mimesis* as an exilic book,[20] is the *Anschließbarkeit* of *Mimesis* (*metalepsis*, so to speak) for further and future problems of research. For a long time, academic discourse has been blind to such a view, while artists observed Auerbach's *rupture* with the academic mainstream very early on. *Philologie der Weltliteratur* offers a program for pursuing new directions and ways of research long before *cultural studies* was re-discovered in America. At the end of his essay Auerbach wrote that:

> So far as I know we possess no attempts at a philological synthesis of *Weltliteratur*; only a few preliminary efforts in this direction are to be found within Western culture. But the more our earth grows closer together, the more must historicist synthesis balance the contraction by expanding its activity. To make men conscious of themselves in their own history is a great task, yet the task is small – more like a renunciation – when one considers that man not only lives on earth, but that he is the world and in the universe. But what earlier epochs dared to do – to designate man's place in the universe – now appears to be a very far-off objective.[21]

The text of *Mimesis* is very clear about this in its last chapter: "The Brown Stocking." Today we may read the following impressive sentences as a vision of globalization *avant la lettre*:

> The spread of publicity and the crowding of mankind on a shrinking globe sharpened awareness of the differences in ways of life and attitudes, and mobilized the interests and forms of existence which the new changes either furthered or threatened. In all parts of the world crises of adjustment arose; they increased in number and coalesced. They led to the upheavals which we have not weathered yet. In Europe this violent clash of the most heterogeneous ways of life and kinds of endeavor undermined not only those

19 Gumbrecht, Hans Ulrich, "'Pathos of the Earthly Progress': Erich Auerbach's Everydays," in: Seth Lerer (ed.), *Literary History and the Challenge of Philology. The Legacy of Erich Auerbach*, Stanford 1996, 31.

20 Cf. Barck, Karlheinz, "*Mimesis* en la encrucijada del exilio de Erich Auerbach," in: *arbor* (Madrid), 185.739 (septiembre–octubre 2009): 909–917.

21 Auerbach, "Philology and *Weltliteratur*," 16.

> religious, philosophical, ethical, and economic principles which were part of the traditional heritage and which, despite many earlier shocks, had maintained their position of authority through slow adaptation and transformation; nor yet only the ideas of the Enlightenment, the idea of democracy and liberalism which had been revolutionary in the eighteenth century and were still so during the first half of the nineteenth; it undermined even the new forces of socialism, whose origins did not go back beyond the heyday of the capitalist system. These forces threatened to split up and disintegrate. They lost their unity and the definition through the formation of numerous mutually hostile groups, through strange alliances which some of these groups effected with non-socialist ideologies, through the capitulation of most of them during the first World War, and finally through the propensity on the part of many of their most radical advocates for hanging over into the camp of their most extreme enemies.[22]

The inner call for something utterly new that structures the *Weltliteratur* essay was heard early on by a number of individuals wide-awake in Latin America, namely in Mexico and Brazil. Here, *Mimesis* found not only its first translation but was introduced into post-war discussions on new realism in culture and the arts as an alternative to the theories of Georg Lukács. Two basic concepts in Auerbach's thinking were discussed as a new take-off in cultural theory: *Stilmischung* and *kreatürlicher Realismus* (creaturely realism). This early Latin American connection to Auerbach was reconstructed for the first time by the Colombian critic Carlos Rincón in a seminal text published in our Auerbach-Memorial-Book at the *Zentrum für Literatur- und Kulturforschung* (Center for Literary and Cultural Research, Berlin).[23] It is within this framework that the perspective of Auerbach's future destiny can be found. In Paris, where the very late French discovery of Auerbach initiated by Diane Meur's translation of *Philologie der Weltliteratur*, Christoph Pradeau made this point in his presentation, writing that Auerbach's essay through Saids translation "a pris rang parmi les textes fondateurs des *post-colonial studies*."[24] Very early, in 1950 in Brazil, Sérgio Buarque de Holando wrote a review of *Mimesis* emphasizing the concept of *kreatürlichen Realismus* it exhibits:

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22 Auerbach, Erich, *Mimesis. The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, with a new introduction by Edward W. Said, Fiftieth-anniversary edition, transl. Williard R. Trask, Princeton 2003, 550.

23 Rincón, Carlos, "Die Topographie der Auerbach-Rezeption in Lateinamerika," in: Carlo Barck/Martin Treml (ed.), *Erich Auerbach*, 371–390.

24 Pradeau, Christophe/Samoyault, Tiphaine (ed.), *Où est la littérature mondiale?*, Saint-Denis 2005, 15.

> E inevitável, para caracterizar o realismo decorrente de semelhante attitude, recorrer ao conceito do *criatural (kreatürlicher Realismus)*, que Auerbach cunhou especialmente. Evitá-lo seria cair, por exemplo, no erro do tradutor americano de um dos capítulos de *Mimesis* – o capítulo sobre o mundo de Pantagruel, ultimamente publicado na *Partisan Review* de Nova York, que traduz insistentemente "criatural" por "animalístico", deformando assim, de modo grosseiro, o pensamento expresso no original. [. . .] Do realismo criatural pode-se dizer que está no polo oposto ao humanismo pagâo, mas também ao Clasicismo dos séculos XVII e XVIII.[25]

On this Latin-American road, Auerbach returns to Europe – not through the university channels but by making a detour through Italian neo-realist movies. Here the story has to be continued, starting with Pasolini and the reading of Auerbach he produced immediately after the Italian translation of *Mimesis*, which was published in 1956, reviewed by Auerbach, and discussed with Leo Spitzer. While Pasolini worked on *La Ricotta*, Auerbach was his *Stichwortgeber*.[26] This could be the subject for another NYU workshop about travels back and forth between America and Europe.

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25 Buarque de Holanda, Sérgio, "Mimesis" (1950), in: *O espíritu e a letra. Estudos de crítica literaria* 2 1948–1959, Sâo Paulo 1996, 292.

26 Cf. Cadoni, Alessandro, *Film e critica. La contaminazione degli stili nel cinema di Pier Paolo Pasolini*, PHD Università degli studi di Siena 2009.

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Tower Bulletin, editorial, 15.11 (16 Jan. 1954).

Walter Benjamin's Farewell to Europe

Vivian Liska

On April 7, 1919, the then twenty-seven-year-old Walter Benjamin writes to his friend Ernst Schoen:

> After taking my exams, I want to learn languages, as you know – to have the European sphere behind me [. . .] I am expecting from the future as soon as it [is] intrinsically and extrinsically feasible for me – to leave Europe. Both are inextricably intertwined and it sometimes weighs heavily on me: because I can't carry this out as an act of violence; but I see leaving Europe as a necessity I will have to face.[1]

"To have the European sphere behind me:" the ambiguity of the expression, in which Europe appears not only as a support and a resource, but also as a threat and a burden – indeed a place toward which one turns one's back and leaves behind. In essence, it contains the simultaneously paradigmatic and singular ambivalences of this German-Jewish thinker who for many is the epitome of a European intellectual from the interwar period. According to Hannah Arendt, Benjamin feared "that people would [. . .] cart him up and down the country to exhibit him as the 'last European,'" if he were to immigrate to America.[2] Neither this departure *in extremis* nor the emigration to Palestine took place. After more than two decades of hesitation about leaving Europe, Benjamin committed suicide in 1940 while fleeing the Nazis. His suicide at the French-Spanish border became the symbol of a failed departure from a Europe to which so many Jewish intellectuals fell victim because they were unable – or able only too late – to make a break with the old continent.

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1 Benjamin, Walter, *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin 1910–1940*, ed. and ann. Gershom Scholem/Theodor W. Adorno, transl. Manfred R. Jacobson/Evelyn M. Jacobson, Chicago 1994, 140. This volume is henceforth quoted in the text as (CWB, page number). This and other quotations have been slightly amended.

2 Arendt, Hannah, "Introduction: Walter Benjamin 1892–1940," in: Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, New York 1970, 18.

Between Benjamin's initial reflections on leaving Europe and his death, he produced works in which he simultaneously re-examined the summits of European cultural achievements (he spoke of a "telescope" which would be trained on a range of writers from Kant and Goethe or Shakespeare and Hölderlin to Baudelaire and Proust or Kraus and Brecht) and examined the foundations of the social and historical developments that prepared the ground for the European catastrophe about to take place. These works accompanied Benjamin's long farewell to Europe, as vividly documented in his letters. In letters written during almost every phase of his life – from his earliest plans to leave the old continent in the context of his initial interest in Zionism in 1912 to his final desperate attempts to escape the Nazi terror – Benjamin continually considered the possibility of emigrating from Europe. The fact that he remained until it was too late to depart safely has repeatedly been described (most forcefully by Hannah Arendt) as a failure, fate, and/or the misfortune and clumsiness of a naïve (or at least not worldly) intellectual. Indeed, although the situation had long been dangerous, it was only in the final months that Benjamin seriously tried to procure the means (money, affidavits, and visas) that would have enabled him to leave. Benjamin was quite aware of the risk involved in this postponement. In July of 1940 he writes to Gretel Adorno: "I continue to live in the spirit appropriate to one who is exposed to risks he should have foreseen and that he ran in (almost) full consciousness of the dangers involved."[3] However, the fact that remaining in Europe was something more and different than a delayed and finally unsuccessful attempt to escape, is evident from the numerous reflections on his departure.

Benjamin understood his options – emigration or remaining in Europe – as almost metaphysical categories. To him, the claims of both possibilities are absolute, their mode subjunctive, and their fundamental figure of thought is the aporia: "My mission," Benjamin writes to Florens Christian Rang in 1923, "could not be fulfilled here [in Europe], even if it were here. It is from this perspective that I view the problem of emigration. God willing, a solution can be found" (CWB, 216). If Benjamin sees "a commandment that needs to be thought through philosophically" in the rejection of Europe and his turn towards Palestine and Jewishness, then he equally describes his work that is oriented towards Europe (above all his *magnum opus*, the *Arcades Project*, through which he was bound

3 Benjamin, Walter, *Briefe* 6, ed. Christoph Gödde/Henri Lonitz, Frankfurt/M. 2000, 470. References to the German edition of Benjamin's letters in six vols. from 1995 to 2000 are henceforth quoted in the text as (B, volume, page number).

physically to the old continent due to its material sources [Materialquellen]) as his essential calling. Benjamin never solves the conflict, but its insolubility, as demonstrated in frequently varied formulations, is linked to one of the core aspects of his thought. This dilemma has a parallel in his conception of Europe to which he remained faithful to the end. It is revealed in the correspondence with friends and acquaintances that he conducted over almost three decades.

Benjamin's commitment to an idea of Europe – which he defended to the end and for which his whole work stands – can be seen in the continuities of style in passages from his letters in which he envisages departure; a continuity maintained despite all the changes in his private life and in his political opinions. For him, Europe is neither a geographical nor a political and ideological realm. In a letter to Rang, he talks dismissively of the earlier preferences of their common friend, Erich Gutkind, who

> carelessly dedicated himself to what was European. He did this in a way that would necessarily one day reveal itself, and had to reveal itself, as a mistake to anyone with eyes to see. For me, on the contrary, circumscribed nations were always central: German or French. (CWB, 214)

Europe is not important to Benjamin as a democratic cosmopolitan association of states, but rather as an indispensable workshop or, as he put it, a "writing factory" (*Schreibfabrik*), a "production enterprise" (*Produktionsanstalt*), and a mode of thinking and attitude toward life. In the detritus of the decaying heterogeneous intellectual tradition of Europe, he finds at once the material, the tools, and the procedure to investigate the state of this tradition – its possibilities and dark depths, its reach and relevance – and recasts it for a new purpose. Benjamin's idea of Europe takes shape not only in terms of content, but in the forms of speaking and thinking, leading to a critical distance and a saving critique of the extant and the given. Consequently, in what follows my concern will be less with a biographical reconstruction of Benjamin's failure to leave than with an analysis of the textual figures and figures of thought through which he expressed, for more than two decades, his need to leave Europe and, even more, his resistance to such a departure.

I. Necessity and Act of Violence

First and foremost, the fundamental questions need to be addressed: Why stay or why go? The diversity of changing necessities – that is, the compelling motives *for* an emigration from Europe which Benjamin cites over

the years – can broadly be reconstructed from his letters: initial encounters with Zionism which, as he already writes to a school friend in 1912, confront him "as a possibility and hence perhaps one day as a duty" (CWB, 17); the recognition of the potential significance of Hebrew for his own thinking, particularly in the context of his studies on the German Tragedy, which ultimately can be learned only in Palestine; the emigration of acquaintances and friends, above all Gershom Scholem, to Palestine; failed love affairs and an increasing feeling of loneliness and isolation; disappointment about the failure of his university career due to latent anti-Semitism and academic conservatism that led to the rejection of his habilitation thesis; the financial difficulties related to this rejection that became acute in later years; hopes for professional possibilities outside Europe; anti-Semitic violence in European cities and the foreboding that there is no place for Jews and others, in Europe; more generally, the increasingly dark social and political situation, as a result of which "Europe has become uninhabitable" and lacked "air to breathe" (B, 6, 244); and, already in the 1920s, an awareness of the irreparable decay of Europe which was confirmed by Hitler's seizure of power. Finally, there is the realization, following Benjamin's internment in the Clos St. Joseph camp near Nevers, that the necessity of fleeing from Europe was a question of survival.

These necessities stand in conflict with Benjamin's attachment to Europe, which makes leaving it, he writes, an act of violence inflicted upon himself. The reasons for staying or for postponing emigration appear just as diverse as those for leaving; but they are more complex. There are too many, and their formulations too often sound like an excuse, to take each one at face value. Benjamin's existential and intellectual bond with Europe, so it seems, lies beyond all concrete justifications. In the early years, the reasons to stay usually come from Benjamin himself. First, there is a rejection of political, territorial Zionism in favor of a "Zionism of the spirit" which can only be realized in Europe: "The best Jews," Benjamin writes to Ludwig Strauss in 1912, "are today bound to a valuable process in West European society" (B, 1, 64). Then there is the question of the Hebrew language and the possibility of learning it in Berlin or Paris that comes in conjunction with the complaint, influenced by Scholem, of the "hideous" revival of Hebrew as practiced in Palestine (to Gretel Karplus, May 25, 1935; B, 5, 93). Finally, and increasingly, there is the impossibility of being able to devote the necessary time and attention to Hebrew, as this would distract him from other, "more European," work.

Soon after first considering the possibility of a later Zionist "duty," Benjamin emphazises his ties to Europe. In another letter to Ludwig

Strauss he writes: "To me it is pointless to ask whether Jewish Palestine-work or Jewish-European work is more urgent. I am bound here" (B, 1, 171). The placement of the two hyphens speaks volumes. In the first case it stands between Palestine and work, while "Jewish" remains separate, in the second it is placed between Jewish and European. Benjamin is tied to the "here" of Europe, an idea of Europe that has entered into a union with Jewishness. Consequently, the place of Jewishness is Europe. It is betrayed by the "Palestine Zionists." "I did not find," Benjamin writes in the same letter to Strauss, "that the Zionists had a Jewish life, that they had more than vague ideas of the Jewish spirit. [. . .] They propagate Palestine and booze German. They are half people. Have they ever thought through school, literature, the inner life, the state in Jewish terms?" It is hard to say from these statements whether Benjamin remains in Europe because Palestine doesn't appeal to him or if he rather wants to cast Palestine in an unflattering light in order to stay in Europe.

Professionally, and even more so with respect to his spiritual and intellectual development, Benjamin doubts whether there are possibilities for him outside Europe. There may "also be no place in Europe" for him, yet "is there more room for me [in Palestine] – for what I know and what I can do – than in Europe? If there is not more, then there is less" (CWB, 417). Even as an outcast, his place is in Europe, even if there is no place for him there. Benjamin responds to the emigration of friends with hope about the special meaning of "distant friendships," which can only develop their true potential in the intensity of an exchange of letters. After a failure to meet Scholem, he writes to the latter: "it may well be fitting to have a small ocean between us when the moment comes to fall into each other's arms 'spiritualiter'" (CWB, 623). And more importantly, it is precisely the emigration of a large number of Benjamin's intellectual Jewish acquaintances that requires him to stay: "It would also be bad for Europe, if the cultural energies of the Jews were to leave it."[4] Later, the letters only hint at one of the principal reasons for his refusal to emigrate to Palestine, namely his relationship with the Russian Communist Asja Lacis, who influenced him both emotionally and ideologically against plans for emigration at a time when he was closest to realizing them.

Concrete remarks on the political situation and the anti-Semitic threat in Europe are noticeably rare in Benjamin's correspondence. Where he mentions them, he talks of the "anti-Semitic ideology" in

4 Letter to Ludwig Strauss, October 10, 1912 (B, 1, 71).

the same breath as he speaks of Zionism. Benjamin's awareness of the political state of affairs in Europe, which would cause him to emigrate, is counterbalanced by doubts about conditions in Palestine. These apply both to the internal Jewish situation and to relations with the Arabs. About the tension between the Eastern Jewish immigrants, the majority of whom are strictly observant, and the "enlightened" Western Jewish immigrants, he asks his interlocutor:

> How does one propose to resolve the pressing religious issue between Western and Eastern European Jews? Does one not fear religious wars? Is not the union of two cultures such as the west and east European Jewish ones something like a leap [. . .] into chaos? (B, 1, 62)

In 1929 he notes the breakdown of relations with the Arabs. Even in 1936 the situation in Palestine appears to him to be at least as threatening as the one in Europe (see B, 3, 317). To him this threat comes less from the physical presence of Jews in Palestine than it does from the spirit of Jewishness. He fears that "the material actions of the Arabs" could hardly be more harmful than the "psychological reactions of the Jews." He sees no prospect of an improvement in the situation (see B, 3, 316). To him the rescue of the spirit of Judaism is by no means guaranteed in Palestine, quite the contrary:

> What becomes of the hopes that Palestine raises, beyond allowing ten thousand Jews, even one hundred thousand Jews, to eke out a meagre existence. A circumstance that, as absolutely essential as it is, may well not run its course without proving to be a new and catastrophic danger among all the dangers threatening Judaism. (CWB, 526)

The few passages in which Palestine appears in a positive light are ambivalent. For example, in his reaction (no doubt intended to be humorous) to Scholem's enthusiastic description of his stay in the cabbalist town of Safed, Benjamin concludes with relief "that, even in much of Palestine, things proceed in a more human and less Jewish fashion than someone who is ignorant of Palestine might imagine" (CWB, 243). Benjamin is hardly interested in becoming less ignorant. Only rarely and half-heartedly does he ask about the country. "I will enjoy looking through a travel guide to Palestine," he announces in June of 1924, but then again only "as soon as I have the opportunity" (ibid.). This intention is not mentioned again.

Benjamin cites, in part, the outward circumstances that prevent him from leaving, and these change depending on his situation. First, there is

the work that still has to be completed before a departure – e.g., the doctorate, the habilitation, various commissioned pieces, trips already planned within Europe, the concern about his dying mother, and visitors expected from abroad. In his final years, the real obstacles to leaving Europe increase: the lack of a passport, money, and a visa; physical and mental exhaustion; and, finally, a border guard who blocks his escape. Yet even in the last two years of his life, as the situation in Europe becomes ever more pressing and departure more difficult, his emigration is not held back by external circumstances alone. The work on the Arcades Project is increasingly at the centre of his life. For that he must stay in Paris, in Europe: "for me, nothing in the world could replace the Bibliothèque Nationale" (CWB, 621). The actual title of the project is "Paris, capital of the XIX. Century," its actual aim to take stock of the European condition and its foundations. As early as 1930 Benjamin calls this work "the theatre of all my conflicts and all my ideas" (CWB, 359). It increasingly demands all his attention and the subordination of all other "dispositions;" perhaps even those that could ultimately have saved his life. Even in the desperate attempts at flight in his last months there is still evidence of the need to save an idea of Europe that, he believes, could be seen only in the lives of those it is preparing to expel. In his letter to Adrienne Monnier dated November 21, 1939, Benjamin describes what is at issue in his project, on which he continues working until the last moment: "Let us hope that the witnesses to European civilisation [. . .] will survive the murderous rage of Hitler, along with their accounts of it" (CWB, 613). The witness does not survive, but his testimony remains. It also includes Benjamin's letters: He explicitly assigns the epistolary genre to "the sphere of 'testimony'" (CWB, 149). This is true in a very special way of Benjamin's letters about the possibility of emigrating from Europe. If letters, for Benjamin, belong "to the history of the continuing life of a human being" ("*zur Geschichte des Fortlebens eines Menschen*," B, 2, 48), then these epistolary reflections contribute to the *Fortleben* of European civilization that is in the process of being destroyed.

II. Deferral and Aporia

Leaving Europe is thus for Benjamin an act of violence. Yet it is a necessity that he, self-admittedly, "will have to face." In 1919 Benjamin describes the question of emigration, which will occupy him for two decades, with uncanny clarity as an aporia. The simultaneity of the

"necessity" of departure and the inability to execute it proves to be not only an existential challenge or an ideological choice, but a continuing philosophical problem. Benjamin describes this "philosophical problem" in a letter to Rang:

> You may be pleased to see that I, for my part emphasise that nothing in your deliberations is derived from what we could call philosophical principles precisely because they are not deduced from theorems and concepts, but born from an interplay of ideas. (CWB, 218)

Benjamin's reflections on emigration, and thus on his dilemma (one he characterizes in terms of a "difficult decision," "weeks of struggle," "tremendous conflict," and "horrid competition" between Europe and Palestine and the European and the Jewish) are not to be derived from principles or existing ideas, but are generated by an "interplay of ideas" – in this case, the interplay between the idea of Europe and the idea of Judaism. For Benjamin they come together in the "the Jewish man of letters" ("*jüdischer Literat*," B, 1, 83), in the "idea of the man of letters" (B, 1, 63), who bears "the new social consciousness" (B, 1, 64), and who, when freed of well-worn patterns of thought and conduct and in the simultaneity of close observation and critical distance, reveals an alternative to what exists ("*das Gegebene*"). This alternative consists in an "interplay" of antitheses, which Benjamin describes in relation to Kafka's writing as an "ellipsis between Jewish tradition and modern big city dweller." This Kafkaean ellipsis also determines Benjamin's own deliberations on the question of emigration.

Arendt writes that "He [Benjamin] did not need to read Kafka to think like Kafka."[5] This is particularly true of those passages in Benjamin's letters in which he considers his departure from Europe. They are couched in a strikingly odd style, which leads Arendt to talk of Benjamin's "curious endless consideration [. . .] of emigration to Palestine."[6] These passages are consistently marked by an aporetic way of writing – the staging of an insoluble situation – which displays a conspicuous similarity to Kafka's "stationary charge" ("*stehender Sturmlauf*")[7] as well as to Kafka's repeated about-turns, which scholars have variously described as "infinite regress," "chiastic recourse,"[8] "oscillating

5 Arendt, "Introduction," 17.
6 Ibid., 35.
7 Kafka, Franz, *Tagebücher*, ed. Hans-Gerd Koch/Michael Müller/Malcom Pasley, Frankfurt/M. 2002, 259.
8 Corngold, Stanley, *Lambent Traces. Franz Kafka*, Princeton 2004, 125.

negation,"[9] or "rotating dialectic."[10] The curiousness and, even more, the endlessness of Benjamin's consideration of emigrating from Europe bear the same stamp.

The core of these considerations is delay. On January 8, 1928, Benjamin writes to Scholem: "My trip to Palestine [. . .] [is] a settled matter. [. . .] To start with, the date of my arrival. This will perhaps be postponed. It depends on [. . .] whether I can get together the passages on which I still need to work [*Passagenarbeit*] before I leave Europe" (B, 3, 403).

The rest of the letter describes the importance "of not rushing the completion of the work" (B, 3, 405). Two weeks later Benjamin explains to Alfred Cohn why he must "for a thousand and one reasons" stay in Berlin (B, 3, 409). On May 22, 1929, one of these reasons is that he began the essay on Proust: "of thousands of pages" (B, 3, 462). In countless variations, he expresses the reasons for delaying his departure, much like in a letter to Gretel Karplus dated December 30, 1933, from Paris: "The decision to be made would be the one to leave here and I would primarily have to find the strength to make it. I still have to wait for some things to happen" (CWB, 432). The reasons why Benjamin must wait change with the years and the circumstances, but there are simply too many of them to take the reasons for the delay at face value. Instead, his circular arguments, tautologies, contradictions, and superfluous justifications, double subjunctives, and reflections in which every line features a "but," "however," or "nevertheless," interrupt the straight line of the argument and prevent a conclusion. These explanations are marked by constant relativizations, conditions, reservations, and hints at vague difficulties and impossibilities.

On February 1, 1923, he writes to Scholem: "In addition to everything else, it has become impossible to remain in Germany and the prospect of my getting away has not improved in any way" (CWB, 205). In a letter dated May 25, 1935, Benjamin explains to Werner Kraft that:

> The question you raise as to where to live during the war is hard to answer because I can hardly count on external circumstances allowing me to do what seems right to me at such a moment, when whatever action taken probably comes too late in any case, but when one must necessarily act within the space of a few hours. (CWB, 487)

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9 Glazova, Anna, *Franz Kafka*, 2001, http://www.kafka.org/index.php/icqlist/index.pho?id=194.229.0.0.1.1, (March 17, 2001).

10 Walser, Martin, *Beschreibung einer Form. Versuch über Kafka*, Frankfurt/M. 1999, 84.

On February 28, 1933, he speaks of being "absorbed by the problems posed by the next months. I don't know if I will be able to make it through them, whether inside or outside Germany" (CWB, 402). In the last years of exile the difficulties are above all of a practical nature. In 1939 Benjamin writes to Scholem: "The same conditions that threaten my European situation will in all likelihood make emigration to the USA impossible" (CWB, 601). There are no doubt facts behind that claim, yet Benjamin's repeated and detailed descriptions of these situations remind one of his remarks about Kafka: "There is nothing more memorable than the fervor with which Kafka emphasised his failure" (CWB, 566). Benjamin's descriptions of the failure of his decision to leave Europe are memorable, above all where he simultaneously reflects on and fervently enacts them.

Often there is, in Benjamin's hesitation, a self-ironic undertone: "At the beginning of April," Benjamin writes to Scholem on March 5, 1924,

> I intend – by hook or by crook – to get away from here. [. . .] It is still not clear to me how I will finance a stay abroad under these circumstances. In the most extreme case I am even ready to sacrifice some books from my library. To be sure, for the time being I am anesthetizing the pain of this readiness by making occasional daring purchases. (CWB, 237)

Benjamin is ready to sacrifice part of his library to raise money for his departure. In the following lines he draws a list of expensive books he just acquired. And five years later, again:

> My travel plans further dispose me to show the utmost restraint in buying books. To tell the truth, a more specific change occurred in me here: the fervor is gone until I voluntarily awaken it again and I will ponder that ten times over. The other day I acquired the only collection of writings by Goethe's childhood friend, J. H. Merck, a selection. (B, 3 29)

Benjamin himself talks of his own "pathological hesitancy," but the path by which he reaches this self-knowledge casts a light on its function: "I am unfortunately in no position at all to counter your reproaches" [about the postponement of his departure for Palestine and the learning of Hebrew linked to that] he writes to Scholem on June 6, 1926,

> they are absolutely justified and I am up against a truly pathological inclination to procrastinate in this matter. I have unfortunately occasionally experienced this inclination with regard to other matters. To be sure, it does seem that you misinterpreted the brevity of my last letter. It resulted from my haste

> to let you know that this business – [his departure for Palestine] – had *finally* got started. And this, of course, is all the more significant, the more complicated my inhibitions were. (By the way, you have only an incomplete picture of their nature and scope and, insofar as they are of a purely personal nature, I must wait to fill you in on the rest until I can do so in person.) [. . .] My coming in the fall depends strictly on my material circumstances. On nothing else, given good health. On the contrary, you may rest assured that now I have begun, I will absolutely go on with Hebrew, here or over there, quite independently of when I leave for Palestine. (CWB, 350)

These lines are a typical example of Benjamin's Kafkaesque writing: He admits his hesitation and habit of procrastination, and then takes back his confession with opaque justifications that could only be clarified in the event of a decision – that is, on arrival in Palestine. He talks of complicated inhibitions and, a few lines later, advances *solely* financial reasons for the postponement. He describes his inability to decide as a character trait and, immediately afterward, announces his decision to come with a great show of resolution. He retreats from the certainty of his coming with a single condition (independent of any inner state), then seals this one uncertainty and quickly adds a second, only to go off in the opposite direction with the very first word of the subsequent sentence. Now he splits the "matter" (the emigration and the learning of Hebrew), lets the journey to Palestine disappear into vagueness, and ends with the assurance that he "will absolutely go on." In the midst of all this vacillation, there comes the explanation that it is precisely the continuing inhibitions (the hesitancy and the postponement) that determine the weight of the decision. Along these lines, the dynamic of Benjamin's "curious endless consideration(s)" becomes evident: They are insoluble and yet decisive precisely in their insolubility.

Benjamin repeatedly emphasizes the insolubility of his situation. On April 25, 1930, he writes to Scholem:

> And I must once again put off giving a definitive answer to the question [of coming to Palestine]. Not, to be sure, for much longer. And not without telling you that in one respect [. . .] it is insoluble in its alternative form. [. . .] But whatever this decision may depend on, it will be made soon – however much, on the one hand, it is embedded in circumstances that seem to be totally alien to it and, on the other hand, in that procrastination that has been stretched to the limit and that is second nature to me when it comes to the most important situations in my life. Having begun to loosen the extremely tangled knot of my existence in one place [. . .] this 'Gordian knot' [. . .] will also have to be unraveled. (CWB, 364f.)

As is well known, Gordian knots cannot be unraveled but only cut by the blow from a sword. Even more significant is the fact that here Benjamin locates his wavering not between Palestine and Europe but between "alien circumstances" on the one hand, and procrastination itself on the other. Hence that "procrastination [. . .] stretched to the limit" becomes a possibility and an attitude in itself, opposed to the "alien circumstances." It can, however, only be attained performatively and not conceptually, since hesitancy, when expressed conceptually, would cancel itself.

Benjamin's deliberations on emigration from Europe pile up to such an extent that they become an end in themselves and the apparent goal – a possible decision – disappears from view. As with Kafka, hesitancy (*Zögern*) becomes the way itself; it makes it possible to ward off a decision. Yet this hesitancy is not merely a passive inability to decide. What matters is the process of hesitation itself. Benjamin, whose hesitation is similar to that of Kafka, calls this process in Kafka his "gesture." Regarding the latter's gestures, Benjamin maintains that none exist that are not affected by the "ambivalence in the face of decision" (*die Zweideutigkeit vor der Entscheidung*). This ambivalence is, Benjamin continues, itself "decisive," because it reveals "the middle of events."[11] As in Kafka, this gesture, as Werner Hamacher has pointed out,

> hesitates before every meaning and every doctrine and is nothing but such hesitation; stalling, postponement is itself a decision, but not one that decides *on* or *for* something, not one that passes judgment, sets up a law or makes an example – then it would belong in the realm of predicative language [. . .] and would presume what can only be disclosed in it.[12]

What on the other hand is disclosed in Benjamin's gesture of hesitation is a space that is free of the dictates of "foreign circumstances" and requirements and in which something else than the given is conceivable.

Arendt comes close to the meaning of this space when she writes:

> What strikes one as indecision in the letters, as though he were vacillating between Zionism and Marxism, in truth was probably due to his bitter insight that all solutions were not only objectively false and inappropriate to reality, but would lead him personally to a false salvation. [. . .] He felt that he would deprive himself of the positive cognitive chances of

11 Benjamin, Walter, *Gesammelte Schriften* 2.2, ed. Rolf Tiedemann/Hermann Scheppenhäuser, Frankfurt/M. 1997, 419.

12 Hamacher, Werner, *Premises*, Harvard 1996, 316.

> his own position. [. . .] He had settled down in the desperate conditions which corresponded to reality; there he wanted to remain in order to "denature" his own writings "like menthylated spirits [. . .] at the risk of making them unfit for consumption" by anyone then alive but with the chance of being preserved all the more reliably for an unknown future.[13]

What is unbearable for Benjamin's contemporaries (she may be thinking of Scholem here) is Benjamin's hesitation. They are expecting an ideological stand, because the situation is urgent and makes a decision necessary. They don't tolerate the philosophical and political value of considering the future as something unknown, that can not be deduced from the given. The "*Zweideutigkeit vor der Entscheidung*" is however, not only a way out or a space of insight (as it is in Arendt's comment), and also not only to be understood *ex negativo* (as a space corresponding to the negative reality). It is also a space beyond necessity and impossibility wherein the possibility of salvation is illuminated.

III. Europe as *Spielraum*

In his great letter to Scholem about Kafka in 1938, Benjamin calls this space a "marvellous *leeway*" ("*ein herrlicher Spielraum*"). It is "the space," he specifies, "which the (coming) catastrophe will not know" (CWB 564). The catastrophe will not know this space of thinking, free of preconditions, because it only knows what is already given and thought. There will be no opening to something else in this space and no way out of it. Not to know this space – its necessity and possibility – that *is* the catastrophe. Benjamin's hesitation creates, like Kafka's gesture, the space that stands against this catastrophe. It takes place not in a decision to be made between two possibilities – here, Europe or there, Palestine or the Jews – but rather "in the middle of events," in hesitancy itself. This discloses neither a concession nor a compromise, nor resolution in a third way. Instead, it emerges from the interplay of opposites that stand simultaneously undiminished in opposition to each other, and remain in all their radicalism. "I don't concede any compromise," writes Benjamin already in 1926. Only in the paradoxical transformation of one into the other and, further, only where both the idea of Europe and the idea of Judaism each proceed "radically in their own sense" is such a hope

13 Arendt, Hannah, *Men in Dark Times*, Boston 1970, 190.

given (B, 3, 158f.). Benjamin's "pathological hesitation" and the profound despair that accompanies it appear like the fear we find in Kafka, of which Benjamin writes: "[It] makes a mess of the process," delays action, but is "nevertheless the only hopeful thing in him."[14] Benjamin's hesitation prevents him from being saved, and yet it is precisely that which he believed has to be saved.

"For Benjamin," writes Gerhard Richter,

> the moment of undecidability is [. . .] not something negative that needs to be transcended. Rather, the perpetual navigation of the relentless difficulties that can never be understood once and for all is the very condition of possibility for any political hope. Benjamin gives the promise lodged in this hope the name "Europe."[15]

As accurately as this formulation captures Benjamin's hope in some respects, it is lopsided in giving it the name 'Europe.' For Benjamin, the "marvellous leeway" before a decision arises as an ellipsis between the European and the Jewish. In a text from 1923, to which he initially gave the title "Thoughts towards an analysis of the condition of *Mitteleuropa*," Benjamin speaks of the "leeway lent by freedom." There, he describes this space as "that more or less evident irony with which the life of the individual demands to run its course as distinct from the existence of any community in which he finds himself."[16] In 1923, Benjamin calls this space the "most European of all goods," yet in the present "it has disappeared as far as the inhabitants of *Mitteleuropa* are concerned."[17] In 1938 Benjamin localizes the origin of this space in the Jewish mystical tradition. It is that which makes Kafka's work the "precise complement of its epoch" and allows him to be, as an *individual*, "devoid of all collective principles and conditions." It is this space, emerging from the conjuncture of the Jewish tradition and European ideas of freedom, which determined Benjamin's deliberations on emigration. And it is this possibility, this possible space, that Benjamin wishes to rescue as a complementary world to the lurking catastrophe. Precisely by not being brought to a conclusion, his deliberations, like Kafka's gesture, point to a way out of the given order and thereby to an opening to something to come, which is still

14 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* 2.2, 431.

15 Richter, Gerhard, "Sites of Indeterminacy and the Spectres of Eurocentrism," in: *Culture, Theory and Critique* 43.1 (2002): 51–65, 59.

16 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* 6, 919.

17 Ibid.

unnamed and unknown. This saving, complementary alternative world arises, for Benjamin, out of a leeway of freedom that recognizes the catastrophe; namely, a leeway which will disappear with the catastrophe of the destruction of a Europe interwoven with Jewishness.

Benjamin illustrates Kafka's "glorious leeway" by way of a well-known passage in *The Nature of the Physical World* by A. S. Eddington, which presents a humorous view of modes of behavior in modernity:

> I am standing on the threshold about to enter a room. It is a complicated business. In the first place I must shove against an atmosphere pressing with a force of fourteen pounds on every square inch of my body. I am sure of landing on a plank travelling at twenty miles a second round the sun – a fraction of a second too early or too late, the plank would be miles away. I must do this whilst hanging from a round planet head outward into space, and with a wind of ether blowing at no one knows how many miles a second through every interstice of my body. The plank has no solidity of substance. To step on it is like stepping on a swarm of flies. Shall I not slip through? No, if I make the venture one of the flies hits me and gives a boost up again; I fall again and am knocked upwards by another fly; and so on. I may hope that the net result will be that I remain about steady; but if unfortunately I should slip through the floor or be boosted too violently up to the ceiling, the occurrence would be, not a violation of the laws of Nature, but a rare coincidence [. . .]. Verily, it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a scientific man to pass through a door. (B, 6, 110)[18]

In full awareness of the known physical facts and in the form of parody Eddington describes the factors that make the enterprise of walking through a door impossible – the gravity of the atmosphere, speed of the earth's rotation, spherical shape of the planet. It is questionable whether Benjamin knew that here he was also describing himself. "In all literature," writes Benjamin, "I know no passage which corresponds to the same extent to the Kafka(esque) gestus." One could, he writes, "without any effort match almost every passage of this physical aporia with sentences from Kafka's prose pieces" (ibid.) – and, one might add, with Benjamin's considerations on leaving Europe. It is indeed easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle and for a physicist to pass through a door than for Benjamin to leave Europe. And yet he does leave Europe – the real, existing Europe – in his mind. He leaves

18 Passage appears in: Eddington, A. S., *The Nature of the Physical World*, New York 1928, 342.

it at the point in his thinking where he enters the ellipsis of the interaction of his idea of Europe and his idea of Judaism. He leaves a Europe that has become uninhabitable. He leaves it in his passages on the necessity and violence of departing, and he leaves it in his hesitation, which opens up the "glorious leeway" that is his escape route and only remaining hope. This is the point Benjamin is making when he quotes Kafka's celebrated phrase that there is an "infinite amount of hope – [but] not for us."[19] There is an infinite amount of hope in Benjamin's farewell to Europe, only not for him. Yet in the texts he has left behind and in the letters which arrived and are preserved in Jerusalem, Benjamin leaves Europe in the same manner as the Chinese painter, whose story Benjamin frequently repeats:

> When the former showed his friends his most recent picture, there was a park in it and a path leading to a small door. But when the friends turned round to the painter he was gone and in the picture. There he was walking on the narrow path towards the door, he paused in front of it, turned round, smiled and disappeared through it.[20]

On June 20, 1931, Benjamin writes from Berlin to Scholem in Jerusalem: "I have now settled my affairs to such a degree that a decision to emigrate to Palestine would be no more difficult for me than to walk out the door" (CWB, 381).

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No Place Yet: Ernst Bloch's Utopia in Exile

Falko Schmieder

On April 7, 1949, Ernst Bloch, having recently returned to Europe after his eleven-year American exile, writes in a letter to author Hermann Broch: "I interrupted the new manuscript on p. 681, as to speak in mid-sentence, and will continue at the new desk as if nothing had happened."[1]

Continuing as if nothing had happened – this sentence could well serve as the motto for Bloch's working-method after his emigration to the U.S. and his return to Germany. And it would be just as fitting with regard to his complete philosophical works. All his life, Bloch emphasized the continuity of his theoretical views and his political commitment;[2] this is all the more astonishing considering that the theoretical development of other political intellectuals realigned radically as a result of the experience of National Socialism: Walter Benjamin's reshaping of the concept of history, Hannah Arendt's theory of totalitarianism, Günther Anders's concept of the Outdatedness of Human Beings, and Adorno's Negative Dialectics, to name just a few. All of these approaches reveal an awareness of a fundamental rupture in the experience of history that has undermined the content of traditional categories such as liberty, progress, or meaning in history.

In his "Theses On the Concept of History," Walter Benjamin writes: "The current amazement that the things we are experiencing are 'still' possible in the twentieth century is *not* philosophical. This amazement is not the beginning of knowledge – unless it is the knowledge that the view of history which gives rise to it is untenable."[3] Herbert Marcuse

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1 Ernst Bloch, letter to Hermann Broch, April 7, 1949, in: Bloch, Ernst, *Briefe 1903–1975*, ed. Karola Bloch et al., Frankfurt/M. 1985, 846.

2 See Schoch, Bruno, "Ernst Bloch: Hoffnung – aus Verzweiflung," in: Dan Diner (ed.), *Zivilisationsbruch. Denken nach Auschwitz*, Frankfurt/M. 1988, 69–87, 71.

3 Benjamin, Walter, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in: *Illuminations. Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt, New York 1968, 253–264, 257.

sharpened Benjamin's approach in his epilog to the "Theses" as follows: "Thinking receives the shock that makes it incapable of continuing to think in traditional tracks."[4] Bloch's thinking, in comparison, seems to be conspicuously untouched by the catastrophic upheavals of history which left their traces in his own biography, too. "Nothing happened indeed" – thus continues the letter to Hermann Broch.

The continuity of his thinking is based on a topic that is directly associated with his name today: the subject of utopia. Already in 1918 (only 33 years old) Bloch's first publication on the subject appeared. Bloch, who was one of the few Germans that had not longed enthusiastically for World War I, witnessed the publication in Switzerland, to which the opponent of the war had withdrawn. It is not hard to see that Bloch's examination of utopian thinking has to be partially understood as a reaction to World War I, which put into a fundamental crisis the general principles of a 19th-century philosophy of progress, which maintains faith in the successive improvement of societal conditions. In the Marxist philosophical tradition, to which Bloch felt committed, the belief in the progress of society was associated with a depreciation of utopian thinking, as can be seen in the title of Friedrich Engels' *The Development of Socialism from Utopia to Science*. Bloch's rehabilitation and redefinition of the concept of utopia is conducted in the interest of the disclosure of the subjective dimension of existence, as well as of the wishes, drives, and needs of man which, especially in times of societal upheaval, had shown to be prominent political factors. During the Weimar Republic, Bloch had good reasons for being suspicious towards the philosophy of progress. World War I and, later, the experience of the formation of fascist movements, made it clear not only that the crisis of bourgeois society did not automatically produce emancipatory potentials, but that it could release regressive and destructive energies as well. During the Weimar years, Bloch was one of the first to recognize the menace of fascist mass movements, which he analyzed critically and opposed in his writing. In his book *Heritage of Our Times*, which was published for the first time in 1935 by a publisher in Zurich, he described the success of the Nazis as based upon the fact that they started from the feelings of the people, which had been neglected badly by the left. Bloch blames the theoretical constructions derived from Marx for having "undernourished the

4 Marcuse, Herbert, "Nachwort," in: Walter Benjamin, *Zur Kritik der Gewalt und andere Aufsätze*, Frankfurt/M. 1965, 97–107, 105f.

imagination of the masses" and "almost [having] surrendered the world of imagination."[5] "Nazis," begins a famous passage, "speak deceitfully, but to people, the Communists quite truly, but only of things."[6] His examination of the utopian dimension also serves to make accessible again the buried dimensions of fantasy and desire for the left.

When the Nazis took over power, Bloch's life was directly in danger. His name was put on the list of forbidden authors; he had to emigrate. His first refuge was Zurich, the city to which he had already fled during World War I. Switzerland, however, had the harshest anti-immigrant laws in all of Europe. Bloch, remaining politically committed, was expelled after one and a half years of toleration by the Swiss police's aliens' branch.[7] He emigrated to Vienna, then to Paris, and finally to Prague. Shortly before the Munich Agreement in September 1938 – literally at the very last minute – he succeeded in fleeing to the U.S. together with his wife and son. During the crossing, the plan for a book with the working title *Dreams of a Better Life* developed. It was planned to be an encyclopedia of the wishes and ideals produced by social-utopian thinking.[8] Shortly after his arrival in the U.S., Bloch writes to Klaus Mann of the planned book, of which he says that it "should have the advantage of being quite American, but without dragging me away even one inch from the center of the most important matters."[9]

The fact that Bloch's planned book was to carry on the venture of utopian thinking that he had started in the *Spirit of Utopia* in 1918 made it possible for him to emphasize the continuity of his work to the extent to which he did. That it was also to become a 'quite American' book has to do with his sensitization to the potentials of the *American Dream* favored in his exile. This becomes clear when considering his lecture, "Disrupted Language – Disrupted Culture," which he delivered in New York at the German American Writers Association in January 1939, which was led at the time by Oskar Maria Graf. Various motifs from the planned work, provisionally titled *Dreams of a Better Life,* are directly

5 Bloch, Ernst, *Heritage of Our Times*, transl. Neville and Stephen Plaice, Berkeley, Los Angeles 1991, 135.

6 Ibid., 138.

7 See Weigand, Karlheinz, "Ernst Bloch," in: John S. Spalek/Konrad Feilchenfeldt/Sandra H. Hawrylchak (ed.), *Deutschsprachige Exilliteratur seit 1993: USA* 3, Bern, Munich 2000, 15–48, 15f.

8 See Münster, Arno, *Ernst Bloch. Eine politische Biographie*, Berlin, Vienna 2001, 220.

9 Bloch, *Briefe*, 646.

related to American history in this lecture. Bloch emphasizes America's status as a country of immigration in which an old principle applies: Who's here, is here, and has equal rights. America is called a pioneering capitalist country where the humanist tradition, which had been abandoned by the European fascist regimes, especially by National Socialist Germany, is still alive. Bloch emphasizes in particular the idea of education – the belief in the project of education, which, according to him, is taken more seriously by the American bourgeoisie than by nearly anyone else. Bloch sees the American ideal of freedom and the protection of humanity as being related to its founding ideology from the times of Washington and Jefferson. The great significance of human rights is, in Bloch's view, based on the memory of the American Declaration of Independence in the context of a bourgeois revolution that failed to appear in Germany. In the final passages of the lecture, it reads:

> But we too understand that, in contrast to Germany, America has had a bourgeois revolution; its national heroes are Washington and Lincoln, not Bismarck and the Great Elector. One speaks here, however formalistic, a kind of national idiom when one says liberty, equality, fraternity. And without blushing, one can call the policy of Roosevelt decent and worth striving for at the moment. [. . .] Dreams of a better life: that's after all the American main topic; and it has become akin to us Europeans like none other, and more geniuses as there are Muses would have to work on the American material, on the manifest of today, on the latent of tomorrow.[10]

In this passage, Bloch combines his own project for an encyclopedia of utopian concepts with American history and the American dream(s), which, as Bloch suggests, promise to provide extensive material for his project. The concluding, enthusiastic remark about America being "the generous land ever-ready for Utopias"[11] is to be understood in this sense.

Bloch sees the fate of the U.S. (in anticipation of Roosevelt's intervention in World War II) as closely tied to Europe's: "Europe is the field where many American problems are co-decided upon, Europe was

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10 Bloch, Ernst, "Zerstörte Sprache – Zerstörte Kultur," in: *Internationale Literatur* (Moscow) 9.6 (1939): 132–141, 140. There are different versions of this lecture, which deviate in interesting details. The American translation of the lecture was published under the title "Disrupted Language – Disrupted Culture," in: *Direction* 2 (1939) 8: *Exiled German Writers*, 16–17, 36; the definitive edition can be found in Bloch, Ernst, *Politische Messungen, Pestzeit, Vormärz*, Frankfurt/M. 1970, 277–299.

11 Bloch, "Disrupted Language," 36.

the origin of the previous world, it is the experimental site for the coming American ideology."[12] In this context, Bloch discusses the possibilities for action for emigrants in America. For him, the problem is foremost one of language, to which he dedicates a large part of his lecture. He distinguishes two principal types of immigrants. The first type, which he calls "instant Americans" ("Schnellamerikaner"), desires the total turn away from one's homeland and past, and even rejects the use of their native language; their hate of Germany has grown into self-hatred. The second type wants to retain his or her existence and consciousness (as conditioned by one's homeland and history), as if nothing had happened post-emigration (to the U.S.). As Bloch tries to answer the question of how one can rid oneself of the false radicalism of both attitudes, he returns to the topic of language. As Bloch says, every immigrant brings with them a language that conditions their life story and identity. Bloch sees this language endangered in two ways in American exile: in Germany, it is in danger of being suffocated; in the U.S. it is in danger of freezing. Bloch maintains that writers in particular are tied to their language in a way that makes them feel even more displaced in their new host country. Where emigration objectively ends, some subjectively feel their emigration to an even larger extent. Bloch confronts this difficulty with the (in his view, legitimate) expectation of the Americans that immigrants assimilate and not remain purely visitors and people in hibernation waiting out the problems at home.

> Since ancient times, America has established itself as a melting pot. May the walls and the main parts be just as Anglo-Saxon: the whole content remains fermenting and ready to alloy. America doesn't want to be just a mixture of different European nations; this quality has to be accepted. This fact yet pre-supposes that every emigrant brings something with him worth melting and capable of being melted.[13]

Thus, his leading question:

> How can we, as German writers, do our duty in a country with a different language? How can we make our living? This amounts, or should amount to the same thing as: How can we as refugees in a country of refuge find our place, keep our heads high, and fulfill our tasks?[14]

12 Bloch, *Politische Messungen*, 299.
13 Ibid., 298.
14 Bloch, "Disrupted Language," 16f.

In his lecture, Bloch opts for the project of mediation between European and American ideas. The German intellectual ought to serve as a teacher in America and blend his experiences into the host country's treasure of experiences.

Bloch answers in a similar way in 1942 in his reply to a survey conducted by the journal *Books Abroad*, which concerned the consequences of the unprecedented intellectual emigration from Europe for America. Here he persists with his opinion that the immigrant owes the host country collaboration so that "the current intellectual emigration can one day be compared with the one from after 1848."[15] He even goes a step further and sets out a historic example already used by Americans: just as Florence profited when scholars immigrated after the fall of Constantinople/Byzantine, America could profit from the new European cultural import.[16]

For Bloch himself, integration proved to be much more of a problem, and for many reasons. The first and primary cause of his problems was that of language, which was at the center of the New York lecture. When first setting foot on American ground, Bloch was already over 50 years old. Being a graduate of a classical *Gymnasium* from around 1900, he had studied Latin, Greek, and French; English hadn't yet achieved the standing of a global *lingua franca* that is for this reason learned as a first foreign language.[17] To manage as an emigrant in America, one has to master English perfectly. Bloch struggled with the language, all the more as he was convinced that he could express his philosophic thoughts adequately only in German. Yet American publishers characterized his German as "cryptic" and "untranslatable."[18] Bloch in turn viewed their requests for substantial cuts and more reader-friendly phrasing as an imposition.

That Bloch didn't succeed in gaining a foothold in the academy was related, among other things, to irreconcilable theoretic disagreements with the members of the Institute for Social Research led by Max Horkheimer, which, especially in the beginnings of exile, gave contracts and opportunities for work to many German emigrants, such as Franz Neumann, Otto Kirchheimer and Leo Löwenthal. The experience of National Socialism had torn the Left into two camps between which

15 Bloch, cited in Weigand, "Ernst Bloch," 21.
16 See ibid., 21f.
17 See ibid., 22.
18 See ibid., 24.

communication was hardly possible.[19] On one side, there were representatives such as Bertolt Brecht, György Lukács, or Bloch, who interpreted fascism mainly as a fraud of the masses and as a sign for the decline of capitalism. On the other side, were the representatives of the Frankfurt School, particularly Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, who, from the experience of fascism, drew the conclusion that one should reject the collectivist ideology of Marxism in favor of investigating anti-Semitism and the defense of the rights of the individual. In a letter to Horkheimer, Adorno writes in August 1940:

> I've finally come so far, and all the more under the weight of the latest news from Germany, that in no way I can shake the thought of the Jews' fate anymore. Often enough, I get the feeling that everything we were used to seeing in the complexion of the proletariat today has been transferred onto the Jews in a terrible concentration. I am beginning to question whether [. . .] the things we were actually trying to say should be said in connection with the Jews, who are the counterpoint to the concentration of power.[20]

Bloch's partisan favor of the Stalinist regime in the Soviet Union and his defense of the Moscow Trials in 1937 were watched with particular dismay by Horkheimer and Adorno; and both ultimately couldn't imagine working with Bloch anymore.

Last but not least, it was Bloch's dislike of the American way of life and the dominant empiricist mindset that made his assimilation even more difficult. Towards Thomas Mann, he eventually articulates his distaste in relation to America: "The country doesn't eat from the metaphysical jam."[21] To Bloch, who was interested in ideas and projects that transcended the given state of the world, the American pragmatism and its limitation to the given order were a horror. The dreams of a better life he often tracked turned out to be simply the fuel for advertisement. On the other hand, the problems with his attempt to describe New York's everyday life, which he aborted after a short time, show that it was hard for Bloch to perceive his environment without bias and in concrete

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19 See Lohmann, Hans-Martin, "Stalinismus und Linksintelligenz. Anmerkungen zur politischen Biographie Ernst Blochs während der Emigration," in: *Exil. Forschung, Erkenntnisse, Ergebnisse* 4.1 (1984): 71–74.

20 Horkheimer, Max, *Gesammelte Schriften* 16, ed. Alfred Schmidt/Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, Frankfurt/M. 1987–1996, 764.

21 Bloch, *Briefe*, 701.

detail. His view of America was often stuck in stereotypes of cultural critique; it was strongly influenced by novelists such as Karl May, Zane Grey, or Friedrich Gerstäcker. As his son Jan Robert Bloch later explained, for example, Bloch maintained the opinion that the Sioux Indians were pronounced Siuks Indians, even though in their own country, they are pronounced as "Suh" Indians.[22]

Literary critic Hans Mayer, a close friend of Bloch's, once formulated the latter's unworldliness towards his new environment as follows: "I always had my doubts whether he ever realized that people didn't speak German in Massachusetts."[23] The burden of providing for the family thus rested on his wife's shoulders, who, after temporary work as a waitress, an insurance agent, and a shop assistant, finally found a job which fit her qualifications, namely as an architect. Particularly in the first years of exile, the Blochs frequently lived at the edge of a subsistence-level existence and were dependent on the contributions of close friends. In retrospect, Bloch often idealized his situation; when describing the working period of his major work as a joyful experience: "I was happy of being able to write in German without being disturbed, a language that wasn't spoken and made banal all around me, a scientific and philosophic language."[24] Already here and later as well, Bloch praised the thinker's secret life: "It's wonderful to work and live unknown, unbothered by any kind of curiosity; fame is posthumous, it refers to the work, not the person." This ethereal reminiscence disregards the fact that Bloch's idea of freedom in exile was based on the reproduction of domination even in the realms of absolute privacy. Nevertheless, this self-assessment hits upon an important point, as Bloch also sees his desperate situation as a chance to live for his work without compromise. Despite the adverse circumstances, his working method has something of a utopia of un-alienated and self-determined work within it. The element of self-enthusiasm in his work is summarized quite nicely by Adorno, who described Bloch as someone who could warm himself using just his own thoughts. Bloch's unshakable optimism was also based on the expectation that his time was yet to come.

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22 Bloch, Jan Robert, "Dreams of a better Life. Zum Exil Ernst Blochs in den USA," in: Karlheinz Weigand (ed.), *Bloch-Almanach* 18, Ludwigshafen 1999, 109–131, 124.

23 Mayer, Hans, "Ernst Bloch, Utopie, Literatur," in: *Ernst Blochs Wirkung. Ein Arbeitsbuch zum 90. Geburtstag*, Frankfurt/M. 1975, 237–250, 245.

24 Ernst Bloch in conversation with José Marchand (1974), in: Arno Münster (ed.), *Tagträume vom aufrechten Gang. Sechs Interviews*, Frankfurt/M. 1977, 20–100, 70.

Bloch was always convinced that German fascism wouldn't last long, and thus he always saw his time in exile as an interim state. As he said in the New York lecture, he had done all his work "to further the goal of a different Germany and meet the circumstances crying out for change." Thus he always worked with regard to a return to Germany. His examinations of the *dreams of a better world,* that treasure-house of historical utopias, were completely dedicated to that aim.

Even though Bloch remained critical of the American Way of Life, it is obvious that much of the American spirit can be found in the book *Dreams of a Better Life.* The connection between utopianism and the American Dream is probably strongest with regard to the collective fantasies that were attached to the passion for new discoveries and the drive towards expansion. This point can be illustrated by the figure of Columbus, who occupies a key position in Bloch's book.[25] As the discoverer of the New World, Columbus is an archetype of utopian enterprises. According to Bloch, Columbus, like no one else, was inspired by the belief in an earthly paradise. He was a figure of transgression and saw himself as an instrument of destiny. This motif makes it possible to draw a connection to the philosophy of Hegel, which occupied a central position in Ernst Bloch's thinking. Bloch associates the motif of the thirst for discovery with that of liberation through active labor. For Bloch, Columbus is a Promethean figure, a Faustian character entirely filled with and driven by the idea of a universal liberation. The Blochian construction – to see scientific breakthroughs towards something new and never before seen, as kind of a shining-through of a different life underlies the traditional Marxist idea of a utopian potential in the forces of production, which, because of their bond to capitalist forms of property, has yet to be realized.

The American idiomatic expressions and quotations that Bloch cited in their original language in his German text constitute the most noticeable traces of exile: "There are no limitations in what you can do; think you can" or "Once you learn a few simple secrets, you will be amazed to find how ideas begin (fairly) pouring into your brain."[26] Those

25 See Riedel, Manfred, "Friedhof und Gedenkfest der Utopie. Ernst Bloch und Amerika," in: *Neue Deutsche Literatur* 42 (1994): 100–106; Dietschy, Beat, "Die Tücken des Entdeckens. Ernst Bloch, Kolumbus und die Neue Welt," in: Francesca Vidal (ed.), *Jahrbuch der Ernst-Bloch-Gesellschaft*, Ludwigshafen 1994, 234–250.

26 Bloch, Ernst, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* 2, Frankfurt/M. 1973, 795.

quotations, like other untranslated passages, point to readings that were based on the coincidences of fate in emigration, without which they hardly would have taken place. In the juxtaposition of Latin quotations, expressions that recall Hegel, and slogans from American bestsellers, Bloch not only captured an atmospheric impression of his existence in exile, but the decision to leave some passages from the American context unassimilated was also based on the recognition of a special potential of expression that risks getting lost in translation. The original quotations demonstrate Bloch's sensitivity for the connection of language and worldview with which he also justified his adherence to his own language in exile. For Bloch, the cited passages compress missionary elements, the language of advertisement, and motifs of psycho-technical self-management into positive, cheer-leading phrases that make an inimitable, rather than a not entirely translatable, imprint of the American pioneering spirit.

Bloch had worked on his magnum opus for many years before it was finally published under the name, *The Principle of Hope*. When, some years after the defeat of European fascism, the possibility of a return to Germany arose, Bloch actually continued working on his major book after his time in exile as if nothing had happened. When reading the book in light of a remark in a letter dating from the early phases of the project, one in which he describes his book as "quite American," many elements of the American Dream that Bloch greatly emphasized in the New York lecture from 1939 can be found. On the other hand, it cannot be denied that the book stands in the German philosophical tradition and breathes with the spirit of Hegel in particular. Beyond that, it must be mentioned that in later editions Bloch deleted the enthusiastic passages on the pioneering role of American democracy and the special affinity of American history and utopia; in his complete edition, for example, the sentence proclaiming that America is "the generous land, ever-ready for utopias" doesn't appear. Approximately two years before Bloch wrote that sentence, he had defended the Moscow Trials publicly in the exile journal *Die Neue Weltbühne*.

The contrast between his high hopes regarding the developments in the Soviet Union and his assessment of America as a fixed point for utopian thinking is obvious, but Bloch never reflected on it – just as he never reflected on the inconsistency of his having emigrated to the U.S. and not to the Soviet Union, the country to which he felt politically committed. That he was correct in doing so can be demonstrated by the fact that the many left-wing intellectuals who had sought refuge from the Nazis in the Soviet Union were then killed in the Stalinist camps.

The way for Bloch's return from exile was paved in the correspondence of the two Romance scholars Erich Auerbach and Werner Krauss. In a letter to Auerbach, Krauss writes he is "deeply"[27] touched by Auerbach's mention of Bloch and wants to recruit him for a chair at Leipzig University. Informed by his experience with Herbert Marcuse, who had quickly turned down such an offer,[28] Krauss now thinks that the offer is "in urgent need of prior consideration." Auerbach, who, like Bloch and Marcuse, had fled from the National Socialists and emigrated from Turkey to the U.S. in 1947, points to potential difficulties ("Nothing forces him to leave") and recommends to "put the nomination in a somewhat humane form, so that he feels cordially invited – he is filled with warmth and very sensitive to human cordiality."[29]

The letter from Krauss to Bloch must be considered lost, but excerpts remain in a letter from Bloch to his friend Joachim Schumacher. There, Krauss's request is quoted in the following words:

> I don't know if you know how many thoughts circle around you in Germany. Anyway, I made myself the interpreter of these wishes directed at you with a tremendous enthusiasm. That is, we all are convinced that the vacant philosophy chair would have to be occupied by you. The age-old hostility between creative spirit and academism is completely sublated due to the particular situation of the local universities [. . .] You would have unlimited freedom, of course. For the only thing that could lead you to considering this project is the joint appointment and the chance, probably never found before, to work completely on your own. This is to say, two faculties, the philosophical and the social-scientific, stand behind me, which both save a chair for you, while you would not have to divide yourself. The social-scientific faculty is set up as the crystallization point of the new university [. . .] As it were, all your conceivable demands are met in advance.[30]

"A bullet came a-flying from my homeland towards me"[31] – with these words, Bloch describes his reception of the unexpected news. In his reply

27 Letter from Werner Krauss to Erich Auerbach, November 25, 1947, in: Krauss, Werner, *Briefe* 1922–1976, ed. Peter Jehle, Frankfurt/M. 2002, 389.

28 See letter from Herbert Marcuse to Werner Krauss, November 28, 1947, in: Krauss, *Briefe*, 390f.

29 Letter from Erich Auerbach to Werner Krauss, January 2, 1948, in: Krauss, *Briefe*, 403.

30 Letter from Ernst Bloch to Joachim Schumacher, February 15, 1948, in: Bloch, *Briefe* 2, 591.

31 Ibid.

to Krauss, Bloch opens with his agreement, in principle, to take on the professorial chair. Another letter, addressed to Schumacher and written nine months earlier, documents that this reply was far from being without alternative.

> Perhaps I will need to be in Europe next spring and summer for proofreading. I am saying: Europe, not Germany. More precisely, I am saying: Paris. Up to now, I can't seem to get the horror of my birth country out of my bones; of the land where my language no longer sounds (to put it euphemistically).[32]

In his reply to Krauss, one finds no such reservations. It is only at the end of the letter that Bloch talks of the political and societal situation in Germany. In this context, Bloch also touches the subject of anti-Semitism and, in a way, answers the question himself: "With the students of labor party, that is of course out of the question, but what about the other ones and the milieu around them?"[33]

Bloch always saw National Socialism, from which he had fled to America, as a manipulation of the working class. This assumption of its instrumentalism made his decision to return much easier for him than for other intellectuals who saw the working class as an integral part of the National Socialist "*Volksgemeinschaft*." It corresponds to Bloch's mostly unbroken continuance of socialist theoretical traditions. After his return from American exile, and under the political conditions of the eastern bloc countries, Bloch saw the Soviet Union as representative of the better way, just as he did in the time before the emigration to the U.S. This background is important for an understanding of some of the decisions the philosopher made throughout his life. For example, he was the one who chose to go from American exile to the newly founded GDR in 1949. In *The Principle of Hope,* he writes: "Everything that is non-illusory, real-possible about the hope-images leads to Marx, works [. . .] as part of socialist changing of the world."[34] Bloch wanted to contribute to this project and thus followed the call of the GDR officials, moved to the Soviet Occupation Zone, and became a professor of philosophy at Leipzig University at the age of 64. The Eastern bloc's state bureaucracy, however, soon appeared to lack the receptivity and openness that Bloch had

32 Ibid., 587.

33 Letter from Ernst Bloch to Werner Krauss, February 20, 1948, in: Krauss, *Briefe*, 422f.

34 Bloch, Ernst, *The Principle of Hope* 1, Cambridge 1995, 17.

praised during his exile in the U.S. When, encouraged by Krushchev's "Secret Speech," he criticized the crushing of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 by Soviet troops and demanded the academic freedom that Krauss had promised him under the slogan "It's got to be played as chess instead of nine men's morris now," he fell from grace. Despite the "natural loyalty to the Soviet Union" he pledged, as he wrote in an open letter to the leadership of the state party in January 1957, and which he had kept "even in times of the Moscow Trials," the emeritus status was compulsorily conferred on him and he was officially and deliberately isolated. When, during a stay in Western Germany, he was surprised by the construction of the Berlin Wall, he decided to stay in the West.

There he became, at 76 years of age, a visiting professor at Tübingen University. Posterity will mainly remember him for his extensive book, *The Principle of Hope,* which he had written during his American exile. With some historical distance it becomes evident what critical contemporaries had already established: namely that *The Principle of Hope* was also a document of the despair of history and an escape from it – a historical materialism with closed eyes. In Bloch's thinking one senses nothing of the catastrophes of history or the shaking of traditional philosophical categories that, for example, Hannah Arendt and Theodor W. Adorno made the subject of their philosophy. "I will continue as if nothing had happened" – this sentence from the letter to Hermann Broch contains both Bloch's political will not to give up on the belief in the possibility of a different organization of society, and the stubbornness with which he stuck to a philosophical conception that had lost its illuminating and critical vigor.

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Bertolt Brecht, Joseph Losey, and Brechtian Cinema

Robert Cohen

Let me begin by evading the question of what might constitute a Brechtian Cinema. Instead, and as a way of approaching the topic obliquely, I will ask the easier question of who is considered or considers himself or herself a Brechtian filmmaker. This narrative begins in the mid-1950s when the Berliner Ensemble presented Brecht's own staging of *Mother Courage, The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, and *The Mother* in Paris. Among the spectators were Roland Barthes and Bernard Dort, friends and co-editors of the journal *Théâtre populaire*.[1] With their enthusiastic reviews and essays, some of them written together, they laid the groundwork for Brecht's international fame. Picking up on the title of one of Barthes's essays, "Les taches de la critique brechtienne," Dort wrote an article entitled "Pour une critique Brechtienne du cinéma." It was published in December of 1960 in *Cahiers du cinéma*,[2] self-proclaimed cradle ("berceau"[3]) of the New Wave, in an issue dedicated to Brecht. In the same issue, the critic Louis Marcorelles deplored the fact that the young directors of the *nouvelle vague* – he specifically mentions Jean-Luc Godard – ignored Brecht and his revolutionizing work in the theatre.[4] Within a few years some of those new directors, foremost among them Godard himself, would become – and remain to this day – the ultimate Brechtian filmmakers. It was through their films and thus via the New Wave that Brechtian Cinema arrived in West Germany,[5] where it would be

1 See Meyer-Plantureux, Chantal, *Bernard Dort: Un intellectuel singulier*, Paris 2000, 95f. and 104ff.

2 Dort, Bernard, "Pour une critique brechtienne du cinéma," in: *Cahiers du cinéma* 19.114 (1960): 33–43.

3 Marcorelles, Louis, "D'un art modern," in: ibid., 44–53, 44.

4 Ibid., 44f.

5 See Brady, Martin, "Brecht and Film," in: Peter Thomson/Glendyr Sacks (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Brecht*, Cambridge ²2006, 297–317, 309.

associated with directors such as Alexander Kluge, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, and Volker Schlöndorff, as well as with Margarete von Trotta, Helma Sanders-Brahms, and Helke Sander[6] (directors from the German Democratic Republic rarely appear in these lists). Italian filmmakers may include Francesco Rosi, Bernardo Bertolucci, and the Taviani brothers.[7] As for Great Britain, Brady's essay in *The Cambridge Companion to Brecht* does not mention any British filmmakers. Brechtian film directors from the United States? It seems almost foolish to even ask. So let's look at Great Britain and the United States.

In the 1960s and 1970s, there appeared in England a series of masterful films including *The Servant* (1963), *Accident* (1967), and *The Go-Between* (1971), which won the *Palme d'Or* at Cannes. These films seemed – and still seem today – quintessentially British. This may be due in part to the fact that Harold Pinter wrote the screenplays (though none of them were based on his plays). While 'quintessentially British' can suggest many things, from a particular type of humor to afternoon tea, in these films it refers to a complex and subtle rendition of class relations in British society. As it turns out the director, Joseph Losey, was as American as apple pie. He was born in La Crosse, Wisconsin, in 1909. From the 1950s onward, he lived and worked in Europe as a political exile.[8] *Cahiers du cinéma* had recognized Losey's stature as a film director even before his series of British masterpieces. In September of 1960, it dedicated an issue to him (no. 111). A mere three months later the issue on Brecht appeared. It included an essay on Brecht by Losey.[9] For the man from Wisconsin was in many ways the most Brechtian film director of all. He certainly was the only one who knew Brecht

6 See Möhrmann, Renate, "The Influence of Brecht on Women's Cinema in West Germany," in: Pia Kleber/Colin Visser (ed.), *Re-Interpreting Brecht: His Influence on Contemporary Drama and Film*, Cambridge 1990, 161–169.

7 See Elsaesser, Thomas, "From Anti-Illusionism to Hyper-Realism: Bertolt Brecht and Contemporary Film," in: Pia Kleber/Colin Visser (ed.), *Re-Interpreting Brecht: His Influence on Contemporary Drama and Film*, Cambridge 1990, 170–185, 170.

8 There are two book-length interviews with Losey: Milne, Tom, *Losey on Losey*, Garden City 1968; and Ciment, Michel, *Conversations with Losey*, London, New York 1985. For monographs see Ledieu, Christian, *Joseph Losey*, Paris 1963; Rissient, Pierre, *Losey*, Paris 1966; Leahy, James, *The Cinema of Joseph Losey*, London, New York 1967; Hirsch, Foster, *Joseph Losey*, Boston 1980; de Rham, Edith, *Joseph Losey*, London 1991. See also the extensive if rather ill humored biography by Caute, David, *Joseph Losey. A Revenge on Life*, New York 1994.

9 See Losey, Joseph, "L'oeil du maître," in: *Cahiers du cinéma* 19.114 (1960): 21–32.

and had worked with him (other than Slatan Dudow, director of *Kuhle Wampe*). But by the end of the 1960s Godard, Jean-Marie Straub and others had become everyone's Brechtian directors *par excellence* while Losey had disappeared from the lists of Brechtian filmmakers.[10]

I. Brecht and Losey

Losey received his BA at Dartmouth College, where he joined the Dartmouth drama club and became its student director. He spent a year at the Harvard Graduate School of Arts and Sciences studying literature and drama. His socialist engagement dates from this time. He began his professional career in New York writing theatre reviews, working as a stage manager, and eventually as a director. In the spring of 1935, he traveled to the Soviet Union to study and work in the Soviet theatre. On his way to Moscow he stayed with the Finnish playwright Hella Wuolijoki. A few years later she would take in the refugee Bertolt Brecht and his family, and her work would furnish the material on which Brecht based his play *Mr. Puntila and His Man Matti*. While in Moscow Losey met Russian theatre director Vsevolod Meyerhold, and German exile Erwin Piscator, whose *Das politische Theater* he translated,[11] and went to film classes taught by Sergei Eisenstein.[12] The theatre director who stood out for Losey, however, was Nikolai Okhlopkov (1900–1967).[13] He met and befriended the Soviet director the day after he arrived in Moscow and that same evening saw a staging of Gorky's *The Mother* at Okhlopkov's Realistic Theatre. In a letter from Moscow to Hella Wuolijoki, Losey describes Okhlopkov's work as "the most exciting theatre I have ever

10 There is, for example, no mention of Losey in Mueller, Roswitha, *Bertolt Brecht and the Theory of Media*, Lincoln 1989; Elsaesser, "From Anti-Illusionism to Hyper-Realism;" Brady, "Brecht and Film" (Losey mentioned only as director of 1947 stage production of *Galileo*); Brady, Martin, "Brecht in Brechtian Cinema," in: Robert Gillett/Godela Weiss-Sussex (ed.), *"Verwisch die Spuren!" Bertolt Brecht's Work and Legacy. A Reassesment*, Amsterdam, New York 2008, 295–308.

11 See Losey, Joseph, "The Individual Eye," in: *Encore. The Voice of Vital Theatre* 8.2 (1961): 5–15, 11.

12 See Ciment, *Conversations with Losey*, 37.

13 On Okhlopkov, see Worrall, Nick, *Modernism to Realism on the Soviet Stage: Tairov-Vakhtangov-Okhlopkov*, Cambridge 1989.

seen."[14] Years later, in his book-length interview with French film scholar Michel Ciment, Losey would recall the unusual architecture of Okhlopkov's stage, which was adapted to the Soviet director's "technique of using the audience and involving them in the production."[15] There was another observer in Moscow who was just as interested in Okhlopkov. Brecht had arrived in the Soviet capital on March 14, 1935, almost on the same day as Losey. He, too, befriended Okhlopkov and he, too, noted the Soviet director's anti-illusionist concept of involving the audience by seating spectators on the stage.[16] Brecht considered Okhlopkov his main ally among Soviet directors. He would later list Okhlopkov, along with Sergei Eisenstein and Sergei Tretyakov, as the Soviet representatives of an international theatre society he planned under the name Diderot Society.[17]

Losey's letters from Moscow to Hella Wuolijoki do not mention Brecht. This may simply be due to the fact that up to then neither Losey nor Wuolijoki had been aware of Brecht's work. In later years, Losey repeatedly recalled meeting Brecht in Moscow.[18] Losey had gone on a speaking tour through the Ukraine. Among his traveling group of foreign visitors was German writer Ernst Ottwalt,[19] who had worked with Brecht on the screenplay of *Kuhle Wampe*.[20] Ottwalt was staying at the same Hotel in Moscow as Brecht.[21] It seems more than likely that he would have introduced the American to Brecht, all the more so as Brecht was planning to go to New York at the end of that year. Brecht left Moscow in the middle of May. Soon thereafter Hanns Eisler arrived[22] and he, too, met Losey. During the exile years in the United States it would be Eisler, rather than Brecht, who stayed in touch with Losey.

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14 Losey's letter of March 16, 1935, Hella Wuolijoki Archive (HWA), National Archives of Finland.

15 Ciment, *Conversations with Losey*, 37; see also Worrall, *Modernism to Realism*, 155f.

16 See Brecht, Bertolt, *Werke. Großе kommentierte Berliner und Frankfurter Ausgabe* (BFA), ed. Werner Hecht et al., 30 vols., Berlin, Frankfurt/M. 1987–2000, 22.1, 541; see also BFA 29, 581–82.

17 See Brecht, BFA 22.2, 987ff.

18 See Losey, "The Individual Eye," 11; see Ciment, *Conversations with Losey*, 38.

19 See Ciment, *Conversations with Losey*, 37f.

20 On Ottwalt, see Cohen, Robert, "Die gefährliche Ästhetik Ernst Ottwalts," in: *The German Quarterly* 61 (1988): 229–248.

21 See Brecht, BFA 28, 496.

22 My thanks to Werner Hecht and Jürgen Schebera for providing me with this date.

As is well known, Brecht and Eisler experienced the staging of Brecht's adaptation of Gorky's novel *The Mother* in New York as a disaster. Brecht, on his first trip to the United States, arrived from his Danish exile on October 15, 1935. *The Mother*, as staged by the Theatre Union, a working class ensemble, opened on November 19 at the Civic Repertory Theatre on 14th Street and 6th Avenue.[23] Losey was not involved in the production. In a letter to Wuolijoki, he noted the inadequacy of the staging: "The production here did not have much idea as to what the play [*The Mother*] was about."[24] He also mentions, "trying to arrange production of Brecht's new play" which very likely refers to *The Round Heads and the Pointed Heads*.[25] By then Losey was centrally involved in the creation of the Living Newspaper, a unit of the Federal Theater Project established under the New Deal. The FTP was intended to put thousands of out-of-work theatre professionals and journalists back to work. Its audience was to be made up of the impoverished workers of the Great Depression. They were to be entertained with critical and satirical investigations of current events. The performances consisted of a montage of short scenes that were frequently based on newspaper and magazine articles and other news sources. The Living Newspaper has been characterized as belonging to "a materialist tradition within modern drama," associated with "Brecht, Erwin Piscator, and Vsevolod Meyerhold."[26] Losey himself has acknowledged the importance, for the Living Newspaper, of his encounters with Okhlopkov, Meyerhold, and Brecht.[27] It was anti-illusionist theatre using "circus, variety, ballet, projection, music," as well as "highly filmic devices."[28] Losey staged the two most memorable programs of the Living Newspaper, *Triple A Plowed Under* and *Injunction Granted*. In retrospect he noted, somewhat incongruously, "This was Brechtian theatre but I didn't know it." He added, "Brecht saw it and loved it."[29] Brecht most likely saw a rehearsal of *Triple A Plowed Under*. When the play opened on May 14, 1936 at the Biltmore Theatre on

23 See Hecht, Werner, *Brecht Chronik 1898–1956*, Frankfurt/M. 1997, 465.
24 Losey's letter of December 6, 1935, HWA.
25 Ibid. See also Houseman, John, *Front and Center*, New York 1979, 228; and Brecht, BFA 28, 532, 537.
26 Cosgrove, Stuart, "Introduction," in: *Liberty Deferred and Other Living Newspapers of the 1930s: Federal Theatre Project*, ed. Lorraine Brown, Fairfax 1989, x.
27 See Ciment, *Conversations with Losey*, 42.
28 Losey, "The Individual Eye," 11.
29 Ibid.

Broadway, Brecht had already returned to Europe. *Injunction Granted* was closed down prematurely in October of that year because it was considered "outright Communist propaganda."[30] Losey had become a target of political attacks for his association with union militants and communists and because of his visit to the Soviet Union. After his departure the Living Newspaper moved away from its innovative, aesthetically and politically radical positions.[31]

After Brecht's visit to New York and up to the end of the war there seems to have been no contact between Brecht and Losey. Losey continued to work in the theatre, staging plays and working with union supported-theatres and left-wing avant-garde groups.[32] In the late 1930s, he began directing short films. Two of these – an animated puppet film commissioned for the 1939 World's Fair in New York entitled *Pete Roleum and his Cousins* (1939), and *A Child Went Forth* (1940) – had musical scores by Eisler.[33] In the fall of 1939, Eisler was being considered for a teaching appointment at the New School for Social Research. Losey contacted the Rockefeller Foundation about a grant for the composer. This led to an investigation not only of Eisler's but also of Losey's communist connections. Both were able to dispel these suspicions even though, as Losey pointed out years later, this was his Stalinist period.[34] The New School eventually received a two-year grant for Eisler to do "experimental studies of music in film production." All this was brought out during Eisler's appearance before the House Committee on Un-American Activities in September of 1947 where Losey's letter of support was read into the record.[35] Losey intervened a second time in support of Eisler. The composer, having spent part of 1939 in Mexico, found it difficult to get a permanent visa for the United States. Losey and other film directors (George Cukor, William Dieterle), as well as playwright Clifford Odets wrote letters to the authorities on his behalf. Pointing to

30 Ciment, *Conversations with Losey*, 52.

31 See Cosgrove, "Introduction," xiv–xv.

32 See Milne, *Losey on Losey*, 97ff.; see Ciment, *Conversations with Losey*, 42ff.

33 See Eisler, Hanns, "Meine Tätigkeit als Filmkomponist" (1939), in: id., *Musik und Politik. Schriften 1924–1948*, ed. Günter Mayer, Leipzig 21985, 436–440, 437; see Schebera, Jürgen, *Hanns Eisler im USA-Exil*, Berlin 1978, 70.

34 See Ciment, *Conversations with Losey*, 317ff.

35 See *Hearings regarding Hanns Eisler. Hearings before the Committee on Un-American Activities. House of Representatives. Eightieth Congress. First Session, Public Law 601 (Section 121, Subsection Q (2)). Sept. 24, 25, and 26, 1947*, Washington 1947, 84–85. Losey's letter dated September 26, 1939.

Eisler's international renown as a composer and conductor and to his composition for *Pete Roleum*, Losey wrote, "Eisler's work on film scores put[s] him among the two or three foremost musicians in this field."[36] This letter, incidentally, is also mentioned in Losey's FBI file,[37] which, if nothing else, points to the close co-operation between the FBI and the HUAC.

Brecht arrived for a second time in the United States on July 21, 1941, in San Pedro, a port district of Los Angeles. In December of 1943, Losey also moved to Hollywood, where he initially stayed with Hanns and Lou Eisler, a fact that is repeated ad nauseam in Losey's FBI files.[38] In March 1944 Brecht met the actor Charles Laughton. In December they began work on an English version of *Leben des Galilei* which they finished at the end of July 1945 and substantially revised after the U.S. dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima. Among the directors considered for the staging of the play, now titled *Galileo*, were Orson Welles,[39] and Elia Kazan.[40] Brecht was fully aware of Welles's genius but eventually rejected him for his unreliability and out of fear that Welles would turn the production into a gigantic project. Brecht and Laughton eventually settled on Losey.

II. The Galileo Project

A first indication that Losey would be the director of *Galileo* can be found in a letter of August 1946 from Brecht to his American friend Ferdinand Reyher.[41] Losey also dates the beginning of their collaboration around that time.[42] He already knew Laughton, having as a young man worked as stage manager for the actor both in London and New York.[43] On September 17, 1946, the FBI noted Losey's return from Hollywood to the East Coast: "[T]he subject is devoting his efforts

36 See *Hearings*, 138. Losey's letter dated January 23, 1940.
37 See FBI file on Losey, # 100–8587, 2, 138, document dated July 24, 1953.
38 See FBI file on Losey, # 100–343468, 3, document dated October 10, 1945 et al.
39 See Hecht, Werner, *Brecht Chronik. Ergänzungen*, Frankfurt/M. 2007, 53ff.
40 See Brecht, BFA 29, 385.
41 See ibid., 395.
42 See Losey's letter of January 7, 1947, HWA. In dating the beginning of their collaboration Losey refers to Wuolijoki's last letter which is dated July 19, 1946. My thanks to Hans Peter Neureuter for providing me with a copy of Wuolijoki's letter.
43 See Milne, *Losey on Losey*, 97f.; see Ciment, *Conversations with Losey*, 30f.

towards the production of a play and does not appear to be engaged in subversive activities."[44] Another FBI document, dated December 12, 1946, notes: "Subject in constant contact with BERTOLDT BRECHT, author of play; HANNS EISLER, composer of the score; and CHARLES LAUGHTON, actor."[45] Mind-numbingly dull, unreliable, and error-ridden, the FBI files form an inescapable historical backdrop to this narrative. The collaboration between Brecht and Losey lasted many months. In February 1947, Brecht noted with reference to *Galileo*: "We have been working throughout the winter with Joe Losey on the staging."[46] Moving back and forth between New York – where Losey at times stayed in the apartment of Brecht's collaborator and lover Ruth Berlau[47] – and Los Angeles, Brecht and Losey eventually settled down in Los Angeles for the rehearsals of *Galileo*. The play premiered on July 30, 1947, at the Coronet Theatre in Beverly Hills in what was to be a trial run for New York. It attracted much critical attention, not least because of Laughton's performance.[48] Brecht never got to see the New York opening. He left Los Angeles on October 16 for his sixth and final trip to New York. From there he went on to Washington, accompanied only by Losey and by one of the producers of *Galileo*, T. Edward Hambleton.[49] On October 30, he appeared before the HUAC. The following day he left for Paris.

Just before he went with Brecht to Washington, Losey staged a protest rally in Los Angeles to raise money for the defense of the so-called Hollywood Nineteen whose names had been given to the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC).[50] The Nineteen thanked Losey and praised him for "the common defense of our constitution

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44 FBI file on Losey, # 100–343468, 67, document dated November 15, 1946.

45 Ibid., 79. Document dated December 12, 1946, original spelling.

46 Brecht, BFA 29, 411 (my translation); see also Losey, "The Individual Eye," 5.

47 See Losey, "The Individual Eye," 13; see Brecht, BFA 29, 413.

48 See Lyon, James K., *Bertolt Brecht in America*, Princeton 1980, 195ff.

49 See Losey, "The Individual Eye," 12; see Ciment, *Conversations with Losey*, 68–70.

50 In the spring of 1947, the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) interviewed fortyone so-called friendly witnesses from the film industry. These witnesses named nineteen people, one of them Brecht, who came to be called the Hollywood Nineteen. Eleven of the Nineteen were eventually called to testify. The ten Americans refused to cooperate and went to jail. They are known as the Hollywood Ten. Brecht gave testimony. See Navasky, Victor S., *Naming Names*, New York 1980, 78ff.; see also Brecht, Bertolt, "Wir Neunzehn," BFA 23, 123–125.

and our industry." The document is signed by nearly all of the Nineteen, among them the only one who was not American: Bertolt Brecht.[51]

On December 7, *Galileo* opened for six performances at the Maxine Elliott Theatre on 109 West 39th Street. It was presented under the sponsorship of the American National Theater and Academy (ANTA), yet another non-profit project created under the New Deal. It was enthusiastically received among progressive and leftist circles – though Brecht, in Switzerland, noted mostly the grumpy ("*übellaunig*")[52] reaction of the cultural establishment.

Scholarship on *Galileo* refers to Joseph Losey as the director of the U.S. productions of 1947. This is usually followed by the qualification that it was really Brecht who directed. In his monograph of 1978 on Brecht and Ferdinand Reyher, James Lyon quotes from a letter from Reyher to Brecht on choosing a director for the play: "My feeling," Reyher writes, "is that unless you find a director who is intelligent, modern and has the instinct of collaboration, you are better off with a pliable fellow who is on the make and on the learn."[53] Picking up on the second half of this sentence, Lyon characterizes Losey as precisely this kind of "young man."[54] Elsewhere Lyon refers to Losey as "director in name" only and as Brecht's "mouthpiece."[55] These characterizations have left their mark on Brecht scholarship in which Losey is dismissed as "the token director."[56] It is the first part of Reyher's sentence, however ("intelligent, modern [. . .] instinct of collaboration"), which more accurately describes Losey. At thirty-eight he was by no means a "young man," and he had almost twenty years of experience in every aspect of theatrical production. Lyon acknowledges this in his observation that Losey "more than any single person was responsible for *Galileo* finally being produced in the United

51 See document published in Ciment, *Conversations with Losey*, 127.

52 See Brecht, BFA 27, 256.

53 Lyon, James K., *Bertolt Brecht's American Cicerone. With an Appendix Containing the Complete Correspondence between Bertolt Brecht and Ferdinand Reyher*, Bonn 1978, 194f.

54 Ibid., 112.

55 Lyon, *Brecht in America*, 185; see also the disdainful remarks on Losey by Ruth Berlau, in: Berlau, Ruth, *Brechts Lai-tu. Erinnerungen und Notate von Ruth Berlau*, ed. Hans Bunge, Darmstadt, Neuwied 21985, 198f.

56 Bahr, Ehrhard, "The Dialectic of Modern Science: Brecht's *Galileo*," in: id., *Weimar on the Pacific: German Exile Culture in Los Angeles and the Crisis of Modernism*, Berkeley 2007, 105–128, 122.

States."[57] The praise, however, refers to Losey's contribution as producer, rather than to his creative input as director.

Brecht was undoubtedly the creative center of the enterprise. In trying to convey to Hella Wuolijoki what the collaboration with Brecht meant to him, Losey seems almost overwhelmed. "Yes I see him," he writes, referring to Brecht, "Yes I live by him." And a little further on, "Working with Brecht has spoiled me for any other theatre,"[58] a sentiment that is repeated in Losey's letters to Brecht.[59] Of *Galileo* Losey notes, "It is such a great play, so clean and clear and architectural." It is, he adds, "what I have worked for and prepared for all my life."[60]

To get a sense of Losey's own contribution one needs to look at the staging of the play in New York in November and December of 1947, and the detailed accounts Losey sent to Brecht. The New York production differed significantly from the staging in Los Angeles, a fact that has been little noticed. Almost all of the parts had to be recast. Losey lists for Brecht the new actors, describes their strengths and weaknesses and explains how, with the help of Laughton, he will get good performances from them. Based on notes Brecht left behind, the text was revised by George Tabori.[61] (Tabori later collaborated with Losey on several film scripts.) Scene 13, the final scene in the English version, went through numerous rewrites of which Brecht was kept informed.[62] Losey is concerned with improving the lighting and the costumes from the staging in Beverly Hills.[63] About Laughton's performance there is this beautifully formulated vignette: "He [Laughton] is working well and nobly and so far courageously. The chances he is taking necessarily become clearer to him every day and there is no sign of weakness. He is touched and encouraged by your [Brecht's] notes."[64] – One of the few extant letters from Brecht

57 Lyon, *American Cicerone*, 112; see also Lyon, *Brecht in America*, 185f.

58 Losey's letter of January 7, 1947, HWA.

59 "I terribly miss working with you," in: Losey's letter of May 19, 1948, BBA 1762/096; "I deeply miss working with you," in: Losey's letter of November 19, 1949, BBA 973/07.

60 Losey's letter to Hella Wuolijoki, January 7, 1947, HWA.

61 See Losey, "The Individual Eye," 8; see Ciment, *Conversations with Losey*, 284; see Tabori, George, "Brecht Files. In Conversation with Martin Kagel (and Nikolaus Merck)," in: *The Brecht Yearbook* 23 (1998): 70–75, 71.

62 See Losey's letters of November 16, 1947, BBA 3129; December 10, 1947, BBA 1762/87; and December 19, 1947, BBA 1762/90.

63 See Losey's letter of November 12, 1947, BBA 3128.

64 Losey's letter of November 16, 1947, BBA 3129.

to Losey – preserved in the Losey collection of the British Film Institute – expresses confidence that "the basic content of the play, the *treason* of Galileo, will come out even clearer in N.Y."[65]

While *Galileo* was still in its run, Losey gave Brecht a strikingly objective evaluation of everyone's work. The letter is valuable not just because it shows the extent to which Losey was in control, but also because it provides an insight into an experienced director's perspective on staging Brecht's play. Losey begins with an overall assessment of the production: "I am very well satisfied with the result, though next time we can improve it still."[66] He explains cuts in the dialogue as well as places where cuts from the Beverly Hills performance had been restored. He notes that scene 10 "is not quite right yet – neither in the writing nor the playing." He describes cuts in the music. He assesses the actors: "Generally speaking the cast is much much better than [in] Hollywood." Much of the letter is devoted to Laughton. "His performance is incomparably better. Excepting for the last scene all his neuroticism and restlessness is gone. No head or ball scratching, no pockets, very little mugging." In responding to Brecht's suggestion that the treasonous aspect of Galileo's recanting be made clearer, Losey observes that "for the very first time it is intelligible in Charles['s] performance. Both the betrayal and the tragedy are clear." About Laughton's delivery of a particular line Losey writes, "He does it with a kind of cry of anguish that is almost unendurable when seen as well as heard." The director notes that, while he disagrees with certain cuts apparently made by Laughton, his overriding concern is "nourishing and protecting Charles['s] performance." He describes at some length changes in the staging of the opening scene. He has Laughton enter the stage from the audience "with the house lights still on." He then has him speak the motto of the play ("It is my opinion that the earth is very noble [. . .]"[67]). There follows more stage business before the curtain finally goes up. The aim of this opening is "to relax the audience, state that it is [in] a theatre, give Charles a chance to get over any strangeness with the audience."

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65 Undated and unpublished letter from the end of November, 1947 (original emphasis). Reference to this letter in Brecht, BFA 29, 427 and 433. My thanks to the British Film Insitute for making a copy of Brecht's letter available.

66 This and the following quotes from Losey's letter of December 10, 1947, BBA 1762/87–88.

67 Brecht, BFA 5, 117.

In the weeks and months that followed the presentation of *Galileo* in New York Losey tried in vain to get the play produced commercially on Broadway. Only weeks after the New York production of *Galileo* he started shooting *The Boy with Green Hair*, his first and in some ways his most Brechtian feature film. There followed four more films in Hollywood, among them a remake of Fritz Lang's *M* (1951). In 1946, Losey had joined the Communist Party (he left it a year or so later).[68] From that point on he was under microphone surveillance by the FBI.[69] In March of 1951, the HUAC inquisition into Hollywood, which had come to an abrupt halt after Brecht's appearance three and a half years before, resumed. According to Losey's FBI file, a subpoena was sent to Los Angeles on June 13, requesting the director to appear on July 19. The following observation in the file appears ludicrous in its reliance on what the gardener said but is ultimately heart wrenching: "The subpoena was returned by the deputy U.S. Marshall with the notice that he had been informed by the LOSEY gardener that JOSEPH LOSEY left town on July 17th, 1951 for an unknown destination and that his wife was headed for Mexico."[70]

It took Losey a decade to re-establish himself as a film director in Europe. He made several films under various aliases. *The Criminal* (1961) showed him back at the top of his craft, and in 1963 he directed Dirk Bogarde in *The Servant*, the first of his series of British masterpieces. He went on to direct Jeanne Moreau in *Eve* (1962), Monica Vitti in *Modesty Blaise* (1966), Elizabeth Taylor in *Boom!* (1968) and *Secret Ceremony* (1968), and Richard Burton, Alain Delon, and Romy Schneider in *The Assassination of Trotsky* (1972). He made films of Ibsen's *A Doll's House* – with Jane Fonda (1973) – and of *Don Giovanni* (1979). He went back to the United States repeatedly but never again directed a film there. He died in his London exile in 1984.

Losey never gave up on doing *Galileo* again, either on stage or on film. The project is the topic of most of his letters to Brecht and Helene Weigel.[71] In the early 1960s, he went to see Weigel in East Berlin in order

68 Losey's declaration in the FBI file on Losey, # 100–343468, 230, document dated May 11, 1956.

69 Ibid., 76, document dated November 8, 1946; ibid. 89, document dated January 13, 1947.

70 FBI file # 100–8587, 2, 139, document dated July 24, 1953.

71 See Losey's letters to Brecht of May 19, 1948, BBA 1762/096; and August 6, 1948, BBA 1762/109. See also Losey's letter to Helene Weigel of July 24,

to get permission to make a film of the play. At the time it was not forthcoming.[72] More than twenty-five years after working with Brecht Losey finally got to make *Galileo* into a film. Just like its director this film has been largely ignored by scholarship on Brechtian Cinema.[73]

Galileo was shot in England in 1974 with Chaim Topol (of *Fiddler on the Roof* fame) in the title role. The dialogue generally follows Laughton's English version as reproduced in the Brecht edition, but there are also numerous changes, cuts and additions, which suggest that the script is likely a composite of various extant translations.[74] The film also appears to follow closely Brecht and Losey's staging of 1947. It is, however, not a filmed stage play but rather a play directed for the camera. Martin Walsh, the brilliant British scholar of Brecht and film who died at the age of thirty in 1977, praised the fluidity of Losey's camera work. He compared the "expressionistic" treatment of some of the scenes to Eisenstein's *Ivan the Terrible*.[75] The scene Walsh specifically refers to shows Galileo's pupils waiting for the outcome of his hearing before the inquisition (the parallel to Brecht's appearance before the HUAC is obvious). It is shot in a starkly stylized manner, with minimal scenery, before a white backdrop with the actors' shadows looming large behind them. Seen today, the clarity and visual beauty of this and other scenes seem like precursors to the visual strategies of Robert Wilson.

Losey employs various Brechtian distancing effects. The titles appear over shots of a sound stage with the film crew getting ready for a day's work. The film has intertitles; at the beginning of each scene the action is interrupted by a chorus of three boys singing directly into the camera (to music composed by Eisler); at various moments Galileo steps out of his role and speaks directly into the camera. Overall, however, the anti-illusionist effects do not dominate the *mise en scène*. This is in keeping

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1956, Helene Weigel Archiv HWA Ko 9186. See also Brecht's letter to Losey of November 12, 1954, BBA 693/83.

72 See Milne, *Losey on Losey*, 171f.

73 The rare exceptions are Leiser, Erwin, "'Die Wahrheit ist konkret.' Notizen eines Filmemachers über Brecht und Film," in: *The Brecht Yearbook* 11 (1982): 28–39, 35; and Lang, Joachim, *Episches Theater als Film. Bühnenstücke Brechts in den audiovisuellen Medien*, Würzburg 2006, 309f.

74 The film's titles state "Adapted for the screen by Barbara Bray and Joseph Losey. From the English version by Charles Laughton." For a description of the various English versions and variants of *Galileo* see Brecht, BFA 5, 359–367.

75 Walsh, Martin, "Losey, Brecht and 'Galileo'" (1975), in: id., *The Brechtian Aspect of Radical Cinema*, ed. Keith M Griffiths, London 1981, 108–115, 112.

with Brecht's play, which, like his other so-called 'classical' plays of the exile period, uses de-familiarizing devices more sparingly than his more experimental work of the Weimar period. Walsh's critique arises from the very fact that Losey faithfully recreates Brecht's V- (for *Verfremdung*) effects: "One suspects," Walsh writes, "that the passing of twenty-five years has made little change in Losey's vision of how *Galileo* should be done."[76] By the mid 1970s, Walsh argues, the effects Brecht used to stir the audience out of its identificatory passivity had become mainstream. The old devices no longer worked. "What Brecht taught, and Godard learned, was that alienation devices must be continually re-invented, if they are to retain any value."[77] This is a valid and, indeed, a Brechtian argument. It applies, of course, to Godard as well. Today Godard's Brechtian devices have largely lost their ability to destabilize and disrupt. They are part of the intrinsic pleasures of Godard's films and characteristic of the historical moment in which they were made. While this is also true of *Galileo*, Losey's film has the added attraction of preserving to a large degree Brecht's own vision of how the play should be done.

The key to any staging of *Galileo* is the casting of the title character. Brecht insisted on an actor of extraordinary ability such as Laughton (and later Ernst Busch). In the U.S. productions the other parts were cast with relatively inexperienced younger actors. This gave even more weight to Laughton's performance. In Losey's film, on the other hand, even small parts are played by actors of the stature of John Gielgud, Patrick Magee, and Michael Lonsdale. As a consequence the dominance of the title character is reduced. One could argue that this concept is suggested by the play itself. In the final scene Andrea refers to the *Discorsi* as a book only Galileo could write. Galileo replies: "There is no such thing as a scientific work that only one man can write!"[78] According to Losey Topol's performance "was consistently better than Laughton's which was very uneven." But Losey also concedes, "there is no moment in Topol's *Galileo* that reaches the heights that Laughton did."[79] The problem with Topol's work lies elsewhere. Rather than *showing* what his character does, as Brecht advised his actors to do, Topol acquires his role through identification. Thereby the dialectical and contradictory aspects of the character

76 Ibid., 114.
77 Ibid.
78 Brecht, BFA 5, 178.
79 Ciment, *Conversations with Losey*, 337f.

are diminished. Topol's performance appears naturalistic in a non-naturalistic environment. It clashes with the more demonstrative and thus more Brechtian method of acting exhibited by Gielgud and others. As a consequence, Martin Walsh argues, "the film's Brechtianism begins to break down."[80] Which brings me to the topic I have so far avoided.

III. Losey and Brechtian Cinema

What is Brechtian Cinema? Can it even exist? In his essay of 1960 Bernard Dort ascertained the apparent incompatibility between Brechtian theatre and cinema. It seemed to Dort that the only choices for a Brechtian Cinema were either treason, as in G. W. Pabst's film of the *Threepenny Opera* of 1931, or failure, as in Alberto Cavalcanti's *Mr. Puntila and His Man Matti* of 1960.[81] Nor was Dort impressed by the cinematic innovations of *Kuhle Wampe*, which, he argued, in its best scenes refers back to Brecht's *theatre*.[82] While Dort asserted that the Brechtian system ("système brechtien"[83]) indeed had a place in cinema, he professed that he did not yet know what a Brechtian Cinema might look like.[84] We now know. One of the most succinct definitions was provided by Roswitha Mueller in her monograph on *Bertolt Brecht and the Theory of Media*. It is based on the films of Jean-Luc Godard:

> Godard breaks with illusionism, with the unified plot and its compelling identificatory structure. There is the play with contradictory elements, the stylized, emblematic use of codes, an emphasis on the autonomy of separate and heterogeneous elements, the interruption of the cinematic flow by the written word and by visual, auditory, or verbal commentary; there is transgression of genre divisions, mixing fictional, documentary, and cinéma vérité approaches in the same film. And finally, Godard's films are a complex web of cross-references and quotations taken from literary, visual, and auditory sources.[85]

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80 Walsh, "Losey, Brecht and 'Galileo,'" 113.
81 See Dort, "Pour une critique brechtienne," 35.
82 Ibid., 35f.
83 Ibid., 38.
84 Ibid., 43.
85 Mueller, *Bertolt Brecht and the Theory of Media*, 105.

By the time Mueller's book appeared in 1989, Godard's films had become the matrix for Brechtian Cinema. It is a Brechtian Cinema which does not trace its lineage to Brecht's own film work – *Kuhle Wampe* had been ridiculed by a nineteen year old budding film critic named Jean-Luc Godard[86] – and only tangentially to his theatre work. Rather, what attracted French film critics and filmmakers to Brecht were his *theoretical* writings.[87] Brecht's *Me-Ti. Book of Changes* (*Me-Ti. Buch der Wendungen*) preoccupied Godard for years.[88] His films frequently refer to and even quote Brecht's texts. In *Tout va bien* (1972) the character played by Ives Montand, a disillusioned film director reduced to making commercials, praises as 'fantastic' Brecht's notes on *Mahagonny* (a reference to "Anmerkungen zur Oper 'Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny'"[89]). *Tout va bien* does not just refer to Brecht's essay but is itself a showcase for the way Brechtian techniques and effects can be recovered for the cinema. So iconic have *Tout va bien* and Godard's other Brechtian films become that, in an article on "Brecht and Film," a scene from Brecht's *Kuhle Wampe* was praised as "worthy of Godard."[90] While this puts the cart before the horse it also suggests that Godard, rather than Brecht, is at the center of Brechtian Cinema. Which in turn implies that what is at stake in Brechtian Cinema is not so much Brechtian as Godardian effects. Such a displacement has consequences. If it is true that Brechtian effects "have become so ubiquitous in modern advertising, feature films and television sit-coms as to lose all artistic and political effect,"[91] the reference seems to be to Godardian rather than Brechtian effects. Also, the diminution of the political could be traced not so much to Brecht as to Godard, whose explicitly leftist politics were mostly confined to a period from the late 1960s to the early 1970s.

The decentering of Brecht's place in Brechtian Cinema raises the question whether Brecht was ever its originator. Brecht's cinematic

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86 Godard, Jean-Luc, "Pour un cinéma politique" (1950), in: *Jean-Luc Godard par Jean-Luc Godard. Articles, essais, entretiens*, introduction et notes par Jean Narboni, Paris 1968, 14–17, 16.

87 See Brady, "Brecht and Film," 297.

88 See Lesage, Julia, "Godard and Gorin's Left Politics, 1967–72," in: *Jump Cut* 28 (1983): 51–58, 54; this fine article contains a detailed analysis of Godard's reception of Brecht.

89 Brecht, BFA 24, 74–84.

90 Brady, "Brecht and Film," 305.

91 Brooker, Peter, "Key Words in Brecht's theory and practice of theatre," in: Peter Thomson/Glendyr Sacks (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Brecht*, Cambridge 22006, 209–224, 218.

innovations are hardly on a level with his innovations in the theatre. While *Kuhle Wampe* is more than the filmed version of Brechtian *theatre*, it is not a reinvention of the language of cinema – not to the degree that, say, Eisenstein's or Orson Welles's films are. Brecht's film projects, as Fredric Jameson has pointed out, "do not particularly suggest an imagination receptive to the possibilities of film in quite the same way as with his later cinematographic would-be disciples (like Godard, for example)."[92]

If to date there exists no in-depth analysis of the Brechtian aspects of Losey's oeuvre this may in part be due to the fact that it contains hardly any Godardian effects. Losey makes this observation about Godard: "the most useful thing Godard did was to break something, to shatter things. I'm not sure that he did much to put the pieces together again in a different order, but he probably helped others to."[93] Also, Losey repeatedly downplayed the importance of theory: "In all of my times with Brecht he never once mentioned 'theory.'" Losey adds, "In work we used every theory and every previous experience of acting and theatre which was useful, but we didn't talk."[94] Unlike with Godard & Co. Losey's Brechtian Cinema is rooted in Brecht's theatrical *practice*. Losey's essay for *Cahiers du cinéma* of 1960 lists aspects of Brechtian theatre deemed directly transferable to film:

> The stripping of reality and its precise reconstruction through selection of reality-symbols.
> The importance of precision in gesture, and texture and line in objects.
> The economy of movement, of actors, of camera [. . .] The difference between stillness and the static.
> The focusing of the eye through exact use of the camera, lens and movement.
> The fluidity of composition.
> The juxtaposing of contrasts and contradiction through editing and in text – this is the simplest way to accomplish the much misunderstood "alienation effect."
> The importance of the exact word, sound, music.
> [. . .].[95]

Unlike Roswitha Mueller's Godard-based characterization Losey's list feels unfamiliar. It contains none of the terminology and concepts that have

92 Jameson, Fredric, *Brecht and Method*, London, New York 1998, 49.
93 Ciment, *Conversations with Losey*, 306.
94 Losey, "The Individual Eye," 7f.
95 Ibid., 14.

come to signal Brechtian Cinema. It should be kept in mind, however, that in 1960 very little of Brecht's theoretical writings had yet been published. As one critic, George Lellis, aptly stated, "One might argue that Losey's applications of Brechtian thought in film have been impure, incomplete, and unacceptable to any sort of Brechtian orthodoxy."[96] Some of the key terms in Losey's list are, "precise" and "precision," "economy of movement," and "exact." They accentuate an aspect of Brecht's work which, though characteristic, is hardly considered defining. If these concepts were important to Losey, it is not least because they characterize his own work. The same can be said of the reference to "reality," another key term in the essay – though for Losey, just as for Brecht, it did not imply any kind of naturalistic rendering. Elsewhere in his essay Losey stresses Brecht's "high visual theatricality."[97] As an example he points to the scene, in *Galileo*, of the investiture of Cardinal Barberini as pope. The scene, writes Losey, "is almost entirely visual."[98] This visuality is strikingly brought out in the film. Losey refers to it in another way: "The visual aspect of Brecht's theatre is comparable to the best of Lloyd Wright or Mies van de [sic] Rohe in architecture."[99] In his letter to Hella Wuolijoki of January 7, 1947 Losey had already characterized *Galileo* as "architectural." The notion of the architectural held great interest for him ever since his encounter with Okhlopkov's stage. While in his essay Losey uses the term metaphorically, in his films it becomes literal. The elaborate architecture of Losey's sets is a kind of making-visible of the 'architecture' of the work as a whole. In the film *Galileo* the architecture of the interconnected sets – as well as the way the camera moves through them – appears as a translation into film of Brechtian devices such as the revolving stage.[100]

In his essay of 1960, Losey stated that "The control which Brecht demands and requires is harder to obtain in cinema." He added, "a precise stylistic equivalent has not yet been found."[101] He expressed the hope that he might find it for a film version of *Galileo*. He eventually did.

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96 Lellis, George, *Bertolt Brecht, Cahiers du Cinéma and Contemporary Film Theory*, Ann Arbor 1982, 40.

97 Losey, "The Individual Eye," 6.

98 Ibid.

99 Ibid., 13.

100 See Ciment, *Conversations with Losey*, 335.

101 Losey, "L'oeil du maître," 31 (my translation); this passage not in Losey, "The Individual Eye."

Today Brechtian Cinema, at least in the commercial ubiquity of its Godardian incarnation, appears to have run its course. But as its history is written, the great American film director who had a long personal and working relationship with Brecht should be reinscribed in it.

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"Without knowing America, you cannot say anything valid about democratic politics." Hermann Broch and the Ethics of Exile

Daniel Weidner

In a letter dated September 1950, the American scholar Hermann Salinger asked Hermann Broch about America's influence on his writing. In response, Broch makes a distinction between its influence on his poetry and on himself as a person. He begins with poetry ('*Dichterei*,' he writes, slightly ironically): "As far as I see, the influence is zero. And I would consider this as quite natural. For the irrational structure which underlies the business of poetry is formed in early youth." True, one might speak of a literary influence in terms of the technique of the modern novel, "however, it was not necessary to go to America for that just as it wasn't necessary to travel to Russia to succumb to the influence of Dostoevsky."[1] Personally however, he is deeply impressed by America:

> This is a rational influence, and it is indeed important. Most of all, I have learned here the efficiency of democracy; opposed to merely becoming acquainted with it, I have truly come to know it. Since I have been working on the psychology of masses and therefore on theoretical politics for several years, witnessing American democracy and directly observing its virtues and vices was indeed of the greatest importance.[2]

Broch's letter may be read emblematically, for it delineates the two paths that lie before a writer in exile: toward the purely aesthetic, that is, toward a personal style in the mother tongue, or toward political theory and action. During his exile years, Broch took both paths. On the one

1 Broch, Hermann, *Kommentierte Werkausgabe* 13/3, ed. Paul Michael Lützeler, Frankfurt/M. 1981, 498f. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from the German original into English are mine, DW.

2 Ibid., 499.

hand, he wrote his magisterial novel, *The Death of Virgil*, a highly avant-gardist text which bears hardly any relation to his actual experiences, and on the other hand he not just participated in various political initiatives of emigrant policy but also worked on a comprehensive theory of modern politics, as mentioned in the letter. How do these two dimensions – the irrational and the rational, the literary and the political, the esoteric and the exoteric – relate to each other? Are they to be conceived of as a passage that links one continent to another or as one that passes from the irrational to the rational, even in political terms? For in his early years, Broch seemed to have been a conservative cultural critic. Born into a Jewish home, he was baptized in his early youth and started idealizing medieval Catholicism in his early essays; he even dedicated one of these texts to Carl Schmitt. Upon his arrival in America, however, he seems to have turned to the democratic camp. It is debatable whether or not his new political orientation was no more than a reworking of his older positions. One might doubt, for instance, that his early work is truly conservative, and it has been argued that Broch's theory of democracy is fundamentally undemocratic. The same is true with respect to the relation of literature to politics. Even if Broch proclaimed time and again that he would turn from literature to politics, the fact remains that he continued to work constantly in both fields. Moreover, on closer inspection the difference is far from absolute. *Death of Virgil,* despite being one of the most esoteric texts of modern German literature, contains quite a concrete message and, what is more, opposed to staying in the writer's closet, it was eventually published and immediately translated. Broch's theory of democracy, on the other hand, was never finished and published only posthumously; this is not surprising given the enigmatic character of these reflections, which are not as exoteric as one might expect.

Thus, the relation between art and politics is not that clear. Indeed, it remained a constant practical problem for Broch to decide on which side to place his efforts. The relation of the esoteric and the exoteric therefore implies an ethic of exile: What does the writer have to do in exile, both in terms of the way in which exile affects one's writing, and the manner in which one is able to react on this influence? In what follows, I will attempt to unfold this question in its different dimensions: after (1) a brief outline of Hermann Broch's situation in exile, I will (2) analyze the textual logic at work in *The Death of Virgil* before I (3) comment on Broch's theory of mass delusion and finally (4) on his politics of Human Rights.

I. Experience of Exile – Experience of America

Hermann Broch arrived in New York on October 10, 1938. In his homeland of Austria, he had been arrested immediately after the national socialists' rise to power in March 1938, but managed to leave the country – first to England and then to the U.S. On his first day, he was quite busy: He met for lunch with Richard A. Bermann of the American Guild for German Cultural Freedom, which supported him financially, and also met Erich von Kahler on this occasion, who would become a close friend.[3] He had an appointment with Benno Huebsch from the Viking Press to talk about an English publication of his novels, and he went to Princeton in the evening to visit Albert Einstein, who had helped him to obtain the Visa – a journey he repeated three days later to also thank Thomas Mann for his support. As these first days show, Broch always had a strong and constantly-growing network of friends and acquaintances in place, mostly among the emigrants, but also including a number of American intellectuals. He arrived as a well-established author, all the more so since his first novel *The Sleepwalkers* from 1931/32 had been immediately translated into English. He spoke English quite fluently and was able to use this network for a number of political initiatives, the most prominent being the "City of Man" group which published several manifestos in favor of a democratic politics. Thus exile, far from amounting to isolation, meant quite the opposite for Broch. After a couple of weeks already he began to complain about having too many visitors and too many people for whom he had to care, and about the large amount of his time he had to dedicate to helping other emigrants.

Despite this integration, however, Broch's life remained somewhat precarious. He initially lived in a boarding house near Columbia University before spending some time in the artists' colony in Yaddo as well as in other mansions. In 1942, he lived as a guest in Erich von Kahler's house in Princeton, where he would spend the next six years. Afterwards he returned to New York, and in 1949 he was a fellow at Yale University, living once again in a small boarding house under somewhat poor conditions, e.g., without a private bathroom. This is where he would eventually die of a

3 On Broch's life in exile see Lützeler, Paul Michael, *Hermann Broch*, Frankfurt/M. 1985, 243ff.; on the importance of the American experience cf. Borgard, Thomas, "Planetarische Poetologie. Die symptomatische Bedeutung der Masse im amerikanischen Exilwerk Hermann Brochs," in: Thomas Eicher et al. (ed.), *Hermann Broch. Politik, Menschenrechte – Literatur?*, Oberhausen 2005, 205–229.

stroke in 1951. His financial situation was even less stable. Although his network secured him some support, it was irregular and barely covered the cost of living, let alone his numerous initiatives to support other emigrants – he constantly complained that he was no longer able to afford the stamps for his countless letters. In 1940, he received a fellowship from the Guggenheim Foundation, and later a Rockefeller research grant that provided him with a monthly stipend of $166 over three years, as well as a support of $200 per month by the Bollingen Foundation to edit a volume of writings by Hugo von Hofmannsthal, a work he actually detested.

What does it mean to arrive in America under these circumstances? In December 1938, two months after his arrival, Broch wrote to Willa Muir, a friend in Scotland, about how much he had to do. He continued:

> Thus I haven't seen much of New York, but what I have seen was impressive. Needless to say that this is not our life, but it is the life of the modern city par excellence, and the life in the collective par excellence, which you can blame but which is nevertheless awesome, and interspersed with all dangers of Nazism [Nazitum] if nothing happens in time. Much of it would inspire you.[4]

Thus, even if Broch often expressed happiness and gratitude about having been able to emigrate, there is always a concern throughout his letters that America could be in danger as well: "This is a wild country, and if it should become nazified, which is by no means impossible, it will reveal what dictatorship actually means."[5] In a letter to Stefan Zweig he suggests that the "apocalypse" would be "some degrees more intense here, and slavery for Jews, Negroes and other minorities will be more bare here than elsewhere. Slaves will be listed at Wall Street, prima, secunda and discard [. . .]. By the way, who would buy me?"[6]

America is thus by no means a secure island – if the American society is paradigmatic for any modern mass society, it also represents the potential and danger of such a society: "Without knowing America, you cannot say anything valid about democratic politics. I have learned tremendously, and I have to repeat time and again how deeply the rough magnificence of this country and its institutions impress me."[7] Like some, but not all, emigrants, Broch thus tried to learn from his situation.

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4 Broch, *Werke* 13/2 (Briefe 2), 43.
5 Ibid., 71.
6 Ibid., 75f.
7 Ibid., 62.

Given this ambivalence, Broch's letters from exile consistently oscillate between dark pessimism and hope, arguing that "[i]f there were a miracle – and it would have to be a miracle indeed – that would be able to stop the disaster, even this miracle would have to be worked for."[8] Therefore Broch worked as hard as he could, up to 17 hours a day, developing new projects without being able to finish or control them: They all swell up to multivolume books which far exceeded the original plan. What is more, he felt that his efforts – and his literary texts in particular – were deeply superfluous in a time of crisis: "I feel like a man who hurries to finish a book only to include it into the library of Alexandria before its burning."[9] Literary work appears to be doomed to failure in face of the radical crisis of culture and humanity.

II. The End of Art

Broch's comment about the burning of the library was made in connection with a work which itself deals with the burning of a book – his *Death of Virgil*, the great literary work he finished in exile and which is fundamental for his negative aesthetics, self-positioning in literature, and the relation of the esoteric and the exoteric in his writing.[10] *The Death of Virgil* was not conceived in exile but is an exilic text in so far as it parallels the writer's biography and reflects his experiences. Broch began to write on the homecoming of Virgil in 1936 and continued to work on it for nine years, even during his imprisonment, until it was finally published in 1945. Remarkably enough, this novel was also translated immediately by Broch's friend Jean Starr Untermeyer, who undertook a painstaking effort to reproduce the specific tone and structure of Broch's text in English.[11]

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8 Ibid., 34.

9 Ibid. 72.

10 On Broch's "negative Aesthetics" see Lützeler, Paul Michael, "The Avant-Garde in Crisis. Hermann Broch's Negative Aesthetics in Exile," in: Stephen D. Dowden (ed.), *Herman Broch, Literature, Philosophy, Politics. The Yale Broch Symposium*, Columbia 1988, 14–31.

11 Cf. Hargraves, John, "'Beyond Words:' The Translation of Broch's Der Tod des Vergil by Jean Starr Untermeyer," in: Paul Michael Lützeler (ed.), *Hermann Broch – Visionary in Exile. The 2001 Yale Symposium*, Rochester 2003, 217–229.

The novel narrates the last day in the life of Virgil, when, according to legend, he planned to burn the manuscript of the *Aeneis*. Thus, the text reflects two basic experiences: the threat of death, which Broch encountered during his imprisonment in Austria, and the uselessness of art in a collapsing world. The vision of a world in flames is omnipresent in the text, especially in the second part entitled "Fire – The Descent," which depicts the poet laying half asleep, haunted by memories and worries:

> Oh, who wants to sleep while Troy is burning! Again and again! Now are the waves of the sea set to foaming, churned by the oar-strokes, cut by the furrowing ships, as their triple-beaked prows cleave the waters . . .
> –, the images persisted and were not to be banished; night after night terror had lifted him through the silence of the spectre-filled craters [. . .]![12]

We read a visionary dream-monologue that evokes a seemingly endless series of images transforming into one another, constantly losing their shape and form. Broch describes how for Virgil, in the process of recollecting his Aeneis,

> [t]he memorable content of the poem was disappearing; whatever had been celebrated by the poem – seafaring and sunny strands, war and the sound of armies, the lot of the gods and the orbits of the starry courses – this and more besides, written down or unwritten, fell quite away, all of it stripped off, the poem had discarded it like a useless garment and was returning back into the unveiled nakedness of its hidden being, into the vibrating invisible from which poetry stems, subsumed again by the pure form, finding itself there like its own echo, like the soul housed in its crystal shell, singing of itself.[13]

Since the act of remembering the poem decomposes its content and thus also negates the achievement of the remembering poet, the idea of burning the manuscript is only the logical consequence of such an experience of constant annihilation. More importantly, this decomposition happens precisely in the text quoted, for, due to its visionary and dreamlike nature, everything narrated dissolves into uncertainty. This is achieved, on the one hand, by the style of *indirect libre* in these passages with their constant double focalization. On the other hand, it is the syntax in particular, the typical longitude, complexity, and ambivalence of Broch's sentences,

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12 Broch, Hermann, *The Death of Virgil*, transl. Jean Starr Untermeyer, New York 1972, 168f.

13 Broch, *Death of Virgil*, 197.

that logically refigures the symbolic quality of the dream experience rather than mimetically representing it. Obviously, the text has a technical dimension in the sense Broch mentioned in the letter to Salinger, and it is also obvious that this technical dimension is influenced by the technique of the modern novel, namely Joyce's interior monologue. However, in Broch's case the text does not completely dissolve into the uncertain but rather comes to represent an intermediary state. In his visions, Virgil hears a voice, "[n]ot quite here, but yet at hand," and he feels himself moving:

> Without having taken a step, indeed without the least attempt to take a step or make any movement whatsoever, he had been moved forward, but still not moved across; it was still the forecourt of reality that surrounded him, he had not yet forsaken terrestrial things, it was still an earthbound dream, and he – a dream within an dream – realized the dreamy nature of what was happening to him: it was a dream on the borders of dream.[14]

This is again a very typical passage: things happen, yet they don't happen; we face a dream, yet it is bordering on our awakening. The discourse decomposes itself, but it is not yet in the state of total decomposition. It is always about to become, to become either clear or nothing at all. That way the burning of the book, which designates the end of art, is simultaneously evoked and deferred. In his comments, Broch describes this process in the categories of the rational and the irrational that we already know from his letter to Salinger, and he claims that it was the constant reworking of the text which rationalized the irrationality of the experience of death to the degree of complete evaporation. Thus, in the text itself, the esoteric becomes exoteric.

Moreover, this does not only happen by the rationalization of syntax. The text has a second and even more rational and explicit layer in the debate between Virgil and Augustus in the third part of the book (a kind of platonic dialogue of nearly a hundred pages), which basically discusses the relation of art and politics in a world in crisis. On his deathbed, Virgil is visited by the emperor, his former friend, who wants to rescue the *Aeneis* as he believes that art must serve the needs of the public and glorify life. Virgil tries to resist, arguing that instead of representing life, art seeks the representation of Death, is parabolic, and is no longer

14 Ibid., 198f.

able to represent the old order and not yet able to narrate anything novel:

> "No longer and not yet," Caesar, much dismayed, was weighing these words – "and between them yawns an empty space. [. . .] The empty spaces between the epochs" – Caesar's words continued, as if they were speaking by themselves, as if they were unfolding without his help, as if the words and not Caesar were soliloquizing: "the empty nothingness that yawns wide, the nothingness for which everything comes too late and too early, the empty abyss of nothingness beneath time and the aeons [. . .] must not be allowed to gape open [. . .] . . ."
>
> Was it actually Caesar who said this? Or had the words of his most secret fear been speaking? Time flowed past mysteriously, the empty, shoreless stream that led to death, always cut into by the present, the present that constantly and elusively was being washed away: "We stand between two epochs, Augustus; so call it expectancy, not emptiness."[15]

This passage not only gives the Fire-chapter's "not quite here but yet at hand" an epochal interpretation, it also shows the limit of this interpretation, for it is the rational debate which begins to dissolve. The "no longer but not yet" is both a category of the philosophy of history and it describes a problem of narration in which it is "no longer but not yet" clear who is speaking. More and more, the debate becomes a dreamlike monologue in which everything is in a state of transition, the narration as well as what is left of the rational discussion in it: For as Virgil argues in the following, the Roman Empire, too, is in transition: like art it is a parable, pointing at a world yet to come. And just like art needs a sacrifice, namely the burning of the *Aeneis*, so too does politics—the Christian connotation here is quite obvious.

Yet Virgil's declaration that the Roman Empire is a mere parable is simply too much for Casear, who becomes very direct now, accusing the poet of hating him and developing a brief analysis of his motives in turn:

> "[. . .] first with false modesty you hypocritically slander your own work so as to be able to disparage mine more easily, and then you want to reduce it to a windy semblance of a sham-image [. . .]. I know you, Virgil; you seem to be gentle, and you love to be worshipped by the people for your purity and your virtue, but in reality your allegedly pure soul trembles constantly

15 Ibid., 335f.

> with hatred and malice, yes, I repeat it, it trembles with a most abject malice . . ."[16]

For Augustus, the poet appears to behave passive aggressively, a point which is by no means easy to dismiss and which can be read as a self criticism of Broch, who underwent psycho-analysis during his entire life. In *The Death of Virgil*, the outburst of accusation has the effect that the dreamlike world around the poet becomes more real: "The Caesar was shouting, and strange, ah, most strange; the louder he shouted, the richer became the world."[17] Only now does Virgil offer his manuscript to Caesar – a slightly comical effect, not only because the very long and speculative discussion is ended quite abruptly by becoming loud but also since Caesar initially objects defiantly that he does not want the book any more. Finally, however, the manuscript is handed over, and for a moment, the situation and the text become very calm: Virgil and Augustus, reunited in some sort of friendship, dispute about the color of a horse they once bought, in short sentences and direct dialogue, without the presence of the narrator. It is a very short scene, for the Emperor has to leave for Rome and the poet is left behind, dying.

The dialogue thus represents Broch's own skepticism about art and its role in contemporary society. It also shows that this rationalization is far from being complete. For even in the fictionalized realm of a historical dialogue, the criticism of art itself becomes artful; and the moral argument transforms into either the fluency of ever changing images or the facticity of a banal discourse about horses. The book actually remains in the state of permanent self-destruction, and this destruction represents the destruction of art in Broch's present. Even if *The Death of Virgil* tries to go beyond art, it halts at art's threshold.

Is there something beyond this threshold? "Whoever wants to think politically today," Broch once wrote, "must have the courage to accept the burning of the Alexandrian library."[18] By writing a book which metaphorically speaking 'destroys' itself, Broch already accepted the burning of books, yet, is it possible to think the political in such a manner as to go beyond this acceptance, to transcend these consequences? How is it possible to act publicly and to rethink politics in a more exoteric way, beyond

16 Ibid., 388.
17 Ibid.
18 Broch, *Werke* 13/2 (Briefe 2), 123.

the rationalization of style, which saved the Virgil-book from dissolving into nothingness and made it (barely) readable and translatable?

III. Slavery, Anti-Semitism, Sacrifice

In February 1940, the author went to the cinema to see *Gone With the Wind*. Afterwards, he wrote a short text, which commences: "Once there was *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, today we have *Gone With the Wind*. The emancipation of the slaves began with sentimental trash – does this new sentimentality not announce the reintroduction of slavery?"[19] This somewhat shocking beginning introduces Broch's argument which points first to the glorification of the lost cause for which the film is notorious, then to the popular function of cinema as the factory of dreams for the masses, and finally, and most importantly, to the coincidence of *Gone With the Wind* with the publication of Hermann Rauschning's *Conversations with Hitler*, which revealed the global political aims of National Socialism – namely the domination of the entire world whilst degrading all other nations to servants. Slavery, as Broch's argument continues, is the sign of the time, both for economical reasons, since high capitalism can no longer rest on paid labor, and psychologically, since slavery implies a vision of an ordered world as represented in *Gone With the Wind*, a vision which totalitarian propaganda efficiently confronts with the chaos and discontent of modern civilization. Only if democracy develops its own vision and symbolism, namely a "democratic propaganda," as Broch does not hesitate to call it, can it hope to counter the totalitarian threat. In the article mentioned above, he evokes Abraham Lincoln, whose glorious figure he contrasts with the demonic attraction of Hitler.

Broch imagined that his short text would be published widely; he attempted to write in a popular style and even conceded that an eventual translator might simplify his prose. However, the article was never translated, let alone published, and Broch continued to work on what he called his 'slavery book.' Typically for Broch, this idea developed into a more and more complex and voluminous project, which will later be referred to as his *Theory of Mass Delusion*. It is comprised of three volumes, the first of which deals with its philosophical and epistemological

19 Broch, Hermann, "'Gone with the Wind' und die Wiedereinführung der Sklaverei in Amerika," in: Broch, *Werke* 9/2, Frankfurt/M. 1981, 237–246, 237.

foundations, the second with the psychology of the masses, and the third with the theory of democracy. None of these volumes were finished during Broch's lifetime, and even posthumously the project remains a vast torso which is rarely read and still difficult to grasp. Nevertheless, it is interesting both as one of the first attempts to present a comprehensive theory of 'totalitarianism' (even if Broch does not use this term) and as a symptom of the very difficulty of this attempt. For it is far from clear, and is in fact topic of a heated controversy among the Brochians, how this theory is related to the object it describes – that is, if the entire discourse on the masses, on democratic propaganda, or even on total democracy is not itself totalitarian.[20] To understand the uncanny ambivalence of this text it is necessary to take into account the fundamental claims Broch made in rethinking politics as well as the fundamental crisis that the common understanding of politics underwent with the rise of fascism.

Why do we need a new political theory? According to Broch, the success of totalitarianism has shown the weakness of western democracies that naively believed that some form of progress would automatically result in the final victory of their principles. However, in the course of the 19th century, the moral foundations of democracy eroded; modern mass society was accompanied by discontent and resulted in a dreamlike existence, a half conscious 'Dämmerzustand,' a latent state of panic which we already recognize as the feeling of permanent instability, anguish, and uncertainty from the Virgil-book. The success of totalitarianism is based on its ability to manipulate this half-conscious state, while its main instrument is, as we already know, enslavement or more formal: exclusion. By excluding certain subjects, National Socialism creates its own coherence.

> Being Nazi, Soviet or Fascist, the terror of the total state (Totalitär-Staat) is founded on the magic of enslavement. The highest objectification of man takes place; he becomes the 'property' of the state in all his being and thinking, he actually becomes the 'corpse left alive' which the slave originally was.[21]

The experience of exclusion has different dimensions for Broch. Personally, it is the experience of being a refugee. Already in England,

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20 Cf. Freese, Wolfgang/Menges, Karl, *Broch-Forschung. Überlegungen zur Methode und Problematik eines literarischen Rezeptionsvorgangs*, Munich, Salzburg 1977.

21 Broch, Hermann, *Werke* 12, Frankfurt/M. 1979, 484.

immediately after his emigration from Austria, Broch was confronted with a widespread anti-Semitism and he realized how many sympathies Hitler collected by his anti-Semitic politics. These sympathies, he stresses, are strengthened by the existence of the refugees: "Every emigrant-ship fuels the hatred against the uninvited visitors."[22] Forced emigration and nazification thus work hand in hand.

Secondly, in theoretical terms, Broch's concept of exclusion goes back to the role of sacrifice in society, as formulated by different sociological and psychoanalytical theories, according to which society is founded on an initial act of violence. For Broch, however, this is not a mythical act but the very concrete act of lynching, which gives the diffuse and unconscious panic of the masses direction and relief:

> The hellish pleasure of lynching is a sacrifice legitimized by the respective theology of values, the sacrifice of a madman who wants to become normal again – and in fact, usually people become quite normal after having lynched someone, without any regrets on what they have done.[23]

Broch's unfinished novel, *The Seducer*, or, *The Spell*, actually depicts a scene of lynching that comes close to a mythical act even in its narrative representation, yet it eventually leads back to the old normality. Indeed, the lack of regret will be a phenomenon that Broch like so many other emigrants had to experience in post-war Germany, as can be read, for instance, in his correspondence with Volkmar von Zühlsdorff.

In the context of the *Theory of Mass Delusion*, it is more significant that the notion of sacrifice is so clearly linked to the most contemporary occurrence, namely to the extermination of the Jews. The reference to the Shoah, already implicit in the vision of modern Wall Street slavery, is indeed central for Broch's theory of modernity. In his early novel, *The Sleepwalkers*, he had already figured the Jews as paradigmatically modern, representing all the ambiguities of modernity and thus being a perfect scapegoat for modern discontent.[24] In the *Theory of Mass Delusion*, Broch speculates that the modernity of the Jews may even be the origin of the

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22 Broch, Hermann, "Zur Diktatur der Humanität innerhalb einer totalen Demokratie," in: *Werke* 11, Frankfurt/M. 1978, 24–71, 32. The First chapter of this text, written in 1939, entitled "Personal Observations," sums up Broch's experiences as an émigré.

23 Broch, *Werke* 12, 392.

24 Cf. Pazi, Margarita, "Ethnische Bewußtseinsverschiebungen im Werk Hermann Brochs. Am Beispiel der Geschichte des Heilsarmeemädchens in Berlin aus 'Die

"stupid and most stupid anti-Semitic idea," namely that the Jews rule the world. This idea is not merely stupid, however; but also highly effective:

> For as stupid and easy to refute as this accusation may be, the conclusion which anti-Semitism draws from it is irrefutable, namely the conclusion of a general extermination of Jews after which the condition of the world necessarily will become better. Here, the border of the refutable is already crossed, and this is all the more so if the intention to exterminate is already being put into action.[25]

The last half of this sentence, written no later than 1941, sounds uncannily prophetic to the contemporary reader. It is indeed a very concrete warning, an outcry to the public – as prophecies originally are – that is, however, heard only posthumously. It decries the naiveté of Western democracies:

> [T]hey did not imagine – even if the fate of the Jews could have been a clear hint – that today's technical means make it easily possible to exterminate entire nations by means of torture in the concentration camps, by scientific deprivation of vitamins or simply by cold.[26]

The actual destruction of the Jews is a fundamental event, for, as in lynching, it is the actual *performance* of murder that constitutes the mass solidarity, in light of which all explanations must be considered belated rationalizations. It is the sacrifice itself which is irresistible, not least because men tend to sympathize with the persecutors rather than with the victims and will consequently maintain that either the enslavement is not unusually cruel or that the slaves are in some way guilty. Finally, due to this mechanism, mass delusion cannot be confronted by rational refutation but asks for an actual "reconversion" to democracy.

But it is not only the totalitarian practice which reaches a critical point with respect to the Shoah: Broch's text does so as well. The above quoted passage concerning the enactment of extermination continues as follows:

Schlafwandler,'" in: *Staub und Sterne. Aufsätze zur deutsch-jüdischen Literatur*, Göttingen 2001, 141–151.

25 Broch, *Werke* 12, 399f. On the role of Judaism in this work see Steinecke, Hartmut, "Menschenrecht und Judentum bei Hermann Broch vor und nach der Shoah," in: Thomas Eicher et al. (ed.), *Hermann Broch. Politik, Menschenrechte – Literatur?*, Oberhausen 2005, 51–63.

26 Broch, *Werke* 12, 332.

> If seen from the magical realm, one might suppose that the human sacrifice to which an entire people is going to be subjected could become a forceful symbol, augmented to the mass of modern life, to a massively enhanced repetition of the divine self sacrifice by which Christ, precisely as part of the very people, introduced our era. But this is nearly a Nazi-thought, blasphemic both from a Jewish and a Christian perspective.[27]

And, as Broch hastens to add, the Jews do not die as martyrs, but as businessmen, lawyers, employees, that is, as ordinary men. "The Jewish fate is horrible but unceremonious (unfeierlich)."[28] We can feel very clearly how Broch interrupts the course of ideas as if to avoid the consequences he is not willing to draw. Both this interruption and the uncanny implication of the mass human sacrifice which intrudes the seemingly political argument are symptomatic. They do not only display the general ambivalence of the idea of a sacrifice, but also show how dangerously Broch's own theory lingers on the margins of politics, anthropology, and theology. This lingering itself becomes a long monologue, driven less by clear concepts than by a constant shift of metaphors with little structure and no references, seemingly having been written in a half-conscious state themselves. As in his *Virgil,* Broch's theoretical texts tend to dissolve the clear-cut boundaries of meanings and positions; they also tend to become opaque and are thus much less outspoken than originally intended.

IV. Human Rights, Religion and Politics

Nowadays, the figure of the slave has reentered political theory, mainly through Giorgio Agamben's figure of the *homo sacer*, the sacred victim, whose exclusion is the foundation of political order. Agamben refers to Hannah Arendt as well as to Carl Schmitt, but he could also have referred to Broch, who actually corresponded with Arendt about slavery, exclusion, and especially the theory of human rights in the mid 1940s, during a time when both wrote their respective books on totalitarianism.[29] In late 1945, Broch had sent Arendt a manuscript, "Remarks on the Utopia of an

27 Ibid., 400.

28 Ibid.

29 On Agamben and Arendt with particular references to the question of human rights see Menke, Christoph, "Die 'Aporien der Menschenrechte' und das 'einzige Menschenrecht.' Zur Einheit von Hannah Arendts Argumentation," in:

'International Bill of Rights and Responsibilites.'" In response, she sent her essay "'The Rights of Man' What are they?" in 1946; three years later, in February 1949, Broch sent a new manuscript on "Human Rights and the Earthly-Absolute" to receive in turn the chapter on human rights from the *Origins of Totalitarianism* in summer 1945.[30] Without being concerned with priorities, it might be interesting to review Broch's thoughts in this context, particularly because the relation of politics and religion, which today reappears so vehemently, is much more explicit in Broch than in Arendt. For not only does he conceive of National Socialism as a form of renewed paganism, he also uses political-theological figures in an affirmative sense. Facing totalitarianism, Broch argues, we cannot and should not get rid of theology, even if it is dangerous. This may be seen most clearly in the mentioned text on "Human Rights and the Earthly-Absolute," a condensed version of Broch's theory of democracy, which was intended to make up the last part of his *Theory of Mass Delusion*.

Again, the form of the text reflects the ambiguities and aporias of Broch's argument in a symptomatic way. The text begins with a strong assertion: "All politics start with man. It is made by him, for him, and often against him. To speak on politics, one needs to have a concept of man, otherwise one speaks about empty mechanics."[31] Politics is not an autonomous sphere of 'the political,' but has to be formulated as a political anthropology, to which both the theory of mass delusion and the ethics of human rights belong. But what, one might ask, is the nature of man? It is unknown, and it may not even exist. The same holds true, as it seems, for the foundation of politics. However, Broch asks, may not the lack of a foundation be used as a cornerstone of a different understanding of politics? He thus raises the question of the possibility of articulating the non-nature of man.

Broch gives a problematic definition: "Man may deny the existence of God, but never that his own existence is in the likeness of

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Eva Geulen/Kai Kauffmann/Georg Mein (ed.), *Hannah Arendt und Giorgio Agamben: Parallelen; Perspektiven; Kontroversen*, Paderborn et al. 2008, 131–147.

30 On Broch's correspondence and relation with Arendt cf. the editor's afterword in: Arendt, Hannah/Broch, Hermann, *Briefwechsel 1946–1951*, ed. Paul Michael Lützeler, Frankfurt/M. 1996; and Sauerland, Karol, "Hermann Broch und Hannah Arendt. Massenwahn und Menschenrecht," in: Endré Kiss/Paul Michael Lützeler/Gabriella Rácz (ed.), *Hermann Brochs literarische Freundschaften*, Tübingen 2008, 319–332.

31 Broch, Hermann, "Menschenrecht und Irdisch-Absolutes," in: *Werke* 12, 456–510, 458.

God's."[32] This sentence is of course paradoxical since it assumes a likeness without inscribing what seems to be the presupposition of it, namely the existence of God. Thus the paradox implies that, even in regard to his likeness, man can only be determined negatively. Referring to the myth of paradise, to Augustine and the Ten Commandments, Broch states that this likeness actually asks too much of man, since he is not able to do good in itself but must be regulated by laws. Moreover, being essentially negative, man cannot be related directly to nature, and therefore natural law may apply to animals but not to man, who is free and thus basically unnatural. Again, Broch illustrates this eccentric position of man, to use a term by Helmuth Plessner, by a double reference to biblical and pagan mythology: Man, created in the likeness of God, repeats the creation incessantly and is thus free; he is a Promethean and therefore essentially a rebellious creature; he is as godforsaken as the devil; like the people of Babel he tries to replace the divine law by natural law, "forgetting that nothing can replace what is revealed."[33] Paradoxically enough, a text that constantly argues by employing religious analogies stresses the impossibility of 'secularizing' the absolute. In fact Broch evokes a transcendent principle to call into question all immanent foundations of politics and of rights.

However, the negativity of man can also assume a very concrete political form. Man is 'negative' when being excluded, as he paradigmatically is in totalitarian regimes. This possibility of exclusion – the conception of the human as a slave or as no-longer-human – represents the non-nature of man, albeit negatively, and may thus serve as the cornerstone for which Broch looked. Broch states his principle:

> The total slavery, which the concentration camps represent as a horrible paradigm, shall not take place. And indeed, one does not have to refer to the divine nature of men or to his freedom to know that in total slavery he is forced not only to the level of the sub-human, but even to the sub-animalic.[34]

This formula is both a postulate in the Kantian sense and it refers to a very concrete fact in history. According to Broch, this facticity may, like the

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid., 462. On the critique of a political theology implied in this argument see Koebner, Thomas, "Der Unerreichbare Gott," in: Paul Michael Lützeler/ Michael Kessler (ed.), *Brochs theoretisches Werk*, Frankfurt/M. 1988, 159–191.

34 Broch, *Werke* 12, 468.

discoveries of certain facts with respect to the theories of physics, have a 'limitative' function: It limits the speculation on formal possibilities. The second part of the essay unfolds this idea in relation to law; it is to large parts a critique of Carl Schmitt. Even if the law is a formal system operating autonomously, it must be limited, specifically by its relation to the human. Namely, the law must not exclude any of its subjects from the law, i.e. by making a law that prevents the fundamental law from applying to certain subjects. Law should not be allowed to exempt its own subjects; every politics is limited by the imperative that 'this shall never happen again.'

The postulate quoted above, is, according to Broch, valid as an 'Earthly-Absolute.' Again, Broch stresses that the absoluteness assumed here is not a secularized version of divine law: "If man merely renamed divine law as the law of reason or as the law of nature without finding new contents, he would not fulfill the task but simply execute a superfluous atheistic demonstration."[35] Rather, the absoluteness of the postulate consists in the fragile nature of man, not in his higher capacities or his eternal vocation. This in turn means that the 'Earthly-Absolute' does not follow from a likeness (to God) but rather the other way round, and thus the essay closes with an appeal to future development, in a very long, typically Brochian and barely translatable sentence:

> It is sure that from the statement of the rights of men a new image of man will finally emerge, and surely [. . .] it will finally become closer and closer to the likeness, however, the respective human freedom will not stand dogmatically at the outset of the series of definitions, but at its end, an end of infinite approximation which nevertheless can never be completely achieved [. . .].[36]

The length and syntactic complexity of the sentence tries to grasp a process in the making. The 'Earthly-Absolute' thus remains a paradox, since it is only expected to become absolute without ever being transmuted in a transcendent absolute. By contrast, as Broch stresses time and again, the absolute is absent and is essential as being absent: The democratic absolute, to quote a similar phrase from Claude Lefort, has to be an empty place, or, as formulated by Jacques Rancière, the political moment of the rights of men does not consist in their givenness but in the debate they initiate.[37]

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35 Ibid., 472.

36 Ibid.

37 See Lefort, Claude, "The Permanence of the Theologico-Political?" in: Hent de Vries/Lawrence E. Sullivan (ed.), *Political Theologies. Public Religions in a Post-Secular*

Consequently, the Earthly-Absolute is actually never directly addressed in Broch's text. Rather, it is sketched by evoking different religious allegories, both from the Bible and from Greek mythology, in a circular movement by which the likeness of man to God that seemed to be a presupposition of the entire discourse is revealed to be its future *telos*. It is this textual movement which renders Broch's theoretical reflections on politics into what I would call a 'poetology of politics,' and it is quite obvious that, as such, it is principally no less esoteric than his poetic texts.

V. Coda

Similar to many other emigrants, Broch thought of returning to Europe after the war. But, as ambivalent as he was about coming to the U.S., he proved to be reluctant about returning, especially because of his doubts that Nazism had really disappeared completely, as some of his correspondents suggested. In a letter to his friend Daniel Brody from 1951 he tells a joke that may again be read emblematically: In the middle of the Atlantic, two ships pass each other, one going eastward to Europe, the other westward to the U.S. When the ships meet, two emigrant friends recognize each other on board of the respective other ship, and they both shout at each other: "Are you *meschugge*?"[38] Both ways of the passage remain problematic. It is neither possible to simply go to the land of freedom, for this freedom remains to be fundamentally endangered, nor is it possible to return 'home' again, for this home may no longer exist. More generally, the joke may also apply to the passage Hermann Broch tries to undertake: For him, the passage from literature to politics remains problematic, for the exoteric parts of his work is by no means less esoteric than his poetry. However, this is not to suggest that Broch simply remained a poet, for his political concerns undermine all his poetry and should not be dismissed too easily in favor of a Brochian aesthetics. The ethics of exile consist in a double provocation, a provocation in terms of cultures: American and German, as well as in terms of discourses:

World, New York 2006, 148–187; Rancière, Jacques, "Who Is the Subject of the Rights of Man," in: *Dissensus. On Politics and Aesthetics*, London, New York 2010, 62–75.

38 Broch, Hermann/Brody, Daniel, *Briefwechsel 1930–1951*, ed. Bertold Hack/Marietta Kleiß, Frankfurt/M. 1971, 1055f.

political, philosophical, and poetical. And actually, when facing *The Death of Virgil*, 450 pages of lyrical monologue, on the one hand, and the *Theory of Mass Delusion*, 450 pages of highly idiosyncratic speculations on modernity, on the other, one is tempted to exclaim: Are you *meschugge*? The problem with such a reading, perhaps, could be that it is still looking for some form of a home, a place of belonging. Only in certain moments Broch went beyond this problem, employing a category which is both political and religious – as we have seen, it is always the religious which intervenes in his ideas – and which is furthermore Jewish, namely the idea of Diaspora. In 1947, Broch wrote to Else Spitzer:

> My dearest, it is astonishing to me that you, and Fritz as well most likely, are bothered by the so called *Heimatlosigkeit*, the loss of home. In this respect I am much more Israeli, for even if I love certain landscapes, I felt my whole life solely diasporic – albeit with the exception of the Viennese cuisine, which establishes a strong bond of homeland, while as an American citizen I can't stand the local grub. But apart from that I am quite happy without a sense of home, and I sometimes even write a kitsch poem about it.[39]

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39 Broch, *Werke* 13/2 (Briefe 2), 143.

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"Lesen Sie before the letter:" Oskar Maria Graf in New York[1]

Robert Stockhammer

I

> About this time, the postman brought a thick letter from America. When father opened it, a long, green dollar bill with a beautiful Indian head on it fell out of the envelope.
>
> "Dear Max," wrote Stasl from Seattle, "I am sending a money for the children. I hope you and Tessa and Kathie are well. Greet the dwarf and all my acquaintances. My man works with the miners in the mine. Is hard work. Have a house and rent to miners who come from Germany, Poland, and Austria. That gives me a dollar or two from the men every week. In America everybody works, the woman too."
> "We are healthy, but write again sometime. Saw in a newspaper the other day that the house where Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence in 1775 belonged to a Graf. He was in Philadelphia. Interests me and I want to look into it sometime. This Graf, I think must have been one of those from Salzburg, that Money-Box Jim wrote about."
> "When I can spare a dollar again I'll send it. Must close because the train is going. My man works and doesn't come home before night. Warmest greetings, Stasl."[2]

This passage from Oskar Maria Graf's book *The Life of My Mother*, first published in 1940, quotes (or invents) a letter that Oskar's aunt Stasl – who emigrated to the United States long before – supposedly sent to the members of her family still living in the little town of Berg at Lake

1 Translated from German by Thorsten Carstensen (New York University).

2 Graf, Oskar Maria, *The Life of My Mother*, New York 1940, 323f. – This essay is a very extensive revision of an article published twenty years ago: Stockhammer, Robert, "Heimatliteratur im Exil. Oskar Maria Graf," in: *Exil* 2 (1991): 71–80.

Starnberg. Having escaped first to Austria in 1933, then to Czechoslovakia in the following year, and finally to New York in 1938, Graf attributes particular importance to this branch of his family in order to inscribe himself into a family tradition long constituted by emigration. Oskar, who adopted his middle name as a *nom de plume* with an ironic nod to Rainer Maria Rilke, remains loyal to his origins precisely because he leaves Bavaria to follow his aunt, as well as several of his older siblings, to the United States. Drawing on previous research done by his great-uncle Andreas Graf (here: "Money-Box Jim"), Graf's inquiries into his family history lead him to the discovery of ancestors who were apparently members of the Waldensians, a Christian sect established in the 12th century, expelled from southern France in the 13th century and then, in the 18th century, expelled from Tyrol, which then belonged to the principality of Salzburg.[3] Instead of locating his family's origin in one place, he locates it in the expulsion from any given place: "We Grafs were really 'immigrants,' displaced people, *emigrants* at first!"[4]

Thus Graf, one of the most widely-read *Heimatschriftsteller* of the interwar period, is deconstructing the ideology of *Heimat* – an ideology which, given the narrowly confined, mostly rural (or small-town) settings of the majority of his novels and stories, has been quite rightfully associated with him.[5] It is because of this affinity, albeit superficial – and despite Graf's undoubtedly 'left' political stance – that the cultural politicians of the Nazi Regime by and large abstained from adding his books to the 'black lists' that were the basis for the public book burnings in May and June of 1933. Because being 'left' apparently was not always

3 See Graf, Oskar Maria, "Meine Familie und Amerika," in: id., *An manchen Tagen. Reden, Gedanken und Zeitbetrachtungen*, Munich 1985, 321–343.

4 Graf, Oskar Maria, *In seinen Briefen*, ed. Gerhard Bauer/Helmut F. Pfanner, Munich 1984, 118 (letter to his sister Therese Graf, November 16, 1937). All quotations from Graf's previously untranslated works have been translated by Thorsten Carstensen.

5 Unfortunately, Graf's work also contains passages such as the following: "A man begins and establishes a lineage. There was something in his blood and in his innermost soul that is usually called his essence. [. . .] All around him was earth, and the man clung to her until he would finally return back into her. Somebody growing up like this has a different brain than the homeless ('Heimatlosen') and restless ('Erregten') of this world." From: Graf, Oskar Maria, *Die Heimsuchung* (1925, *The Visitation*), 181, cited in: Häntzschel, Günter, "Oskar Maria Graf – ein 'Volksschriftsteller'?," 24. Häntzschel also addresses the commercial success of the novel and its author's own repudiation of this work in later years.

enough for a writer to have his books burned, Graf not only had to write his famous appeal "Verbrennt mich!" ("Burn me!"), but he also submitted his concept of *Heimat* to a very thorough revision.

The earliest signs of this revision can be found in Graf's account of his travels to the USSR in 1934. In this text, he rebuffs the untranslatable and apparently non-transferable word 'Heimat:'"Heimat? Come off it! Wonderful emigration: how you ease people and turn them into world travelers!"[6] With Stasl's letter, not only does he project this praise of emigration back onto his own family history, but he also locates it in the associative space that is History. The speculations about the role his own ancestors played with regard to the origin of the American Declaration of Independence clearly allude to the self-image of the entire United States as a nation consisting of "emigrants at first" (disregarding, of course, the head of the Native American which, in Graf's account, adorns the one-dollar bill).[7] Thus, Graf provocatively denies a clear-cut distinction between enforced exile and an exile which, while perhaps necessary for economic reasons, is still an exile of one's own free will.

Meanwhile, the grammatical and stylistic shortcomings of the passage quoted at the beginning of this article are quite obvious. But how is one to interpret these deficits? It is hard to imagine that Aunt Stasl, within the more or less fictional world of the book, should have written to her German relatives in poor English; hence, it seems safe to assume that 'in reality' (i.e., within the fictional world), she composed her letter in poor German. And as the book does not contain any reference to a translator, and is not even marked as a translation from another language, this impression seems to be one that the author himself wanted to create. Only six years later, when *Das Leben meiner Mutter* was published in the language in which Graf had written it, did the virtually impossible task of the anonymous translator[8] become clear. What follows is the original of the translated passage quoted at the beginning of this essay:

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6 Graf, Oskar Maria, *Reise in die Sowjetunion 1934. Mit Briefen von Sergej Tretjakow*, ed. Hans-Albert Walter, Darmstadt, Neuwied 1974, 15.

7 Whether one-dollar-bills adorned with the head of a Native American actually existed remains unclear. In my cursory research, I only came across corresponding coins and a reference to corresponding five-dollar-bills that were in use briefly.

8 While the book does not give the translator's name, all evidence points to the hardly known A. van Eerden. See Johnson, Sheila, "Oskar Maria Grafs Schwierigkeiten mit dem Amerikanischen," in: Ulrich Dittmann/Hans Dollinger (ed.), *Jahrbuch der Oskar Maria Graf-Gesellschaft. 1994/95*, Munich, Leipzig 1995, 84–104, 92. Johnson also presents a critique of this translation.

> Einmal in jener Zeit brachte der Briefbote ein dickes Kuvert aus Amerika, und als der Vater es öffnete, fiel aus dem Brief eine längliche grüne Dollarnote mit einem schönen Indianerkopf darauf.
>
> "Lieber Max, – ich schicke für die Kinder einen Spargroschen," schrieb die Stasl aus Seattle in den Weststaaten, "hoffentlich geht's Dir und der Resl und der Kathl gut. Grüße auch die alte Resl und alle Bekannten. Mein Mann workt bei den Miners im Bergwerk. Ist harte Arbeit. Haben ein house und verrente an Miners, wo aus Deutschland, Holland und Österreich kommen. Gibt auch zwei Dollars from man the week. In Amerika schafft alles, auch die Frau. Wir sind gesund, aber schreib wieder einmal! Hab' neulich ein newspaper gelesen, daß das house, wo Jefferson anno 1775 the Declaration of Independence written hat, einem Graf gehört hat. Der ist in Philadelphia gewesen. Interessiert mich und will einmal researchen. Dieser Graf I think muß einer von den Salzburgern, wo der Kastenjakl written hat, gewesen sein.
> Wenn wieder ein Dollar übrig, schick' ich ihn. Muß schließen, weil the train geht. Mein Mann workt und kommt nicht vor Nacht heim. Herzliche Grüße – Stasl."[9]

Not only does Stasl's German feature a slightly Bavarian tone, it is also and more importantly interspersed with Anglicisms. The specific problem that any translation into English will face lies precisely in the fact that some elements are already translated.[10] Nowadays, in an English translation, these elements would perhaps be annotated with asterisks, as in: "Saw in a newspaper* the other day that the house* where Jefferson wrote* the* Declaration* of* Independence* in 1775 belonged to a Graf." But even this notation would still be imprecise because the asterisk for 'wrote' would require an additional comment, as the original uses 'written,' a different form of the same English verb which, in turn, is motivated by the temporal conventions of German colloquial speech. And how would one 'translate' into English the word "verrente," an English verb with both a German prefix and suffix? The question is by no means irrelevant, as similar linguistic forms (e.g., 'googeln') have, in fact, gained currency 'in German' and are thus no longer foreign words, but foreign-words. Interestingly enough, American English evolved in a similar

9 Graf, *Leben meiner Mutter*, 308.

10 See my attempt to outline a theory of literature in the age of globalization: Stockhammer, Robert, "Das Schon-Übersetzte. Auch eine Theorie der Weltliteratur," in: *Poetica* 41 (2009): 257–291.

way, starting with the 'Taler' (pronounced with a thick Bavarian accent) that Stasl sends (or returns) to Bavaria.

Graf himself claimed on several occasions that he could hardly speak any English, even many years after his initial arrival in the United States.[11] Despite the self-effacement possibly at work here, Graf's statement is rendered plausible for two reasons: first, his professional and social environment was mostly limited to German emigrants; second, until his death in New York in 1967, he never made a true attempt to write something in English. Thus emerges the image of an author who, between 1940 and 1946, was unable to read a printed copy of his 'own' book. And because this book dealt with the life of his mother, of all things, this image of Graf assumes an emblematic quality with regard to his relationship with language. Graf repeatedly emphasizes the fact that people usually speak of fatherland ('Vaterland') and mother tongue ('Muttersprache'), and that while he would be ready to give up the 'fatherland' at any time, he would be much less willing to do so with regard to the 'mother tongue.'[12] And then, ironically, he first comes across *The Life of My Mother* in a language other than his mother tongue. Moreover, the version written* by the author himself is already interspersed with elements of this foreign language – with precisely those Anglicisms so feared by the author.

II

"Lesen Sie before the letter:" Graf will include similar linguistic hybrids in *Die Flucht ins Mittelmäßige* (*The Flight into Mediocrity*), the only novel in which he works through aspects of his life in New York. First published

11 Concerning Graf's resistance to learning English ("because as a writer, I simply remain imprisoned within the German language") see, for example, Graf, *Briefe*, 173 (letter to Kurt Kersten, May 24, 1943).

12 See Graf, *Leben meiner Mutter*, 553 (his rejection of the expression 'Vaterland'); "Was mich abhält, nach Deutschland zurückzukehren," 47: "Heimat is language (how strange that one cannot speak of father language and father tongue instead of mother language and mother tongue)." The idea of "being at home in language" is also taken up in: Graf, *Briefe*, 241 (letter to Warnecke, December 24, 1952). See Azuélos, Daniel, "L'exil dans l'exil. Les stratégies linguistiques contradictoires des exilés aux Etats-Unis (Thomas Mann, Klaus Mann, Hans Sahl, Oskar Maria Graf)," in: *Études Germaniques* 63 (2008): 723–735. Azuélos addresses the question of language with regard to Graf and other German-speaking immigrants in the United States.

in 1959, the novel remains untranslated into English to the present day. At the same time, apart from the utopian novel *Die Eroberung der Welt* (1949, *The Conquest of the World*), this novel is the only major text in which Graf departs from the Bavarian settings that dominate his other works, even those written in New York. It is, however, unclear how much truth there is in Graf's assertion, taken up even by current scholarship,[13] that in New York, he wore "presque toujours des culottes de cuir." In the domain of "rural things," his self-proclaimed area of expertise,[14] *Unruhe um einen Friedfertigen* (*Turmoil Surrounding a Peaceful Man*, 1947) is the last book worth mentioning.[15] Perhaps one of Graf's finest, this novel centers on a shoemaker who has fled a Jewish pogrom in Odessa and seeks refuge in a Bavarian village at the beginning of the 20th century. Relinquishing his Jewish background, he is able to live peacefully until one day he is beaten to death by the SA. Not only does this novel constitute a definite rejection of idealized provincial life, it is also the result of a significant loss of confidence in synecdochical representation. This text does not simply depict "the large world in miniature," as Graf's method is often labeled; rather, it suggests that the world in miniature cannot be sealed off from the larger world.

Die Flucht ins Mittelmäßige can hardly be counted among Graf's best books. It is not for nothing that this book came about under the working title "Der mißlungene Roman" ("The failed novel"), which can be related to both the novel's *discours* and its *histoire*, as its protagonist Mart Ling, a German emigrant in New York, has been able to carve out a career as an author of short stories, but fails to write a novel. The abstruse subject of this unfinished novel within the novel – the breeding of boneless pigs and the impact of this endeavor on the global economy – can be understood as the allegory of its own form: the novel fails because it does not attain structure.[16] It remains as amorphous as the pigs it sets out to tell the reader about.

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13 See Azuélos, "L'exil dans l'exil," 726.

14 Graf's business cards and letterheads featured job titles such as "expert in rural things" or "provincial writer."

15 Graf's collections from the 1960s, published under titles like *Der große Bauernspiegel* or *Bayerisches Lesebücherl*, mostly recycled stories and anecdotes from the 1920s shall here be treated with polite disregard.

16 See Graf, Oskar Maria, *Die Flucht ins Mittelmäßige. Ein New Yorker Roman* (1959), Munich 1976, 550. Interesting scholarly literature on this novel exists only few and far between. The most concise article to the present day is: Bollenbeck, Georg, "Vom Exil zur Diaspora. Zu Oskar Maria Grafs Roman 'Die Flucht ins

Ling, whose talent as a storyteller comes to light at the meetings of a small circle of emigrants, quite obviously shares many traits with his creator. The social circles of both Ling and Graf consist mainly of German or German-speaking emigrants (as even Russians who had previously lived in Germany converse in German). In this community, however, German is constantly injected with English words or phrases. Ling may not (as Graf famously did) establish a German *Stammtisch* on the Upper West Side (which is where the fabled photograph that shows the broad-shouldered Graf putting his arm around a lanky Bertolt Brecht was taken). But the meetings of Ling's friends surely are, as has been said about the Stammtisch, reminiscent of a "ghostly roundel,"[17] informed by an "almost violent authenticity."[18] Here, the storyteller Ling shines no less brightly than Graf did at the weekly gatherings he initiated.

At first glance, then, there seems to be a fundamental difference between Ling and Graf; after all, the latter had already completed a good number of novels by that time. But, using Walter Benjamin's distinction, even these novels could be defined as long stories rather than novels. In so doing, one would be in line with Benjamin's own reasoning, since he himself put the categories of his seminal essay "The Storyteller," published only in 1936, to the test in a review of Graf's work as early as 1931. "The birthplace of the novel," we read in this review, "is, historically speaking, the solitary individual, who is no longer able to express himself by giving examples of his most important concerns, is himself uncounseled, and cannot counsel others."[19] Graf's work, Benjamin argues, is by contrast rooted in the oral tradition and is based on the author's skill to narrate what he knows from hearsay. Hence, *Bolwieser* – the text to which Benjamin's review is devoted, along with the *Kalendergeschichten* – should be considered, despite its subhead "Novel of a Husband," not a novel, but a "story."[20]

Mittelmäßige,'" in: Thomas Koebner/Wulf Köpke/Joachim Radkau (ed.), *Exilforschung. Ein internationales Jahrbuch*, Munich 1985, 260–269.

17 Graf, *Briefe*, 250 (letter to Karl Otto Paetel, March 4, 1954).

18 Graf, "Bayern in Amerika" (unpublished manuscript), quoted in: Recknagel, Rolf, *Ein Bayer in Amerika. Oskar Maria Graf. Leben und Werk*, Berlin 1974, 289.

19 Benjamin, Walter, "Oskar Maria Graf als Erzähler" (1931), in: id., *Gesammelte Schriften* 3, ed. Rolf Tiedemann et. al., Frankfurt/M. 1972–89, 309–311, 309. Benjamin uses an almost identical phrase in his famous essay "The Storyteller:" see Benjamin, Walter, "The Storyteller. Reflections on the Works of Nikolai Leskov," in: id., *Illuminations. Essays and Reflection*, ed. Hannah Arendt, New York 1969, 83–110, 87.

20 Benjamin, "Graf als Erzähler," 311.

It remains a matter of argument whether Graf's oeuvre between the 1920s and 1940s is indeed seamlessly anchored in the oral tradition, as Benjamin suggests. What is evident, however, is that in Graf's works from this period, the written form is not treated as a problem because it does not constitute a break with orality. This break, then, is exactly what occurs in *Die Flucht ins Mittelmäßige*, when Ling reflects upon his chances of winning the short story prize endowed by his friends:

> To invent a story was certainly not the issue for Ling. He knew from experience that his stories were lively and absorbing whenever he recounted them *orally*. Improvisation and acting were of crucial importance for this way of relating events. [. . .] Meanwhile, none of this mattered when putting an incident down *in writing*, regardless of how neat and compact that incident was. This process of abstraction no longer provided the storyteller with audible, visible and tangible relief. Instead, this comfort was replaced by a mute surrogate of ink, a figurative makeshift consisting of words, periods and other signifiers placed next to each other [. . .].[21]

Obviously, this pair of opposites is not congruent with Benjamin's juxtaposition of story and novel, as Benjamin also recognizes transcribed stories (Leskow's or Graf's) as such, whereas Ling, in keeping with a familiar tradition, distinguishes between two media of language, and denigrates writing as a mere "makeshift" and the "mute surrogate" of spoken language. But subsequently, Ling not only triumphantly secures the prize; he also becomes a hugely financially successful author of *stories* who is overmatched only by the task of composing a *novel*. Thus, both oppositional pairs come to be aligned: while managing to write quasi-oral texts ('stories' in the Benjaminian sense), Ling fails to succeed in a genre constituted by writing (the 'novel').

Moreover, even Ling's quasi-oral texts obviously share traits of the written form. Their medium is not merely incidental, but rather conditions them with the stigma of the poverty of experience while also marking them as commodity. The genesis of Ling's first story already betrays its pseudo-orality because its source is not, as the reader is initially made to believe, an incident that a female acquaintance had experienced and that Ling had then heard about. Instead, this incident had been talked about in many newspapers. Furthermore, the text constantly stresses the fact that Ling is merely interested in the fame and money he acquires through writing. In Benjamin's terms, *these* texts should not be called stories;

21 Graf, *Flucht ins Mittelmäßige*, 156 (Graf's emphasis).

rather, they pertain to the genre of the "'short story,' which has removed itself from oral tradition."[22]

Written texts of all kinds multiply in the novel. With Jack Neuberger, a dilettante of German origin who manages to make a lot of money with stories, the text presents the reader with yet another character devoted to writing novels. Unlike Ling's, Neuberger's novel will indeed be completed and printed. Titled "Der krumme Weg ins Nichts" ("The Crooked Path into Nothing"), this novel is an exact *mise en abyme* of *Die Flucht ins Mittelmäßige*, as its characters are also people who have emigrated to New York, and the protagonist shares many traits with Ling. Even its title is an obvious parody of the novel in which it is being invented. Thus, the life of the protagonist of *Flucht* appears to be uncannily predestined by the life of the protagonist of "Der krumme Weg ins Nichts," who ends up committing suicide. While Ling escapes this fate, he still has to come to terms with the death of a friend, the details of which he does not learn from an oral narrator, but once again through a written text. Upon his death, Laschinski, a professor of literature at Johns Hopkins University, leaves behind a letter addressed to Ling. When Laschinski's Norwegian colleague hands over the letter to Ling, he advises, "Lesen Sie before the letter."[23] This letter is then 'printed' on the following pages, placing the reader *of* the novel in the same situation as the reader *in* the novel.

Surrounded by so many texts that bear testimony to or even threaten to predetermine his life, Ling responds with an apotropaic gesture. Thus, towards its end, the novel is marked by an event that occurred at the beginning of Graf's life in exile: a book burning. Ling burns an edition of Neuberger's novel as well as the entire manuscript of his own.[24]

III

Oskar Maria Graf stayed in New York until his death in 1967. He visited Germany four times after the end of the Second World War, and on several occasions even entertained the idea of returning for good. But only his protagonist Ling returns permanently, not to Bavaria, incidentally, but to Hamburg, the city that "reminded him of New York the

22 Benjamin, "The Storyteller," 448.
23 Graf, *Flucht ins Mittelmäßige*, 502.
24 See ibid., 563.

most."[25] The reasons for Graf's continued stay in the United States are rather elusive. In a short statement with the title "Was mich abhält, nach Deutschland zurückzukehren" (1961, "What Prevents Me from Returning to Germany"), he lists various motives for his decision: here, the political criticism of "the country's division" stands next to a short eulogy of New York and the fear of moving yet again. His adamant resolve to stay in the United States is all the more difficult to comprehend when one considers that which sets him apart from Hannah Arendt or Siegfried Kracauer, who never returned to Germany either. While both Arendt and Kracauer began to write in English and worked for English-language institutions during the Second World War, Graf seemed determined not to let go of the German language.

Moreover, unlike Arendt und Kracauer, Oskar Maria Graf was not of Jewish origin. It is therefore all the more remarkable that, describing his continued stay in the United States after 1945, he borrowed a word that at the time was used exclusively to denote the 'dispersion' of the Jewish people:[26] 'Diaspora.' In *Die Flucht ins Mittelmäßige*, with the first chapter titled 'Exile or Diaspora,' Graf provides a clear indication of what he saw as the word's origin. After Ling uses it in a discussion, another character comments: "'The thing with the diaspora was the best, though! Of course, nobody understood it. Only we Jews are able to understand it.'"[27]

Graf is immune to the danger of over-identifying and correlating his own life with the history of the Jews, immune also because of his decade-long relationship with a Jewish woman named Mirjam Sachs.[28] In *Die Flucht ins Mittelmäßige*, Ling confronts a former resistance fighter with the word 'diaspora' because he feels that the other's revolutionary rhetoric is outdated. The resistance fighter had had to go into exile because of a life-threatening conflict between his attitude and the political circumstances, so that choosing his location was already an act of immediate political significance for him. The diaspora on the other hand is marked by the lack of a threat to one's life; because one could return at any time,

25 Ibid., 568.

26 Today's use of the term with regard to the African and other diasporas was established only in the wake of Postcolonial Studies.

27 Graf, *Flucht ins Mittelmäßige*, 34.

28 Mirjam Sachs, whom Oskar Maria Graf only married in 1944, worked as an editorial assistant with the German-language magazine *Aufbau* (to which her husband occasionally contributed as well); she thus played a vital role in assuring the couple's livelihood.

the current historical situation no longer serves as a motivation for choosing one's residence. The diaspora thus amounts to a kind of *post-histoire*:

> A person settled in diaspora was someone who, in a sense, was already without a past. This person did not rest within the time and environment of the general present, but rather felt to be constantly living in a provisional state. Hence, he was committed to an anxious forecasting and planning, infinitely projecting a fictitious private or general future of humanity.[29]

Caution is of course necessary when applying this assessment to Graf himself. After 1945, continuously expressing his views on many important political events, Graf was thoroughly rooted "within the time and environment of the general present." In his novel *Die Flucht ins Mittelmäßige*, the story is complemented by its historical context (even though this context, barely intertwined with the fates and actions of the characters, ends up being little more than decoration). Likewise, Graf did not give up utopian thinking, and the infinite projection of a fictitious "general future of humanity" can also be understood as an allusion to his novel *Die Eroberung der Welt* (1949), which was reissued (now under the title *Die Erben des Untergangs* (*The Heirs of Ruin*)) in 1959, the same year *Die Flucht ins Mittelmäßige* was published. But his utopia of a nationless world community is not, to borrow Ernst Bloch's term, a concrete one. Hence, the historical signature of the person in diaspora is not specific, and the spatial correlate of this situation is the fact that one's own residence seems more and more coincidental. In other words, Graf's situation may well be summed up as a paradox: he did not return to Germany *because* he could have done so at any time.[30] Instead, he chose the provisional solution to be his permanent lifestyle, realizing that putting an end to the interim by changing his residence would amount to no more than an empty gesture.

Interspersed with Anglicisms, the decisively 'impure' German that Graf at first only rehearsed in a fictional letter, while then using it as a rhetorical device akin to a *leitmotiv* in the novel *Die Flucht ins Mittelmäßige*, can be considered the linguistic correlate of choosing the provisional. The written form is its media correlate; that is why several instances of writing and reading – e.g. the phrase "written hat" in Stasl's letter or the "Lesen Sie before the letter" in the novel – are marked by linguistic hybrids. In

29 Graf, *Flucht ins Mittelmäßige*, 416.

30 For many years (until he became a U.S. citizen in 1958), he would not have been able to re-enter into the United States; this, however, would not have prevented him from returning to Germany if he had opted for this irrevocable decision.

his appeal "Burn me!," Graf himself had nurtured the precarious image of "the stake's pure flame;"[31] and, similarly, Ling refers to the private book burning as an occasion for "wiping the slate clean."[32] In sharp contrast, Graf's approach to his written work since the 1940s was one of permanent revision and recompilation of older and newer texts. Before* he writes, he always reads the letters* that he has already written*. While in the Federal Republic, the post-war cultural rhetoric revolved around the idea of a 'zero hour,' the New York emigrant Graf had no intention of performing a *tabula rasa*.

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31 Graf, "Verbrennt mich!" 15.

32 Graf, *Flucht ins Mittelmäßige*, 563.

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Eclipse of Reason: Max Horkheimer's New York Lectures, 1944[1]

Eckart Goebel

I

While the sheer amount of literature published on Walter Benjamin has become unfathomable, and even texts on Theodor W. Adorno appear with a certain regularity, the work of Max Horkheimer is not currently an object of intense academic or general interest. Except for the oft-reprinted *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, authored jointly with Adorno, his writings are not entirely available either in Germany or in the United States. They are discussed primarily in the context of studies on Critical Theory, the concept of which Horkheimer had first defined in his famous essay of 1937, or in works on the history of the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research. The relatively few, mostly biographical texts on Horkheimer himself are for the most part less interested in the thinker and the question of his potential contemporary relevance than in the successful, still controversial university politician and academic manager. Zwi Rosen's monograph is perhaps the best evaluation of the man published in recent times.[2]

In 1933, the year of the Nazi seizure of power, Horkheimer successfully rescued the donor-financed Institute for Social Research, of which he had become director in 1930, by escaping into exile via Geneva. The institute relocated to New York City in 1934. Horkheimer moved to California for health reasons in April of 1941 but returned again and again to New York, as he did in 1944. Early that year, he held a series of public lectures at Columbia University under the title "Society and Reason." Beginning in October, he again spent several months in Manhattan in order to coordinate the institute's work studying anti-Semitism,

1 Translated from the German by James C. Wagner.

2 Rosen, Zwi, *Max Horkheimer*, Munich 1995.

after the American Jewish Committee (AJC) had authorized financing for the research the previous year. The product of this work was *Studies in Prejudice*, released in five volumes over the course of 1949 and 1950; Horkheimer's New York lectures had already been published by Oxford University Press in 1947, under the title *Eclipse of Reason*.

Horkheimer returned to Europe in 1949 and the following year re-established the Frankfurt Institute in the newly-founded Federal Republic of Germany, with great social influence well beyond the bounds of academia. In the late 1960s, circulated bootleg copies of Horkheimer's early essays became key texts of the student movement. The social philosopher therefore decided to reissue both these essays (*Kritische Theorie: Eine Dokumentation*, 1968) and *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1969, first published in Amsterdam in 1947), and to commission a translation of the New York lectures. Rendered into German by Alfred Schmidt, the lectures appeared in West Germany in 1967, even before the new editions of *Documentation* and *Dialectic*, under the title *Zur Kritik der instrumentellen Vernunft* ('Critique of Instrumental Reason').

Among the most important precursors to both the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and *Eclipse of Reason* is an essay that Horkheimer had first published only in hectographic form in the winter of 1941–42, in a commemorative volume that he had edited together with Adorno. The book was dedicated to the memory of Walter Benjamin, who had committed suicide in 1940 in the Spanish border town of Portbou while fleeing Nazi persecution. Not included in the new publication of his other essays, Horkheimer's text reappeared discreetly in 1970 in a slim volume published by Fischer Verlag, under the dialectic – i.e. to be read both conjunctively and disjunctively – title *Vernunft und Selbstbehauptung* ('Reason and Self-Assertion').

The German war of annihilation against the Soviet Union began on June 22, 1941. The Japanese Empire's surprise attack on the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor followed on December 7 of the same year, transforming a European conflict into a world war. In the war-torn winter of 1941–42, Horkheimer's essay for Benjamin develops in a condensed form the author's theory, later elaborated in his New York lectures, of subjectivized, instrumental power as a function of self-assertion alone:

> Reason in this sense is as indispensable to modern warfare as it always has been to running a business. Its terms, condensed into one, are the optimal adaptation of means to an end, thought as a work-saving function. It is an instrument, it keeps in mind its own advantage, sets coldness and sobriety as

> virtues. Faith in it rests on more compelling motivations than metaphysical hypotheses. If even the dictator invokes reason persuasively at times, it is because he believes that he possesses the most tanks. He was sensible enough to build them; the others should be sensible enough to retreat. To defy such reason is quite simply sacrilege. Reason is his God, too.[3]

Looking at the sequence in which this ensemble of three texts was republished, one may notice that Horkheimer reverses their historical chronology. The lectures (1967), systematically constructed and well-balanced in their arguments within an international philosophical context, stand guard before the spectacular fragments of the *Dialectic* (1969), which reach back to the prehistoric origins of humanity, and the distraught wartime essay (1970), the nadir of Critical Theory, which notes that "the thought of change" has been corroded "by awareness of a universal disaster"[4] and – in 1941–42, no less – declares that "reality [. . .] is defined by the concentration camp."[5]

The following text represents an attempt to describe the structure of the New York lectures of 1944 along with a number of their fundamental ideas, in order to resurrect the memory of a major work of Critical Theory that has otherwise largely been forgotten.

II

The title given to the lectures' German translation clearly states the purpose of Horkheimer's inquiry – to provide a critique of instrumental reason –, yet it abandons the haunting imagery of the American title, *Eclipse of Reason*. One reason for the change in title may be that the English word 'eclipse' not only denotes the obscuration of one celestial body by another but also is used figuratively to refer to a general dwindling or loss of validity and power. In German, however, to speak of a '*Sonnenfinsternis der Vernunft*' would seem to employ the kind of poetic license foreign to Horkheimer's own self-image. The original, highly successful title nonetheless brings together several ideas that Horkheimer intends to develop.

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3 Horkheimer, Max, *Vernunft und Selbstbehauptung*, Frankfurt/M. 1970, 12. Transl. JCW.

4 Ibid., 48. Transl. JCW.

5 Ibid., 49. Transl. JCW.

A solar eclipse reminds human beings of their fundamental and insurmountable dependence on nature. If the light of the sun were permanently extinguished, or if the sky grew dark as the result of a natural or nuclear catastrophe, all life on earth would come to an end. In the uncanny twilight of a solar eclipse, as the birds fall fearfully silent and dogs bark nervously in the quiet, even modern man may, despite his pleasure in the astronomical sensation, experience that ancient shudder. As astronomy, enlightenment explains a solar eclipse's natural causes and thereby fulfills its calling to take from man his fear of the unknown. The radiant sun thus logically became the symbol of enlightenment, the light of which dispels the ghosts of superstition. Inasmuch as a solar eclipse is a transitory phenomenon, the title *Eclipse of Reason* is ultimately also inscribed with a programmatic perspective for the work to be done after the war, the end of which was already in sight in 1944. Horkheimer blends together the symbol of enlightenment with the astronomical phenomenon of an eclipse; the demand for a self-critique of reason, which Critical Theory is supposed to achieve, appears emblematic:

> Reason can be more than nature only through concretely realizing its 'naturalness' – which consists in its trend to domination – the very trend that paradoxically alienates it from nature. Thus also, by being the instrument of reconciliation, it will be more than an instrument.[6]

III

Unlike the fragments which make up *Dialectic of Enlightenment, Eclipse of Reason* is systematically constructed. Horkheimer's modest note that the text merely comprises a series of American lectures protects the book from accusations that it formally reproduces what it rejects in terms of content: a philosophical system. Yet the book's construction – which, admittedly, Horkheimer himself ultimately subverts – must be addressed in order to resolve a seemingly blatant contradiction in its author's argumentation that, in fact, thinks through a contradiction in the issue itself which, not having been reflected upon, has contributed to the

6 Horkheimer, Max, *Eclipse of Reason*, New York 1947, 177. Citations from this book will subsequently be designated by page numbers in parentheses directly following the quotation.

"derangement of reason" (176). *Eclipse of Reason* on the one hand reconstructs the history of thought as an irreversible historical development from objective to subjective reason, only to then establish these terms in its final chapter *On the Concept of Philosophy* as a *systematic* opposition; the book thus goes beyond the purely historical argument of the 1941–42 essay. Objective and subjective reason stand starkly opposed to one another. Considered philosophically, each refers to its opposite and thus points beyond itself. If it is thought through consistently, subjective reason, which aims toward what is useful, discovers objectivity at its root – utility is a socially mediated rather than an individual category. Conversely, objective reason, the idea of the whole and of responsibility for it, logically corresponds to its concept only if it incorporates subjective reason, the interest of the individuals who constitute the whole in their own self-assertion:

> Both the separatedness and the interrelatedness of the two concepts must be understood. The idea of self-preservation, the principle that is driving subjective reason to madness, is the very idea that can save objective reason from the same fate. (175)

The relationship between subjective and objective reason finds its parallel in the traditional systematic opposition between (objective) nature and (subjective) spirit, whose relation to each other Horkheimer likewise highlights with an emphasis on the priority of the object as elaborated by Adorno in his *Negative Dialectics*. Horkheimer exposes the "unavoidable aporia of all theory of knowledge," which frustrates philosophy's claims to absoluteness, to coming first. Philosophy is capable of abstracting from the concrete, yet it cannot obliterate it; the spirit's "content is always referred to as something outside autonomous reason, even if only in the quite abstract form of the datum" (173). This aporia of epistemology directs Critical Theory toward the remembrance of nature in the subject, which has become narcissistic in its domination over nature, toward the fact that the subject has been given something which precedes it and which it bears within itself.

The problems that may arise in offering a reading of *Eclipse of Reason* result from Horkheimer's methodologically motivated interweaving of historical and systematic perspectives, for which the construction of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* obviously provided the model.

Metaphysics as ontology is the attempt to comprehensively reproduce in language everything that exists. The history of philosophy from

Aristotle to Kant, however, produced numerous ontologies, and this stands in direct contradiction to the very idea of metaphysics. Hegel attempts to resolve this contradiction by tracing the history of the experience of consciousness from antiquity to his present day, so that out of this history Absolute Spirit may ultimately emerge. He resolves the contradiction between metaphysics and history, ontology and historic time, by sublating the history of metaphysics into the concept of a metaphysics of history. Horkheimer takes up this model of system and history intertwined, in order ultimately to again transgress the bounds of systematic thought, to complete the step from Hegel's historical system to Nietzsche's genealogical research.

Critical Theory is Hegelian in the sense that it preserves the memory of the absolute idea which makes it possible to view the merely empirical world from a distance. In its consummation as philosophical contemplation, it "opposes the breach between ideas and reality" (182). Yet on the other hand, Critical Theory is Nietzschean inasmuch as it rejects as illusionary the cold hypostatization of ideas obtained by abstraction and considered in contemplation, thereby resisting the temptation to conceive of abstraction as an origin that philosophy allegedly discovers.

As Adorno does in his *Epistemology: A Metacritique*, also written in exile, Horkheimer employs a famous quotation from Nietzsche's *Twilight of the Idols* that turns the traditional perspective on occidental philosophy completely upside down. Nietzsche opposes the idiosyncrasy of philosophers which "consists in confusing the last and the first things. They place that which makes its appearance last [. . .] the 'highest concept,' that is to say, the most general, the emptiest, the last cloudy streak of evaporating reality, at the beginning as the beginning. This again is only their manner of expressing their veneration: the highest thing must not have grown out of the lowest, it must not have grown at all" (cit. 180f.). Through this twofold turn against both the merely empirical world and idealism that has hubristically forgotten its own genealogy, "we are driven," according to Horkheimer, "by the principle of negation, to attempt to salvage relative truths from the wreckage of false ultimates" (170).

Horkheimer points the way toward the practice of determinate negation, constituted as a third term alongside idealism and empiricism, through his reconstruction of the history of thought as one of the gradual disappearance of the idea that philosophy's aim is to discern an objective order to the world that exists independent of the subject, one which not only implies a concept of absolute truth but also predetermines the objective *purpose* of human life in notions of good, of justice and of happiness.

The subjectivization of reason means that the world is henceforth experienced only as an amorphous resistance against which the individual interests are asserted. Reason becomes an instrument for the realization of subjective ends that are no longer embedded in any sense of objectivity or absoluteness. In the course of the process of civilization, ends become radically contingent, strictly dependent on the subject. It has become impossible to conceive of a higher, objective purpose within which subjective interests would obtain an absolute meaning. Attempts to articulate such meaning are denounced as mysticism:

> The present crisis of reason consists fundamentally in the fact that at a certain point thinking either became incapable of conceiving such objectivity at all or began to negate it as a delusion. [. . .] If the subjectivist view holds true, thinking cannot be of any help in determining the desirability of any goal in itself. (7)

With the loss of objective meaning, subjects are plunged into sick solitude; its dark shadow is paranoia, the assumption that an unknown power has deliberately obscured any insight into the meaning of the world as a whole. In shedding light upon itself, upon the fact that its ideas were only historically produced surrogates for beliefs that had been lost, enlightenment generates anew what it was supposed to assuage: fear, *Angst*. Yet with his abysmal hypothesis that the paranoid suspicion which casts doubt upon meaning was *always already* inscribed in the process of civilization, Horkheimer refutes the hope that regression to an earlier social stage could be a general curative, at the same time announcing as a complement to the *Eclipse of Reason* the anthropological surveys of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*:

> One might say that the collective madness that ranges today, from the concentration camps to the seemingly most harmless mass-culture reactions, was already present in germ in primitive objectivization, in the first man's calculating contemplation of the world as a prey. Paranoia, the madness that builds logically constructed theories of persecution, is not merely a parody of reason, but is somehow present in any form of reason that consists in the mere pursuit of aims. (176)

IV

Over the course of five chapters, Horkheimer unfurls the (social) history of reason's subjectivization. The book's wealth of individual observations

and digressions cannot be properly treated in a short essay. Research into Horkheimer's relation to art, for example, or a study of his intense interest in Catholicism – all of this remains to be wished. For reasons of space, only a brief outline of the book's structure can be given here.

The first chapter – *Means and Ends* – argues against the tradition of pragmatism from William James to John Dewey by explicating the displacement into the realm of semantics of the concept of ends, the devolution of the question as to the meaning and purpose of the whole into a hypertrophy of solitary, potentially paranoid self-interest.

Subjective reason – the pursuit of one's own interests by rational means – appears historically as the ideology of liberalism, which expects that the harmony of a prosperous society will emerge from the chaos of interests, guided by an 'invisible hand.' The 'nation' is supposed to provide the objective idea that overarches locally and holds together socially the effectively global phenomenon of capitalist competition. For Horkheimer, however, the crisis of liberalism since the late nineteenth century, i.e. the crisis of capitalism as it impels the institution of monopolies and trusts, demonstrates that "no effective rational principle of social reason remains. The idea of the national community (*Volksgemeinschaft*), first set up as an idol, can eventually be maintained only by terror" (20).

The second chapter – *Conflicting Panaceas* – examines those attempts to overcome this crisis that have had a major impact on society, exemplified by the installation of natural science as the idol of the age by both (neo-) positivism and, as in the example of the now largely forgotten school of neo-Thomism, its opposite: the effort to restore religious bonds by the means of thinking. Horkheimer's intent is to reveal the irrational elements of scientific faith as well as the repressed rationalism of theology.

Scientific absolutism is incapable of immanently justifying what it is based on, namely the concepts of observation, of fact, of the identity of science and truth; it becomes tangled in an aporia: "But the crucial question is: How is it possible to determine what justly may be called science and truth, if the determination itself presupposes the methods of achieving scientific truths?" (76). On the other hand, attempts to resurrect religion as a site of objective meaning cannot get around their authoritarian impulse "to stop thinking at a certain point, in order to create a preserve for some supreme being or value, be it political or religious" (68). Moreover – and this is the argument developed in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* in the form of the proposition that myth was already enlightenment – , the desire for restoration represses the historically recorded fact of religion's own self-sublation, not in the rational theology of Protestantism but, according to

Horkheimer, in the older tradition of mysticism: "Mysticism started out to make God dependent upon man, and ended logically in the announcement of God's death" (73). Neither scientific absolutism nor attempts at religious restoration prove capable of resolving the crisis of reason.

The third chapter – *The Revolt of Nature* – is a systematic summary of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, one which may, given its greater clarity, serve as an introduction to a reading of that fragmentary volume. Horkheimer draws a bold trajectory from the constitution of the ego, which pays the price for its identity in the form of its radical alienation from nature, to the nineteenth century's most prominent attempt to sublate that alienation: Darwinism as ideology, instrumentalized and politically radicalized by fascism. This chapter makes clear that *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is not only an immanent critique of unreflected enlightenment but also, first and foremost, a direct philosophical counterargument to fascism.

In the web of civilization, the individual not only has to bear the pain of separation that results simply from being a self in an increasingly foreign world of objects and strange others. The individual must also curtail its desire to be itself; it must adapt itself, ultimately negate itself, *in order* to be able to assert itself. The contradiction between adaption and being oneself, according to Horkheimer, is exacerbated to the point of self-destruction, whereby fetishized self-assertion is paradoxically perverted into a pure mechanism without self and ultimately devolves into the abstract "insatiability of the species" (110) that exploits the planet: "The moral is plain: the apotheosis of the ego and the principle of self-preservation as such culminate in the utter insecurity of the individual, in his complete negation" (122).

The suffering caused by the distorted, paradoxical constitution of the subject, encountered in Freud as 'discontent in civilization,' becomes ever more acute with the industrialization of the world, which "no longer has room to evade the system" (96). Whoever attempts to escape this closed system, later defined by Horkheimer as the 'administrated world,'"must be ready to run the risk of utter loneliness" (112). For Horkheimer, the road which leads to the radical loneliness of contemplation and of art is, for all the suffering involved, admittedly a privileged path of civilization, tied to social privileges; the same civilization, meanwhile, "has never had a strong hold on the oppressed masses" (119), who are rather ensnared in its gears. The industrialization of the world "does not mean that more time is left for speculation or for deviations from established patterns. The more devices we invent for dominating nature, the more we must serve them if we are to survive" (96f.).

The mechanisms of enforced adaptation perfected and automated in the industrial world nourish the "element of resentment and suppressed fury" (100) which accompanies the process of civilization and which is most often acted out as the exclusion from society of individual groups, particularly of minorities. The non-integrated – and Horkheimer reads this nasty symptom anthropologically, as a perversion of the archaic capacity for mimesis – are subjected to mocking ridicule. Horkheimer points to Victor Hugo, who in the nineteenth century "portrayed the deep anthropological affinity between hilarity, fury, and imitation" better than anyone. "According to Hugo, laughter always contains an element of cruelty, and the laughter of crowds is the hilarity of madness" (117).

In Horkheimer's analysis, fascism and National Socialism unleashed the increasingly aggravated revolt of nature that history had prepared, effectively in order to subjugate nature all the more forcefully. Regression and the thrust of modernization play into each other, with fateful results:

> Clearly, the Nazi rebellion of nature against civilization was more than an ideological façade. [. . .] The revolt of natural man – in the sense of the backward strata of the population – against the growth of rationality has actually furthered the formalization of reason, and has served to fetter rather than to free nature. In this light, we might describe fascism as a satanic synthesis of reason and nature – the very opposite of that reconciliation of the two poles that philosophy has always dreamed of. (122)

The book's fourth chapter – *Rise and Decline of the Individual* – recapitulates the history of subjectivization with respect to the category of the individual. Individuality "presupposes the voluntary sacrifice of immediate satisfaction for the sake of security, material and spiritual maintenance of one's own existence" (129). A paradox thus emerges: the individual, after all of its self-denial, no longer knows for whom it made such a sacrifice, because through that sacrifice it lost itself and its desire for happiness and enjoyment. The critique of liberalism, whose innermost core was "individualism" both in theory and in practice (138), again takes center stage here. Horkheimer provides a classic *Lehrstück* on how to critique an ideology, juxtaposing the theory of the allegedly autonomous individual's 'splendid isolation' with the dialectic hypothesis that the emancipation of the individual and that of society are intertwined. The idea of the individual is thus recovered critically: "The fully developed individual is the consummation of a fully developed society" (135).

The intellectual harvest of Horkheimer's experiences in American exile is more clearly visible here than in other chapters; here he takes

on the phenomenon of total integration. In clear strokes, he outlines the prospective research program of a Critical Theory of society that incorporates into its thought the phenomenon of the total integration of all parts of society, the path to the administrated world. Horkheimer's revised view of the role of workers in an administratively integrated society is perhaps his most striking shift, given his Marxist background. Here the proletariat disappears as a class:

> The rise of the workers from a passive to an active role in the capitalistic process has been achieved at the price of integration in the general system. [. . .] The fact that organizing labor is recognized as a business, like that of any other corporate enterprise, completes the process of the reification of man. (148)

Horkheimer forcefully describes the harried modern working world of the United States, the "pressure of an economic system that admits of no reprieve or escape" (154). One may say here that these observations regarding a working world in which everything "must keep moving" at all times, in which permanent social "insecurity" (158) and deep "depressions" (155) have become first-rate sources of stress, have lost nothing in terms of their currency. Horkheimer's observations about the America of the 1940s still apply in today's globalized world, "this contracting world" (151) in which "everything changes" and yet "nothing moves" (159). "It takes all the running you can do to stay in the same place" (ibid.). A passage on the key concepts of efficiency, networking and the need to be 'one of the boys' reads as though it were taken from a study written in the present day of the twenty-first century:

> Nor is efficiency, the modern criterion and sole justification for the very existence of any individual, to be confused with real technical or managerial skill. It inheres in the ability to be 'one of the boys,' to hold one's own, to impress others, to 'sell' oneself, to cultivate the right connections – talents that seem to be transmitted through the germ cells of so many persons today. (154)

In another passage looking back on the world of the bourgeoisie, Horkheimer dismisses the nostalgic notion that culture has a critical function and first develops the idea of the culture industry: "There was still a cleavage between culture and production. This cleavage left more loopholes than modern superorganization, which virtually reduces the individual to a mere cell of functional response" (145).

V

In light of Horkheimer's insight that "political theory is infected with the apologetic trend of the total culture" (146), the book's final chapter – *On the Concept of Philosophy* – cannot be expected to offer a sweeping vision: "Philosophy is neither a tool nor a blueprint. [. . .] There is no formula" (165f.). The path back to a notion of objective meaning that metaphysics may reflect upon in order to obtain from it an endurable concept of society, is blocked: "The process is irreversible" (163). Working through the history of a subjectivization of reason, however, has yielded a comprehensive work program for the future, one whose most important philosophical task remains an anthropological rewriting of Kant's critique of reason, as demanded and only fragmentarily realized in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*: "The true critique of reason will necessarily uncover the deepest layers of civilization and explore its earliest history" (176).

Yet this journey through the history of reason's subjectivization has also generated the *memory* of the concept of objective meaning. This memory is no mere nostalgia; rather, it allows for a contemplative distance with respect to the stressful world of 'efficiency.' The systematic opposition that the book ultimately establishes, outlined at the beginning of this essay, is thereby genealogically liquefied. The sublime notions of good, of justice, of freedom, of happiness and of history are, as concepts, the dubious hypostases of a crumbling metaphysics. Horkheimer nonetheless holds on to these ideas because they are the *expression* of historically concrete desires – both positive, in their expression of the desire for "complete fulfillment and unrestrained enjoyment" (153), and negative, in their expression of the desire not to have to be afraid and not to suffer: "Philosophy is at one with art in reflecting passion through language and thus transferring it to the sphere of existence and memory" (179).

"Faith in philosophy," as Horkheimer conceives of it after philosophy's end, "means the refusal to permit fear to stunt in any way one's capacity to think" (162). Faith in philosophy after the end of metaphysics is realized as critical distance with respect to two attitudes toward human desire: as distance toward idealism, which in the name of realizing its ideas sacrifices the very people who have those ideas, and as distance toward pragmatism underpinned by empiricism, which rebuffs human desires with a "skeptical gentleness, the attitude of a physician shaking his head" (170). In deciphering metaphysical concepts as the traces of concrete desires, Critical Theory becomes a kind of 'wishful thinking,'

provocatively setting itself in opposition to the 'dream machine' of the culture industry.

The tension to which Critical Theory's dual alienation from idealism and pragmatism knowingly subjects itself is articulated by a *leitmotiv* that consistently runs through *Eclipse of Reason*: "the consideration that man is still better than the world he lives in" (159). In 1944, at the climax of the historically singular anti-humanity perpetrated by the Germans, Horkheimer concedes that the "method of negation," the only available remaining path, "rests on confidence in man" (187). This confidence, this trust exists beyond ideology; 'realism' lost faith in man, and the "so-called constructive philosophies may be shown truly to lack this conviction" (187). Confidence is as impossible as it is unavoidable for human beings left alone in sick solitude on a planet that has become foreign to them under an empty, darkened sky. The impossible, unavoidable demand to learn to trust, conceptually and concretely, in a paranoid society of global control – for Horkheimer, this is what remains of religion and utopia.

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I'm Not There: New York as Displaced Psychogeography in Uwe Johnson's *Jahrestage*

Michael W. Jennings

When it's night-time in Italy it's Wednesday over here.

The Everly Brothers

I

Uwe Johnson was never in New York.[1]

A welter of biographical facts of course contradicts this claim.[2] Johnson had emerged, seemingly fully developed, onto the West German literary scene in 1959 with his remarkable first published novel *Speculations about Jacob*. After a childhood and early education in Mecklenburg, he had studied at Leipzig but was prevented by the state from finding a regular job as a result of his mother's flight to the West in 1956. And it became increasingly clear to Johnson that he would have no better luck placing his literary work than he would finding a regular position. His first novel, *Ingrid Babendererde*, was rejected by a number of publishers in the East; his second novel, *Speculations about Jacob*, met a similar fate, and was finally published in the West by Peter Suhrkamp in 1959. In

1 There is a double irony in this claim. While I concentrate in what follows on Johnson's *biographical* presence in New York and on New York's *psychological* absence in the consciousness of the protagonist of Johnson's novel *Jahrestage*, Gesine Cresspahl, Johnson is absent in another sense from New York and indeed from America. Johnson's great novel – for most scholars and critics the most important German-language novel of the second half of the twentieth century – has had a very limited reception in the United States. This essay is deeply indebted to conversations with Ulrich Fries, who introduced me to the work of Uwe Johnson, and Holger Helbig – and to the reading of their work.

2 For a useful short chronicle of Johnson's life based on letters and citations from other texts, see Fahlke, Eberhard, *"Die Katze Erinnerung." Uwe Johnson – Eine Chronik in Briefen und Bildern*, Frankfurt/M. 1994. For a full-scale, though deeply flawed biography, see Neumann, Bernd, *Uwe Johnson*, Hamburg 1994.

July of that year, he moved to West Berlin. The early 1960s saw the publication of two more novels, a collection of stories, and numerous essays; Johnson was soon counted among the most important writers of his generation, and the leading literary commentator on what was then called the "German-German question." He soon became frustrated, though, by the tendency of the press and the critical establishment to pigeonhole him as the "poet of the two Germanys." He was thus predisposed to take seriously an analysis by the American publisher Helen Wolff: that he suffered from a "dearth of world" – with the clear implication that "world" existed only outside the current German realities.[3] Wolff was able to procure a position for Johnson in New York at Harcourt, Brace, and World, the house that published her own imprint, Helen and Kurt Wolff Books.

Uwe Johnson landed at JFK in April 1966 and, after having his bags searched, in his words, for drugs and communism, he went immediately to the meeting of the *Gruppe 47* that was held in Princeton, New Jersey. Unlike Peter Handke, he made no noise there. Moving to New York, he found an apartment at 243 Riverside Drive, where he was joined by his wife and daughter. Johnson remained in New York for more than two years, and was tempted to stay longer – he claims that he was, by the end of his stay, thinking of writing his great novel *Jahrestage* in English. He soon settled into his position as an editor in the textbook division at Harcourt, Brace, where he was charged with the creation of a cultural reader for advanced high school students of German called 'Das neue Fenster.' He plunged deep into the workaday world of a normal employee of a major publisher, and surprised his coworkers by his refusal to even once draw out his famous author card and claim any privilege or advantage. For the second year of his stay, during which he began the serious composition of his novel, he was supported by a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation, again through the mediation of Helen Wolff.

Those are the facts. But was Uwe Johnson ever psychologically in New York? Was he ever in New York in a meaningful human way, partaking in the social, political, and cultural practices of a local community? By this I don't mean simply to imply that he failed to engage in the typical novelist's practice of devouring all of ambient life in the service of his novel – Johnson, who had a somewhat obsessive interest in the materiality of the urban world, certainly did that. Michael Curschmann, a faculty

3 Fahlke, *"Die Katze Erinnerung,"* 175.

member in the Princeton German Department which played host to the meeting of *Gruppe 47*, recalls a dinner with Johnson at which he was subjected to a seemingly endless stream of questions regarding the minutiae of the built environment in America – transportation systems, toilets, the construction of manhole covers, etc.[4] As Sigrid Bauschinger noted soon after the appearance of the first of *Jahrestage*'s four volumes, Johnson indeed created a remarkably detailed and complete picture of those parts of New York through which Gesine moved. As Bauschinger also immediately recognized, that picture is remarkably "colorless" and "matter of fact:" information was conveyed, but no experiences.[5]

To put my claim baldly: Uwe Johnson was uninterested and perhaps incapable of exploring any local mentality other than that which existed in the north German province of Mecklenburg. Whether he was in Leipzig, in Berlin, in Rome, in New York, or in Shearness on Sea, the little town at the mouth of the Thames where he finished *Jahrestage* and died, he never left Mecklenburg. By this I do not mean to claim that Johnson was somehow a provincial author. Quite the contrary. Johnson exploited a radical, self-imposed psychogeographic limitation to Mecklenburg in order to craft one of the great novels of the twentieth century, a novel with significant political and social implications for, at the very least, Germany and America. In what follows I will draw more on a reading of *Jahrestage*, and especially a reading of the figure of the protagonist, Gesine Cresspahl as Johnson's autobiographical double, than on the details of his life in this great city.

The fundamental datum of any reading of Johnson's novel seems to be its essential doubleness.[6] At the most obvious level, *Jahrestage* is played out in two distinct spatial centers, New York City and the fictitious

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4 Michael Curschmann in conversation with the author, 1990. For a nuanced treatment of Johnson as "documentary realist," see Mecklenburg, Norbert," 'Trostloser Ehrgeiz der Faktentreue' oder 'trostlose Prämisse der Fiktion?' Uwe Johnsons dokumentarischer Realismus," in: *Johnson-Jahrbuch* 3 (1996): 50–71.

5 Bauschinger, Sigrid, "Mythos Manhattan. Faszination einer Stadt," in: id./Horst Denkler/Wilfried Mausch (ed.), *Amerika in der deutschen Literatur. Neue Welt – Nordamerika – USA*, Stuttgart 1975, 382–397, 387ff.

6 The standard work on the novel's structure remains Fries, Ulrich, *Uwe Johnsons "Jahrestage,"* Göttingen 1990. See esp. pp. 96–126 on the relationship of the novel's narrative structure to the major events of Germany's troubled history in the twentieth century. See also Helbig, Holger, "In einem anderen Sinn Geschichte. Erzählen und Historie in Uwe Johnsons *Jahrestagen*," in: *Johnson-Jahrbuch* 2 (1995): 119–133.

Jerichow, a small town in Mecklenburg. The present-time layer of Johnson's novel – the novel's title refers, among other things, to the days of the year between August 21, 1967 and August 20, 1968 – depicts the life of Gesine Cresspahl, German immigrant in America, bank employee, and unmarried mother of a ten-year-old daughter, Marie. Gesine, or Dschisine, as her American co-workers style her, and her daughter inhabit a highly detailed and immediately recognizable portion of New York City, Johnson's capital of the twentieth century; the novel takes for its own the space between the Upper West Side, Midtown, and the South Ferry. But the novel also offers, interspersed within their story, a cohesive and equally detailed *Alltagsgeschichte* of the life of the inhabitants of Jerichow, and especially of the life of Gesine's father, Heinrich Cresspahl, that extends from 1931 to at least 1953.

Just as the novel has two spatial centers, it also maintains two points of temporal focus. That portion of the novel devoted to Jerichow is narrated in the epic past. The New York strand is given in the narrative present; it is a montage of fragments drawn from highly disparate material – memory shards, daily experience, newspaper clippings, descriptions, factual reports of events.[7] The discontinuities in the presentation of this material are often mediated only by their presentation on one calendar day and, to a lesser extent, by their presence in Gesine's consciousness. This mode is often characterized as modernist, and it draws, indeed, on the tradition of the high modernist novel as it came to Johnson from his reading of Joyce, Döblin, and Faulkner. The American level has as its background the most intensive, and most intensely debated, phase of the war in Viet Nam, the eruption of race warfare in the American inner cities, and the assassination of a series of public leaders who were the bearers of hope. It was a particularly troubled time even in a troubled land. The German plane represents the years of fascism, the Soviet occupation, and the early years of the German Democratic Republic. The Jerichow strand, too, has its characteristic mode: historical narrative in the grand tradition. Johnson draws on elements of the historical novel and of the Bildungsroman, in often self-conscious allegiance to Thomas Mann. The book's title thus points not only to the days of the New York year, but also to anniversaries, repeated dates, commemorations of events in Jerichow and elsewhere. The most significant chapters of the novel are, without exception,

7 On the narrative structure of the novel, see esp. Mecklenburg, Norbert, *Die Erzählkunst Uwe Johnsons. Jahrestage und andere Prosa*, Frankfurt/M. 1997.

those that are troubled by the anniversary of a death: of Cresspahl, of Jakob, Gesine's lover and the father of her child, of her mother Lisbeth, and of other figures.[8]

The final doubling is a central problem for my argument: the narrative voice is itself doubled, mirroring in an inexact, troubling manner the temporal and spatial division of the text.[9] There are in fact two narrators, Gesine Cresspahl herself and Uwe Johnson, who appears as a highly dramatized figure in the novel and to whom Gesine consistently refers with a fine irony as the Genosse Schriftsteller. In one of the novel's most frequently quoted lines, Gesine asks: "Who is narrating here, Comrade Writer, you or me? Both of us, Gesine."[10] The result is an extraordinary perspectival indeterminacy: even as the novel is able to frame and correct the contents of Gesine's consciousness through recourse to the authorial conceit of the comrade writer, that same consciousness is, extensively, coterminous with that of Uwe Johnson. For all her modeling on the figure of Elizabeth Johnson, Uwe Johnson's wife, Gesine Cresspahl is also his double, the lab rat in the life world that is New York City. And Jerichow, always Jerichow.

The foregoing has of course only reiterated the best-known positions of the scholarship on Johnson. There is no dissension regarding the novel's essential doubleness. There has been, however, absolutely no agreement on the relations between the novel's various poles. To get at those relationships – and thus at the significance of Gesine's life in New York – it is absolutely essential to examine the various *motivations* for the novel's

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8 On the relationship between these death days and the narrative structure, see Fries, *Uwe Johnsons "Jahrestage,"* 77–95. On the more general calendrical structure, including not only days of personal significance, but days marked by political and religious observance, see Schmidt, Thomas, *Der Kalender und die Folgen: Uwe Johnsons Roman "Jahrestage;" ein Beitrag zum Problem des kollektiven Gedächtnisses*, Göttingen 2000.

9 There is of course an enormous literature on the narratological problems posed by *Jahrestage*. After a first wave of formalism, more nuanced positions that take into account the novel's historical and psychological complexity have gradually emerged. For a sensible evaluation of the current state of research, see Spörl, Uwe, "Von den *Jahrestagen* zum 'impliziten Autor' Uwe Johnson," in: *Johnson-Jahrbuch* 12 (2005): 15–26.

10 Johnson, Uwe, *Anniversaries: From the Life of Gesine Cresspahl*, transl. Leila Vennewitz, New York 1975, 169; *Jahrestage. Aus dem Leben von Gesine Cresspahl* 4, Frankfurt/M. 1970–1983, 256. Quotations from the two volumes of *Anniversaries* will be cited hereafter as A or A2 plus page number; from *Jahrestage* as J plus page number.

narration, and not merely its structure, which is almost pedantic in its complexity.[11] *Jahrestage* thematizes with unusual rigor and intensity the motivations behind its being narrated and written, thematizes them in a manner that forces the reader to question continually the reasons for the inclusion or exclusion of any given block of material. That is arguably the primary effect of the doubled narrative instance. The reader is constantly challenged to locate the perspective – and not just in Gesine or the Comrade Writer, but in a series of disembodied voices that float through the text.

Gesine's motivations for narration are themselves extraordinarily complex; she is, in fact, at once the most hollow and the most complicated protagonist of a German novel written after the war.[12] Gesine Cresspahl is a woman not so much concerned with as overwhelmed by her past, an utterly German past. As her friend Dietrich Erichson puts it, she has an "obsessive reveling in grief" (A2 304; J 1318). In telling her story and having it told, a primary motivation is thus the exploration of her own identity, or rather an exploration of her unusual lack of identity. Johnson's Gesine is the representation of the contents of a consciousness, without, however, imbuing that consciousness or its contents with even a shred of affective life. When she is promoted at the bank, the young packer assigned to move her into her new office remarks that he has never encountered an office so free of personal effects. Hers is a life lived wholly without traces. Gesine Cresspahl's hollowness transcends a mere self-alienation, transcends even the husk-like forms that mark the departed presence of a subjectivity. Her hollowness is focused, at key points in the novel, in a troubling state of dissociation. And it is precisely this hollowness and dissociation that characterizes her relationship to New

11 The remarkable commentary on the novel that appeared in Helbig, Holger/Kokol, Klaus/Müller, Irmgard/Spaeth, Dietrich/Fries, Ulrich (ed.), *Johnsons "Jahrestage." Der Kommentar*, Göttingen 1999, has made a start toward unpacking the novel's complex referential system. See also Helbig, Holger, "Intertextualität und Identität in den *Jahrestagen*. Über Traditionsstiftung für Figuren und Interpreten," in: *Johnson-Jahrbuch* 13 (2006): 169–184.

12 The Johnson literature has in general avoided direct confrontation with Gesine's complexity, preferring to embed remarks on the construction and effects of her subjectivity amid analyses of other aspects of the novel. A notable exception is Annekatrin Klaus's *"Sie haben ein Gedächtnis wie ein Mann, Mrs. Cresspahl." Weibliche Hauptfiguren im Werk Uwe Johnsons*, Göttingen 1999. But Klaus's study is concerned much less with the "person" Gesine Cresspahl than with the gender relations between a male author and a female protagonist.

York. "That was not her and was Mrs. Cresspahl, employee of the firm for the last four years [. . .] Bottom line: Unknown. No one, disguised. Not discernible" (A2 165; J 1037).[13]

The hollowness, the brittleness of Gesine Cresspahl is not an error or a failing, but Johnson's solution to an historical problem. Simply put, knowledge of the Holocaust has shattered Gesine Cresspahl's consciousness.

> The possession of a functional shock agent can be demonstrated, as can a guaranteed effect. The shock agent was a photograph made by the British in the KZ Bergen-Belsen and printed in the newspaper that they published in Lübeck after the war. The effect has not stopped to this very day. Affected was this person. I am the child of a father who knew of the systematic murder of the Jews. Affected was one's own group. Even if I was twelve years old, I belong to a national group that slaughtered another group in excessive number. The shock can be demonstrated through the crippling of reactions. (J 232)[14]

In a manner that is unique to the literature of the postwar, Gesine Cresspahl is made, as an individual, to carry the German burden: to live that debt that so many wanted and want to forget.[15] Johnson, and through

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13 Christof Hamann has attempted to characterize Gesine's relationship to the city as that of an immigrant; this accounts for neither the specificity of the makeup of Gesine's consciousness nor for the specifics of her daily practice of life, which cannot be simply poured into a sociological category. Hamann, Christof, "Doppeltes Scheitern. New York und die Erinnerung in *Jahrestage*," in: *Johnson-Jahrbuch* 9 (2002): 275–295, 290.

14 Horst Turk draws a crucial distinction between memory and making present: Cresspahl's memory is secure, while Gesine is dependent upon modern media, and especially photography, in the making present of the past. Turk, Horst, "Gewärtigen oder Erinnern? Zum Experiment der Jahrestage," in: *Johnson-Jahrbuch* 2 (1995): 134–154, 134.

15 It is an interesting sidenote that the crucially important passage cited here, one of the most often cited in the German-language literature on Johnson, was omitted from the abridged edition published in America *and supervised by Johnson*. This is of course just one more way that Johnson was not in New York. For discussions of the differences between the German and American editions, see Müller, Irmgard, "*Anniversaries* – Das kürzere Jahr. Zur amerikanischen Übersetzung der *Jahrestage*," in: *Johnson-Jahrbuch* 2 (1995): 78–108, and Eikel-Pohen, Monika, "'Days of the Years?' Ein Vergleich zwischen den *Jahrestagen* und ihrer englischen Übersetzung *Anniversaries*," in: *Johnson-Jahrbuch* 16 (2009): 105–124; on the specific omissions in the American edition, see Müller, "*Anniversaries* – Das kürzere Jahr," 80–96 and Eikel-Pohen, "Days of the Years," 110–116.

him that burden, drives Gesine beyond the limit of acceptably realistic representation. Johnson has taken Adorno's famous dictum and reformulated it ironically through poetry: after Auschwitz, no more integrated consciousness, no more selves.[16]

It is for this reason that I have spoken of the novel's only apparent doubleness. The New York stratum seems at first to be underlain with a linear German past; the past breaks through into the present level often enough to cause discomfort but, on first reading, the two levels seem to be separable. But the discovery of the extermination of the Jews takes place in the center of the Jerichow narrative; the past narrative is broken, in other words, by an ineradicable and insurmountable historical turn. It shatters Gesine's consciousness; its effects are *at every moment* the dominant causal factor in the structure and character of the New York narrative. The narration of *Jahrestage* represents, then, a kind of shock therapy; Gesine is not that German who needs to be confronted with a past. That past is inescapable, the centrally constitutive aspect of her very existence. She lives it every day, is broken, hollowed out, and crushed by it. This, then, is less a form of doubleness than a fundamental erasure of spatial and temporal distinction. So powerful are her associations with that past leveled by the Holocaust that she is often unsure of not only who she is, but of *where and when* she is.

The complexity of the novel's psychogeography is established on the first page.[17] The novel begins abruptly, with no clue as to who is speaking, thinking, or remembering:

> Beyond the breakers the waves pull the swimmers on outstretched hands over their backs. The wind flutters; the Baltic laps at the shore when the wind is so wholly without force. The word for the short waves of the Baltic was kabbelig – choppy. The village lies on a small spit on the New Jersey shore. (A 3; J 7)

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16 For a recent demonstration of the disastrous consequences that follow from viewing Gesine as a rather harmless, verisimilar human psychological economy, see Krellner, Ulrich, "*Was ich im Gedächtnis ertrage.*" *Untersuchungen zum Erinnerungskonzept von Uwe Johnsons Erzählwerk*, Göttingen 2003; see esp. 224–233.

17 The opening section of the novel remains among the most thoroughly explicated pages in Johnson's *œuvre* and indeed in the German literature of the late twentieth century. See especially Fries, *Uwe Johnsons "Jahrestage,"* 19–50 and Neumann, Uwe, "'Behandeln Sie den Anfang so unnachsichtig wie möglich.' Vorläufiges zu Romananfängen bei Uwe Johnson," in: *Johnson-Jahrbuch* 3 (1996): 19–50, esp. 42–49.

It is not merely that her consciousness and its vehicle, language, are suffused by a jumbled set of temporal and spatial locators. This famous opening is at bottom a citation. It is a citation of a scene in *Speculations about Jakob* in which it is Jakob Abs, Gesine's lover, who carries her with outstretched hands over his back, and not the personified wave of *Jahrestage*.[18] In a fundamental sense, Gesine can never be unambiguously anywhere else but on the Baltic coast, in Mecklenburg. She is quite aware of the omnipresence of this psychogeographic conflation: "Occasionally one's own situation from back then, that of the fourteen year old child, changes while listening into that of a partner from the present" (A2 419; J 1539). Triggers for this conflation are everywhere: a tone of voice, a certain hoarseness, common word roots between English and Mecklenburg platt. The New York and Jerichow strands are at once organized and their edges dissolved by the fact of the Holocaust; not merely by spatial centers, temporal strata, and narrators, but by their position before or after the Holocaust.

If for Marx, everything that is solid melts into air, for Johnson, the specificity of any place other than Mecklenburg dissolves into the effects of light.[19] This is Gesine's memory of their arrival in the city:

> Unexpectedly, the plane begins to roar, tearing right above the Atlantic toward Brooklyn, right by the veiled Verrazzano Bridge and the Empire State Building in its lonely position, vaporized underneath its tresses of light. Coney Island, twisting colored light. Chains of headlights on the expressways. Blue street lights swaddled in mist. (A 84; J 118f.)

Dissolution is in fact the dominant effect of the depiction of life in New York. There has been a great deal of talk about Johnson's ability to capture the essence of modern reality – Urs Jenny has spoken of Johnson's radical impulse, "to take possession of a reality remainderlessly," but this is exactly the opposite of Johnson's point. Reality is instead remainderlessly absorbed into forms of refraction. This effect of distancing and dissolving was already apparent in the titles of Johnson's first two novels: the speculations are about Jakob, the third book is about a figure named Achim. The dissolution of immediate experience in modern media – and

18 Fries, *Uwe Johnsons "Jahrestage,"* 22.

19 Although there is a substantial literature on water symbolism in Johnson's work, little attention has been paid to metaphors of light. See, e.g., Strasky, Severin, "'So klares Wasser habe ich nie wieder gesehen.' Aspekte der Wassersymbolik in Uwe Johnsons *Jahrestage*," in: *Johnson-Jahrbuch* 11 (2004): 191–210.

especially in the *New York Times* – has been a staple of Johnson criticism. But in *Jahrestage*, the relationship between the discourse of the surface and the search for the essence behind the surface is very often worked out through metaphors of light. The pattern of Gesine's days is nowhere better expressed than on the day in which she looks from her office "through the open door at the sun blinds of the building opposite, encased in blue frosted glass, at the mirror into which this day, until darkness falls, will collapse without a trace" (A 45; J 61). The discursive surface of western society is a mirror that can absorb human experience and leave no trace. Yet Gesine clings to a stubborn hope: she is in a subway car stalled in a tunnel and she remembers having seen – though she cannot now see – "a hole toward the light. The persistently recurring search for a way out was marking time; it suppressed all thought" (A 261; J 1230). In its old-fashioned desire to penetrate behind and expose the apparently seamless surface of image and discourse, Johnson's novel stands as a poetic equivalent of Guy Debord's *Society of the Spectacle*, also a product of 1968.

This is the awful paradox of Johnson's novel. True being, authenticity, identity – all these lie in the past. So Gesine attempts to resuscitate that past, to piece it together for herself, to tell it to her daughter, so as to help recover her own identity and, perhaps, to make Marie proof against the repetition of history. But Gesine is fully aware that her memory no more captures reality than does the *New York Times*. She knows, for instance, that her memories of vacation on the Baltic do not really include the concrete reality that the Konzentrationslager Barth lay across the bay from her retreat on the Fischland – she learns that much later and incorporates the knowledge into memory, hopelessly distorting and denaturing it. But – and this is the main point – even insofar as the past is retrievable for the individual consciousness in search of identity, the past that is resuscitated is unbearable; her past, if she were to recapture it, would only initiate another cycle of shock and crippling emotional stasis. The name New York stands, then, from Gesine's point of view, for a complex series of non-presences and avoidance mechanisms, strings of light behind which nothing hovers. This, then – the search into the past for identity and authenticity and her desperate attempt to show her daughter that even so debased a time can harbor such things – is Gesine's main motivation for narration; as such, it explains a great deal about the constant interlacing of past and present. It does not do so fully, however. To fully answer the question I pose here, the relationship between different psychogeographical structures in the novel, we need to examine not just Gesine's, but Uwe Johnson's narrative motivations.

Johnson is aware that Jerichow cannot be rebuilt. Gesine refuses to admit this knowledge. We learn that the city cannot be rebuilt from the Hebrew scriptures; Joshua 6:26 says as much. "Joshua laid an oath on them at that time, saying, 'Cursed before the LORD be the man who rises up and rebuilds this city, Jericho. At the cost of his firstborn shall he lay its foundation, and at the cost of his youngest son shall he set up its gates.'" Gesine should have learned this through direct experience. The German past, the past as it is concentrated in Jerichow, is too dense with memory, too awash with evil: as it is recaptured and rebuilt in a narrative, it only introduces new ruptures and fissures in individual identity. Yet she is condemned to live her life in Mecklenburg, regardless of when and where she might find herself: on the New Jersey shore in 1967, or in Denmark or Prague in 1968. Gesine is rendered impotent and immobile by her compulsive recovery of a place buried in the past that is nonetheless her only possible source of reality and selfhood.

II

The first volume of *Jahrestage* appeared at the very inception of a central cultural turn in Germany: the turn, after 1968, to a series of works that looked not to the mainline cultural tradition, as had the literary works of 1959, nor to the historical avantgarde movements in Europe, as had the works of the early 1960s by such great artists as Gerhard Richter and Alexander Kluge, but to new developments in art that had arisen in New York – minimalism and especially conceptualism – and rapidly spilled over into other countries. The great bodies of work from the 1970s are extra- or anti-literary: Hanne Darboven's *Schreibzeit*; the typologies of Bernd and Hilla Becher; Rolf Dieter Brinkmann's *Materialienbände*. We sense, in the works of Darboven, Brinkmann, and the Bechers, that modernism already lies in its mausoleum; Brinkmann is in fact in some ways little more than modernism's nervous breakdown. Walter Benjamin once wrote that great works are great works because they either inaugurate or bring to conclusion their particular form. Uwe Johnson's *Jahrestage*, published in four "Lieferungen" between 1970 and 1983, brings the modernist novel in Germany to its conclusion: it is the cenotaph of literary modernism, the closed portal through which nothing more can pass. As such, it is deeply, pervasively, and productively anachronistic. *Jahrestage* remains nothing less than a fully committed modernist novel: modernist in its formal strategies, modernist in its pervasive

citationality, and above all modernist in its insistence, despite its corrosively critical stance toward capitalist modernity, that a counterweight to the *Verfallsgeschichte* of recent history exists, in however fragile and hidden a form. At its core lies the hope for a just human society: even if this hope cannot escape ironic formulation as a "moral Switzerland to which we can emigrate" (J 382). Let us return once again to the opening scene of *Jahrestage* and to the waves that lap at the Baltic shore that lies, paradoxically enough, in New Jersey: "Long waves drive against the beach [. . .] The taut breakers, already streaked white, swathe a round hollow space of air that is pressed to nothing by the clear mass – as if a secret were destroyed there" (A 3; J 7). The wave's hollow, the tiny moment of time frozen, for an instant, in the frothing, seething water, is the guarantor that, even amid desolation, a carefully preserved though entirely transient space might exist within which hope is sheltered.

Uwe Johnson was never in New York; Gesine can never again be in Mecklenburg. And *Jahrestage* can never find its moment.

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Bodies: Ernst H. Kantorowicz

Paul Fleming

At a different time, in a different context, the anecdote describing the beginning of Ernst Kantorowicz's academic career could have provided the fodder for an unwritten comedy, a comedy of erudition called "Kantorowicz and the Footnotes." In 1927, at the age of thirty-two, Kantorowicz published his first great work, a five hundred-page tome *Kaiser Friedrich der Zweite* (*Emperor Frederick the Second*). This work of comprehensive history examining the medieval Holy Roman Emperor Frederick the Second of Hohenstaufen was an "instant best-seller" – over ten thousand copies sold in the first years – and strolling the Ku'damm one could find multiple copies in fashionable bookstore windows.[1] Kantorowicz, one could say, made it big with one blow: a bestselling academic author who received an honorary professorship in Frankfurt in 1930 on the strength of this book (and without having a *Habilitation* or, in fact, as an autodidact without having studied Medieval history). This same book, however, also enflamed the ire of his Medievalist colleagues, not only because of what the book said (which I will turn to shortly), but also because of what it didn't say or, rather, what it didn't contain: footnotes. Throughout the five hundred-plus pages, one finds not a single footnote, not a reference, not even a referenced page number. One could call it history without sources. Kantorowicz justified this decision by claiming that he didn't want the burdensome apparatus of scholarship to dampen the text's "readability." Readable is one way to describe a historical study without references – audacious is another.[2]

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1 Grafton, Anthony, *The Footnote. A Curious History*, Cambridge 1999, 19. For an academic work, Kantorowicz's study on Emperor Frederick the Second was "an extraordinary success" for its time: a second edition appeared in 1928, a third in 1931, 1936 saw the fourth edition, with 12,200 total copies sold before the war. See Eckhart Grünewald's afterword to Kantorowicz's *Kaiser Friedrich der Zweite*, Stuttgart 2003, 539.

2 Scholars associated within the George Circle, such as Max Kommerell and Friedrich Gundolf, tended to possess a certain distaste for footnotes. One finds nary a reference, much less a footnote in their literary studies.

The story doesn't end here, though. Wanting to demonstrate his scrupulous scholarship, Kantorowicz published a second book in 1931, four years later – *not* a revised edition now including footnotes and an apparatus (since it was too complicated to integrate them into the already finished text) but rather a book-length study (if one can call it that) consisting *only* of footnotes and annotations.[3] This text outside of a text, this book of notes and commentaries in search of a main text could be a conceit drawn from the inkwell of Jean Paul, who never shied away from writing prefaces without books and footnotes without reference.

This strange scene of publishing is, however, all but a comedy since Kantorowicz's place in Germany in the 1920s is different from many of the other exile intellectuals discussed in this volume – which is why one needs to pause and briefly sketch the contours of a complex biography.

Ernst Osterkamp has recently pointed out the public relations coup bound up with *Kaiser Friedrich der Zweite*, a context inextricable from Stefan George and his Circle, to which Kantorowicz ardently belonged at least since 1920. George, in fact, had been looking for someone to write a study on Frederick II ever since he dedicated the poem "Die Gräber in Speier" to him a decade earlier in *Der Siebente Ring* (1907, *The Seventh Ring*). George was so enthusiastic when he discovered Kantorowicz as the man for the task that he – George – signed the contract on Kantorowicz's behalf and held all negotiations with his house press, Bondi, guiding the work through all its phases. George's role as *Kaiser Friedrich der Zweite's* midwife was no accident. In 1928, George brought two further books to publication in the very same week: his own book of poetry *Das Neue Reich* (*The New Kingdom*) and Max Kommerell's *Der Dichter als Führer in der deutschen Klassik* (*The Poet as Leader in German Classicism*). All three books appeared in George's sixtieth year and were conceived as a trilogy that Osterkamp describes as a "symbolic harvest" of George's life. Moreover, the trilogy was designed to encompass past, present, and future. In Osterkamp's words: "There can only be one person who can mediate between the utopian past of [Frederick's the Second's] Staufer Kingdom and the utopian future of the New Reich: the poet as *Führer*."[4]

3 It should be noted, though, that Kantorowicz's second volume of annotations and notes was already announced as forthcoming in the first edition of *Kaiser Friedrich*. See Grünewald's afterword in *Kaiser Friedrich der Zweite*, 541f.

4 Osterkamp, Ernst, *"Ihr wisst nicht wer ich bin." Stefan Georges poetische Rollenspiele*, Munich 2002, 23. All translations from German sources are mine, PF.

The poet, George, mediates between past and future, and Kantorowicz and Kommerell show the way.

Kantorowicz, therefore, squarely belonged to the conservative, aesthetic-elitist intellectual forces in the late Weimar republic. Born to a German-Jewish family in Poznan in 1895, he volunteered for and fought in the German Army for five years in the Great War, from 1914–19;[5] the last two years were notably spent in the *Freikorps*, the ultra right-wing militia, where Kantorowicz fought to suppress the Polish forces in the Greater Poland Uprising (1918–1919), helped crush the Spartacus uprising in Berlin, and was wounded in the streets of Munich fighting for the nationalists against the socialist government. As far as badges of conservatism go, Kantorowicz did not lack credentials. And for this reason Kantorowicz sticks out when discussing exile authors. He was Jewish but not part of the various groups of largely left-leaning friends and acquaintances who landed in the United States: Adorno, Horkheimer, Bloch, Kracauer, Arendt, and Brecht, for example, were all in contact with one another, if only through one another, and shared varying degrees of leftist thought. In fact, it wouldn't be a total stretch to say that in some ways Kantorowicz belonged to the enemy camp.

The story of Kantorowicz's dilemma as a conservative can be briefly, if insufficiently, circumscribed through the tale of two oaths. In 1933, Kantorowicz was in "a relatively protected position"[6] as a full professor in Frankfurt, the upstart university that also housed Horkheimer's Institute for Social Research, where the relations between the George camp and the Horkheimer camp were often not amicable. This same year, the Nazi Party came to power and passed a law on April 7 excluding all Jews from public positions with the exception of active war combatants. Kantorowicz was shaken to the core that all he had done to demonstrate his patriotism, indeed, his *nationalism* amounted to nothing in the face of being Jewish, as his letter of protest to the Prussian ministry of education attests:

> I never dreamed – I, who volunteered for military service in 1914, I, who fought during, and, again after the war against the Poles in Poznan, against the Sparticist insurrection in Berlin, and against the Republic of the Councils in Munich – I never thought that I could expect to be stripped of my

5 Boureau, Alain, *Kantorowicz. Stories of a Historian*, transl. Stephen G. Nichols/ Gabrielle M. Spiegel. Foreword by Martin Jay, Baltimore 2001, 29.

6 Raulff, Ulrich, *Kreis ohne Meister. Stefan Georges Nachleben*, Munich 2010, 72.

> post because of my Jewish ancestry. It seemed to me that thanks to my writings on the Emperor Frederick II Hohenstaufen, I would not need any proof, either past or present of my feelings in favor of a Germany reoriented towards nationalism, it appeared to that my fundamental enthusiasm for a nationalist state went well beyond the ordinary feeling (so readily swayed by events) nor has it eroded by current affairs [. . .] However, for myself, as a Jew, I am forced to draw clear conclusions as regards what is going on and to put aside my professional duties for the spring semester.[7]

As Alain Boureau highlights in reading this passage, most notable is Kantorowicz's lexicon itself, the use of the same language – and the same appeals to nationalism – as those who want nothing more than to be rid of him. When the Nazis in 1934 then required every functionary to swear an oath of loyalty "to the head of the empire and German Peoples, Adolf Hitler,"[8] Kantorowicz, a pallbearer at George's funeral the year before, asked for and was granted the status of emeritus, thus avoiding being fired since he was now retired. A nationalist in a nation that didn't want him, Kantorowicz nevertheless stayed in Germany another four years, largely in Berlin researching at the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*. But with *Kristallnacht* in November 1938, Kantorowicz realized it was imperative to get out, securing passage with the help of well-connected friends. After a quick stop in England in December 1938, he left for the U.S. in January 1939, where he lived until his death in 1963, becoming a U.S. citizen in 1945, the very year he was offered a chair of history in Frankfurt, the university that had expulsed him a mere eleven years earlier. This is certainly not insignificant but difficult to interpret: Kantorowicz could have returned but did not; his hiatus could have been a mere six years, but he turned his back on Germany. One of the most nationalistic of the exiles had one of the most broken relations to Germany upon expulsion, to the language as well, since all his major works upon exile were written in English.[9]

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7 Cited in Boureau, *Kantorowicz*, 12f.

8 Ibid., 78.

9 For an examination of Kantorowicz's relation to Germany and the U.S. during and after the war, see Raulff, *Kreis ohne Meister*, 313–346. Kantorowicz's reasons for not accepting an offer in Germany are manifold, not the least being that his mother was caught while trying to escape over the Swiss border and deported to Theresienstadt, where she died. In a letter to his friend Langlotz, Kantorowicz writes on September 15, 1945: "As far as I am concerned, returning to a German lecture hall is naturally inconceivable. Belsen, Dachau, Theresienstadt would always stand between me and the youth" (in Raulff, *Kreis ohne Meister*, 318). When asked about

In 1949, the second oath crisis erupted in his life, now at Berkeley, fanned by the paranoia of McCarthyism. The same year, the university's board of regents, in a furtive attempt to preempt the state trumping the university's autonomy, decided of its own volition to make all university members swear to a loyalty oath to the government that read:

> I am not a member of the Communist party or any other organization which advocates the overthrow the government by force or violence and I have no commitments in conflict with my responsibilities to impartial scholarship and the free pursuit of truth.[10]

Kantorowicz could have easily signed this but did not and, in fact, led the battle against the oath of loyalty – for good reason, given his experience with nationalism under the Nazis, but also for very different reasons than many of his colleagues. Kantorowicz didn't hide or deny his conservative roots;[11] in his letter of refusal he notes being wounded fighting the socialists and, in a move of strange ambiguity, underscores the role he may have played in the rise of Fascism.[12] In the end, he still had no sympathy

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his mother, Kantorowicz is reported to have henceforth responded: "Mother? I had no mother" (reported by Robert L. Benson, cited in Raulff, *Kreis ohne Meister*, 316). One should add to this trauma called Germany Kantorowicz's immediate and enduring love for the U.S. and, in particular, for California. Already in 1939 Kantorowicz describes the weather (like "seventeenth century Spain or the Mediterranean with a touch of China") as well as his colleagues and students in endearing terms: "The nice thing is the students have something radiant [*etwas Strahlendes*], which we scarcely know. They are completely unburdened, totally pagan [. . .] have fun learning things they like and otherwise like their own beautiful limbs – a mixture that amuses me in an indescribable way." (Ibid., 315.)

10 Boureau, *Kantorowicz*, 82.

11 In the prefatory note to the collection of documents on the loyalty oath that he himself assembled in 1950, Kantorowicz writes: "I am genuinely conservative and never have been taken for anything else." (Kantorowicz, Ernst H., *The Fundamental Issue. Documents and Marginal Notes on the University of California Loyalty Oath*, http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/~ucalhist/archives_exhibits/loyaltyoath/symposium/kantorowicz.html [July 12, 2011].)

12 In a letter to Berkeley's president, Robert G. Sproul, on October 4, 1949, Kantorowicz is blunt about his credentials as well as their potential consequences: "My political record will stand the test of every investigation. I have twice volunteered to fight actively, with rifle and gun, the left-wing radicals in Germany; but I know also that by joining the white battalions I have prepared, if indirectly and against my intention, the road leading to National-Socialism and its rise to power." See Kantorowicz, *The Fundamental Issue*.

for or solidarity with communism, Marxism, or any left-leaning force; rather, he refused to sign in the name of tenure, academic freedom, and scholarship needing to be immune from political forces.

In late 1950, Kantorowicz, exhausted by the battles, resigned a second time from a university due to the demand to take an oath of allegiance to a nation. He left Berkeley and assumed a position at Princeton's prestigious Institute for Advanced Study in 1951, where he wrote his masterpiece, *The Kings Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (1957). This exceptional study written in exile is book-ended by two dialogue partners, one who came before and squarely belongs to the Germany Kantorowicz left behind – Carl Schmitt in *Political Theology* – and, more importantly, one who comes after him and explicitly engages Kantorowicz's paradigmatic work – Giorgio Agamben in *Homo Sacer.* At stake in what follows is the extent to which Kantorowicz's remarkable exercise in erudition and theoretical acumen can be confined to discussions of secularization and the question of continuity of state, as Agamben argues, or whether it also enters into the abyssal structures that define politics and, thus, anticipates the very arguments Agamben makes in *Homo Sacer.*

Like *Kaiser Friedrich, The King's Two Bodies* is a five hundred-plus page tome; unlike *Kaiser Friedrich* it contains copious footnotes. Moreover, its sober analysis of political theology announces a marked distance from what can be described as the mythologizing gestures that often underwrite his first book. The younger Kantorowicz extolled the thirteenth century emperor as the "the ferment of a German identity on the rise"[13] and summoned all his Georgian linguistic power in bringing this primal German figure to life. For a taste of the style and stakes, one only has to look at the last paragraph of the 1927 study:

> The dream of Germany began to transform itself [*wandeln*]: and the transformation of myth [*Mythenwandel*] only reflects the life and desires of the aging or self-rejuvenating people [. . .]. But even with his release [*Erlösung*], the tired lord of the end [i.e., Bismarck, PF] no longer had anything in common with that fiery lord of the beginning [i.e., Frederick, PF] the seducer, the enchanter, the radiant, the cheerful, the eternally-young, the strict powerful judge, the erudite and wise, the head warrior in the muses' helmet, the one who never sleeps, but ponders [*sinnt*] how he should renew "the *Reich*."[14]

13 Boureau, *Kantorowicz*, 12.

14 Kantorowicz, *Kaiser Friedrich*, 528. Following Joseph Mali, Kantorowicz tries here to "present Friedrich as the fulfillment of the collective dream not only of his

Less an argument than an invocation, Kantorowicz's first book closes like a magician conjuring Frederick and calling him into the present. The verb tense itself changes; Frederick is not the past, but the past that is still coming, the harbinger of the future, the one who never rests and thus intuits the new Reich. Despite this pathos and its undertones, especially toward the end of the Weimar Republic, it is important to note that Kantorowicz saw Frederick as an intellectual, a bookish-cosmopolitan figure, who made Italian, not German the court language, and who was tolerant of both Jews and Muslims.[15] Kantorowicz's conservatism was George's aesthetic-intellectual elitism, not militaristic fascism.[16]

Fast forward thirty years from the final salvo of *Kaiser Friedrich* to the opening of *The King's Two Bodies,* and one clearly sees the traces of self-critique at work. The introduction of *The King's Two Bodies* begins as follows:

> Mysticism, when transposed from the warm twilight of myth and fiction to the cold searchlight of fact and reason, has usually little left to recommend itself. Its language, unless resounding within its own magic or mystic circle, will often appear poor and even slightly foolish, [. . .].[17]

For those who translate this back into German, nothing less than a bemused bracketing of the "slightly foolish" language of a "magic or mystic circle" [i.e., a *Kreis*] is at stake here. Demystification is the operative word, an antidote to mystifying and myth making.[18] The distance traversed

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[Medieval] times, but of all German history." (Mali, Joseph, "'Mythenschau:' Die Geschichtsphilosophie von Ernst H. Kantorowicz," in: Wolfgang Ernst/Cornelia Vismann [ed.], *Geschichtskörper. Zur Aktualität von Ernst H. Kantorowicz*, Munich 1998, 31–46, 40.)

15 See Landauer, Carl, "Ernst Kantorowicz and the Sacralization of the Past," in: *Central European History*, 27.1 (1994): 1–25, 5–8. See also, Raulff, *Kreis ohne Meister*, 258ff., where he describes Kantorowicz's argument for the co-mingling of the poetic and politic arts in Friedrich's court.

16 Kantorowicz spells this out in his 1933 lecture (certainly attended by uniformed officers) at Frankfurt University entitled "Das geheime Deutschland" (The Secret Germany), in which he, fully aware of the stakes involved as a Jewish professor, warns against confusing a Georgian aesthetic "secret Germany," which still slumbers in concealment, with contemporary, 'awakened' Nazi Germany. See Grünewald's afterword to *Kaiser Friedrich*, 544f., and Raulff, *Kreis ohne Meister*, 163.

17 Kantorowicz, Ernst H., *The King's Two Bodies, A Study in Medieval Political Theology*, Princeton 1985, 3.

18 This process of demystifying the Circle probably already begins in the late 1930s (circa 1937) for Kantorowicz, when he prefers "like an erudite anchoret to turn

from Kantorowicz's earlier Georgian linguistic pathos to the dry humor of American English can be found in the preface, where he excuses his citation practice (not without a sly nod to his previous book *sans* footnotes) by acknowledging "that [if] the author has quoted his own studies and articles perhaps too frequently [, this] does not imply indebtedness to himself, but laziness."[19] Although the tone here is markedly different than in his first book, Kantorowicz does not pursue a simple undoing, denial, or refutation of George and his own past; rather, one can view *The King's Two Bodies* as a continuation of Kantorowicz's previous historical concerns in a different key, in which the problems remain but offering solutions or even conclusions is held in check.[20] Instead of conjuring answers like a master rhetorician, he confronts the rhetorical nature of the problems themselves – the metaphors that power relies on. In *The King's Two Bodies*, Kantorowicz, moves from mythologizing to producing what Hans Blumenberg calls a metaphorology, the historical-rhetorical analysis of metaphors, their mobilizations and political-philosophical efficacy. In the simplest terms, *The King's Two Bodies* analyzes the origin of the modern state through a detailed exegesis of a medieval metaphorical conceit: the king has two bodies, one mortal, one immortal. Largely Christological, this notion, following Victoria Kahn, locates the birth of the modern state in "the appropriation of theological metaphors, above all the ecclesiastical body of the church and the incarnated body of Christ for secular political purposes."[21] Seen in this light – as it usually is – *The King's Two Bodies* can be read as a continuation of and substantial contribution to the theories and debates surrounding secularization. The crucial reference

his back on all cliques and to disappear from any group image." (Raulff, *Kreis ohne Meister*, 190.) However, it is neither a clean break from nor a simple rejection of George, the Circle, and his own youth. Until his death, for example, Kantorowicz kept a picture of George on his bedroom desk and in 1954 called him the "one source" from which all his work springs (see Raulff, *Kreis ohne Meister*, 334 and 324).

19 Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies*, x. Victoria Kahn wryly comments that such a claim is "something no assistant professor could get away with today." (Kahn, Victoria, "Political Theology and Fiction in *The King's Two Bodies*," in: *representations* 106 [Spring 2009]: 77–101, 78.)

20 Kantorowicz goes so far as to claim in the Preface: "Only hesitatingly and rarely did the author find it necessary to draw conclusions or indicate how the various topics discussed in these pages should be geared with each other." (Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies*, xi.)

21 Kahn, "Political Theology," 78.

point for Kantorowicz's study is what Christian theology calls the mystic or hypostatic union, the two natures of Christ, divine and human, in one person. The language Kantorowicz quotes from the Plowden Reports from the fifteenth century to describe the king's two bodies could equally apply to the King of Kings, Christ himself: "a Body natural and a Body politic together indivisible; and these two Bodies are incorporated in one Person, and make one Body and not divers."[22] Therefore, one main issue (but in no way exclusive – a point I will return to) that *The King's Two Bodies* addresses is the problem of political continuity, particularly in the earliest still-forming monarchial manifestations of the modern state, for if the king is the state's head – metaphorically and literally – how does the state continue, survive when the king, the head, is dead? Again, quoting Plowden's Report: "[. . .] the Body politic is transferred and conveyed over from the Body natural now dead, or now removed from the Dignity royal, to another Body natural."[23] This sentence announces a structural crux of the metaphor of two bodies: when one body, the mortal coil, passes on, it simultaneously passes on the other, the immortal 'body' to the next, waiting natural body, a double passing that ensures continuity not only of political succession (and thus the state) but of authority itself. One body dies, the other moves on, and thus empowers another mortal body as a doubled body, at once material and immaterial. In this secularization of Christ's dual body, religious transcendence is modulated to the plane of immanence in the form of continuity. From this perspective (which is correct, but too limited) the main focus of Kantorowicz's study is a remarkable documentation and theorization of the historical practice of secularization, of the migration of sacred topoi and structures to the profane political realm as part of the latter's justification and explanation.

This all too brief and inadequate summary (since the lengthy discussions on mediaeval philosophies of time, funeral rites, and notions of corporation paint a much more complex, heterogeneous picture) leads to the two dialogue partners mentioned above: Carl Schmitt and Giorgio Agamben. One could say that Kantorowicz provides the historical evidence and archival heavy-lifting for Schmitt's famous thesis in his 1922 treatise *Political Theology*: "All significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts."[24] In fact, although Schmitt is

22 Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies*, 9.

23 Ibid., 13.

24 Schmitt, Carl, *Political Theology. Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, transl. with an introduction by George Schwab, Chicago, London 2005, 36.

never mentioned by name, the *Kings Two Bodies* can be read as a prolonged response to Schmitt, as Kantorowicz's subtitle spells out – "A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology."

Schmitt, however, pursues what Hans Blumenberg correctly calls a "metaphorical theology," i.e., theology by other means, which thereby "avoids the cynicism of an open 'theological politics'."[25] Schmitt's political theory is essentially a rejection of the all-too-secularization of politics in the nineteenth century via the dissemination of authority in the people and a justification for returning to the only true politics, that of the sovereign and decision.[26] As Agamben notes, "the sovereign exception is, for Schmitt, [. . .] the very meaning of State authority."[27] In other words, where no sovereign decides the exception, there is no real state. Kantorowicz's project, on the other hand, could be called a "political metaphorology," an examination of the metaphors that move between sacral and secular realms, to various ends, and – unlike his work on Frederick as well as Schmitt's work – is not as much an appeal for a solution or return, but a description of problem, of a metaphoric field and its political repercussions.

The argument Giorgio Agamben makes in *Homo Sacer* is much more complicated vis-à-vis Kantorowicz, especially since he devotes an entire section to *The King's Two Bodies*, which he holds in great esteem but claims does not go far enough in its analysis. Agamben frames his argument by honing in on a point that Kantorowicz himself highlights at the end of his study, the unique Christian character of the metaphoric field of the two bodies, as the last sentence of the book makes perfectly clear: "The king's two bodies is an offshoot of Christian theological thought and consequently stands as a landmark of Christian political theology."[28] Agamben's reasons for focusing his critique of Kantorowicz on this point are manifold: first, it allows him to place Kantorowicz on the side of secularization – the religious roots of the secular state – and thus imply that Kantorowicz is simply another voice within the ongoing

25 Blumenberg, Hans, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, transl. Robert M. Wallace, Cambridge, London 1985, 101.

26 Describing political thought since the French Revolution, Schmitt writes: "The sovereign [. . .] has been radically pushed aside. The machine now runs by itself. [. . .] which means that the people became the sovereign. The decisionistic and personalistic element in the concept of sovereignty was thus lost." (Schmitt, *Political Theology*, 48.)

27 Agamben, Giorgio, *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, transl. Daniel Heller-Roazen, Stanford 1998, 17.

28 Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies*, 506.

chorus of secularization debates, which Agamben himself avoids with a single leap to Rome. Second, by locating Kantorowicz's project within the discourse of already existing political structures, it removes it from any radical claims. Agamben states flat out that *The King's Two Bodies* is "exclusively concerned with the other, more innocuous feature that [. . .] defines sovereignty (*puissance absolue et perpétuelle*) – the perpetual nature of sovereignty," whereby the king's *dignitas* survives the body and "the continuity of the state's *corpus morale et politicum*" is assured, "without which no stable political organization could be conceived."[29] An important argument, to be sure, but one that stops short of the deeper structures and abysses at the heart of political power. By stopping at and insisting on the Christological origins, Kantorowicz – according to Agamben – misses the central paradoxes of the sovereign and sovereignty. Had Kantorowicz gone beyond Christianity to the Roman roots and rituals, he would have encountered "a darker more uncertain zone, [. . .] in which the political body of the king seemed to approximate – and even to become indistinguishable from – the body of the *homo sacer*, which can be killed but not sacrificed."[30]

Here one enters the core of Agamben's project in *Homo Sacer*. As a person who can be killed with impunity but is equally banned from sacrifice to the divinities, the *homo sacer* opens up the "originary *political* structure that is located in a zone prior to the distinction between sacred and profane, religious and juridical."[31] The *homo sacer* marks a double exception to the law: Exception to *ius humanum* (since it suspends the prohibition of homicide) and an exception to *ius divinum*, since he cannot be consecrated and thus belong to god. The *homo sacer* is therefore located prior to the religious-secular differentiation that forms the crux of the secularization debates. As the double exclusion – this exteriority to all law that is nevertheless essential to the law – the *homo sacer* forms the analogous structure to the sovereign exception. Employing Schmitt's thought on sovereignty (i.e., 'the sovereign is the one who decides on the exception'), Agamben circumscribes the originary paradox of all politics: "the paradox of sovereignty consists in the fact that sovereignty is, at the same time, outside and inside the juridical order."[32] Exterior to law and religion, to the human and the divine, the sovereign, as a negative

29 Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 92.
30 Ibid., 94.
31 Ibid., 74.
32 Ibid., 15.

image of the *homo sacer*, opens up the paradox of all founding, especially the founding acts of a juridical system, which necessarily occur outside – and thus not subject to the rules of – the system it founds: the sovereign enables law by being outside it; the sovereign is the excluded inclusion, at once the exception and the rule.

Here one reaches the crux of Agamben's argument and, thus, his means for 'going beyond' Kantorowicz: The sovereign and the *homo sacer* – the one who decides the exception and the one who is exposed to all exceptions – form a symmetrical tandem, a threshold or zone of indistinction in which law is both enabled and withdraws from itself. Agamben thus underscores the strict "structural analogy" between the sovereign and the *homo sacer* as "symmetrical figures that have the same structure and are correlative."[33] In their mutual double exception from divine and human law, the sovereign and *homo sacer* "are joined in the figure of an action that, excepting itself from both human and divine law, from both *nomos* and *physis*, nevertheless delimits what is in a certain sense the first properly political space of the West distinct from both the religious and profane sphere, from both the natural order and the regular juridical order."[34] In other words, this exceptional two-sided coin of the sovereign/*homo sacer* not only marks the realm of politics as such (being both inside and outside the sphere of the political), but also precedes all discussions of secularization and, thus, also theology. Their structural analogy delimits what one could call 'bare politics' – politics without qualification, neither theological nor profane.

By supposedly missing this abyssal paradox and focusing only on continuity of the given, Kantorowicz in Agamben's reading avoids the aporias of sovereignty itself, which he describes in the simple phrase: "the law is outside itself."[35] Thus, Agamben writes:

> [. . .] the king's political body cannot simply represent (as Kantorowicz and Gisey held) the continuity of sovereign power. The king's body must also and above all represent the very excess of the emperor's sacred life, [. . .] once this is acknowledged, the metaphor of the political body appears no longer as the symbol of the perpetuity of *dignitas* but rather as the cipher of the absolute and inhuman character of sovereignty.[36]

33 Ibid., 84.
34 Ibid.
35 Ibid., 15.
36 Ibid., 101.

But does Kantorowicz, by focusing on the Christological roots (which he does), miss all this, particularly the "excess" and "inhuman character of sovereignty?" Is it simply the path of continuity that he traces? The sovereign, I recall, is the one who decides the exception. This is the essential definition given by Schmitt and the beginning of Agamben's study. Kantorowicz concludes his first chapter, which is fittingly called "The Problem: Plowden's Report," with the uncanny and problematic case of Charles I, where the titular problem comes to the fore with a paradoxical intensity that Agamben would seem to subscribe to.

The case of Charles I and the British Parliament is paradigmatic of the abysses that emerge from the rift and reduplication of the body. In 1642, the British Parliament issued a declaration, as Kantorowicz describes it, summoning "in the name and authority of Charles I, King (capital K) body political, the armies which were to fight the same Charles I, king (small k) body natural."[37] This is a complex situation. Using the notion of the king's two bodies, Parliament argues that the king (small k) is issuing decrees and laws that the King (capital K) actually opposes; therefore, Parliament invokes the authority of the King (capital K) to essentially declare war on the king (small k). The Declaration of the Lords and Commons of May 27, 1642, thus states: "*and what they do* [i.e., Lords and commons] *herein hath the stamp of royal Authority, although His Majesty . . . do in his own person oppose or interrupt the same . . .*"[38] Who or what is sovereign here? This bifurcation or split or psychosis in the notion of sovereignty makes clear that the question of deciding the exception can and does occur and recur, even within the course of putative continuity. It is not the sovereign (i.e., king) deciding, but rather the Parliament making a sovereign exception and thus demarcating the bifurcation of the king's two bodies *before* death in order to ultimately depose, cleave, kill the king. The Parliament thus removes the metaphorology of the body from the mere question of continuity and places it in the sphere of sovereignty as deciding the exception. The Parliament essentially says: 'The king is outside the King, the giver of the law is lawless.'

Kantorowicz, in the now typically dry and restrained language of *The King's Two Bodies,* writes concerning Charles I: "the King body politic was retained in and by Parliament whereas the king body natural was, so to say, frozen out"[39] – frozen out not only of Parliament, but frozen

37 Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies*, 21.
38 Ibid.
39 Ibid.

out also in the sense of "can be killed," since the armies are being called on to wage war in the name of the King against the king. Therefore, if Agamben locates the symmetrical figures of the sovereign and the *homo sacer* prior to any religious lexicon to arrive at the founding paradox of politics, or more properly, the paradox of all acts of founding of the political, then it can be argued that Kantorowicz insists with equal emphasis on the Christological metaphor of the two bodies *for the same reason* – not to avoid the paradoxes of power but to bring them to the fore. Kantorowicz insists on the doubleness and duplicity of the body as essential to his project. I quote from the epilogue of the book:

> For despite all the parallels, similarities, and "antecedents" in classical times, there is nevertheless *one* detail which would exclude a pagan origin of the Tudor formula from the outset; that is the concept of the king having two *bodies*. There is apparently nothing in pagan thought that would justify this diction.[40]

It is precisely the metaphorology of the body and the problems it opens up by being doubled – and not only for the solutions it might offer (such as continuity) – that lead Kantorowicz to emphasize the Christian roots. If the sovereign is the one who decides the exception, if the sovereign is external to but included within the law – then the sovereign in the case of Charles I is not sovereign, not *the* sovereign. The state of exception is declared by Parliament, against the sovereign, in the name of sovereignty, against the king in the name of the King, who has been literally pulled apart, body from body; if not quartered then halved, it is regicide not only on a theoretical level but also on a literal level, since the king indeed becomes "killable." Abject from himself, split into two, the king with his two bodies exposes the abysses at the heart of politics.

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Siegfried Kracauer: The Film Historian in Exile[1]

Anton Kaes

One of the foundational works of film history, Siegfried Kracauer's *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film*, is also a work of exile. Kracauer began writing the book in 1942, a year after he had emigrated to New York from Paris; he completed the manuscript in 1946. The book thus took shape as the United States engaged in an all-out war against the Nazi regime, and as American media waged a propaganda campaign focusing on the German national character. Published by Princeton University Press in April 1947, Kracauer's *From Caligari to Hitler* openly wished to contribute to the prevailing U.S. discourse about Germany in the immediate aftermath of World War II. How did this book, ostensibly a study of Weimar cinema, develop into a political intervention that "aims at increasing our knowledge of pre-Hitler Germany in a specific way?"[2] This essay will excavate the various historical strata of Kracauer's project and analyze the emergence of his "psychological history of the German film" under conditions of exile.

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1 I would like to thank Ingrid Belke, co-editor of Kracauer's *Werke*, for her invaluable support of this project from its beginning. Johannes von Moltke, Gertrud Koch, and Nicholas Baer read earlier versions and made many helpful suggestions. I also would like to thank the Suhrkamp Verlag, which owns the rights to Siegfried Kracauer's German works and presently oversees the rights to his American writings, for giving me permission to quote from Kracauer's unpublished letters and documents. (NYANA, which owned the rights to Kracauer's English-language works, no longer exists.) I am grateful to the Manuscripts Division of Princeton University Library for letting me quote from Kracauer's unpublished correspondence with Princeton University Press. I also thank the Deutsches Literaturarchiv, Marbach a. N., which holds Kracauer's papers (Kracauer-Nachlass), for giving me permission to cite from his unpublished writings.

2 Kracauer, Siegfried, *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film,* revised and expanded edition, ed. Leonardo Quaresima, Princeton 2004, li. This reprint of the original 1947 edition also contains a list of Kracauer's numerous factual errors.

My own project rests on the assumption that the archeological study of a work *in statu nascendi* opens a large untapped area of unrealized intentions, alternative plans, and 'roads not taken.' The life of a work *before* its publication bursts with potentiality. Seen in this light, production history becomes virtual history in which *possible* works shadow the existing one. Kracauer's most famous book is thus no longer examined in isolation, but reinserted into a vast network of intertwined and competing texts, which include letters, grant applications, research proposals, preliminary reports, drafts, and alternate versions. The object of study, then, shifts from the single work to the larger *project* of which it is part. From this perspective, the published book appears as merely *one* response to a specific historical moment. What other responses were considered and rejected? What changes were made in view of political exigencies or an assumed audience? How did the terms of production become inscribed in the final product? Such questions are especially instructive in the exilic context because of the exile's pressures to adjust and find acceptance in an unfamiliar environment. Under the threat of survival (and surveillance), exiles must be particularly attuned to possible effects and implications of their writings.

I argue that Kracauer's ultimate goal was to explain to the American reader (and to himself) a national mindset that led to fascism, war, and genocide. *From Caligari to Hitler* sought to provide an account of a nation that forced him into exile and murdered his mother and aunt in a concentration camp. How could such traumatic experiences *not* have had an effect on his writing? In a 1947 review, Eric Bentley characterized Kracauer's historical study of Weimar cinema as a thinly veiled condemnation of Germany, a "refugee's revenge."[3] The book's early, alternative titles, such as "German Cinema and the German Mind," demonstrate Kracauer's intent to probe the collective mentality of a nation, to which he himself was inescapably bound. In this regard, Kracauer's entire project of a "psychological history of the German film" could also be seen as a tormented interrogation of his own identity, as presaged by his comment to Walter Benjamin on February 24, 1935: "[. . .] I have always had a distant, even hostile attitude vis-à-vis whatever might be called the German mentality."[4]

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3 Bentley, Eric, "The Cinema: Its Art and Techniques," in: *New York Times* (May 18, 1947).

4 Benjamin, Walter, *Briefe an Siegfried Kracauer. Mit vier Briefen von Siegfried Kracauer an Walter Benjamin*, Marbach am Neckar 1987, 82. ("An sich fiele mir sogar eine

Numerous biographical, economic, and cultural factors animated the production of Kracauer's *Caligari*, and I cannot include all of them here. I also need to pass over the book's reception history and its influence on the historical study of national cinema.[5] Instead, my analysis focuses on the genesis and evolution of Kracauer's project in reaction to shifting social and political realities. Where to begin?

I. Revisiting the Past

On February 28, 1933, one day after the Reichstag fire, Siegfried Kracauer and his wife Lili fled from Berlin to Paris, in haste and without savings or belongings. On this day, an emergency decree was passed that suspended civil liberties and led to the persecution and mass arrest of Communists and left-leaning critics of the Nazi Party for supposedly preparing a putsch. Kracauer, "the Jew and man on the Left,"[6] as he characterized himself in a letter to fellow journalist Benno Reifenberg in 1933, had reasons to be fearful. As Germany's most prominent film critic, he

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solche Umstellung leichter als manchem andern, da ich von jeher dem, was deutsche Mentalität heissen darf, fremd, ja feindlich gegenüber gestanden habe."). Writing from Paris, Kracauer suggests that because of his negative view of the "German mentality," he might find it easier than others to adapt to "Anglo-Saxon countries or France."

5 These issues are addressed by, among others, Koch, Gertrud, *Siegfried Kracauer: An Introduction*, transl. Jeremy Gaines, Princeton 2000, 75–94; Elsaesser, Thomas, *Weimar Cinema and After: Germany's Historical Imaginary*, London 2000, 18–60; Mack, Michael, "Film as Memory: Siegfried Kracauer's Psychological History of German 'National Culture,'" in: *Journal of European Studies* 30 (2000): 157–181; Koebner, Thomas, "Von Caligari führt kein Weg zu Hitler: Zweifel an Siegfried Kracauers 'Master'-Analyse," in: id. (ed.), *Diesseits der Dämonischen Leinwand: Neue Perspektiven auf das späte Weimarer Kino*, Munich 2003, 15–38; Brecht, Christoph, "Strom der Freiheit und Strudel des Chaos: Ausblicke auf Kracauers Caligari-Buch," in: id./Ines Steiner, *Im Reich der Schatten: Siegfried Kracauers "From Caligari to Hitler"* Marbach am Neckar 2004, 5–52; Kaes, Anton, "German Cultural History and the Study of Film: Ten Theses and a Postscript," in: *New German Critique* 65 (Spring/Summer 1995): 47–58.

6 Quoted in Belke, Ingrid/Renz, Irina (ed.), *Siegfried Kracauer 1889–1966* (*Marbacher Magazin* 47/1988), 76. All quotations taken from this path-breaking documentation were compared with the original sources at the Kracauer-Nachlass in the Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach. Kracauer's correspondence and essays are quoted, whenever possible, according to the published sources. Unless an English source is cited, translations are my own.

was known for relentlessly exposing new film productions for their underlying, mostly reactionary tendencies. He had worked for the *Frankfurter Zeitung* since 1921, but felt, after his transfer to Berlin in 1930, increasingly alienated by the paper's right-wing orientation.[7] He chronicled the final years of the Weimar Republic with mounting anguish and radicalism. The borders between film review and political intervention became ever more blurred. In his programmatic essay, "The Task of the Film Critic," published on May 23, 1932, he declared:

> Briefly stated, the film critic of note is conceivable only as a social critic. His mission is to unveil the social images and ideologies hidden in mainstream films and through this unveiling to undermine the influence of the films themselves wherever necessary.[8]

Although Kracauer's radical film criticism soon became inopportune for the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, the chief editor was concerned enough about his safety to send him to the newspaper's Paris office – only to fire him six weeks later, in August 1933, under the pretext that he had published in a leftist exile journal. (Kracauer worked on the side because the *Frankfurter Zeitung* had drastically cut his salary.) It is safe to say that the abrupt fall from the height of fame and the resultant threat to his

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7 From 1921 to 1933, Kracauer published more than 700 film reviews and several hundred essays of cultural criticism in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*. All of them are now available in Kracauer, Siegfried, *Werke: Kleine Schriften zum Film*, 6.1–3, Frankfurt/M. 2004; id., *Werke: Essays, Feuilletons, Rezensionen*, 5.1–4, Berlin 2011. From 1930 to his forced exile in 1933, Kracauer reported from Berlin. In July 2010, Berlin-Charlottenburg renamed the former Holtzendorff-Platz after him. (See Kracauer's proleptic essay about the new Kracauer-Platz, "Aus dem Fenster gesehen," in: id., *Straßen in Berlin und anderswo*, Frankfurt/M., 1964, 40–44.) A plaque on neighboring Sybelstrasse 35, his domicile from 1931 to 1933, reminds us: "After his writings were banned by the National Socialists, he emigrated via France to the United States where his film-sociological main works were created – 'From Caligari to Hitler' and 'Theory of Film.'" Interestingly, it is the American Kracauer who is memorialized, not the 1920s Kracauer of *Das Ornament der Masse* (1927, repr. 1963). The implied timeline contains an inaccuracy: Kracauer did not flee *after* his writings were banned; he was already in Paris when his book *Die Angestellten* appeared in the 1935 index of banned books ("Liste des schädlichen und unerwünschten Schrifttums"). I thank Ingrid Belke for pointing this out to me.

8 Kracauer, Siegfried, "Über die Aufgabe des Filmkritikers," in: *Frankfurter Zeitung* (May 23, 1932); in translation, "The Task of the Film Critic," in: Anton Kaes/Martin Jay/Edward Dimendberg (ed.), *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook,* Berkeley 1994, 635.

livelihood devastated and broke Kracauer. His letters to his colleague and friend Benno Reifenberg in 1933 are full of panic, resentment, and desperation, testifying to the misery of exile – a life of unending economic hardship, humiliating appeals for help, and fears about one's professional future. By 1937, Kracauer began planning his emigration to New York, counting on Leo Löwenthal and other German friends who had emigrated earlier, for affidavits and even financial support. A grueling, three-year-long struggle to obtain an immigration visa and funds for the passage to New York ensued. After being interned by the Vichy Government from September to November 1939, the Kracauers finally received their visa and left for Marseilles, where they met with Benjamin. Their plan to depart from Lisbon was thwarted when Spain unexpectedly closed its border. Benjamin killed himself on September 26, 1940. (Kracauer later wrote that he, too, had contemplated suicide.) After several more months of anxious waiting, the Kracauers arrived in New York on April 25, 1941, welcomed by Leo Löwenthal and his wife. Kracauer was 52 years old and barely spoke English, but he had prepared his stay in New York well. Within a week of his arrival he became the special assistant of Iris Barry, curator of the Film Library at the Museum of Modern Art, with the charge to write a history of German cinema – a plan that can be traced back to his exile in Paris.

When Kracauer arrived in Paris in 1933, he was in the middle of writing *Georg*, his second novel. Although *Ginster*, his first novel, had been commercially successful in 1929, he could not find a suitable publisher for his semi-autobiographical account of a modern journalist. (*Georg* did not appear until 1973.) In need of income, Kracauer embarked on a commercial book project for the French market, titled *Jacques Offenbach and the Paris of His Time*. Published by the exile publisher Allert de Lange in German in 1937, the book uses the life and work of the French composer of popular operettas to present in colorful detail the "biography" of a society and an epoch – that of Paris of the Second Empire.[9]

9 On the production and reception history of this book, see Ingrid Belke's "Nachbemerkung," in Siegfried Kracauer, *Werke: Jacques Offenbach und das Paris seiner Zeit*, 8, Frankfurt/M. 2005, 509–549. See also Matala de Mazza, Ethel, "Operettenwelten: Die Exile Siegfried Kracauers," in: *Filmexil* 19 (May 2004): 16–24. In a letter to Benjamin on May 4, 1937, Adorno expressed his disappointment with Kracauer's *Offenbach*: "No, if Kracauer really does identify with this book, then he has definitely erased himself from the list of writers to be taken at all seriously. And I am myself seriously considering whether or not I should break off relations

(Kracauer shared with Benjamin an interest in nineteenth-century Paris as the site of modernity.[10]) Although his *Offenbach* sold poorly, translations in French and English appeared in 1938. Kracauer was eager to discuss future book projects with Walter Landauer, editor of Allert de Lange. Deciding between a book on the *fin de siècle* or a "Film-Buch," he signed a contract for the latter. "I am very glad," Landauer wrote to Kracauer on February 4, 1938, "that you decided to write the film book. Despite all difficulties and concerns, I believe that this is the right book for you and that from it some advantages will accrue for you. You can still write the fin-de-siècle-book at a later time."[11] The plan was to finish the film book within five months, by October 1, 1938. According to a three-page abstract, "Plan meines Buches über den Film" (Plan for my book on film), from May 16, 1938, Kracauer proposed to follow his work on *Offenbach* by examining film in relation to its times and "to conceptualize it as a living being that grows up in a certain milieu and under certain situations and can only be understood if this milieu and these conditions are factored in."[12] He argued for a narrative history that would "bring the people of our generation into an awareness of its [film's] origins by pointing out processes that are barely on the threshold of history."[13]

In his project description, Kracauer never once mentioned the "German mind" (as he later would in the American context), but he also no longer insisted on the ideology critique he advocated at the height of his authority in 1932. Critical theory in the spirit of the Frankfurt School

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with him [. . .]. Indeed, the piece is so irredeemably terrible that it could easily become a bestseller, and that would surely relieve all our worries." (Adorno, Theodor W./Benjamin, Walter, *The Complete Correspondence 1928 – 1940*, ed. Henri Lonitz, transl. Nicholas Walker, Cambridge 1999, 184.) Adorno's "worries" allude to the fear that Kracauer might become financially dependent on the Institut für Sozialforschung. Adorno's hostile reaction foreshadows his harsh judgment of Kracauer's exilic work in 1964. See Adorno, Theodor W., "The Curious Realist: On Siegfried Kracauer," in: Rolf Tiedemann (ed.), *Notes to Literature* 2, transl. Shierry Weber Nicholsen, New York 1992, 58–75.

10 Benjamin frequently quotes from Kracauer's *Offenbach* in his *Passagen-Werk*. See Benjamin, Walter, *The Arcades Project*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, transl. Howard Eiland/Kevin McLaughlin, Cambridge 1999.

11 Belke/Renz, *Marbacher Magazin*, 92.

12 "Plan meines Buches über den Film," 1 (unpublished manuscript in Kracauer-Nachlass).

13 A slightly modified version, "Ideenskizze zu meinem Buch über den Film," is reprinted in Kracauer, *Werke: Theorie des Films* 3, 807–809.

gave way to a "social biography" of the movies. Although Kracauer's original idea of writing such a narrative history of cinema never came to fruition, he was able to reuse the book proposal from 1938 for his Guggenheim Fellowship application in 1942, however with a twist: the focus was now on a "*psychological* history of the German film" – a project that would take another four years to complete.

Kracauer's decision in January 1938 to write a book about German cinema (instead of the *fin de siècle*) was influenced by a letter that Max Horkheimer had sent him from New York on May 3, 1937.[14] Horkheimer, who knew Kracauer through common friends Leo Löwenthal and Theodor W. Adorno, had emigrated via Geneva to New York in 1934. Aware of Kracauer's precarious economic situation, Horkheimer tipped him off about a possible position at the newly founded film library at the Museum of Modern Art, which had a "virtually complete collection of silent films dating from the beginning of the film industry [. . .] and an almost complete collection of films produced in Germany."[15] He added that the Museum was considering the possibility of "studying on the basis of available materials the relationship between the social situation and cinema in Germany."[16] Most importantly, Horkheimer told Kracauer that he had recommended him for the position as an expert on German cinema. Two weeks later, Kracauer penned a letter to MoMA's Film Library. He declared that he would accept the commission ("Auftrag") to explore the connection between social developments in Germany and the art of film. He summarized his qualifications: "I may say that I was regarded as one of the first – if not the first – film critic and film expert in Germany, and that I have always stressed the relations between film and the general social development."[17] However, in May

14 Horkheimer's letter was sent to Adorno but addressed to Kracauer. See *Adorno–Horkheimer Briefwechsel* 1, Frankfurt/M. 1994, 347–351. Adorno frequently mentions the "Filmsache" in his letters to Kracauer, for instance on July 4, 1937, where he tells him about a visit to Meyer Schapiro, who promised to bring Kracauer to New York. On September 13, 1937, Adorno speaks of the "American plan relating to film," and again December 10, 1937, when he expresses the hope that Kracauer would soon join him in New York on account of the "film project."

15 Quoted in Belke/Renz, *Marbacher Magazin*, 91.

16 Ibid.

17 Kracauer to Museum of Modern Art, Dep. Film Library, May 18, 1937, unpublished letter in Kracauer-Nachlass.

1937, no funding was available for a German cinema expert at the MoMA Film Library.

On December 14, 1937, curator Barry sent an inquiry to Meyer Schapiro, Professor of Art History at Columbia University and Kracauer's main American contact, asking: "Will you write me a letter telling me exactly the nature of the book that you want Kracauer to write, or that he wants to write, if your suggestion came from you first."[18] Later, Kracauer would emphasize that it was Barry's suggestion (rather than his own or Schapiro's) that generated the idea for a history of Weimar cinema.[19] Barry even proposed to find a publisher for Kracauer's unwritten book, but without success, prompting her to write to Schapiro on February 7, 1938:

> I have at last heard from Knopf, the publisher, and as I rather feared, their reaction about the Krakauer [sic] book is unfavorable. They seem to feel that it would find only a very small public, and that it would be a subject for some university rather than a general commercial publisher. I feel that they may perhaps be right, for as far as I can ascertain no film book sells well in this country.[20]

Not long thereafter, Kracauer met Iris Barry and John E. Abbott in Paris. In a lucky coincidence, the Museum of Modern Art presented an exhibition of American art, "Trois siècles d'art aux États-Unis," in Paris in July 1938, which also included a program of American art film curated by MoMA's Film Library. Kracauer gave the retrospective of American cinema a glowing review and remarked that the New York Film Library, founded by a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation, was not only screening and restoring old films, but also fostering scholarly work and outreach.[21] He ended his review of July 24, 1938 in a slightly self-serving

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18 Iris Barry to Meyer Schapiro, December 14, 1937, unpublished letter in Kracauer-Nachlass. Schapiro (besides Löwenthal) was instrumental in arranging Kracauer's visa to enter the United States.

19 On November 18, 1944, he writes to Barry: "Many thanks for your friendly words about my book. I am fully aware of the fact that this book was your idea for many years." He thanks her for "invaluable initiative and original assistance." Kracauer to Barry, unpublished letter in Kracauer-Nachlass.

20 Iris Barry to Meyer Schapiro, February 7, 1938, unpublished letter in Kracauer-Nachlass.

21 In the mid-thirties, several film archives were founded: the British Film Institute in 1933, the Reichsfilmarchiv in 1935, MoMA's Film Library in 1935, and the Cinémathèque Française in 1938, which was preceded by informal groups.

way: "If it is true that the interpretation of present-day life is also to be found in the films themselves, then this Institute is going to have an extraordinary task ahead of it."[22]

The Film Library at MoMA was founded in 1935 as the first cultural institution dedicated to collecting, preserving, and distributing older film. The Rockefeller Foundation committed $100,000 to the Film Library to acquire films to build a historical archive of cinema – an innovative step because art museums were traditionally devoted to paintings and sculptures, while film culture was exclusively interested in new productions.[23] Now "old" films could be studied as works of art or social documents. Moreover, the Film Library believed that preservation and exhibition of film art would be best complemented by research and scholarship. And who would be more qualified than Kracauer to turn the Film Library at MoMA into an unparalleled research center for film history? Supported by the Rockefeller and Guggenheim Foundations for full five years, Kracauer became one the first people ever to devote himself full-time to a scholarly study of German cinema.

An uncanny scenario: Kracauer, the foremost film critic of the Weimar Republic, sits in a projection room at the Museum of Modern Art, re-viewing films from the Weimar era, most of which he himself had reviewed before. He revisits them with the benefit (or curse) of hindsight. He watches the films with the knowledge of Weimar democracy's slide into the dictatorship of the Third Reich. In this process of "back-shadowing," Weimar films appear as unwitting documents for the psychological conditions that made fascism possible. As Kracauer returns to his own past through the movies, he performs what war psychoanalyst Ernst Simmel had suggested in 1918 that shell shock victims do in hypnosis: to let the past run by repeatedly – like a movie – in order to understand what caused the traumatic event.[24] Were there signs in Weimar cinema

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Kracauer had been affiliated with the circle of film aficionados around Henri Langlois in September 1936.

22 Kracauer, "Ausstellung der New-Yorker Film Library," in: id., *Werke*, 6.3, 216.

23 See Wasson, Haidee, *Museum Movies: The Museum of Modern Art and the Birth of Art Cinema*, Berkeley 2003; Decherney, Peter, *Hollywood and the Culture Elite: How the Movies Became American*, New York 2006.

24 Quoted in Kaes, Anton, *Shell Shock Cinema: Weimar Culture and the Wounds of War*, Princeton, 2009, 49. Kracauer uses a different analogy: "In writing I felt like a physician who performs an autopsy and also examines a part of his own, now for-ever dead past. But some of it lives on, naturally, however changed" (Letter to Panofsky on May 2, 1947, in: Kracauer, Siegfried/Panofsky, Erwin,

that pointed to this catastrophic outcome? Were there hints he had overlooked? Although Kracauer had been the first to detect proto-fascist tendencies in Weimar cinema, his *post factum* readings are sealed with a certainty that leaves no alternatives or ambiguities. What critics have decried as teleological fallacy in his approach was nothing less than the frantic attempt to find the origins of what happened to him and his country. The original plan to write a social history of film became an opportunity to work through a personal and national trauma. It is no surprise that not only his first but also his last book written in exile – the posthumous *History: The Last Things before the Last* – is obsessed with the need to make sense of the past. In this way, he injected the experience of exile into the history of Weimar cinema.

II. Adapting to the Present

Soon after Kracauer landed in New York on April 25, 1941, he succeeded in meeting John Marshall, the Associate Director for the Humanities at the Rockefeller Foundation, a major benefactor of MoMA's Film Library and supporter of the study of film as a political propaganda tool.[25] On May 9, 1941, Kracauer sent him his curriculum vitae in which he stated:

> Through all these years I continued my researches [sic] on moving pictures and collected the material for a book on the *History and Sociology of Moving Pictures*; my material includes notes on extensive research in the Paris Film Library. In 1938, I was invited by the Film Library of the Museum of Modern Art to come to New York and to write at this institute a study of the *History and Sociology of German Moving Pictures*.[26]

Briefwechsel 1941–1966: Mit einem Anhang: Siegfried Kracauer "under the spell of the living Warburg tradition" ed. Volker Breidecker, Berlin 1996, 47).

25 Kracauer sent Marshall the various chapters of his *Caligari to Hitler* for feedback. On June 19, 1945, Kracauer wrote: "That you find my plans of study of real interest encourages me to feel that you are concerned for my further activities. I wish to tell you that I have begun to tackle the problem of a job to start in October [. . .] I could do a good and important job by following up on problems of American mass culture. The suggestion that I might analyze the comic strips has also cropped up." (Unpublished letter in Kracauer-Nachlass.)

26 Quoted in Culbert, David, "The Rockefeller Foundation, the Museum of Modern Art Film Library, and Siegfried Kracauer, 1941," in: *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 13.4 (1993): 497.

Here he distinguishes between two projects – one general one, a social history of film, the other a specific one on *German* moving pictures. Kracauer had indeed planned to write a general book on film since 1938 and had already begun making notes for it between November 1940 and May 1941. Titled "Film I," "Film II," and "Film III," and known today as "Marseille Notes for a Theory of Film,"[27] they are considered preparation for his *Theory of Film*, which would take Kracauer until 1960 to complete. In the early forties, as Hitler's armies marched victoriously across Europe, more urgent matters occupied him – matters that could be funded because they responded to the immediate political situation in the United States.

In May 1941, Barry asked the Rockefeller Foundation for a grant of $2,000 for Kracauer to "undertake a serious study of German wartime communication through film."[28] He would work with the radio communication project of Ernst Kris and Hans Speier (also sponsored by the Rockefeller Foundation) in the hope of "an integrated content-analysis of totalitarian communication in wartime."[29] Barry further suggested that MoMA's holdings of Nazi propaganda and "entertainment" films would be the basis for his analysis. Kracauer's expertise in German film was thus put to use for counter-propaganda (openly funded by the Rockefeller Foundation) that was intended to help with the American war effort.[30]

Kracauer's first American publication, "Propaganda and the Nazi War Film," was commissioned by the Rockefeller Foundation and published as a brochure by MoMA's Film Library less than a year after his arrival. Its aim was to examine the aesthetic structures and practices of German war newsreels (for example, *Blitzkrieg in the West*) and propaganda films, such as Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will*. Kracauer also analyzed recent feature films (*Baptism of Fire* and *Victory in the West*) according to a "scheme" that described the "polyphony" of commentary, visuals, and sound. The preface for the brochure, dated June 9, 1942,

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27 They are reprinted in full in Kracauer, *Werke: Theorie des Films* 3, 515–779. See also Hansen, Miriam, "'With Skin and Hair:' Kracauer's Theory of Film, Marseille 1940," in: *Critical Inquiry* 19 (Spring 1993): 437–469.

28 Iris Barry to John Marshall, May 14, 1941, letter reprinted in Culbert, "The Rockefeller Foundation", 499.

29 Ibid.

30 Kracauer's research proposal for the Guggenheim Fellowship in October 1942 ends with the promise that his studies on Nazi film propaganda will "contribute to an effective American war film production." ("Notes on the Planned History of the German Film," unpublished manuscript in Kracauer-Nachlass.)

declared: "This report details how the Nazis handle that polyphony. An intimate knowledge of their devices may prove useful for purposes of effective counter-propaganda."[31] Practicing formal readings of Nazi films to promote the cause of American "counter-propaganda" – such was the contradictory reality of Kracauer's first year and a half at the Film Library – from May 1941 to October 1942. His German background as well as his knowledge of film assured his position as a specialist in the "Swastika world" (vi). But his expertise in fascist propaganda had its own prehistory.

Back in Paris in January 1937, Kracauer had accepted an invitation from Adorno and Horkheimer to write a lengthy (and well-paid) essay on "Masse und Propaganda" for the Frankfurt School's *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*. Kracauer delivered the study under a new title, "Totalitarian Propaganda," in installments between August and December 1937. Interested in the emergence and function of propaganda, he postulated for Germany an economic and ideological crisis which fascism resolved through the cult of the masses, the charlatan-like personality, and an emphasis on the nation. His essay of 135 pages was radically cut and rewritten by Adorno. Kracauer angrily withdrew it from publication, and it is considered lost except for an elaborate abstract.[32] This study of fascist propaganda and its media, however, provided a solid foundation for his American work on the content and function of German war propaganda films. Unsurprisingly, even this commissioned study on fascist propaganda sought to explain more than the movies: he deployed the films to uncover a collective German "mentality" that brought forth, and was swayed by, such propaganda. This concern with a national psychology echoed the dominant American discourse about Germany at the time – a discourse in which mostly German refugees tried to explain to the American public how the Germans became Nazis.

In the early forties, countless books, articles and films appeared in the United States about Germany and the Germans that brought the enemy into representation by constantly delineating, describing, and inventing it.[33]

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31 Kracauer, Siegfried, *Propaganda and the Nazi War Film*, New York 1942, vi.

32 The abstract is reprinted in Belke/Renz, *Marbacher Magazin*, 85–90. See Kracauer's response in his letter to Adorno on August 20, 1938 (Adorno, Theodor W./Kracauer, Siegfried, *Briefwechsel 1923–1966*, ed. Wolfgang Schopf, Frankfurt/M. 2008, 395–400).

33 For instance, Winkler, Paul, *The Thousand-Year Conspiracy: Secret Germany behind the Mask*, New York 1943; Seger, Gerhart/Marck, Siegfried, *Germany: To Be or*

After long accommodating the Nazi rulers to avoid losing the German market, Hollywood began to produce anti-Nazi films in 1939, with many German refugee actors having to play Nazis because of their accents. The political discourse ranged from works that emphasized the "dual character" of Germans to those that believed in an enduring, quasi-genetic defect of Germans as authoritarian personalities. Erich von Kahler's *The German Character in the History of Europe,* published in Swiss exile in 1937, was influential in giving a historical account of the "Faustian" national psyche of Germans.[34] Thomas Mann's political essays and his magisterial novel *Doktor Faustus* (published in 1947, the same year as Kracauer's *Caligari*) also compulsively worked through the "German problem," as Kahler called it in 1943.[35] William McGovern's popular 1941 history, *From Luther to Hitler*,[36] the title of which may have inspired Kracauer's *From Caligari to Hitler*, constructed a genealogy of Germanness from the sixteenth to the twentieth century. Also in 1941, Emil Ludwig's *The Germans: Double History of a Nation* declared that "all well-intentioned efforts to make a distinction between Hitler and the German character miss their point."[37] Ludwig, well-known in the 1920s as a prolific biographer of famous men (Goethe, Napoleon, Lincoln, Roosevelt, Jesus, Stalin, et al.), had come to America in 1934, after his books were burned on May 10, 1933. His American writings, all violently critical of Germany and the Germans, were provocative and controversial, especially among fellow refugees. In response, the German-Jewish exile paper *Aufbau* ran a series of articles in 1942 under the telling title "Was soll mit Deutschland

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Not to Be, New York 1943; Nizer, Louis, *What to Do with Germany*, Chicago 1944; Tetens, T. H., *Know Your Enemy*, preface by Emil Ludwig, New York 1944. Teten's anti-German book was published by the Vansittart-inspired Society for the Prevention of World War III. See Kaes, Anton, "What to Do with Germany? American Debates about the Future of Germany 1942–1947," in: *German Politics and Society*, 13.3 (Fall 1995): 130–140. See also Radkau, Joachim, *Die deutsche Emigration in den USA: Ihr Einfluss auf die amerikanische Europapolitik 1933–1945,* Düsseldorf 1971; Hoenicke-Moore, Michaela, *Know Your Enemy: The American Debate on Nazism,* New York 2010.

34 Kahler, Erich von, *Der deutsche Charakter in der Geschichte Europas*, Zurich 1937.

35 Kahler, "The German Problem," in: *Contemporary Jewish Record* (December 1943): 454–465; and (December 1944), 608–15. See also Arendt, Hannah, "Approaches to the German Problem," in: *Partisan Review*, 12 (Winter 1945): 93–106.

36 McGovern, William Montgomery, *From Luther to Hitler: The History of Fascist-Nazi Political Philosophy*, Boston et al. 1941.

37 Ludwig, Emil, *The Germans: Double History of a Nation*, New York 1941, 5.

geschehen?" (What should be done with Germany?) Hannah Arendt, among others, participated in the debate, issuing a diatribe against Ludwig in which she called him a former nationalist who now opportunistically sided with the stronger country, thereby encouraging imperialism and racism. Ludwig countered with a blistering attack on the "German Patriots in Exile." Even the *New York Times* entered the debate on July 13, 1942, with an editorial that criticized Ludwig. If indeed only seven percent of Americans believed that Hitler represented the German people, *The Times* argued, then Ludwig was wrong in equating Germany with Hitler. Furthermore, the editorial admonished readers that the "theory of wickedness of an entire race is a Nazi theory; let us not ape it."[38] The assertion of an innately authoritarian national character held out the promise to explain the fascist turn in German politics, but came at the price of damning a whole people – including members of the internal resistance movement, as well as all German refugees. It is fascinating to observe the extent to which the exiles themselves were self-divided about the question of the German national character. Kracauer's work in exile is fully imbricated in this highly charged political discourse.

The heated public debates in the early 1940s often blurred the terms "Nazis" and "Germans." In his 1942 pamphlet on the German propaganda film, Kracauer, too, was tempted to make generalizations about "the deep-seated desire of Germans to be sheltered by a *Weltanschauung*."[39] Almost in passing, he made the following claim: "The natural inclination of Germans for thinking in anti-rational, mythological terms has never been entirely overcome."[40] This sentence caught the eye of his Marxist friend Meyer Schapiro, himself a second-generation immigrant of Lithuanian-Jewish descent. Although Schapiro praised Kracauer's stylistic analysis of Nazi war film propaganda and his skill in deriving ideological claims from close readings, he was stunningly harsh in his criticism of Kracauer's obvious over-identification with the anti-German discourse as a new immigrant in 1942. Schapiro wrote to Kracauer on August 12 of that year:

> I am shocked to read of the "natural inclination of Germans for thinking in anti-rational mythological terms." This is what the Nazis want the people

38 Editorial in *New York Times*, July 13, 1942. Ludwig countered with the publication of a 96-page pamphlet, *How to Treat the Germans*, New York 1943. Between 1939 and 1946, Hollywood released approximately 150 anti-Nazi movies. It is not known how many, if any, Kracauer watched.

39 Kracauer, *Propaganda and the Nazi War Film*, 21.

40 Ibid., 24.

> to believe; as for me, habits of thought are cultural and historical, not "natural." And the German organization? And technology? And Helmholtz and Co.? and the superiority of the German film? Is all this the result of the "natural inclination" in question? Why should the Nazis appeal to the German ratio if they are naturally irrational? Can we ever change them by appealing to a faculty that nature, alas, had denied them? Isn't it perfectly rational for Goebbels to appeal to their irrationality? What melancholy and childish paradoxes this Nazi racial psychology brings us to.[41]

Schapiro also took issue with Kracauer's remark about the "passivity of the German people." Palpably infuriated, Schapiro calls this "another bit of ethno-psychology that I can't swallow; it is almost an inversion of the Nazi theory (which distinguishes active and passive peoples in history.) [. . .] The conception of the 'people' implied in all these notions is to me a most distasteful, undemocratic and cynical one."[42]

Kracauer's response to this stinging critique was brief (acknowledging it on a postcard), but it is telling that five years later, in the reprint of his essay as an appendix to *From Caligari to Hitler*, he changed the wording from "the *natural* inclination of Germans [. . .]" to "the *traditional* German penchant for thinking in anti-rational mythological terms."[43] Altering the formulation from "natural" to "traditional" meant a shift from a biological to a cultural register. Schapiro's dismissal of Kracauer's use of national psychology made him more careful, even preemptively defensive, as is evident in the introduction to his *Caligari*:

> To speak of the peculiar mentality of a nation by no means implies the concept of a fixed national character. The interest here lies exclusively in such collective dispositions or tendencies as prevail within a nation at a certain state of its development.[44]

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41 Quoted in Belke, Ingrid, "'Das Geheimnis des Faschismus liegt in der Weimarer Republik:' Der Kunsthistoriker Meyer Schapiro über Kracauers erstes Filmbuch," in: *Filmexil* 4 (Juni 1994): 40.

42 Ibid., 41f.

43 Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler*, 290. Belke highlights this comparison in "Das Geheimnis," 45f.

44 Ibid., Introduction, 8. This debate would be of utmost importance for the postwar negotiation of guilt and punishment. See Karl Jaspers' discussion of collective guilt in *Die Schuldfrage* (The Question of Guilt), which appeared in 1947, the same year as Kracauer's *Caligari*. Jaspers: "It is nonsensical, however, to charge a whole people with a crime. The criminal is always only an individual. It is nonsensical, too, to lay moral guilt to a people as a whole. There is no such thing as a national character extending to every single member of a nation . . . Morally one

Schapiro concluded his long critical letter in 1942 by expressing excitement about Kracauer's planned book on pre-Nazi German film: "I am convinced that it will tell us more about the Nazis than your present account of this film propaganda. The 'secret' of the Nazis is to be found in the Weimar Republic."[45]

The book Schapiro mentioned was, of course, *From Caligari to Hitler*, which in August 1942 was not yet written (nor titled), though conceptualized to the point that Schapiro could allude to it. After publishing "Propaganda and the Nazi War Film" and a follow-up essay, "The Conquest of Europe on the Screen: The Nazi Newsreel, 1939–40,"[46] Kracauer had returned to his original exile project of writing a history of German film. In his final report to John Marshall of the Rockefeller Foundation, dated May 25, 1943, he elaborated on his project, again focused on the one question that was on everyone's mind at the time: "How was Hitler possible?" In order to answer this question and to explain his new emphasis on the psychological dispositions of the German movie-going public, he referenced three books that buttressed his argument. The first was Franz Neumann's classical 1942 study, *Behemoth: The Structure and Practice of National Socialism*, which explained the failure of the Communists partly in terms of "their inability to evaluate correctly the psychological factors and sociological trends operating among German workers."[47] According to Kracauer, Neumann came to the conclusion that democracy might have survived "if the democratic value system had been firmly rooted in the society."[48] Kracauer also invoked Erich Fromm's 1941 book *Escape from Freedom*, which argued that most German workers were of a personality type that can be defined as "authoritarian," a deep-seated personality trait that lets them forget even their political self-interest. If given a choice between socialism and fascism, they would show "a deep-seated respect

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can judge the individual only, never a group [. . .] A people cannot perish heroically, cannot be a criminal, cannot act morally or immorally; only its individuals can do so. A people as a whole can be neither guilty nor innocent [. . .] Every German is made to share in the blame for the crimes committed in the name of the Reich. We are collectively liable. The question is in what sense each of us must feel co-responsible" (ibid., 40f.)

45 Schapiro, in Belke, "Das Geheimnis," 41.

46 See Kracauer, Siegfried, "The Conquest of Europe on the Screen: The Nazi Newsreel, 1939–40," in: *Social Research* 10 (September 1943): 337–357.

47 Kracauer, Siegfried, Preliminary Report for John Marshall, Chapter 1, May 25, 1943, 26. (Manuscript, Kracauer-Nachlass). Also in Kracauer, *From Caligari*, 10.

48 Kracauer, Preliminary Report, 27; also in Kracauer, *From Caligari*, 10f.

and longing for established authority."[49] In other words, their personality structures would make it impossible to rebel against fascism. Kracauer also invoked his own 1930 treatise, *The Salaried Masses* (Die Angestellten), where he had argued that members of the destabilized middle class did not realize that their practical interests should induce them to side with democracy; their surrender to the Nazis was based on emotional fixations rather than on a "realistic facing of the facts."[50] In his opinion, these delusions were being reinforced by the movies, which did not present the world "as it really was." In 1943, Kracauer adds to his excerpt from *Die Angestellten* a vitriolic aside that articulated his undiminished contempt: "That they have been thoroughly cheated by those from whom they expected salvation, is almost an act of poetic justice."[51] From this politically engaged analysis Kracauer deduces a special explanatory function for a critical study of film:

> Thus, behind the overt history of the economic shifts, social exigencies and political machinations during that period runs a secret history – the history of the character of the German multitude. One cannot overestimate the importance of the psychological factor in pre-Nazi Germany. While the socialist party leaders had to pay for neglecting it, Hitler himself profited by playing upon the soul of the masses. The disclosure of their taboos and idols of all the fears and longings which found outlet then will doubtless help in the understanding of his ascent.[52]

And he concludes: "The German movies offer an incomparable opportunity for grasping the secrets of the German soul."[53] In the published book he made some telling changes. His introduction alters "German soul" to "inner dispositions:"

> Thus, behind the overt history of economic shifts, social exigencies and political machinations runs a secret history involving the inner dispositions of the German people. The disclosure of these dispositions through the medium of the German screen may help in the understanding of Hitler's ascent and ascendancy.[54]

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49 Ibid.

50 Ibid., see Kracauer, Siegfried, *The Salaried Masses*, London 1998 (Orig. *Die Angestellten*, 1930).

51 Kracauer, Preliminary Report, 28.

52 Ibid., 29.

53 Ibid.

54 Kracauer, *From Caligari*, Introduction, 11.

Kracauer admits that the German cinema of the pre-Hitler era was first and foremost the outcome of what may roughly be called middle-class mentality – but this did not limit its range in his opinion: "For there hardly existed a group character," he writes, "that would not have shared the same traits with those bourgeois strata which, during a long period, had taken a leading part in Germany's cultural development."[55] In fact, Kracauer believes that both working-class and upper-class minds share middle-class proclivities. (He illustrates this through the case of actor Hans Albers, whose popularity transcended class.)

Because the extension of his Rockefeller Grant would run out in June 1943, he applied at the suggestion of Iris Barry for a fellowship from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation. As stated on his application, dated October 14, 1942, his plan was to write a "History of the German Film in relation to the social, political, economic and aesthetic influences that shaped it."[56] He used language similar to that of his original proposal from 1938, but added two points. He gave credit to the existence of the archive of the Film Library. ("Before the foundation of the Film Library, the realization of such a proposal would have been hardly conceivable."[57]) Responding to the new political situation, he also gave the project a political spin that was missing in the earlier draft:

> The project's special purpose is also of general importance: in following the development of the German film, it helps in the understanding of the events that led to Hitler's rise to power, and reveals the mentality behind the Nazi regime as well. Thus the research is, perhaps, in a position to prepare the ground for two post-war tasks. First, it concentrates upon those more or less hidden elements of German reality which will have to be considered by any education project concerned with Germany's future. Second, it can hardly fail to draw attention to the rich possibilities that might be realized through a similar study of American film.[58]

He concludes by pointing out that both studies – his earlier pamphlet on Nazi propaganda film and the proposed book on German film – are "designed to make evident how the Nazis practice psychological warfare on the screen, and thus to contribute to an effective American war film

55 Kracauer, Preliminary Report, 27.
56 Guggenheim application, unpublished, first page, dated October 14, 1942 (Kracauer-Nachlass).
57 Breidecker, *Kracauer*, 15f.
58 Ibid., 18.

production."[59] The political project of his *Caligari* is stated more clearly in the research proposals and correspondence than in the published book itself.

Kracauer began his Guggenheim Fellowship in July 1943, but in less than a year he realized that he needed more time to complete his study of the German mind. On March 3, 1944, Kracauer submitted a "preliminary report," summarizing the first three chapters of his book and outlining the rest. He blamed methodological difficulties (he specifically mentions "theories on collective psychology") for his slow progress. He reiterated that the pre-Nazi films followed the basic formula from rebellion to submission and claimed: "Hitler knew how to exploit dispositions in the depth of the collective soul."[60] Once again, given his belief in deep-seated inclinations, he was tempted to allude to national character: "[. . .] my writing will result in a history of German collective dispositions from the last World War on. Conditioned by external factors, such dispositions do not always change with the ever-changing circumstances, but may temporarily become themselves a factor influencing the course of events."[61] However, he quickly added in parentheses, remembering Schapiro's critique: "(This implies that I am far from postulating a fixed national character.)"[62]

He ended his account from March 1944 with the hope that his book would not be just a film book; instead, "its methods of approach to the core of a people's life may prove particularly interesting after the war when contacts will be resumed."[63] By spring of 1944, the victory over Germany was certain and discussions started about the future of the vanquished country. What began as a social history of pre-Nazi cinema and the "German mind" now became an intervention in American cultural politics that was designed to promote Kracauer, the exiled German authority, not only as an expert of German cinema, but also as a public intellectual in New York. He hoped to use his symbolic capital as a German refugee for some long-term and secure employment.[64]

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59 Ibid.

60 Preliminary Report on my Project, "History of the German Film . . .", dated March 3, 1944, 7.

61 Ibid., 8.

62 Ibid.

63 Ibid., 9.

64 Kracauer was eventually successful in this endeavor. After a fellowship from the Bollingen Foundation (1949–51) to write his *Theory of Film* and a stint at the

III. Writing for the Future

On August 4, 1944, Erwin Panofsky, a German-born art historian at Princeton and fellow émigré since 1934, informed Kracauer that he had recommended his book to the director of Princeton University Press.[65] As one of the referees for the Guggenheim Fellowship, Panofsky already knew the first two chapters. Kracauer hesitated at first because he was still trying to interest a commercial publisher. After this failed, he followed his friend's advice and corresponded with Datus C. Smith, director of Princeton University Press. The Editorial Board of Princeton University Press approved publication of Kracauer's still-untitled, half-completed book about German cinema on October 17, 1944. The minutes of the Princeton University Board meeting included this note:

> Siegfried Kracauer: The German Film (working title only; actual title not yet chosen). On recommendation of Erwin Panofsky. Manufacturing cost about $1,750 for 2,000 copies. Approval is subject to remaining portion of manuscript being of the same quality as the part we have seen.[66]

Immediately after the book was accepted, a long and revealing correspondence about the title of the book ensued. Kracauer suggested the following title on November 3, 1944: "Shadows of the Mass Mind: A History of the German Film."[67] A few days later, on November 7, 1944, Smith countered with a suggestion for a shorter title: "The German Film and the German Mind." The discussion resumed again one-and-a-half years later,

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Voice of America (1950–52), he became Research Director of the Bureau of Applied Social Research at the Social Science Department of Columbia University, a position he held until 1958. From 1952 on, he served as a paid consultant for the Bollingen Foundation, a philanthropic organization for the Humanities and precursor of today's Mellon Foundation, which enabled him to visit Germany regularly. The job's administrative chores and his commissioned articles for American papers and magazines delayed the completion of his *Theory of Film* until 1960. On Kracauer's American writings, see Moltke, Johannes von, "Manhattan Crossroads: Theory of Film between the Frankfurt School and the New York Intellectuals," in: Gerd Gemünden/Johannes von Moltke (ed.), *Culture in the Anteroom: The Legacies of Siegfried Kracauer*, Ann Arbor, forthcoming. See also Kracauer, Siegfried, *Siegfried Kracauer's American Writings: Essays on Film and Popular Culture*, ed. Johannes von Moltke/Kristy Rawson, Berkeley, forthcoming.

65 Breidecker, *Kracauer*, 30.

66 Unpublished document in the Princeton University Press Records (Kracauer file) in the Manuscripts Division of Princeton University Library.

67 Kracauer to Smith, November 3, 1944. Cited in Breidecker, *Kracauer*, 38.

on March 18, 1946, when the publisher reluctantly agreed to the main title "From Caligari to Hitler" – a title for which Kracauer had found support from Panofsky against the will of the publisher, who thought that the word "Hitler" in the title would be unwelcome. (Panofsky wrote later, on April 29, 1947, with a sense of irony that he was looking forward to Kracauer's parallel American work "From Shirley Temple to Truman."[68]) The two names "Caligari" and "Hitler" – one fictional (taken from Robert Wiene's 1920 film *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*), the other historical – are brought into a constellation that encapsulates Kracauer's narrative technique of interlacing fiction and political reality.

On August 28, 1946, Kracauer's editor at Princeton University Press, Jean MacLachlan, sent his chapter on *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* to the journal *Theater Arts* for prepublication.[69] She titled the essay "Caligari and the German Soul," even though Kracauer had asked her to use the term "German soul" sparingly. "I do not like it [the term] at all," Kracauer wrote, "but it is difficult to replace. Occasionally, I have substituted 'collective mind' for it. However, there are places where 'soul' seems more correct. At any rate, I think, soul should appear as rarely as possible. If in some case or other you find an appropriate alternative, I should be very glad."[70] Again we see Kracauer both attracted to and repulsed by collective psychology as an analytical tool. He seems to use terms like "soul," "collective soul," "inner dispositions," and "mass mind" synonymously, but feels noticeably uneasy about it.

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68 Breidecker, *Kracauer*, 46.

69 Most of Kracauer's correspondence with Princeton University Press is with Jean MacLachlan. After working with her on his manuscript from 1944 to the end of 1946, he writes to her on January 26, 1947: "I am afraid, this will be my last letter to you, at least in connection with the book. I can hardly tell you how grateful I was – and am – for your helpful cooperation. It was so comforting for me to know that I could always rely on your understanding, your watchful eye and your personal interest. And really, without your guidance I sometimes would not have known how to find my way in this maze of details." (Unpublished letter in Princeton University Press Records.) Strangely, Kracauer does not mention her name in his Preface.

70 Kracauer to MacLachlan, April 8, 1946. (Princeton University Press Records). *Theater Arts* did not print the article, nor did *Hollywood Quarterly*. Kenneth Macgowan, the editor of *Theatre Arts*, wrote to MacLachlan on July 1, 1946: "Thank you for sending us Dr. Kracauer's introduction. I am sorry to say that none of us likes it. We feel that it is rather heavy and full of questionable philosophizing. We have been tempted to use his material on 'Caligari,' though it suffers from the same faults. Please let down the good doctor as gently as you can."

Another concern for Kracauer was the preface to the book. After Smith advised him to limit the whole preface to a sentence or two, he asked for help in a long letter to MacLachlan, dated May 5, 1946: "What worries me greatly is the Preface. Naturally I can begin it with a sentence such as Mr. Smith suggested: 'This book is not concerned with German films for their own sake; rather, it aims at increasing our knowledge of German pre-Hitler history through an analysis of these films.'"[71] This passage reappears in the Preface to the published book, with only slight stylistic changes. In the letter to his editor, Kracauer continues:

> There are only two points I really wish to touch in this Preface: First, that this book wants to set a pattern for studies of current mass tendencies in this country and elsewhere; second, that I am not concerned with drawing practical conclusions as to German re-education, etc., but that I am merely concerned with exposing the deep psychological layers which re-education, if any, will have to seize upon. (I even think I should not use the word re-education.)[72]

It is telling that Kracauer considered broaching the topic of reeducation because by 1945 the question of 'What to do with Germany?' had become an urgent one for all German exiles.[73] It may be that the inclusion of such a practical intervention in the Preface was intended to catch the attention of governmental agencies that might fund further research. (We must not forget that, in 1946, Kracauer was an independent scholar who had no choice but being constantly on the lookout for funding sources.) Whatever the reason, this remark places the book in the middle of a heated debate about reeducation at the end of the war. The State Department had begun thinking about the immediate postwar period as early as 1944. Once Henry Morgenthau's radical plan of turning Germany into a pastoral farmland was abandoned in late 1944, the issue of what to do with Germany (at least the territory occupied by the United States) became of utmost importance. The basic principle of reeducation followed the belief that a mere change in government would not be

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71 Kracauer to MacLachlan, May 5, 1946 (Princeton University Press Records).

72 Ibid.

73 See Kracauer's review of Marshall Knappen's book *And Call it Peace*, titled, "Reeducation Program for the Reich," in: *New York Times Book Review* 53/1 (January 4, 1948): 6, 18. He is skeptical about the author's positive outlook on German reeducation.

sufficient to make Germany a democratic state; the German people themselves would have to be "reprogrammed," and a whole process of reconstruction – psychological, economic, military, political, and cultural – would be needed for the shaping of a new Germany.[74]

Reeducation included not only denazification and punishment (the Nuremberg Trials lasted from November 1945 to October 1946), but also changes in Germany's cultural institutions, including schools, literature, and film. As early as 1944, German refugees started their own reeducation debates – most prominently Paul Tillich and Paul Niebuhr in their "Council for a Democratic Germany." They made proposals to the State Department which, however, were deemed too harsh (for instance, they advocated blanket dismissal of all German teachers).[75] Representatives of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) also visited California to ask five German refugee writers for suggestions about reeducation, but again their suggestions were found useless: Lion Feuchtwanger said in this secret (now declassified) document that "three million Nazis must be arrested, killed, or exiled to forced labor," while Alfred Döblin commented: "Educating the Germans is almost hopeless because the majority of the professional classes are Nazis."[76] No refugee was asked to serve on any of the governmental reeducation committees. Fearing that political activism might jeopardize his position, Kracauer did not openly participate in these debates, but the correspondence with his publisher demonstrates that the reeducation of Germans was very much on his mind and that he saw his *Caligari* as indirectly contributing to it.[77]

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74 Tent, James F., *Mission on the Rhine: Reeducation and Denazification in American-occupied Germany*, Chicago 1982, 19.

75 The Council for a Democratic Germany was founded by Paul Tillich on May 3, 1944, in New York. It sought to represent German exiles in the United States and give them a voice in the American debates about the future of Germany. Brecht was a member, and Thomas Mann was not, though he sympathized with the cause. Kracauer (to the best of my knowledge) was never asked to join. See Langkau-Alex, Ursula/Ruprecht, Thomas M. (ed.), *Was soll aus Deutschland werden? Der Council for a Democratic Germany in New York 1944–1945: Aufsätze und Dokumente*, Frankfurt/M. 1995.

76 Memorandum to the Director of Strategic Services From the Foreign Nationalities Branch, Number 8–304, dated January 18, 1945, "Five German Writers Discuss What to Do with Germany," repr. in Stephan, Alexander, *Im Visier des FBI: Deutsche Exilschriftsteller in den Akten amerikanischer Geheimdienste*, Stuttgart 1995, 564f.

77 In an essay titled "The Decent German: Film Portrait," in: *Commentary* 7 (1949): 74–77, Kracauer discusses the 1947 film *Ehe im Schatten* (Marriage in the

Reeducation efforts blended into national psychology questions. In order to successfully educate a person, not to mention a people, questions of mentality and identity needed to be asked. Are the Germans by nature and by disposition authoritarian? Can they be trained to be democracy-loving citizens? Numerous books and articles were written to answer these questions. "Can Germany be cured?" was also the title of a conference held in New York in 1945. *Time Magazine* reported that many intellectuals who attended the conference (Franz Alexander and Margaret Mead, among others) had doubts that Germans would ever change their autocratic character and despotic conduct. The New York psychiatrist Richard M. Brickner, who had organized this conference, was known as the author of a 1943 book entitled *Is Germany Incurable*? The most notorious representative of anti-German sentiments was of course the British Lord Henry Vansittart who since the early 1940s had ceaselessly attacked Germany as an innately militaristic, dictatorial, and aggressive nation that needed to undergo a program of corrective education. His pamphlet, *Black Record of Germany: Past, Present, and Future,* sold a million copies in 1942, and excerpts appeared in popular magazines like *Reader's Digest*. We know from a letter to Panofsky that Kracauer greatly enjoyed reading Vansittart's *Lessons of My Life* and did not disagree with Vansittart's rabid anti-Germanism.[78]

Struggling permanently to make ends meet and looking for more institutional funding for his research, Kracauer was keen on demonstrating the usefulness of his contribution. For instance, in a letter to his editor on August 29, 1946, he wrote: "Incidentally, I wish to add a sentence in the Preface, but I do not yet know whether or not I should mention in it the

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Shadows) from the perspective of reeducation: "Through its one-sided emphasis on issues of personal morality, this film brings the problem of German re-education into sharp focus. For that problem does not bear on individual ethics, as many still incline to believe; rather, it bears on certain basic concepts which, common to 'bad' Germans and 'good' Germans alike, are responsible for their political inhibitions. What is wrong with the majority of Germans is the way they conceive of authority, of the role of reason, of the interrelation between culture and civilization. Any effective mobilization of German decency must depend on a change in habits of thought that are centuries old" (ibid., 76).

78 Kracauer writes to Panofsky on February 14, 1944: "How right you were with your judgment about Vansittart's book [. . .]. I also wouldn't know where he was essentially wrong" (Breidecker, *Kracauer*, 28). Kracauer refers to Vansittart, Henry, *Lessons of My Life*, London 1943. An excerpt from this book appeared in *Reader's Digest* in November 1943.

United Nations. Can be done in the proofs."[79] This sentence is added to the letter (and it is significant that it was retained in the proofs and was included in his 1947 preface): "I also believe that studies of this kind may well help in the production of films – not to mention other media of communication – which will effectively support the cultural aims of the United Nations."[80]

This reference to the cultural aims of the United Nations is an astonishingly topical reference that places his book in dialogue with the debates about an international organization that came into existence less than a year prior, on October 24, 1945, when the United States, France, the Republic of China, the Soviet Union, and the United Kingdom signed an agreement to stop wars and facilitate cooperation in the political, social, and cultural realms. The cultural aims of the United Nations consisted of educational opportunities, freedom of expression, and international collaboration through science and culture, as well as human rights. Kracauer's psychological history of German cinema was intended to support these cultural aims, but he does not state in what sense. Two years later, in Spring 1949, Kracauer published an article entitled "National Types as Hollywood Presents Them," which directly references UNESCO:

> This study about national types is one of a number of pilot studies undertaken in connection with the UNESCO project for studying international tensions [. . .]. UNESCO has begun to inquire into the nature of tensions inimical to mutual understanding between the peoples of the world. Part of this "Tensions Project" is an analysis of the conceptions which the people of one nation entertain of their own and of other nations.[81]

He again asks the question that he had already answered in his *Caligari*: "How do the films of any nation represent their own nation?"[82] And as if to reiterate the biggest complaint against *Caligari*, he once again

79 Kracauer to MacLachlan, August 29, 1946 (unpublished letter, Princeton University Press Records).

80 Kracauer to MacLachlan, ibid. The version published in *From Caligari to Hitler* is slightly different: the word "production of films" is replaced by "planning of film" and the phrase "effectively support the cultural aims of the United Nations" is replaced by "effectively implement the cultural aims of the United Nations." In both cases, the printed version is more assertive.

81 Kracauer, Siegfried, "National Types as Hollywood Presents Them," in: *The Public Opinion Quarterly* (Spring 1949): 53–72, 53.

82 Ibid.

asserts: "An individual or a people is not so much a fixed entity as a living organism that develops along unforeseeable lines. Hence the difficulty of self-identification."[83] Interestingly, his article refers to the famous book *Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture* by the anthropologist Ruth Benedict, which is a study of Japanese national character based on literature, film, and customs. This book, published in 1946, pursues a similar project as Kracauer's *Caligari*: to understand the Japanese mind (i.e. the mind of the United States' other military enemy) by extrapolating psychological traits from cultural artifacts, native traditions, and representations, in order to suggest strategies for the postwar period.[84]

Kracauer's desire to intervene in American cultural politics at the end of World War II (as he was finishing *Caligari*) explains his involvement with the so-called anti-Semitism Project, directed by Horkheimer and Adorno in collaboration with Else Frenkel-Brunswik, Daniel J. Levinson, and R. Nevitt Sanford, all from the University of California, Berkeley. Begun in 1941, this massive empirical study by Adorno sought to measure unconscious and latent anti-Semitic biases among American control groups.[85] As part of this project, Kracauer (as the "film expert") was asked by Horkheimer in 1945 to serve as a consultant for a "test film," which was intended to provoke anti-Semitic reactions that could empirically be quantified with the help of questionnaires. Suggestively titled

83 Ibid., 54f.

84 The difference between Benedict's and Kracauer's projects is that Benedict never visited Japan, while Kracauer of course lived in Germany for half of his life. In addition to her analysis of cultural artifacts and customs, Benedict drew on interviews with Japanese people living in the United States during the War.

85 The results of this study were published by Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, and Sanford under the title *The Authoritarian Personality* in 1950. This study of 990 pages was one of five volumes in the book series, "Studies in Prejudice," ed. Horkheimer and Samuel H. Flowerman, in collaboration with the American Jewish Committee. The introductory chapter of *The Authoritarian Personality* alludes to a concept of "mentality" that echoes Kracauer's *Caligari*: "The research to be reported in this volume was guided by the following major hypothesis: that the political, economic, and social convictions of an individual often form a broad and coherent pattern, as if bound together by a 'mentality' or 'spirit,' and that this pattern is an expression of deep-lying trends in his personality" (Adorno, Theodor W. et al. (ed.), *The Authoritarian Personality*, New York 1950, 1). On the Frankfurt School's "Studies in Prejudice" project, see Wiggershaus, Rolf, *The Frankfurt School: Its History, Theories, and Political Significance*, transl. Michael Robertson, Cambridge 1994, 408–430, and Wheatland, Thomas, *The Frankfurt School in Exile*, Minneapolis 2009, 227–263.

"Below the Surface," the film would stage a fictional incident to elicit stereotypical responses. The short film was never produced, but various drafts of the script have survived.[86] The larger research initiative that explored the authoritarian mindset resonated with Kracauer's own ongoing project of exposing proto-fascist attitudes in Weimar Germany. As World War II drew to a close and the question of the future of Germany became more urgent, Kracauer began to see one country's problem through the prism of the other. For instance, his essay "Hollywood's Terror Films: Do They Reflect an American State of Mind?" in the Jewish monthly *Commentary* in August 1946, analyzed American film in the language he used for his study of Weimar cinema. "Terror films" (soon after to be called film noir) like *Shadow of a Doubt, The Stranger*, and *Dark Corner* not only "cater to popular demands," he wrote,

> they also reflect popular tendencies and inclinations. The conclusion therefore would be that inner disintegration, whatever its stages, has actually become a widespread phenomenon [. . .]. That the kind of horror formerly attributed only to life under Hitler, in the anti-Nazi thrillers, has now been acclimated to the American scene, is more than accidental. Aside from the genuine and constant affinity between sadism and fascism, it seems probable that the sadistic energies at large in our society at the present moment are specifically suited to provide fuel for fascism. And it is in these energies, in this emotional preparedness for fascism, that the real danger lies, more than in the agitators and rabble-rousers who, when the circumstances are right, will be able to manipulate them for tangible ends.[87]

Kracauer, who became an American citizen on September 5, 1946, resumed his role of the film critic as social critic – a role he had advocated at the end of the Weimar Republic. He looked "below the surface" and detected similarities and analogies between postwar American and pre-Nazi cinema.

Kracauer's correspondence with the publisher shows that he intended his *Caligari* to be an intervention in the postwar debates not just about

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86 See Gilloch, Graeme/Kang, Jae Ho, "*Below the Surface*: Siegfried Kracauer's 'Test-Film' Project," in: *Formations* 61 (special issue on Kracauer) (Summer 2007): 149–160; Koch, *Die Einstellung ist die Einstellung*, 54–120; Jennemann, David, *Adorno in America*, Minneapolis 2007, 105–147. It is safe to assume that this critique of anti-Semitism found its way into Hollywood productions from 1947: Elia Kazan's *Gentlemen's Agreement* and, most overtly, Edward Dmytryk's *Crossfire*.

87 Kracauer, Siegfried, "Hollywood's Terror Films: Do They Reflect an American State of Mind?" in: *Commentary* 2 (August 1946): 135.

Germany, but also about the United States. He aimed at the American market, hoping that the publication would lead to a breakthrough for him after living on research grants for half a decade. On April 28, 1946, shortly after finishing the book, Kracauer admitted as much in a letter to his friend and fellow exile Eugen Schüfftan: "I don't believe in a commercial success, because the book is far from being popular. But I do believe in a prestige success, in the long run at least [. . .]. My main hope is that the book will help me to find an adequate job . . . I've no desire whatsoever to live ever again as a free-lance writer."[88] This letter echoes a sentiment he expressed in an earlier letter to his friend Hans Speier on May 12, 1945: "Of course, I have thought of a new research project, but, frankly, I have lived long enough on foundation money, and I am sick of an existence that seems to come to a stop every year. This time, it should be a regular job."[89] In this way, *From Caligari to Hitler* could also be seen as a strategic work that responded, or more accurately, adapted itself – in ever-shifting nuances – to the demands of American politics.

Adorno mercilessly highlighted these "adaptive strategies" when he wrote in 1964, on the occasion of Kracauer's seventy-fifth birthday, about the specific conditions of American exile. According to Adorno, the very fact that the United States allowed its exiles and immigrants to work came with a price: "Probably the compulsion to fit in was worse than in earlier emigrations [. . .]. The burden of conformity, which weighed upon the natives as well, was especially harsh. Intellectual immigrants who were already successful were enthusiastic advocates of that conformity."[90] Adorno castigated the exile's tendency to identify with

88 Kracauer to Schüfftan, April 28, 1946, repr. in Kracauer, Siegfried, *Nachrichten aus Hollywood, New York und anderswo: Der Briefwechsel Eugen und Marlise Schüfftans mit Siegfried und Lili Kracauer*, ed. Helmut G. Asper, Trier 2001, 65f. The letter is written in a revealing mixture of English and German.

89 Kracauer to Speier, May 12, 1945, unpublished letter in Kracauer-Nachlass. In this letter, he assesses his own qualities: "I hold that I could do a good job in all matters concerning cultural relations to Germany (and France) – one of my specialties would be to spot ideologies in the making, to discover intellectual underground activities, and so on. I also should very much like to function as a consultant for the production of documentary films and broadcast emissions designed to be sent to Europe."

90 Adorno, "The Curious Realist," 71f. See also Jay, Martin, "Adorno and Kracauer: Notes on a Troubled Friendship," in: id., *Permanent Exiles: Essays on the Intellectual Migration from Germany to America,* New York 1986, 217–236.

the new country and went so far as to call it "identification with the aggressor."[91] Kracauer was rightfully offended by this harsh criticism from his friend of more than 40 years, and he could have asked in return why Adorno went back as early as 1949 to the country that had forced him into exile. Adorno's derogatory speech articulated the psychological harm that exile did to Kracauer and arguably to Adorno himself, who had observed in 1944: "Every intellectual in emigration is, without exception, damaged ('beschädigt')."[92]

IV. Epilogue: Kracauer's FBI Files[93]

J. Edgar Hoover launched an FBI inquiry into Kracauer's possible anti-American activities on December 29, 1950. His Executive Order No. 9835 was triggered by two facts: first, in 1946, Kracauer's name surfaced in the personal address book of Hanns Eisler, who was deported in 1948 after the House Un-American Activities Committee accused him of being a member of the Communist Party; and second, in 1949, Kracauer published an article on Jean Vigo in *Hollywood Quarterly*, which according to one FBI's agent's report was considered a "Communistic organization."[94] Four Special Agents in New York, New Jersey, Los Angeles,

91 Adorno, "The Curious Realist," 72.

92 Adorno, Theodor W., *Minima Moralia. Reflections from Damaged Life*, London 1974, 33 (translation modified).

93 Kracauer's FBI file (Number 123–7917) was made available through the Freedom of Information Act. (All subsequent quotations come from this file; page numbers are given when available.) An intriguing document of McCarthyism, his relatively short file of approximately 50 pages (many of which contain identical biographical information) is heavily redacted with all names of interviewees and references to dates and localities blocked out. Kracauer refrained from any open display of leftist sympathies during his American exile and studiously avoided contact with the various exile organizations. His correspondence only rarely mentions political events. For the larger context of German exiles under FBI surveillance and investigation, see Stephan, Alexander, *Im Visier des FBI*, and Stephan, Alexander, *"Communazis": FBI Surveillance of German Émigré Writers*, transl. Jan van Heurck, New Haven, London, 2000.

94 FBI report from February 9, 1951, File No. 123–7399, on Seigfried [sic] Kracauer: "The publication, Hollywood Quarterly, was cited as a 'communistic project' sponsored by the Communistic Front, the Hollywood Writer's [sic] Mobilization, and the University of California at Los Angeles."

and Washington, D.C. sent reports that contained detailed biographical information (including a list of his American publications) and short summaries of approximately twenty interviews with Kracauer's employers, colleagues, and neighbors. Although Kracauer completed and signed a two-page State Department "Request for Investigation Data" on November 8, 1950, it is unclear whether he was aware of the extent of this inquiry.

A summary report from the field office in New York, dated March 29, 1951, offered the opinions of representatives from the Bollingen Foundation, the Guggenheim Foundation, the Museum of Modern Art Film Library, and the Rockefeller Foundation. According to this report, a representative (whose name is blacked out) from the Guggenheim Foundation "stated that he would endorse Kracauer as a person who appreciated the privilege of being in the United States and who would, in his opinion, be loyal and patriotic. He also stated that Kracauer is of excellent character and impressed him as a very capable person."[95] This person also displayed clippings from the *Frankfurter Zeitung* which, as reported, "reflected that Kracauer had been critical of the Nazi influence on German films and that these reviews had been written during the Nazi rise to power in Germany" (4f.). The interviewee at MoMA's Film Library (whose name is also blacked out) declared that "Dr. Kracauer had used this library for the past six years as his office and that he works there daily, arriving at approximately 9:00 AM in the morning and departing at approximately 6:00 PM in the evening" (5). Another anonymous interviewee in the report acknowledged that

> he is of the opinion that Kracauer was brought from Europe through the efforts of Miss Iris Barry and the Rockefeller Foundation . . . (He) stated he feels certain he would have known if Kracauer is a Communist or Communist sympathizer and he feels certain Kracauer is not so affiliated [. . .] He said that the book "From Caligari to Hitler" written by Kracauer was historical and in it he was critical of the Communists. (6)

The representative from the Rockefeller Foundation mentioned *Propaganda and the Nazi War Film* as well as *From Caligari to Hitler*, and remarked that "both books were, in his opinion very well written and contained nothing adverse to the interests of the United States" (ibid.).

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95 FBI Report from March 29, 1951, File No. 123–5351, 4. Subsequent page numbers in the text refer to this report.

In addition to his professional contacts, five neighbors were interviewed and, according to the report, each one praised Kracauer as "a person of good character and reputation and a loyal American citizen" (9). It seems that none of the four FBI agents ever read Kracauer's book about German film and the German mind; they relied on what their interview subjects thought of it. A conflicted contribution by a traumatized German émigré to American counter-propaganda and reeducation efforts, *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film* turned out to be a "safe book" for its author. The investigation ended after exactly three months, on March 29, 1951.

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Identifying the Impulse: Alfred Lion Founds the *Blue Note* Jazz Label[1]

Stephan Braese

With the book *Escape to Life*, published by Houghton Mifflin in Boston on April 14, 1939, editors Erika and Klaus Mann wished to accomplish two things. In the first place, at a time when the Nazi regime had not yet reached the height of its power, they hoped to strengthen the self-confidence of those driven from their homeland, in the horizon of the ideologem of the "other" or "better" Germany. But on the other hand, their book was aimed at presenting the American public with both the motives and artistic and intellectual complexity of the exile from Nazi Germany, mainly for the sake of increasing the refugees' acceptance. These goals could not be unified entirely without conflicts. When the editors praised the artists and intellectuals who had fled Germany and Austria as bearers of "true German culture"[2] and, in a chapter entitled "A Musical Evening" describing a concert evening with Adolf Busch and Rudolf Serkin, spoke of Mozart's music as "German music, the most beautiful and most German of music,"[3] then they underscored a "Germanness" whose significance – for instance whether it should enjoy friendly reception in the States for, so to speak, its own sake, or rather possessed special attributes rendering it specially fit for a country of immigration like the USA – was rather unclear. In a political realm, this ambivalence corresponded to a question sparking intense discussion within the German exile scene a few years later: whether the exiles from Nazi Germany wished to be "representatives of an immigration growing into the country or rather of an emigration here temporarily enjoying refuge."[4]

1 Translated from the German by Joel Golb.

2 Mann, Erika/Mann, Klaus, *Escape to Life*, Boston 1939, viii.

3 Ibid., 261.

4 George, Manfred, "Klare Scheidung," in: *Aufbau* 9.12 (1943): 4, here cited from Ernst Loewy (ed.), *Literarische und politische Texte aus dem deutschen Exil* 2, Frankfurt/M. 1982, 532f.

It is the case that Erika und Klaus Mann endowed "true German culture" with the vague attribute of having been "at all times [. . .] a creative part of world culture."[5] But in the *Escape to Life* volume, the attribute amounted to a catchphrase removed from the basic and concrete question of how and where culture from Germany was to establish productive ties with American culture, how it could for instance provoke it and develop it further. The "Germanness" of German culture in the volume possessed an ossified, anxiously isolated, conservative quality, derived from a putatively glorious history that had now faltered. An appreciation of German culture for the sake of such "Germanness:" that formed the – phantasmatic – core of the rhetorical strategy that Erika and Klaus Mann chose for their book about German culture in exile.

A few weeks after the appearance of *Escape to Life*, in April 1939, a German exile in the New York WMGM studio recorded the "Daybreak Blues" with the Port of Harlem Jazzmen, and a few weeks after that, in May of the same year, he was working with his partner on the first publicity flyer for their new firm. The man's name was Alfred Lion; he came from Berlin. The firm was Blue Note Records, which would become, in Michael Cuscuna's words, "one of the greatest jazz record companies in the world."[6] Here "German culture" would become "a creative part of world culture" in a sense the *Escape to Life* volume could not yet know: not through a claim to an immutable worldwide standing, but through a great curiosity concerning *another* culture offering its German counterpart a chance to preserve its most precious attributes.

I

The jazz that had begun to develop since the end of the nineteenth century, above all in New Orleans, had only reached Germany circuitously and with difficulty. The entry of the USA into World War I and the stationing of American troops in France brought the first Afro-American jazz musicians to Europe.[7] Nevertheless. Germany's political isolation during the war and the economic crisis afterwards impeded popularization

5 Mann/Mann, *Escape*, viii.

6 Cuscuna, Michael, "The Blue Note Story," in: id./Michel Ruppli (ed.), *The Blue Note Label. A Discography*, Westport 2001, XI–XIX, XII.

7 Lotz, Rainer E., "Amerikaner in Europa," in: Klaus Wolbert (ed.), *That's Jazz. Der Sound des 20. Jahrhunderts*, Frankfurt/M. 1997, 291–297, 292.

of the new music.[8] While France took on a leading role in the cultural appreciation and discographic exploration of American jazz,[9] in Germany rejection prevailed. In 1919 Joseph Roth thus noted the following:

> The negroes, it is reported, dance to the accompaniment of a wild music that is actually no music [. . .]. This music is non-melodic [. . .]. Some say *shesbent*; others: *dshesbent*; yet others simply *jazzband*. Some learn to dance jazzband; others can do so; yet others dance without either having learned it or being able to jazzband [*jazzbanden*].[10]

If these lines can be read as revealing an effort to at least approach the phenomenon, despite acute bewilderment, other voices were more clear-cut, speaking of "the jazz disease," a "narcotic," a "negro import," "Americanitis."[11] At the same time, countless German bands emerged that while using saxophones and new percussive elements and claiming to play jazz, in fact merely bore a distant resemblance to that Afro-American music.

A serious German engagement with the new American musical form only became apparent in the mid-1920s. The music journal *Melos* now began to publish articles about jazz, the music teacher and critic Alfred Baresel wrote jazz-instruction books,[12] and in his book *Jazz,* published in Munich in 1927, Paul Bernhard indicated programmatically that "if any form of creativity is capable of healing the European soul, then it would be jazz-inspired music. It has the force to unify the world across social and ethnic differences."[13] In 1928 , the renowned *Hoch'sche Musikkonservatorium* in Frankfurt am Main introduced a jazz program[14] – but not without authorities from the quasi-official world of German and

8 Jost, Ekkehard, "Jazz in Europa. Die frühen Jahre," in: Wolbert (ed.), *That's Jazz*, 299–304, 300.

9 Lotz, "Amerikaner in Europa," 296.

10 Roth, Joseph, "Jazzband," in: *Werke I. Das journalistische Werk 1915–1923*, ed. Fritz Hackert/Klaus Westermann, Cologne 1989, 543–547, 543f.

11 Schaal, Hans-Jürgen, "Humanität im Widerstand. Zum Bild des Jazz in der Literatur," in: Wolbert (ed.), *That's Jazz*, 635–641, 636.

12 Kater, Michael H., *Gewagtes Spiel. Jazz im Nationalsozialismus*, Munich 1998, 43.

13 Wagnleitner, Reinhold, "Jazz – The Classical Music of Globalization," in: Wilfried Raussert/John Miller Jones (ed.), *Traveling Sounds: Music, Migration, and Identity in the U.S. and Beyond*, Berlin 2008, 23–60, 30.

14 Kater, *Gewagtes Spiel*, 44.

Austrian music such as Hans Pfitzner and Sigmund von Hausegger immediately objecting, referring to "nigger blood" and the "rhythm of belly-dancing negroes."[15]

When in May 1925 the pianist Sam Wooding and his eleven-person orchestra gave a concert in Berlin's *Admiralspalast*, "German listeners" were, as Ekkehard Jost describes it, "confronted for the first time with the expressive resources of African American music, and in a manner not perspectively distorted through the lenses of Euro-American jazz reception, but mediated by individuals in part responsible for the origins of this music."[16] Among other musicians, Wooding's band included trumpeters Tommy Ladnier and Doc Cheatham; the Chocolate Kiddies revue was performed, with music by Duke Ellington, together with thirty chorus girls.[17] Seventeen year old Alfred Lion was in the audience.

Lion, born on April 21, 1911 into a Jewish middle class household in the Schöneberg district of Berlin, had landed at the concert by accident (he had, Richard Cook informs us, "gone to his roller-skating rink one day and found that there was no skating that day, since Wooding's group were to perform a concert. He went in, and heard black American music in person for the first time: 'It was something brand new but it registered with me right away'").[18] In the following years Lion would go to great lengths to become more familiar with this music. His efforts included a trip to New York in 1928 during which he labored on the docks and slept in Central Park.[19] Meanwhile the German interest in Afro-American music had increased, in part due to material less directly tied to that musical form – for instance the performances of Josephine Baker, who visited Berlin for the first time in 1925.[20] The Bauhaus in Dessau began its own jazz band, and composers such as Paul Hindemith, Kurt Weill, and Ernst Křenek incorporated jazz elements into their work.[21] But when in 1930 the Nazis took over the Thuringia state government, their minister for popular education issued an edict both

15 Ibid., 47.
16 Jost, Ekkehard, "Jazz in Deutschland," in: Wolbert (ed.), *That's Jazz*, 357–378, 359.
17 Kater, *Gewagtes Spiel*, 29f.
18 Cook, Richard, *Blue Note Records. The Biography*, Boston 2004, 7.
19 Cuscuna, "Blue Note Story," XI.
20 Kater, *Gewagtes Spiel*, 31.
21 Ibid., 31, 44, 43.

mirroring attitudes shared by broad parts of the populace and anticipating a deep-seated cultural trend:

> For years in nearly all areas of culture, influences stemming from alien races have increasingly come to the fore – influences likely to undermine the moral strength of the German national character [*die sittlichen Kräfte des deutschen Volkstums*]. A broad space is here occupied by products representing a glorification of Negroism [*Negertum*], including jazz bands and drum music, negro dances, negro songs, and negro musical pieces, and striking German cultural sensibilities in the face. Preventing these manifestations of disintegration whenever possible is in the interest of a maintenance and strengthening of German *Volkstum*.[22]

The extent to which the possibilities available for the performance and appreciation of jazz had begun to shrink in Germany is perhaps made especially clear by reserves being expressed, as well, in the avant-garde musical milieu – particularly prominently and repetitively by Theodor W. Adorno in the journal *Musik* starting already in 1929.[23]

In 1931 Alfred Lion moved with his mother to South America, where he tried various commercial jobs and also did occasional work as a lobster fisherman.[24] In 1937 he was able to move permanently to New York as representative of an import-export firm.[25] In the States, Lion encountered a social formation within which jazz was hardly more accepted culturally than in Germany. Already in 1917, the *Times-Picayune* in New Orleans, jazz's birthplace, had written off the new music in the following terms: "Its musical value is nil, and its possibilities of harm are great."[26] The deep-seated racism evident throughout the USA, the existence of a deeply torn society, was also the backdrop for nearly everything being said about the music being played by Afro-Americans. It is the case that the swing being conducted by white bandleaders such as Benny Goodman and Tommy Dorsey – as Reinhold Wagnleitner has described it, a form of "popular music based on and influenced by jazz" – had become highly popular; but to the extent swing

22 Cited from Jost, "Jazz in Deutschland," 362.

23 See Kater, *Gewagtes Spiel*, 167 and Steinert, Heinz, *Die Entdeckung der Kulturindustrie oder: Warum Professor Adorno Jazz-Musik nicht ausstehen konnte*, Munster 2003. My study of Adorno's critique of jazz against the horizon of the experience in the USA of exiles from Nazi Germany is in preparation.

24 Cook, *Blue Note Records*, 8.

25 Ibid.

26 Cited from Wagnleitner, "Classical Music," 24.

functioned as a music for entertainment and dancing within America's white culture, it diminished the chances of jazz, as "a form of popularly-generated high art music," ever being accepted there by more than a minority.[27] The special production for the Afro-American ghetto of "race records" by stars such as Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, and Bessie Smith who were popular there, and the corresponding development of a racist publicity discourse (marked by epithets such as "the negro king of jazz")[28] perpetuated a structure rendering any meaningful cultural interaction more or less impossible.

In New York, however, by the mid-1930s an audience increasingly tired of swing's ever-more trite formulas had begun to emerge in connection with a "kind of subculture" developing in smaller formations.[29] The record dealer Milton Gabler established an informal organizational center for these listeners. In January 1938, he drew his conclusions from the inadequacy of the record business as it was and independently recorded titles by the Bud Freeman Trio and the Eddie Condon Septet under the Commodore label.[30] At the end of the year, a focal point for American high culture, Carnegie Hall, was the venue for a concert presenting, according to the programmatic intentions of its organizer John Hammond, "talented Negro artists from all over the country who had been denied entry to the white world of popular music."[31] Performing on December 23, 1938 in the completely overfilled concert hall – 300 additional seats had to be placed on the stage – were, among others, the boogie-woogie pianists Pete Johnson, Albert Ammons, and Meade Lux Lewis, as well as the Count Basie Orchestra.[32] Alfred Lion was present at the concert. Lion would now unite, in a single impulse, Gabler's self-confident initiative in face of a supposedly omnipotent music industry and Hammond's active new interpretation of American culture. Scarcely two weeks after the concert, on 6 January 1939, he produced his first record together with Ammons and Lewis. The Blue Note label had been founded.

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27 Ibid., 40.
28 See Sidran, Ben, *Black Talk*, New York 1983, 64ff.
29 See Cook, *Blue Note Records*, 4.
30 Ibid., 5.
31 Ibid.
32 Ibid.

II

Following the recording session with Ammons and Lewis, there was another session with the Port of Harlem Jazzmen and the J.C. Higginbotham Quintet on April 7.[33] In May 1939 a publicity flyer appeared for the new company, probably written by Lion's partner Max Margulis, a "writer and committed left-winger" who put up much of the initial money.[34] The flyer documented the program whose realization by Lion gave Blue Note the place it has in twentieth century Western cultural history:

> Blue Note records are designed simply to serve the uncompromising expression of hot jazz and swing, in general. Any particular style of playing which represents an authentic way of musical feeling is genuine expression. By virtue of its significance in place, time and circumstance, it possesses its own tradition, artistic standards and audience that keeps it alive. Hot jazz, therefore, is expression and communication, a musical and social manifestation, and Blue Note records are concerned with identifying its impulse, not its sensational and commercial adornments.[35]

The three-time reference to expression – in the suggestive linkages "uncompromising expression," "genuine expression," and "expression and communication" – here already underscore the "expressive culture" of jazz whose attributes have been recently outlined by Paul Gilroy. Gilroy has shown how both the experience of slavery and the "enforced separation of the slaves from literacy"[36] tied to that experience led to a culture of expression possessing a "distinctive *moral* basis"[37] while not following Europe's traditional model of textuality. In order to allow survival in conditions stamped by enslavement, disenfranchisement, and degradation, Afro-American cultures of expression worked, according to Gilroy, at forming utopias "beyond the grasp of the merely linguistic, textual, and discursive"[38] and at building "a community of needs and solidarity which is magically made audible in the music itself."[39] Gilroy thus argues "that

33 Cuscuna, *Blue Note Label*, 2f.
34 Cook, *Blue Note Records*, 10, 12.
35 Ibid., 12.
36 Gilroy, Paul, *The Black Atlantic. Modernity and Double Consciousness*, London, New York 2002, 36.
37 Ibid.
38 Ibid., 37.
39 Ibid.

we reread and rethink this expressive counter-culture not simply as a succession of literary tropes and genres but as a philosophical discourse which refuses the modern, occidental separation of ethics and aesthetics, culture and politics."[40] In this light, we can understand the Blue Note program as articulating the genuinely *existential* significance, taking in both society and experience, that expression possesses in jazz. Only insight into these indissoluble ties with social reality makes possible a recognition of jazz's dependence on "place, time and circumstance."[41] And the constitutive significance of the "intimate interaction of performer and crowd"[42] for developing jazz's "expressive culture" is also acknowledged in the references to "expression and communication" and "audience," and when jazz is conceived as both a "musical and social manifestation."

But the programmatic text has its Archimedean point in a recognition of jazz as art: a position contradicting commercial calculus. Already in Europe, the stigmatization of jazz as "a wild music that actually is no music"[43] had not stood in the way of its commercial cannibalization. And even when in circles of artists and intellectuals a longing emerged for jazz to provide renovative effects for what Herman Hesse referred to as "all our sham culture" (*all unsre Scheinkultur*), this was based on stereotyping the music as "endearing, honest negritude" (*liebenswerte unverlogene Negerhaftigkeit*).[44] In this respect the American music industry had developed a higher level of professionalism through a disguising and smoothing out of qualities once defining its products as art, in order to increase their salability – techniques from which the Blue Note program distanced itself in its reference to "sensational and commercial adornments." But if possessing "its own tradition" and "artistic standards" are indeed two basic attributes of art, the core of the concept, around which the programmatic flyer organized itself, is expressive authenticity: intercultural and transcultural in nature and thus annulling all "particularities" or differences of "place, time, and circumstance," with individuals and their particular experiences defining its smallest common denominator. Within this perspective, art is defined as one or another product, wherever located and whoever its creator, from which individuals can read, learn, experience something about themselves.

40 Ibid., 38f.
41 The text of the Blue Note flyers is reprinted in Cook, *Blue Note Records*, 12.
42 Gilroy, *Black Atlantic*, 102.
43 Roth, "Jazzband," 543.
44 Hesse, Hermann, *Der Steppenwolf*, Frankfurt/M. 1980, 42f.

Today the essentialist premises informing such a concept of art will encounter well-grounded reservations. But this emphatic belief in the unity of the human race beyond ethnic and social borders, grounded in the epoch of the European Enlightenment,[45] is what allowed Alfred Lion, the European Jew from Berlin, to actively acknowledge Afro-American expressive culture in the middle of a society whose racism, even in New York, worked against such recognition on a daily basis.

The European origins of the conceptions manifest here have often been noted. Richard Cook, for example, observes that "Lion, whose roots were in a European cultural value system, already had a conviction that jazz was an art music;"[46] and Michael Cuscuna confirms that behind Lion's "relationship to jazz stood a European aesthetic and evaluation of the arts."[47] However, the specific character of Lion's basic premises only becomes clear when we consider what distinguished him from other exiles from Germany such as Thomas Mann and Lion Feuchtwanger, Albert Einstein and Theodor W. Adorno, Bertolt Brecht and Herbert Marcuse. Alfred Lion was not only not famous but was also no artist or intellectual. Rather, he was one of many German Jews from moderately cultivated middle-class or even lower middle class circumstances – individuals Atina Grossmann has referred to as "provincial cosmopolitans." After coming to New York, many of these Jews "clung to their language and their rituals, their *Spazierengehen*, their *Kaffee und Kuchen* served on the family *Porzellan*, somehow still amazingly intact despite their long voyages in the huge 'lifts' of the 1930s and 1940s," and "generally developed a deep loyalty to their new homelands."[48] This adherence to such

45 See Neumann, Michael, "Philosophische Nachrichten aus der Südsee: Georg Forsters 'Reise um die Welt,'" in: Hans Jürgen Schings (ed.), *Der ganze Mensch. Anthropologie und Literatur im 18. Jahrhundert*, Stuttgart, Weimar 1994, 517–544. Although Kant's famous "Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?" may have been more paradigmatic for the German Enlightenment's orientation than the texts of Georg Forster, in the Enlightenment epoch it was Forster who most emphatically underscored a categorical parity with human beings of other "races," as repeated in his *Voyage Around the World*: "All peoples of the world have the same claims to my good will [. . .]. At the same time I was aware that I have various rights in common with every human being." (Forster, Georg, *Reise um die Welt*, Frankfurt/M. 1997, 18.)

46 Cook, *Blue Note Records*, 13.

47 Cited from Schaal, Hans-Jürgen, *Happy Birthday! 60 Jahre Blue Note. Eine Passion und ihre Folgen*, http://www.hjs-jazz.de/?p=00016 (February 26, 2011).

48 Grossmann, Atina, "German Jews as Provincial Cosmopolitans: Reflections from the Upper West Side," in: *Leo Baeck Yearbook* 2008, 157–168, 161.

customs also meant fidelity to "both the Wilhelmine traditions of *Bildungskultur* and the modernist innovativeness of Weimar."[49] According to Grossmann, it was precisely "their peculiar provincial insistence on 'old world' customs"[50] that rendered these exiles into "cosmopolitans:"

> wordly, sophisticated, sexually free, musically literate, privy to the secrets of making decent bread and delicious *Pflaumenkuchen* in what was in 1940s and 1950s America a desert of white bread and bad coffee. The refugees in turn could see and enact themselves in that simultaneously provincial and cosmopolitan role.[51]

Alfred Lion represented this New York-exiled German Jewry: while he was, as indicated, no intellectual by vocation, cultural intellectualism and an underlying cultivation defined his basic approach – above all to everything the new homeland offered in the way of new experience. Where Grossmann describes Manhattan's Upper West Side in the 1940s and 1950s as an "ersatz extension of Weimar Berlin,"[52] this was hardly less the case for certain offices in West 47th Street or in 767 Lexington Avenue: where according to the renter the "finest in jazz since 1939" (the Blue Note slogan) stood in the center.

III

The specific perspective Lion brought from Europe and encapsulated in the May 1939 flyer would have been without consequence if it had not found pragmatic realization, as registered in both the Blue Note recordings and in the history of twentieth century American, European, and international music and culture. The process was already evident in the first recording session on January 6, 1939, with Albert Ammons and Meade Lux Lewis, Michael Cuscuna thus recounting that Lion "instinctively" "provided their favorite beverages and food and created an atmosphere of respect, appreciation and warmth that brought out the best in them."[53] When Cuscuna, probably the author most familiar with the history of the Blue Note label, notes the "instinctive" nature

49 Ibid., 162.
50 Ibid., 163.
51 Ibid., 163f.
52 Ibid., 165.
53 Cuscuna, "Blue Note Story," XI.

of such preparation, this by no means only refers to insight into what helps produce high recording quality but also to Lion's internalized respect and concern for the artists. Art Hodes would later recall the following:

> You walk in and there's a big bag full of food. Once we started playing, you didn't have to leave the building for nothin'. Alfred hung his hat in the control room [. . .]. There was a feeling of 'at ease.' And considering the times, the bread was good. Eventually the records were released, and no one got hurt.[54]

Embedded in the laconic "no one got hurt" was the fact of a prevalent coarseness vis-à-vis both the artistic integrity of jazz musicians and their participatory rights and copyrights in the music business. In the 1940s and 1950s, to be able to emerge from the studios "unhurt" as an Afro-American artist was virtually uniquely the case for Blue Note Records.

Often, Lion accommodated himself to the specific daily schedules of his artists. Already the first, 1939 recording session was arranged for 4:30 a.m., hence at around the time that musicians ended their regular work in New York's clubs and often came together in informal sessions. The unusual practice of not asking musicians – who mostly depended on any income offered – into the studio in the afternoon or even the morning but taking account of their vocation's rhythm quickly gained attention in the New York jazz scene. Lion later recalled that

> A lot of musicians had heard about these late sessions. At one of them, Billie Holiday and her entourage were on the sidewalk, shouting to be let up. But I was so nervous, because I didn't really know what I was doing yet, that I wouldn't let her up. I probably could have recorded her that night, but I couldn't deal with anything beyond what I was trying to do.[55]

This short account sheds light on the figure cut by Lion in those early years: while in the New York subculture of Afro-American music the hipness of what he was doing was recognized in the 1940s, Lion, the European with the thick-lensed glasses and heavy German accent,[56] was so focused on the demands of his work and so amazed at where his fascination with this music had led him, that he was incapable of

54 Cook, *Blue Note Records*, 17.
55 Ibid., 12.
56 Ibid., 193.

grabbing the one-time commercial possibility (Billie Holiday already was considered one of the world's greatest jazz singers) when it was offered. This lack of commercial cunning may have informed Lion's singular reputation among jazz musicians up through the 1960s.

But it was not only authentic, credibly articulated respect for the musicians that determined Lion's relationship with them but above all a completely new working arrangement, even within a small independent label like Blue Note. Again in Cuscuna's words:

> [E]ach record date was preceded by planning sessions and two or three days of rehearsals. This was reflected not only in the perfect execution of the musical ensembles, but also in the varied and ambitious compositions that the musicians were able to tackle. Lion knew that proper preparation before the studio date allowed the musicians to be spontaneous and creative with challenging material when the tapes finally rolled.[57]

These rehearsals, let us note, were paid: a step that Prestige Records' producer Bob Weinstock – at times the Prestige label represented Blue Note's most dangerous competition – was not prepared to take. The comment of a former member of the Blue Note staff was to the point: "The difference between Blue Note and Prestige is two days of rehearsal."[58] A special quality of the studio, quickly becoming known among musicians, was what Stan Britt has referred to as its "kind of relaxed yet freewheeling atmosphere."[59] The authenticity of Lion's behavior inevitably contributed to this atmosphere at just those times when it would have struck American observers as peculiar. When in 1957 Lion had the idea of allowing percussionist Art Blakey to bring together eleven musicians for a recording under the title "Orgy in Rhythm," his friends acknowledged, in Leslie Gourse's words, that he was "crazy to produce the project." But, Gourse continues, "it was destined to lose money. Lion's main worry was whether twelve musicians would show up for the recording date on time, but all of them did."[60]

However concerned Lion – after all, a born Prussian – was with punctuality as opposed to money,[61] a very different aspect of his personality was noted by various musicians. This was, as Cook records it, "the

57 Cuscuna, "Blue Note Story," XV.
58 Ibid.
59 Britt, Stan, *Dexter Gordon – A Musical Biography*, New York 1989, 81.
60 Gourse, Leslie, *Art Blakey: Jazz Messenger*, New York 2002, 64.
61 See Grossmann, "German Jews," 158.

Alfred Lion dance. If a session wasn't going too well, Alfred would sit impassively in his seat, as if waiting for something to happen, but when the band finally hit a groove which he liked, he'd begin an ungainly shuffle around the control room [. . .]. The musicians knew that once Alfred had gone into his dance, they were on to something."[62] But however picturesque that habit was, together with his tendency to exclaim "it must schwing!" in a thick German accent,[63] the practical results of the conditions Lion created can evoke only profound respect: the Blue Note catalog, for one thing, and by far most importantly, the recordings themselves. The respect is evident in remarks by many musicians. For example, Bobby Hutcherson recalled that Lion and Frank Wolff (a photographer and Lion's partner at Blue Note; see more below) "were more like jazz musicians than record executives. They loved to hang out and have a great time. They loved the music and had a real feel for it."[64] And Horace Silver recalled that "Alfred was not a musician, but Alfred was a jazz fan, and had been a jazz fan since he was a little kid."[65] Nearly three decades after his work with Lion began, Silver had not forgotten Lion's characteristic approach to Blue Note's jazz artists:

> Alfred Lion and Frank Wolff were men of integrity and real jazz fans. Blue Note was a great label to record for. They gave a first break to a lot of great artists who are still out there doing it today. They gave me my first break. They gave a lot musicians a chance to record when all the other companies weren't interested. And they would stick with an artist, even if he wasn't selling. Of course, if every record a guy made didn't sell at all, they couldn't stay with him forever. But if a guy was a great player who didn't sell well – and there were many – and if Alfred and Frank believed in him, they would stay with him. You don't find that anymore.[66]

And even perhaps the epoch's most difficult jazz musician, Miles Davis, showed great respect for Lion in an autobiography that otherwise does not stint on getting even – recommending him, for instance, to Cannonball Adderley "as a person he could trust and who would also leave him alone in the studio."[67] (Although Adderley would choose another label,

62 Cook, *Blue Note Records*, 116.
63 Cf. "It must schwing! Blue Note – Fotografien von Francis Wolff und Jimmy Katz," exhibition at Jewish Museum Berlin, Oct. 30, 2009–Feb. 7, 2010.
64 Cuscuna, "Blue Note Story," XVI.
65 Sidran, Ben, *Talking Jazz. An Oral History*, New York 1995, 140.
66 Cuscuna, "Blue Note Story," XIII.
67 Davis, Miles/Troupe, Quincy, *Miles: The Autobiography*, New York 1994, 193.

he later would play with Davis in *Something Else*, arguably one of the most beautiful of the Blue Note records.) And as Davis went through a personal crisis in the 1950s, alongside Bob Weinstock "it was Alfred Lion," as he recalled it, "who was also cool with me" – in fact a rare accolade from an artist whose weight in the world of jazz only becomes fully clear in that 400-page autobiography.

But what was here expressed on something like the micro-level of concrete recording policy was also realized on the macro-level of a deliberate program. This included the decision – running against the tendency of both the large labels and the general commercial mood of the 1940s and 1950s in particular – to record nearly exclusively Afro-American musicians.[68] While this may well have been a "musically immanent" decision in favor of authenticity,[69] it also demanded a specific and not least of all economic will to self assertion in a social environment where the civil rights movement was a thing of the future. Lion's unambiguous readiness to show solidarity with representatives of the music that had brought him to the States as a young man is also evident in his asking saxophonist Ike Quebec to be his A & R man in 1959,[70] meaning he was basically responsible for selecting and contacting artists and profiling the Blue Note sound.[71] But in retrospect, perhaps the most striking aspect of Lion's program was visual: a presentation of the Afro-American artists on the album jackets in self-confident poses by no means commonplace within America's 1950s majority society. In Germany, this has been noted in the context of the above-cited exhibit of work by Blue Note cover-photographer Francis Wolff:

> Wolff placed the musicians before chrome-gleaming autos, towering street signs, and urban canyons opening into the light. He portrayed his heroes as kings in a time when the musicians were being discriminated against through segregation in this external world.[72]

At this point, it should be clear that Lion could not have seen through his ambitious project without support from a congenial team. Francis –

68 See Cook, *Blue Note Records*, 17, and the discography of Cuscuna/Ruppli, *The Blue Note Label*.

69 See the Blue Note flyer in Cook, *Blue Note Records*, 12, and above.

70 See Cook, *Blue Note Records*, 136.

71 See de Wilde, Laurent, *Monk*, Paris 1996, 101f.

72 Sickert, Maxi, "Die Könige von New York," in: *die tageszeitung* (November 11, 2009).

originally Frank – Wolff was a friend of Lion from his Berlin days (they attended the 1925 Sam Wooding concert together).[73] Wolff, however, only took up exile from Nazi Germany in the States in 1939, after which Lion could quickly convince him to help him at Blue Note. With the introduction of the long-playing record, which Blue Note would only convert to in the early 1950s, covers and their design took on entirely new importance; at Blue Note they constituted the material platform for the development of jazz photography by Wolff. For many musicians, his presence in the studio, where he took photos during sessions, was unforgettable; in various memoirs he and Lion are described together.[74] Trumpeter Lee Morgan dedicated a composition to him – "The Lion and the Wolff."

Starting in the early 1950s, the third indispensable member of the Blue Note team was the optician Rudy van Gelder, who served as tone engineer for the Blue Note recordings, first from his parents' living room in Hackensack, then full-time in a studio set up for that purpose in Englewood Cliffs. Here as well close cooperation was needed; in that respect van Gelder indicated, looking back, that "Alfred knew exactly what he wanted to hear. He communicated it to me and I got it for him technically. He was amazing in what he heard and how he would patiently draw it out of me. He gave me confidence and support in any situation."[75] The basis for the synchrony between producer and tone engineer was a shared conception of the artist's individuality – and in the framework of recording technique, of the responsibility to arrange its congenial expression. "I'm talking about jazz," van Gelder indicated in a 1985 conversation,

> where it's an expression of a musician's personality, and his own sound, and he's recognizable and he's unique, and you can identify him as just as easily as I can recognize your voice or your face when I see you. Alfred had a way of presenting the situation. Here they are, this is the way they sound as individuals, this is the way. And he said, "Now you go ahead, and you do what you have to do to make that thing sound the way we want it to sound." And that's how he would present the problem.[76]

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73 Kahn, Ashley, "The Manifest . . . ," in: Francis Wolff/Jimmy Katz, *Blue Note Photography*, ed. Rainer Placke/Ingo Wulff, Bad Oeynhausen 2009, 10–11, 10; Lundvall, Bruce, "Alfred Lion's Widow . . . ," in: Francis Wolff/Jimmy Katz, *Blue Note Photography*, ed. Rainer Placke/Ingo Wulff, 150.

74 See Cook, *Blue Note Records*, 116, and Sidran, *Talking Jazz*, 140.

75 Cuscuna, "Blue Note Story," XIV.

76 Sidran, *Talking Jazz*, 314.

Van Gelder's remarks reveal an insight, reflecting decades of experience, into jazz's character as "expressive culture." At the same time, they show deep respect for the musicians and their music in that the former are not seen mainly as representatives of a "stream" or products of the "race music" business but, simply, as artistic personalities. This emphatic acknowledgement of Afro-American jazz musicians as creative artists was reflected in van Gelder's rigorous approach to the sound of each musician as not any less distinctive as a voice – or a face. Through such implicit analogizing of artistic products with physical manifestations of human individuality, the artistic works were themselves accorded a quasi-human dignity. But as convinced as van Gelder and Lion were of this principle, the problem had to always be solved anew of how to record the distinctiveness of the sound under the technical conditions of the age while increasing the number of listeners valuing that sound as much as possible.

Finally, a fourth member of the team worked on another dimension of the common enterprise: the graphic artist Reid Miles, who landed at Blue Note in 1956. With little personal interest in jazz, Miles would be informed by Lion about the nature of each separate recording before planning the record jackets, almost always with the use of Wolff's photos.[77] In doing so, he had recourse to an aesthetic that, although like van Gelder he was himself no immigrant, was among the most popular things brought over by the "provincial cosmopolitans:" "His Bauhaus designs," Bruce Lundval observes, "using Frank Wolff's intimate 'on the scene' photographic images created the Blue Note look and set a very high standard for album graphics from that point forward."[78] Looking backward, we can thus recognize this production quartet as – to again cite Lundval – "a convergence of creative forces that was inevitable given the astonishing talents that came together in these four men."[79]

A small episode, but one with huge resonance in jazz history and nothing less than paradigmatic for the constellation around Alfred Lion and Blue Note, makes especially clear how some constitutive moments in Lion's enterprise were intermeshed: the discovery of Thelonious Monk. Monk, one of the absolute key figures in Bebop's development, is presently, as Cook notes, "generally acknowledged as the major jazz

77 See Cook, *Blue Note Records*, 88f.
78 Lundvall, "Alfred Lion's Widow . . . ," 150.
79 Ibid.

composer after Ellington;"[80] in 1947 the masterful pianist was thirty and without a single recording. It was Ike Quebec who brought Monk to Lion's attention that year;[81] and, in the words of Monk's French biographer Laurent de Wilde, Lion's capacity "to hear in Monk what was inaudible to the American ear"[82] culminated in a first recording on October 15, 1947. The second one took place nine days later, a third in another four weeks. Of the fourteen personal compositions Monk performed, at least half are now standards – among these recorded on November 21, a piece that would become nothing less than the embodiment of jazz, "Round Midnight." The jazz journal *Downbeat* judged: "'Midnight' is for the super hip alone,"[83] which was not meant as a compliment. Today, in contrast, both the composition and Monk's performance stand for the place of Blue Note in twentieth century cultural history. Alfred Lion identified the impulse. He was a Jewish European from Berlin.

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80 Cook, *Blue Note Records*, 23.

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82 Ibid., 90.

83 Cited from Cook, *Blue Note Records*, 28.

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A Flaschenpost Recast: Leo Löwenthal's Late Writings[1]

Jerome Bolton

In an interview with Leo Löwenthal in 1980, W. Martin Lüdke recounts an anecdote told by Hanns Eisler at the beginning of the Second World War. The story tells of various members of the Institute for Social Research gathered on California's pacific shore. Among the assembled was Theodor Adorno who, when suddenly and forcefully overtaken by melancholy, suggested to the group to "throw out a message in a bottle." To this Eisler sardonically replied that the *Flaschenpost* should read: "I feel so lousy."[2] After the war, Adorno, Max Horkheimer, and Friedrich Pollock returned to Germany to reestablish the Institute in Frankfurt (Eisler returned in 1948 to settle in East Berlin). Meanwhile Löwenthal, along with Frankfurt School émigrés Herbert Marcuse, Franz Neumann, Otto Kirchheimer, and Erich Fromm, chose to remain in the United States and would enjoy a diverse career

1 The texts that I refer to as Löwenthal's late writings were published between the late 1970s and 1989. These writings include essays, memoirs, and interviews that are mainly collected in his autobiographical reflections (Löwenthal, Leo, *An Unmastered Past: The Autobiographical Reflections of Leo Löwenthal*, ed. Martin Jay, Berkeley 1987). The individual titles are listed as follows: "Sociology of Literature in Retrospect" (1981), transl. Ted R. Weeks, 163–182; "Theodor W. Adorno: An Intellectual Memoir" (1979), 183–200; "Recollections of Theodor W. Adorno" (1983), transl. Sabine Wilke, 201–215; "In Memory of Walter Benjamin: The Integrity of the Intellectual" (1983), transl. David J. Ward, 216–236; "The Utopian Motif in Suspension: A Conversation with Leo Löwenthal," interview with W. Martin Lüdke (1980), 237–246; "The Left in Germany has Failed," interview with Peter Glotz (1985), transl. Ted R. Weeks, 247–260; "Against Postmodernism," interview with Emilio Galli Zugaro (1985), transl. Benjamin Gregg, 261–268. To this group of writings I also include: Löwenthal, Leo, "Address upon Accepting the Theodor W. Adorno Prize on 1 October 1989," transl. Jamie Owen Daniel, in: *New German Critique* 54 (1991): 179–182.

2 Cf. Löwenthal, *An Unmastered Past*, 237.

on both ends of the continent.[3] By the time of the interview mentioned above, Löwenthal was the sole surviving member of the original Institute circle and still defiantly committed to its initial theoretical impulses. As Richard Wolin writes, "Leo played an indispensable role in keeping the torch of Critical Theory alive in the face of the neoconservative ideological shift that swept across Europe and North America during the 80s."[4] In his writings, speeches, and interviews between the late 1970s and 1989 – or what I am calling his 'late writings' – Löwenthal preoccupied himself with the survival of classical Critical Theory and, on occasion, with postmodernism. It is also in these writings in which a *Flaschenpost* is recast.

The metaphor of a *Flaschenpost*, or of a message in a bottle, is commonly used to describe the efforts of classical Critical Theory. More specifically, it insists that the Institute's political message was "cast into a dark and angry sea"[5] during the 1930s and 1940s only to wash ashore and uncork on American soil in the 1960s. This 'traditional account' of the reception of Critical Theory has recently been challenged by Thomas Wheatland whose work on the Frankfurt School's exile period thoroughly investigates the interaction between the émigrés and the communities of scholars they encountered while abroad.[6] Indeed, Wheatland probes archival documents previously neglected and seeks to dispel the various 'myths' he argues create an uncomprehensive image of the Circle's

3 After Löwenthal's emigration in 1933, first to Switzerland and then to the United States the following year, he joined the 'Institute of Social Research, affiliated with Columbia University' in New York where he developed the review section of the *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*. For nearly the entire war period, he held an advisory position in the Domestic Media Department of the Office of War Information (OWI) in Washington. In 1944, he worked for the Bureau of Overseas Intelligence (part of the OWI) and later with the Voice of America (VOA) – the official external broadcast institution of the United States federal government – as its research director. After nearly a decade with the VOA, Löwenthal moved to California to work at the Stanford Center for the Advanced Study of the Behavioral Sciences. In 1956, he joined the University of California, Berkeley's Speech Department and shortly thereafter its Department of Sociology. Although he retired in 1968, Löwenthal remained active in University affairs nearly until the end of his life in 1993 at the age of 92.

4 Wolin, Richard, *The Frankfurt School Revisited: and Other Essays on Politics and Society,* New York 2006, 101.

5 Wheatland, Thomas, *The first comprehensive history of the Frankfurt School in its American exile: A Q&A with author Thomas Wheatland*, http://www.upress.umn.edu/covers/Wheatland_QA.html (July 6, 2011).

6 See Wheatland, Thomas, *The Frankfurt School in Exile*, Minneapolis 2009.

American exile – e.g., that the Horkheimer Circle remained more or less isolated from its intellectual surroundings and that its efforts to have an impact on American intellectual life failed before the rise of the New Left in the 1960s. These myths, Wheatland asserts, are sustained by the *Flaschenpost* metaphor which simultaneously "underplays the interactions between Critical Theory and American intellectual life during the Frankfurt School's years in exile" and "helps to overplay the relationship between the Horkheimer Circle's legacy and the American New Left."[7] Hence his discontent: "this metaphor of the *Flaschenpost*, as much as I find it poetic and powerful, needs to be broken and discarded."[8] Although Wheatland's points are well taken, I prefer to retain the metaphor's symbolic function.

According to Löwenthal, the 'symbol' of the metaphor arose "out of the feeling that one could contribute to change, that the message would get through to the right people that the possibilities [for change] would once again arise."[9] He continues:

> Think of the beginning of our interdisciplinary orientation and collaboration within the framework of our political philosophy, to our determination as émigrés to uphold this tradition, as the only progressive voice of German intellectual life – that was something out the ordinary. Adorno's metaphor of the *Flaschenpost* couldn't have been more to the point.[10]

In light of these observations, it can be said that the *Flaschenpost* metaphor served as a symbol of preservation and transmission of the Institute's idiomatic theoretical and political perspective in times of intellectual and political peril. With this in mind, I read Löwenthal's late writings[11] – which include largely-overlooked interviews, memoirs, and reminiscences of Adorno and Walter Benjamin – as retaining the symbolic function of the *Flaschenpost*. For, in them, he challenged not only what he considered to be various 'collective misreadings' of the work of his Frankfurt School colleagues – by partisans of Critical Theory who 'rebelled' against their former intellectual mentors in the 1980s – but also sought to preserve and transmit the real 'meanings' of the concepts of history, progress, human autonomy, and an independent art at a time when they came under attack by postmodernist and neoconservative

7 Ibid.
8 Ibid.
9 Löwenthal, *An Unmastered Past*, 241.
10 Ibid., 66.
11 See the works cited in footnote # 1.

critics. Before further discussing Löwenthal's final intellectual concerns, a discussion of his position *vis-a-vis* the problematic of art and mass culture in American popular culture is necessary. In relation to the overarching theme of the present volume this is not only fitting but can possibly throw his individual achievements, which remain overshadowed by other figures associated with Critical Theory, into greater relief.

According to Martin Jay, part of the reason for Löwenthal's relative neglect within academic discussion "must be attributed to the seriousness with which he took the Institute's collective identity."[12] Indeed, even after his departure from the Institute, Löwenthal continued to exhibit a great willingness to engage in collaborative scholarship, as is evidenced by the multiple works he co-authored with critics such as Norbert Guterman and Marjorie Fiske, among others.[13] Also constructive is Jay's interpretation of Löwenthal's writings as "pure examples of Critical Theory applied to literature." For, though they may appear "more typical" of the work of the Institute than that of Benjamin or Adorno, they also suffer "from none of the occasional perversity and arbitrariness that mar their texts."[14] Hanno Hardt makes a similar observation when he states that Löwenthal's writings on popular culture "remain more accessible contributions to the field of communication research, in terms of their practical application, than the theoretical work of his colleagues."[15] Meanwhile, Jürgen Habermas celebrates Löwenthal's courage to always place himself in question, "so as to grant him the ability to display methodologically motivated judgemental arrogance without being misunderstood."[16] This humility, he writes, may also explain why Löwenthal

> opened himself to his American environment, to empirical research and the analytical style of thought; why he alone of the older Frankfurt group, without being a pragmatist, has not denied his respect to America's great

12 Jay, Martin, "Introduction," in: *Telos* 45, Tribute to Leo Löwenthal on the Occasion of his 80th Birthday (1980): 77–79, 78.

13 Cf. ibid. Among the work referred to here is the volume of *Studies of Prejudice-Prophets of Deceit* (co-authored with Norbert Guterman), as well as his collective work with Marjorie Fiske, Seymour Martin Lipset, and Joseph Klepper.

14 Ibid., 79. Compared to the work of Adorno and Benjamin, Jay interprets Löwenthal's sociological analysis of literature as a "more direct and straightforward approach to the relationship between society and culture."

15 Hardt, Hanno, "The Conscience of Society: Leo Löwenthal and Communication Research," in: *Journal of Communication* 41 (1991): 65–85, 66.

16 Habermas, Jürgen, "Leo Löwenthal – A Felicitation," in: Löwenthal, *An Unmastered Past,* 9–14, 14.

> philosophy [. . .]; why he has occupied for a quarter of a century, and with extraordinary success, a professorship in one of America's leading sociology departments; why he was the one who in the decisive years managed the affairs of the Institute for Social Research, who not only edited the *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, but, even more important, assumed the management of a review section that subsequently attained historical significance.[17]

These critics demonstrate that Löwenthal's profile as an academic abroad represents the successful integration of an identity bound up exclusively in the German intellectual tradition – namely the political-philosophical perspective of the Institute under the guidance of Max Horkheimer – into the American academic community, a feat he shared only with his life-long friend and colleague, Herbert Marcuse. Though perhaps 'less unique' in his methodology than other members of the Institute, his 'sociological' approach to literature and culture nevertheless allowed him to successfully bridge the gap between the demands of American Scholarship and that of the Institute. After all, how many of his colleagues could delight in the degree of flattery he received when the cultured and progressive American sociologist, Robert Merton, praised his "Triumph of the Mass Idols" as "one of the few successful examples of a synthesis of the European theoretical stance and American empirical research."[18]

In the essay, Löwenthal undertook a content analysis of popular biographies featured in the magazines *Colliers* and *The Saturday Evening Post*. The work represents a rare instance in which he deals specifically with popular commodities themselves and it exemplifies his critical-yet-ambivalent diagnosis of the 'leisure culture' as symbolically expressed through the counter-position of the philosophies of Michel de Montaigne and Blaise Pascal. For Löwenthal, each philosopher stands for two distinct themes in the problematic of art and mass culture (adaption vs. salvation or the psychological and the moral approaches to popular culture) that have emerged since the beginning of bourgeois forms of life and thought. Montaigne, as Löwenthal interprets him, represents the former position and is sympathetic to the human need for 'relaxation,' 'diversion,' and 'escape' under the pressure of modern life. Following this view, entertainment meets the universal human need to indulge in (frivolous)

17 Ibid.
18 Löwenthal, *An Unmastered Past*, 133.

leisure-time activities.[19] Pascal, on the contrary, is read as advancing a critique of entertainment that prefigures the view that distraction "is a threat to morality, contemplation, and an integrated personality."[20] In line with this view, leisure-time activities are to be 'serious,' that is, they are to contribute to the salvation of one's soul. Popular culture, then, as it ultimately leads the individual to "surrender to mere instrumentalities at the expense of the pursuit of higher goals[,]" is judged disapprovingly.[21] Löwenthal's own feelings on the subject can be thought of as occupying a middle position between the two above.[22]

On the one hand, Löwenthal diagnosed popular culture as a degraded cultural form.[23] This can be sensed particularly well in his "Triumph of Mass Idols" essay as many of its passages are uncharacteristically chastising in tone, thereby allowing it to be read not only as his most *Pascalean* but his most *Adornean* writing. Its psychoanalytically inspired images of the 'passive modern human,' for instance, recall Adorno's infamous attack on the 'jazz subject,' of which, for better or worse, Löwenthal wrote highly in a letter to Max Horkheimer on the twenty-second of October 1942.[24] Like the jazz subject, who (allegedly) submits herself to external forces of social domination, Löwenthal likens the passive modern human to the concept of a "human robot who, without having done anything himself" – and as if moving to the monotonous beat of a drum like the 'rhythmically obedient' type – "moves just such parts and in just

19 For a detailed discussion of the changes in popular culture, as well as on the debate on popular culture and art see Löwenthal, Leo, *Literature, Popular Culture, and Society*, Palo Alto 1961; particularly chapters 1–3.

20 Ibid., 17.

21 Ibid.

22 David Gross makes a similar observation; see Gross, David, "Löwenthal, Adorno, Barthes: Three Perspectives On Popular Culture," in: *Telos* 45, Tribute to Leo Löwenthal on the Occasion of his 80th Birthday (1980): 122–140, 128.

23 Gross has compiled a concise list of the conclusions regarding the characteristics of modern culture arrived at by Löwenthal that support the pessimistic view of culture of the greater Frankfurt School. He summarizes that: "Löwenthal finds in twentieth century Western cultures a loss of a sense of the mythical; a growing mass conformity; emphasis from production to consumption values; an increasing standardization of life; the actual elimination of free choice through 'institutional repetition' in the mass media; an erosion of the capacity to experience; and the disappearance the autonomous individual" (ibid., 129).

24 See Jay, Martin, *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute for Social Research, 1923–1950*, Boston 1973, 214.

such directions as his makers wished him to."[25] Additionally, both the jazz and robotic types operate in accordance with Löwenthal's characterization of the socialization pattern of mass culture, which he described as "psychoanalysis in reverse:" "it makes people neurotic and psychotic and finally completely dependent on its so-called leaders."[26] Under such circumstances, individuals, instead of emerging as active participants in a democratic body, lead an existence shaped by outside forces. Here the authoritarian aspect of the culture industry shows its head.[27]

On the other hand – and in dialectical fashion – Löwenthal recognized the utopian aspect of popular culture. His evaluation of culture as fundamentally ambiguous is particularly evident in a letter to Horkheimer in February 1942, in which he mentions his forthcoming work on popular biographies, namely the "Triumph of Mass Idols" essay. In the letter, he suggests to Horkheimer that the masses show by their very occupation with the subjects of biographies and with their ways of 'consumption' "a longing for a life of innocence;" he writes that:

> From my whole inner life I can deduce more and more how hateful the whole idea of production in the sense of permanent changes, transformation, incessant treatment of man and nature by machines and organization must become to the unconscious and even conscious life of the majority. [. . .] [T]hey both [German and American Biographies] represent distorted utopias of a concept of man to which we stand in an affirmative way, namely, they both imply the unconditional importance of the real, living, and existing individual: dignity, happiness.[28]

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25 Löwenthal, Leo, "The Triumph of Mass Idols" (1944), in: id., *Literature, Popular Culture, and Society*, Palo Alto 1961, 109–140, 129.

26 Löwenthal, *An Unmastered Past,* 134.

27 The relation between political agitation and the culture industry was something that the Institute stressed; think of works such as *The Authoritarian Personality* (Adorno et al.) or *Prophets of Deceit* (Löwenthal et al.). Common to both, according to Löwenthal, is that they strive to "keep people in permanent psychic bondage, to increase and reinforce neurotic and even psychotic behavior culminating in perpetual dependence on a 'leader' or on institutions or products" (Löwenthal, *An Unmastered Past*, 186). As such, instead of developing in individuals a capacity for critical thought, Löwenthal believes that the culture industry institutionalizes a "reign of physic terror, whereby the masses have to realize the pettiness and insignificance of their everyday lives" (Löwenthal, *Literature, Popular Culture, and Society*, 130).

28 Cited in Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, 213.

In the passage above, Löwenthal is noticeably sympathetic to the human need for diversion under the pressure of modern life. Indeed, here he is at his most *Montaignean*. In response to the letter, Horkheimer seems also to appreciate the desire of the masses to escape societal pressure through leisure activities and he argues that humans cannot be blamed for showing a greater interest in the sphere of privacy and consumption than in production: "This trait contains a Utopian element; in Utopia production does not play a decisive part. It is the land of milk and honey."[29] It would appear, then, that participation in mass culture is not the problem *per se*; after all, the pleasure derived from consumption is, as Löwenthal claims, legitimate:

> People derive a great deal of satisfaction from the continual repetition of familiar patterns. There are but a very limited number of plots and problems which are repeated over and over again in the successful movies and short stories. [. . .] Everyone knows that he will hear more or less the same type of story and the same type of music as soon as he turns on the radio. But there has never been any rebellion against this fact; there has never been a psychologist who could have said that boredom characterized the faces of the masses when they participate in the routine pleasures.[30]

In this context, Adorno would surely counter and assert that "[popular] music does the listening for the listener" by which he attempts to demonstrate that popular commodities promote the thoughtlessness of the masses and are above all a means by which individuals achieve some psychical adjustment to the mechanisms of present day life.[31] As shown earlier, Löwenthal, too, was aware of the ideological aspect of contemporary commercialization in popular culture. Even so, his critical-yet-ambivalent diagnosis of culture and the mass media avoids certain prejudices commonly associated with the cultural theory of Adorno.

Critics of Adorno have argued that his approach to culture lacked the dimensions needed to "pick up the symbolic dimension of mass media, respond to the progressive possibilities of technological innovation, and analyze the real political economy of mass media."[32] Though Löwenthal

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29 Cited in ibid.

30 Löwenthal, *Literature, Popular Culture, and Society*, 135.

31 Adorno, Theodor W., *Minima Moralia. Reflections on a Damaged Life*, transl. E.F.N. Jephcott, New York et al. 1974, 201.

32 Bernstein, J.M., "Introduction," in: Theodor W. Adorno, *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture*, New York 1991, 1–28, 21. In his introduction,

supported Adorno's evaluation of culture – "in no way do I differ radically from my colleagues and friends [Horkheimer and Adorno] in the critique of mass culture"[33] – he was also more open to the progressive potential of the mass media. He suggested, for instance, as Berman has written, "the possibility of escaping the twin dangers of highbrow elitism and crass commercialism by raising 'the question of how mass media can be used as instruments for encouraging the cultural and educational development of broad segments of the population.'"[34] Instead of writing off the culture industry as the sheer degeneration of art – *à la* Horkheimer and Adorno in their *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* – Löwenthal placed value on distinguishing between mass culture and the technologies *used by it* to argue against holding the latter responsible for instituting a 'totally administered' society:

> On the contrary; as a consequence of the capital structure within which these media are used, as a consequence of the political-economic *form*, the entire technological arsenal has been appropriated. The aesthetic and cognitive potential of film, radio, and television hardly gets a chance.[35]

As such, Löwenthal proposed linking together the continual advancement of the media's technical and aesthetic possibilities with a consistent effort to grasp its 'harmful' dimensions: "There must be *both*: the appropriate utilization of the new media and a radical critique of a mass culture that just stultifies our intelligence."[36] Why then, given that he allows for a rehabilitation of popular culture in defense of polemical dismissals, was Löwenthal so uncompromising in his critique of postmodernism?

To answer this question it is necessary to return to the problematic of art and mass culture as represented by the Montaigne-Pascal dispute mentioned earlier. As the Institute's expert on literature, Löwenthal granted a privileged position as regards the creative writer in society. For him, the writer justifies or defies society by presenting a "living reality" that brings to light previously unspoken "insecurities," "frustrations," "hopes,"

Bernstein attempts to free Adorno's evaluation of culture from unwarranted prejudices.

33 Löwenthal, *An Unmastered Past*, 252.

34 Berman, Russell, Untitled Review, in: *Theory and Society* 15.5 (1986): 792–795, 794.

35 Löwenthal, *An Unmastered Past*, 255.

36 Ibid.

"anxieties," and "fantasies."[37] Grandiosely spoken, it is the artist "who portrays what is more real than reality itself."[38] At her best, the creative writer is a 'dialectician' focusing on the idiosyncratic, and her art a 'non-religious philosophy of redemption' – that is, "a great reservoir of creative protest against social misery that brings to consciousness unredeemed elements that await social happiness."[39] The writer of popular literature, alternatively, passively records the conditions of society. In her art, nothing is ever redeemed and, instead of reflecting 'genuine human experience' – as high art does – her art reflects an administered and rarified consciousness and thus lacks the implicit aesthetic of great art, as described above. Löwenthal thus maintained that the democratization of art, understood as the union of art and commodity welcomed in postmodern society, constitutes a false reconciliation that places art "into a seamless context of simulation with the culture industry, which pulls us all into its flow and endeavors to carry us away from genuine experience,"[40] that is, a type of experience through which (subjective) autonomy becomes palpable.

Like his Frankfurt School colleagues, Löwenthal feared that the blockage of an oppositional consciousness mediated primarily by art "gives free rein to the forces of manipulation" that sustain a manipulated (false) collectivism comprised of participants who are lulled into a noncritical state.[41] Further, he stressed that without a genuine education of people to aesthetic experience high art is deprived of its seriousness and its consumption only strengthens the tendency toward passive amusement. To demonstrate this point, Löwenthal singles out *Time Books* and the *Literary Guild* as two examples of enterprises that offer its customers a "planned approach" to reading: "Although the acquaintance with great art is certainly growing, an acquaintance without genuine experience, rooted in critical openness, only serves to support the system."[42] As such, the possibility for artistic experience withers and with it follows the destruction of "the very grounds on which a real subjectivity might be constructed."[43] For Löwenthal, then, with regard to the Montaigne-Pascal

37 Löwenthal, *Literature, Popular Culture, and Society*, ixff.
38 Ibid., xii.
39 Löwenthal, *An Unmastered Past,* 124.
40 Löwenthal, "Address upon Accepting the Theodor W. Adorno Prize," 182.
41 Löwenthal, *An Unmastered Past*, 175.
42 Ibid., 182.
43 Gross, "Löwenthal, Adorno, Barthes," 132.

dispute, the linkage of art and leisure against mass culture cannot be detached from the critical-cognitive aspect of art, namely, its ability to develop in individuals a capacity to avoid the psychological regression that accompanies the emergence of 'totally integrated societies.'

The eclipse of the individual was something that the Frankfurt School had stressed in its theoretical and empirical work. Opposed to welcoming its liquidation, however, Löwenthal and his colleagues called for its critical and dialectical enhancement. In his own work, he worked not only to uncover the structure of the bourgeois individuality but investigated the decay of the subject – its conversion to mere illusion and ideology – that could emerge as the active participant in a democratic body.[44] The dissolution of the latter, he maintains, supports a system that imparts values that do not conform to the autochthonous expression of the masses but are completely manipulated from above for the sake of profit and societal control.[45] Accordingly, and despite his sympathy for the humane (namely his *Montaignean* tendency), Löwenthal was ultimately inclined toward Pascal and indicted popular culture.

Here is the occasion to review Löwenthal's resistance to the radical critique of reason and to what he considered "irrational and neomythological" "nonconcepts" (the concept of "post-histoire," for instance, which presupposes that the notion of history, progress, and of an autonomous art have become untenable) that he attributed to the "postmodern mentality."[46]

To a large degree, Löwenthal's late writings are an examination of the intellectual and political circumstances that allowed the postmodern intellect to gain academic hegemony, and he diagnosed the collapse of the student movement in the 1960s and early 1970s as one of the primary factors. He writes that: "after the complete internal and external psychological collapse of this idea [of forging a new political will], there arose a colossal need for the vacuum to be filled."[47] He had the following to say about the Leftist intelligentsia of the period:

> These people aren't evil, but they are victims of a desperate situation in which the impatience, the expectation that something has to happen – even

44 On this point, see Russell Berman's review of Löwenthal's *Literature and Mass Culture: Communication in Society* 1 (Berman, Untitled Review).

45 For a brief but comprehensive overview of the historical assumptions behind a critical theory of culture, see the Gross article cited in this work.

46 Löwenthal, *An Unmastered Past,* 262f.

47 Ibid., 265.

> if threat means that nothing at all should happen – overwhelms the rationally advisable attitude of *waiting*, of critical thought.[48]

Löwenthal's observations recall those made by Siegfried Kracauer in his essay, "Those who Wait," from 1922. In the essay, Kracauer thematized the metaphysical suffering he felt humans experienced as a result of a lack of a higher meaning in the modern world. Instead of embracing what he considered to be 'short-circuit' practices to fill this void, he advised his contemporaries to 'wait' "by committing oneself to *waiting*. [. . .] One waits, and one's waiting is a *hesitant openness*, albeit of a sort that is difficult to explain."[49] Those who wait, he writes, must be hard on themselves, so as to maintain the greatest possible distance from 'illusory fulfilment.' Both Kracauer and Löwenthal advise *waiting* when faced with different possible routes to a more fulfilled future. For Löwenthal, this meant waiting for the possibility to form a really *new* leftist intelligentsia, "one that continues to grow theoretically, as Critical Theory tried to do," and one that could enjoy the potential to bring about not mere improvements but genuine social change.[50] As Wolin has written, "Leo believed that integrity lay in refusing to follow the whims of academic fashion and a willingness to hazard strong judgments in the face of a rising tide of relativist vacillation."[51] Problematizing the concepts of the enlightenment, of reason, of the autonomous individual, the concepts of history, of morality, and of an independent art signified for Löwenthal not a development but a failure: "The left, Mr Glotz [his interlocutor], especially the leftist intelligentsia in Germany has failed; indeed, it is also failing, more and more, in the United States and in France. [. . .] [T]he modern age is being sold out."[52]

Numerous passages in Löwenthal's later writings are colored by a tone that hints at resignation; indeed, they recall the atmosphere of Eisler's anecdote mentioned at the outset. Consider the following sentiment expressed by Löwenthal in his interviews with Helmut Dubiel in 1985: "[W]hat makes me so sad is that there aren't any real political movements with which I can identify, at whose disposal I could place my meager

48 Ibid. (emphasis added, JB).

49 Kracauer, Siegfried, "Those Who Wait," transl. and ed. Thomas Y. Levin, in: id., *The Mass Ornament, Weimar Essays,* Harvard 1995, 129–142, 138.

50 Löwenthal, *An Unmastered Past*, 258.

51 Wolin, *The Frankfurt School Revisited*, 104.

52 Ibid., 257.

resources. I feel very isolated."[53] Shortly afterward, at the conclusion of the interview, he reflects that:

> I am still so strongly rooted in my political youth, that is, the period from age seventeen to twenty-two when I really believed in utopia. I believed in the possibility of a successful revolution and the realization of its goals. I really believed that we could change the world. [. . .] Perhaps my youthful hopes have been so profoundly disappointed that I can no longer muster the patience to identify with movements that are dedicated to mere improvements. Of course, my heart beats faster when the utopian seems to throw off sparks, if only for a moment; but disappointment follows all too quickly. Just take a look at the world today. Tell me, just where should one plant one's political sympathies and hopes?[54]

Can the passage above, and others like it, be understood in the context of a *Flaschenpost*? Recall that, on the one hand, the *symbolic function* of the metaphor is one of preservation and transmission – that Löwenthal fought to preserve the motifs present in Critical Theory is unquestionable. But how closely is the passage above and others like it in his late writings related to his claim that the metaphor arose out of the feeling *that one could contribute to change, that the message would get through to the right peoplee, that the possibilities [for change] would once again arise*?

Toward the end of his intellectual career, Löwenthal was unconvinced that the postmodern turn had capitalized on the events that could have brought about *real* social and political change, that is, if this possibility was indeed at hand. This claim is supported by considering his interpretations of the fate of the political energies of the 1960s and 1970s. On the one hand, he believed these progressive forces were abandoned at the expense of 'apolitical' textual strategies:

> We are confronted with distorting mirrors, or picture puzzles that whirl and swirl the dead about. To me this represents an unreflected revelry abounding in irrationalist concepts, an ever-present flirtation with mythology. Unfortunately, this 'mythology' characterizes a certain so-called leftist intelligentsia much more than a rightist one. The right, the neoconservatives, are in fact quite positivistic, oriented toward the practical, the left however loses itself in intellectual meanderings that can only make the situation worse.[55]

53 Löwenthal, *An Unmastered Past*, 158.
54 Ibid., 159.
55 Ibid., 258.

On the other hand, he interpreted their stultification as the consequence of a "filial rebellion"[56] against Critical Theory by the American New Left after the student movement. This is not to say that he failed to recognize the significance of the protest movement; he believed, for example, that the event had helped bring about the end of the Vietnam War. With regard to the movement's ability to 'really gain political momentum,' however, he remained of the opinion that its potentials were extinguished by the 'private psychological frustrations' of its participants:

> I saw that many of these young people enjoyed the state of upheaval they had caused on campus with their activities, that they experienced this as an atmosphere that mitigated certain psychological frustrations in the academic as well as personal sphere and allowed them to retreat into the background. But this hardly translated into a viable political movement. [. . .] I soon gained the impression [in Berkeley] that it [the Free Speech Movement] was essentially more a matter of satisfying certain psychological needs than of realizing realistic political goals.[57]

Was the postmodernist turn, as Löwenthal asserts – rather polemically at times[58] – premature and ideologically suspect? I certainly wouldn't defend this thesis. However, asking the question of whether celebrating the end of the defining concepts of modernity is not without its consequences can prove constructive.

The consideration above has been examined both by Richard Wolin and Russell Berman; both have diagnosed in the present what alarmed Löwenthal in the past. Berman, for instance, has investigated the relation between the death of the subject and the withering of the idea of emancipation, and he critiques post-structuralism for its lack of a substantial account of the latter:

> The social forces undermining the potential for individual autonomy are not understood by conformist intellectuals, but their results are perceived and universalized in paradigms of structured power. Because relations of

56 Ibid., 195.

57 Löwenthal, *An Unmastered Past*, 151f.

58 Perhaps the most polemical of all of Löwenthal's critiques of postmodernism is the following statement, delivered in an interview in 1985: "Since other credible tools and ideologies were not available [after the internal and external psychological collapse of the student movement in the sixties and seventies], a large part of the [postmodern] intelligentsia slowly sank into this irrational and mythological behavior, into this dangerous swamp" (ibid., 265).

> domination cannot be criticized without a notion of human rights, post-structuralism ultimately lacks a substantial account of emancipation, relegated to the dustbin of western metaphysics.[59]

More recently, Wolin has inquired about whether the displacement of the modern through the postmodern could mean that the former's historical potentials for freedom belong to the past. "In this case," he writes, "the death of the subject would not be an occasion for rejoicing; rather, it would point out that the project of human autonomy and self-determination, which coincides with the birth of the modern, has become anachronistic."[60] On another occasion, Wolin warned that "today's cant concerning the 'death of the subject' might best be understood as a profession of intellectual impotence. For if the subject is 'dead,' the idea of emancipation cannot be far behind."[61]

Whether or not one agrees with Berman or Wolin, taking Löwenthal's critique of postmodernism seriously, despite its being problematic, can lead, I argue, to a more nuanced evaluation of its claims. Furthermore, his ambivalent attitude toward the democratic transformation of culture, as represented by his middle position in the problematic of art and mass culture, can be interpreted as a call to critics to affirm the democratic transformation of culture only if proscribed in such a manner as to transform in an emancipatory direction. As such, it can be read as a simultaneous *yes* and *no* to the postmodern age[62] and can therefore be

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59 Berman, Untitled Review, 795.

60 "Die apokalyptischen Möglichkeiten, die von den Postmodernisten so eifrig begrüßt werden – eine Posthistoire, die den Tod des 'Menschen' oder das 'Ende der Moderne anführt' –, wäre für Kritische Theoretiker ein Grund zur Sorge und Bestürzung gewesen. Denn eine Verdrängung der Moderne durch die Postmoderne könnte bedeuten, dass auch die historischen Freiheitspotentiale der ersteren mittlerweile der Vergangenheit angehören. Der 'Tod des Subjektes' wäre in dieser Sicht kein Anlaß zum Jubeln, sondern verweist darauf, dass das Projekt menschlicher Autonomie und Selbstbestimmung, das mit der Geburt der Moderne zusammenfällt, anachronistisch geworden ist." Wolin, Richard, "Die Vorzüge der Ungleichzeitigkeit: Leo Löwenthal mit Neunzig," transl. Michael Schröter, in: *Das Utopische soll Funken schlagen*, ed. Peter-Erwin Jansen, Frankfurt/M. 2000, 165–172, 167. My translation into English, JB.

61 Wolin, *The Frankfurt School Revisited*, 104.

62 This interpretation owes much to Levin's interpretation of the relation to life of Kracauer's 'waiting subject,' which the former reads as a "simultaneous *yes* and *no* to modernity" (Levin, Thomas Y., "Introduction," in: Kracauer, *The Mass Ornament*, 1–32, 14).

related to the metaphor of the *Flaschenpost* which would insist that the claims of classical Critical Theory, though perhaps dated and impossible to defend in every nuance, still hold some contemporary significance.[63]

Jay has remarked that Löwenthal kept faith with the radical and utopian spirit of Critical Theory with a "remarkably sober dose of realism [. . .]."[64] In an interview from 1985, Löwenthal admitted to his interlocutor that:

> When I speak of such things [the speculative utopian call for a resurrection of nature or a reconciliation between man and nature, for instance] I feel a bit old and obsolete. After all, one cannot live only on utopian hopes based in never-never land, whose realization seems scarcely within the realm of the possible.[65]

Löwenthal concludes the interview by suggesting that a realist evaluation of the motifs present in Critical Theory – he names Habermas specifically, who detached his variant of Critical Theory at the point of unfounded hope[66] – may perhaps provide the only means of salvaging said motifs "from a complete disintegration into an empty, melancholic pessimism."[67] Whether Habermas's 'theoretical realism' is on course is the topic for another text.

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63 Bernstein has convincingly argued that Adorno's analyses of the culture industry is "uncomfortably timely:" "Despite its overemphasis on the culture industry's goal of homogeneity, Adorno's theory and analyses continually call attention to the difference between pseudo-individuality and individuality, pleasure and happiness, consensus and freedom, pseudo-activity and activity, illusory otherness and non-identical otherness. [. . .] If the sure logic of the culture industry is significantly different from the time of Adorno's writing, its effects are uncannily the same. Adorno saw clearly the trajectory of the culture industry and the threat it posed. That his most pessimistic predictions have come to pass makes his writings on the culture industry uncomfortably timely" (Bernstein, "Introduction," 27). Given that Löwenthal's analyses are similar to those arrived at by Adorno, his writings also fall under Bernstein's argument.

64 Jay, Martin, "Introduction," in: *An Unmastered Past*, 1–8, 4.

65 Löwenthal, *An Unmastered Past*, 245.

66 Cf. Löwenthal, *An Unmastered Past*, 245f.

67 Ibid., 246.

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On An Eastward Trajectory Toward Europe: Karl Löwith's Exiles

Rodolphe Gasché

In his inaugural speech at the Academy of the Sciences in Heidelberg in 1959, where, thanks to his friend Hans-Georg Gadamer, he had returned in 1952 after eighteen years of exile in Italy, Japan, and then the United States (a speech that has been republished in a revised form under the title "Curriculum Vitae (1959)" in *My Life in Germany Before and After 1933*) Karl Löwith recalls how in 1919, after some deliberation on whether to study biology or philosophy, he finally decided for the latter, and subsequently enrolled in Freiburg in Husserl's seminars. In the beginning Löwith enjoyed Husserl's strict phenomenological thought, but only until he began to attend the seminars offered by Heidegger, "who [as he states] lured us away from Husserl's naïve faith in a conclusive philosophical method."[1] Apart from his doctoral dissertation on Nietzsche under the guidance of Martin Heidegger, Löwith habilitated himself in Marburg in 1928 (where he had followed his teacher) with a thesis on *The Individual in the Role of Fellow Human Being* (*Das Individuum in der Rolle des Mitmenschen*). Although at the time Löwith characterized his own starting point as anthropological – in other words, in clear distinction from the ontologism of Heidegger's analytic of Dasein – the problematic of this work still unfolds within a conception of world predicated primarily on the human being and its relations to objects, and other human beings. Löwith writes:

> the personalized world of I and you (*Mitwelt*), in which each is relatively conditioned by the other [. . .] this *Mitwelt*, also constituting us as "individuals," appeared at that time to be our definitive world [*unsere maßgebende Welt*], because it is of direct and everyday concern to us.[2]

1 Löwith, Karl, *My Life in Germany Before and After 1933A Report*, transl. E. King, Urbana 1994, 158.

2 Ibid., 159.

But shortly after having understood "world" in this manner – that is, also in implicitly temporal and historical terms, an understanding largely indebted to Heidegger's critical questioning and "Destruktion" in *Being and Time* of the traditional understanding of Being, including, as Löwith adds, "the temporal meaning of Being as it was understood by the Greeks" as that which is always present – Löwith abandoned this conception of world according to which human Dasein is a being that unfolds within a temporal, above all within a future-oriented horizon (in other words, intrinsically historical) as "an all too human horizon of the world."[3] Building upon his earlier concerns with the whole of the natural world as elaborated by Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, and likewise motivated by his continuing interest in biology, while undoubtedly also reminiscent of his studies with Husserl (who referred his students "beyond the transient realities to the timeless 'essence' of phenomena"), Löwith turned away from the human and historical world, a world primarily determined in terms of relations of persons with one another that until then had been for him the "definitive world," toward a conception of the world as, primarily, the world of nature, or the natural world.[4] Yet, by natural world Löwith does not mean nature as it is an object of the sciences. The latter does not inquire into the eternal motions of nature, or the universe as such, but, in Hannah Arendt's words, into its processes, "the history, the story of the coming into being, of nature or life or the universe."[5] By "natural world" Löwith rather understands "the *world as such*, which is the One and Whole of what is that exists by and from itself [*welche das Eine und Ganze des von Natur aus Seienden ist*]." More precisely, in a return to Greek cosmotheology, for him the natural world corresponds to what the ancients referred to as the physical *cosmos*, a whole that is "ever complete" and "entirely independent," one that swings in itself and whose *logos* is the changeless law of the cyclical recurrence of the same.[6] With Heraclitus' fragment 30 in mind, according to which the "ordered universe (cosmos), which is the same for all, was not created by any one of the gods or of mankind, but [. . .] was ever and is and shall be ever-living," the natural world, or cosmos, is

3 Ibid., 158f.

4 Löwith, *My Life in Germany*, 27.

5 Arendt, Hannah, *The Human Condition*, Chicago 1958, 296.

6 Löwith, *My Life in Germany,* 166 (trans. mod.). As Löwith points out it is Nietzsche who was the first to seek such a return to the Greek understanding of the whole of what is, but Nietzsche, he also argues, remains stuck in historicism.

understood as a whole which – in distinction from the one that originates in the mythical creation by a determined god, or is a product of the human being – is *holon*, in other words, a whole that does not lack anything, that is without beginning or end, and, therefore, is "already qua cosmos *to theion*, that is, divine."[7]

Undoubtedly, in light of the contemporary natural sciences' seemingly endless progress at mastering nature and the earth, the Greek understanding of the physical cosmos as an ordered whole – even though its closed form has been a paralyzing obstacle to the development of the sciences in their modern shape for which the Greeks laid the ground but which they did not create themselves – has a particular relevance in that it reminds us of the intrinsic limits to the human effort at mastering that to which human beings themselves belong. Yet the thrust of Löwith's return to the ancients' conception of nature and the universe is not primarily directed against the modern sciences, but against the world understood merely in human terms – more precisely, in terms of a temporality and historicity particular to human Dasein. If, as Gadamer has submitted, "no other Greek text seems to illustrate Löwith's intention as well as the pseudo-Aristotelian (Hellenistic-Stoic) work 'On the Cosmos,'" it is because the "'natural concept of world'" that he "uses against both modern historicism and modern science, is clearly of Stoic origin."[8] Indeed, Löwith's reason for focusing on "the eternal cycle of nature, [is] to learn from it the equanimity that alone is appropriate to the minuteness of human life in the universe."[9] But the philosophical significance of this step back from the historical world of men to the natural world, which also dominates Löwith's entire critical debate with Heidegger's early and late thought, whose concept of the historicity of Dasein and of the history of Being he characterizes as the epitome of historical and eschatological thinking, respectively (in Löwith's words, Heideggerian thought is an "absolutizing of history itself," as a result of which the natural world and the human being's reference to it [*Bezug zum All*] are

7 Freeman, Kathleen, *Ancilla to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers*, Cambridge 1983, 26; Löwith, Karl "Das Verhältnis von Gott, Mensch und Welt in der Metaphysik von Descartes und Kant," in: *Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften*, Heidelberg 1964, 1–26, 6.

8 Gadamer, Hans-Georg, "Hermeneutics and Historicism," in: id., *Truth and Method*, 2nd, revised Edition, transl. J. Weinsheimer/D. G. Marshall, New York 1995, 528.

9 Ibid., 532.

completely obliterated), only comes into view, I hold, and can only be truly assessed, if it is seen within the phenomenological problematic of what constitutes the "life-world."[10]

Although Georg Simmel coined the term, "life-world" becomes a central philosophical concept only with Husserlian phenomenology, and has since then been a persistent concern of all phenomenological thought. For Husserl, the life-world, which he also refers to as the "natural world" in his early works, is the whole of the natural, that is, of all the originary, intersubjective experiences – a world of pre-given evidences and of manifold validities which, because they are fixed and pre-given, no longer reflect their historical genesis – that constitute the pre-scientific attitude in and to the world, and which is therefore the repressed foundation, as it were, of the sciences.[11] In his later work, particularly *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, Husserl's aim is to relate the sciences back to this foundation (that is, to the practical concerns of the life-world), through which alone they could have become meaningful in the first place. From his own very early references to the life-world it is clear that this theme is also a consistent preoccupation of Heideggerian thought. Since Heidegger's primary concern is the question of Being, however, the existential and hermeneutic analyses of the life-world, that is, of Dasein's fundamental characterization as Being-in-the-world, are conducted in primarily temporal and historicist terms. By holding in his "Heidegger: Thinker in a Destitute Time" that an analysis of Dasein is unnecessary to understand the meaning of Being, as well as that the truth of Being is not tied to the essence of the human being, Löwith takes issue not only with Heidegger's thought about the life-world, but also with the overestimation of

10 Löwith, Karl, *Nature, History, and Existentialism and Other Essays in the Philosophy of History*, ed. Arnold Levison, Evanston 1966, 18.

11 In contrast to the modern, that is, Copernican understanding of the world, the earth in the originary experience of the life-world is not round and does not move. As the ground for everything that moves, the earth, according to this immediate and intuitive (*anschaulich*) representation is flat. (See Husserl, Edmund, "Grundlegende Untersuchungen zum phänomenoligschen Ursprung der Räumlichkeit der Natur," in: Marvin Farber (ed.), *Philosophical Essays. In Memory of Edmund Husserl*, New York 1968, 307–325). Even though there is a definite tension between the scientific view of the earth and the one of the life-world, Husserl also admits elsewhere that the sciences transform the way the life-world is experienced. In any event, Löwith's rediscovery of the life-world on his eastward trajectory presupposes the very roundness of the earth.

history and the historical world in Western Christian and post-Christian thought, of which, for him, Heidegger's thought represents the very climax. "Heidegger's essential-historical thinking," Löwith contends, is "an extreme consequence of historicism to the extent that, in a historiologically definable way, it thinks in an excessively historical manner," and Heidegger therefore, like all previous thinkers, misses the true nature of the life-world.[12] However personal Löwith's criticism of Heidegger may be, his assertion that from Heidegger's elaborations on the destining of Being it would seem that "universal Being as such and as a whole had a predilection for the Occident," and, furthermore, that his understanding of the essence of the human being as a historical essence is only one definite essence, one "among other possible essences that Heidegger ignores," shows that the true target of Löwith's criticism is not Heidegger alone, and not even Heidegger in particular.[13] In fact, as is obvious from Löwith's work on *Meaning and History* (*Weltgeschichte und Heilsgeschehen*), his target is the whole of Christian Europe and post-Christian Europe which, from Hegel to Heidegger, moves "within the same modern eccentricity of a historicism with regard to the history of spirit and the history of Being," and which therefore amounts to an oblivion of the natural world as the true life-world.[14] Löwith's return to the Greeks, that is, to their understanding of the physical cosmos, is a return to the lived world, to the life-world. However, when he argues that Heidegger's thinking, notwithstanding its emphasis on the Greeks in determining the life-world, "is not an Eastern meditation nor a Greek beholding of Being as always the same, but instead is a historically conditioned Being-on-the-way that wills in the modern sense," it is also clear that he aims at a definition of the life-world as the natural world that not only reaches back to an understanding of Greek thought – one that is not mediated by Christian and modern conceptions of history – but that also takes non-European, that is, oriental modes of experiencing the natural world, into account.[15]

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12 Löwith, Karl, "Heidegger: Thinker in a Destitute Time," in: id., *Martin Heidegger and European Nihilism*, ed. R. Wolin, transl. G. Steiner, New York 1995, 31–134, 57, 93. In the face of this criticism even Habermas, who certainly cannot be accused of having much sympathy for Heidegger, felt compelled to defend him against Löwith's unfair treatment of his former teacher.

13 Ibid., 72.

14 Ibid., 71.

15 Ibid., 70. Heidegger's call upon the Greeks to think the life-world as an intersubjective world of Dasein is most explicit in his early lectures on Aristotle's rhetoric (1924) in Marburg, which Löwith must have attended.

Undoubtedly, as Habermas has observed, Löwith's reference to the living whole of the cosmos carries "a grand conservative sentiment."[16] Indeed, even though Löwith is certainly not the only phenomenologically trained thinker of the period to highlight nature and the importance of experience of nature for the life-world (Eugen Fink would be an example), his explicit aim of demystifying historicism through, as Reinhard Koselleck writes, a reflection "on history towards a view of the world which precedes all history," inevitably gives his elaborations on the eternal laws of the cosmos an untimely and even anachronistic appearance.[17] In passing, let me also point out that the importance that Löwith attributes to nature in trying to resist what he considers an inflated importance of historicism, is somewhat questionable since the opposition of nature and history itself is anything but self-evident. As he himself notes at one point, "the natural antithesis to nature would be not history, but art," that is, the artificial.[18] Hence, unless history is thought as fundamentally artificial – but then, is this not precisely, as Löwith has shown in *Meaning in History*, a conception that from Vico to Marx subtends modern philosophy of history and its notion of progress – is the confrontation of history with the eternal and cyclical laws of nature in order to unseat its priority in the European universe, not also an intrinsically "unnatural" enterprise? – Let me return to the question of Löwith's recourse to a natural concept of world in what amounts to a clear provocation of our historically oriented way of understanding the world.[19] In spite of a number of

16 Habermas, Jürgen, *Philosophical-Political Profiles*, transl. F. G. Lawrence, Cambridge 1985, 82.

17 Kosellek, Reinhardt, "Foreword," in: Löwith, *My Life in Germany*, xi–xv, xiii.

18 Löwith, *Nature, History, and Existentialism*, 17.

19 Although initially Löwith's interest in the natural world is rooted in his discovery, or rediscovery of the Greeks, his reflections on the one physical world are crowned, as it were, in his later works by his discovery (or rediscovery?) of Spinoza, who, as he observes, "is unique in his kind because he took a position outside the anthropo-theological tradition of the Bible, and therewith recovered a natural understanding of man and world" (Löwith, Karl, *Gott, Mensch und Welt in der Metaphysik von Descartes bis zu Nietzsche*, Göttingen 1967, 206). However, it is also clear from this work that Spinoza's radical criticism of the notion of purpose – and with it of the biblical conception of creation according to which the world has only been created for the benefit of man, and is thus "nothing in itself, and even less the One, the Whole, and the Perfect" (ibid., 222), which Spinoza's metaphysics unconditionally affirmed – comes only to fruition in Nietzsche. In fact, Nietzsche is overall the most likely source of inspiration to which Löwith's concern with the natural world must be retraced. (For the

ambiguities this attempt at retrieving a natural view of the world, I hold, does not amount to a simple return to the ancient theory about the cosmos and nature. Although the Greek physical cosmos with its eternal laws is the starting point of Löwith's reflections on a natural concept of world, his understanding of this concept cannot simply be reduced to ancient cosmotheology. In his late work, *Gott, Mensch und Welt in der Metaphysik von Descartes bis zu Nietzsche*, he submits that "biblical anthropo-theology, i.e., the partnership of God and man, has become as foreign to us as the more humane cosmo-theology of the Greeks."[20] But as he also notes, "something so old and yet always so new as eternity cannot easily be revived again, even with the most modern techniques."[21] Some commentators have pointed out that Löwith has left his conception of a natural world quite vague. But, if this is the case, then it is because instead of being simply an anachronistic retrieval of a fully elaborated theory, Löwith's reaching back to the natural concept of the world is a function of his attempt to develop in the face of historical consciousness a conception of the life-world in tune with the beginnings of philosophy in Greece and whose grand object was nature. More precisely, if philosophy, as it emerged in Greece, has been tied to the thinking of the natural world, then what is at stake for our thinker is nothing less than a retrieval of philosophy itself for our times. The reconstruction of a natural concept of world by means of which modern historical consciousness is to be lead back to "the true beginning of philosophy, the problem of nature," must not only take place by way of a detour through history, as Manfred Riedel (a Löwith student himself) has argued, it does not entail (which is certainly more problematic), "a departure from history, but the recovery of a dimension of knowledge, for which historical consciousness has no standard."[22] But even more important evidence that Löwith does not consider ancient Greek cosmotheology a fully sufficient response against the modern historicist conception of the world, is to be found in the fact, as pointed out earlier, that a full elaboration of the natural concept of world must also take non-European, that is, oriental forms of experiencing the world of nature into account.

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overarching importance of Nietzsche in Löwith's thought see Ries, Wiebrecht, *Karl Löwith*, Stuttgart 1992, 11f.).

20 Löwith, *Gott, Mensch und Welt*, 250.

21 Ibid., 78.

22 Riedel, Manfred, "Karl Löwiths philosophischer Weg," in: *Heidelberger Jahrbücher* 14 (1970): 120–133, 132.

At this point let me circle back to Löwith's biography, and to the trajectory of his exile that brought him from Heidelberg to Rome, from Rome to Sendai, from Sendai to Hartford and New York, and which comes to a conclusion in Heidelberg – that is, an eastward trajectory, that forced him to circumnavigate the entire globe before returning to his point of departure. In his essay on Löwith, Habermas observes that while reading the latter's "artful autobiography" in his inaugural address before the Heidelberg Academy of Sciences, he became

> fascinated by the quiet logic of this philosophical career. How was it possible that a destiny so outwardly driven about by political catastrophes – the fate of one who emigrated via Rome to Tokyo, from the East to the West, and from the United States to Germany – could have made inwardly possible not only the identity of the person, not only the continuity of doing philosophy at all; that in such a shell early seeds eventually bore the fruit of developed thought in an almost cyclically maturing evolution?[23]

In what follows, I will seek to respond to some of Habermas's questions regarding Löwith's almost cyclical maturing evolution by tying the latter's reflections on the life-world to one of, if not the most, experientially decisive stops on his departure from Germany, namely, Sendai. There he would spend five years at the Tohoku University where, thanks to a recommendation by Kuki Shuzo, he was offered a position in 1936 when, under the pressure of National Socialist foreign propaganda, his position in Rome became insecure. In "Curriculum Vitae," Löwith remarks that he "did not remain untouched by the experience of the no longer Far East, but [that, on the contrary, he] obtained an unforgettable impression of the country and its people, its subtle civilization and the great Buddhist art."[24] The same cannot be said, I think, of his subsequent sojourn in the United States where Paul Tillich and Rheinhold Niebuhr helped him obtain a position in 1941 at the theological seminary at Hartford (Mass.) before he was appointed to the New School in 1949, even though during his stay at the Protestant seminary the contracted obligation to teach the Early Fathers nurtured in him the plan to write his famous study on the *Meaning in History*. Certainly, Löwith's experience of Japan did not prevent him from severely criticizing, as we will see, certain aspects of the Japanese mentality. Moreover, toward the end of his

23 Habermas, *Philosophical-Political Profiles*, 95.
24 Löwith, *My Life in Germany*, 162.

stay he had become intellectually isolated to such a degree that he looked forward to moving to the United States, even though, as Gadamer remarks, the country which received him so hospitably was also "the one that could the least in a natural fashion meet his own way of being [das seinem Wesen der Sache nach am wenigsten auf natürliche Weise entgegenkommen konnte]."[25] In many ways one could say that his long sojourn in the U.S. was only a stay in transit. Several entries in his posthumously published *Von Rom nach Sendai, von Japan nach Amerika: Reisetagebuch 1936 und 1941* about the trip from San Francisco – "S. Francisco is still half European [*noch halb Europa*]" – to Chicago characterize his experience of America in such a manner. He writes: "On the way: summer resorts, they all look like gas stations," or, "The places, none of which are towns, but rather gas stations," that is, places that one only passes through.[26] In "Curriculum Vitae," he also observes that, while "it was quite impossible to avoid some kind of 'adjustment to the American way of life' if one wanted to be accepted" – as a German Jew, for example, although converted to Protestantism, he was required to teach Protestant theology in America – "in Japan [by contrast] nobody expect[ed] a foreigner to adapt and, therefore, to become Easternized."[27] Since the Japanese wanted "to study the European cast of mind from the European," in contrast to America which thinks of itself as having surpassed the old Europe, Löwith could even teach in his own native language at Sendai.[28] But in addition to the fact that, as Gadamer noted, Japan provided Löwith with "a frame that was especially adequate to the composed fatalism of his nature, but also to his high artistic sensibility and his need for a dignified distance with respect to human beings and the world," Japan became important for him in a crucial way for still another reason.[29] Indeed, his privileged situation at the Imperial University of Sendai gave him the freedom not only to experience Japan in all its difference from Europe, but also, as he remarks in "Unzulängliche

25 Gadamer, Hans-Georg, "Karl Löwith zum 70. Geburstag," in: Hermann Braun/Manfred Riedel (ed.), *Natur und Geschichte. Karl Löwith zum 70. Geburtstag*, Stuttgart 1967, 455–457, 456. See also, Muschg, Adolf, "Meine Japanreise mit Löwith," in: Löwith, Karl, *Von Rom nach Sendai, Von Japan nach Amerika: Reisetagebuch 1936 und 1941*, ed. K. Stichweh/U. von Bülow, Marbach 2001, 111–155.

26 Löwith, *Von Rom nach Sendai*, 105f.

27 Löwith, *My Life in Germany*, 163.

28 Ibid., 163.

29 Gadamer, "Karl Löwith zum 70. Geburstag," 456.

Bemerkungen zum Unterschied von Orient und Okzident" (1960), as, above all, an other that gave him the chance to re-delimit, or re-define, himself in relation to this other, in a way not unlike the one by which "the Greeks became aware of themselves as Greeks as they became conscious of their difference with respect to [*von und zu*] the 'barbarians.'" What is at stake in his experience of Japan, which provides him with the opportunity to "distinguish himself from himself [*Selbstunterscheidung*]," or of a 'critique' of himself (that is, of himself as a European), is nothing less than a rediscovery of what allowed the Greeks to build their identity on a relation to others, and, in the same breath, of what, in principle, constitutes the essence of Europe insofar as its origin lies in Greece.[30] Shortly after his arrival in the United States, Löwith writes that "some years in the Far East are almost indispensable for a critical, i.e., discriminating understanding of ourselves."[31] In any case, only after his experience in Japan had made it possible for him to rethink "old Europe" could America, which boasted of having left old Europe behind itself, become a place in transit before Löwith's final return to the old country.

After having invoked the two thousand years of European history that he had constantly before his eyes in Rome, Löwith writes in the first entry in his diary about his departure from Rome for Japan: "But now everything is supposed to become different – in the 'Far East,' whose remoteness will perhaps bring 'Europe' closer again to oneself [dessen Ferne einem 'Europa' vielleicht erst wieder nahebringt]."[32] From the beginning, Löwith's journey eastward is linked to a hope that the remoteness and foreignness of the East will make him rediscover what is closest to him. While en route, he learns that upon his arrival in Sendai he is to immediately give an inaugural address at the university, whereupon he files a telegram in return with the title of his lecture: "Die Idee von Europa in der deutschen Philosophie der Geschichte." The additional

30 Löwith, Karl, "Unzulängliche Bemerkungen zum Unterschied von Orient und Okzident," in: D. Henrich/W. Schulz/K.-H. Volkmann-Schluck (ed.), *Die Gegenwart der Griechen im neueren Denken. Festschrift für Hans Georg Gadamer*, Tübingen 1960, 141–170, 142.

31 Löwith, Karl, "Japan's Westernization and Moral Foundation," in: *Sämtliche Schriften* 2, Stuttgart 1983, 541–555, 541.

32 Löwith, *Von Rom nach Sendai*, 8. A bit later in the diary he adds, that "he goes with Ada to a foreign country in order to become, amidst a truly foreign race, a 'German' again, while oneself is slandered and defamed by the 'compatriots [Volksgenossen]' of one's own country" (ibid., 13).

remark that "Hegel's Philosophy of History in the luggage compartment is what will save him," shows that while the idea of Europe that he will seek to retrieve during his stay in the Far East may certainly have to be uncoupled from the philosophy of history as it culminated in Hegel's thought, Löwith's openness to the East in view of recapturing the idea of Europe remains nonetheless modeled, at least up to a point, after the Hegelian dialectic of self and other.[33] Incidentally, featured among the other books that Löwith took with him to Japan in 1936 was Franz Rosenzweig's *Letters*. In "M. Heidegger and F. Rosenzweig: A Postscript to *Being and Time*," he remarks, after having read these letters in 1939, that:

> The impression Rosenzweig's personality made upon me was so strong that I immediately procured also his principal work in philosophy, *The Star of Redemption*, and his collected essays, *The Shorter Writings*. In part, my interest was aroused by the striking similarity between Rosenzweig's philosophical starting point and that of my own teacher, Heidegger.[34]

But the essay from 1942–43 is also intended to show that the similarity of both Heidegger's and Rosenzweig's starting point – what Hermann Cohen had labeled "the new thinking of our times," a thinking that starts out with the facticity of one's own Dasein in a clear and systematic opposition to German Idealist thought – did not prevent both thinkers from developing their thought in thoroughly opposite directions. If I briefly linger on the difference between both thinkers that points to another aspect of Löwith's interest in Rosenzweig, it is because the problematic in question is not unrelated to what I will construe in the following as his experience of nature in pagan Japan. He writes that whereas "Heidegger destroyed the Greek and Christian tradition that had been accepted up to the time of Hegel and for which true Being is always existent and everlasting" for the benefit of finite time, "Rosenzweig was able to affirm the Star of David as the eternal truth within the limits of time, from what was a more fortunate position due *his* factical inheritance, his Jewry and his conscious return to it."[35] Against Heidegger's "concept of 'worldliness' and 'world-time' which are implicitly nourished by the Christian notion of '*saeculum*' that Heidegger's philosophy attempts to secularize, but in

33 Ibid., 53.
34 Löwith, *Nature, History, and Existentialism*, 52.
35 Ibid., 76.

vain," and which are rooted in the latter's double inability "to restore the natural philosophy of the ancients [and] to reject the Christian distinction between the born and the re-born man, authentic and inauthentic Dasein," the religious Jewish thinker paradoxically offers Löwith a way to revalue the tenets of the pagan world.[36] Indeed, even though it is argued in the first volume of *The Star of Redemption* that "the truth of the pagan world is [. . .] an enduring truth," which is, however, "unrevealing" and "'everlasting' only as an 'element,'" and that "the place of the ancient cosmical order is taken over by the new order of creation in which man and the world belong together only as a creation of God," Rosenzweig succeeds in restoring the idea of the formative unity of the cosmos that "has been destroyed since the appearance of Christianity and Judaism in world history."[37] In short, what Rosenzweig offers Löwith against the radical historicism of Heidegger is a way to do justice to the principles of the eternal order constitutive of the Greek pagan view of the world, which became of crucial importance for his experience of Japan, and, subsequently, his understanding of the 'essence of Europe' even though for Rosenzweig these principles were ultimately sublated in the higher order of Jewish religious thought.[38]

Even though Löwith and his wife "soon felt at home" in Sendai, unaware at first of their "isolation [. . .] and the physical strain of this transplantation," Löwith's fascination with things Japanese was not of the order of the "ill-fated love" for the East as professed by, for example, a Lafcadio Hearn.[39] Also, when he refers to the East, or Orient, as opposed to the West, or of Asia in relation to the concept of Europe

36 Ibid., 63.

37 Ibid., 63f.

38 This leads me to venturing the following question: Could it be that "the natural world" in Löwith is a secularized conception of what Rosenzweig construed as the ontological uniqueness of the meta-historical temporality of the Jewish people, one that takes them squarely out of the flux of history. In Peter Eli Gordon's words, according to Rosenzweig, the Jewish people, by observing a temporal law that "allows them to pull back from any attachment to their surrounding," enjoy, in distinction from all other people who, in order to be eventually redeemed must progress through history, "redemption as a present experience?" (Gordon, Peter Eli, "Rosenzweig Redux: The Reception of German-Jewish Thought," in: *Jewish Social Studies* 8.1 (2001): 1–57).

39 Löwith, *My Life in Germany*, 117; Löwith, Karl, "European Nihilism: Reflections on the Spiritual and Historical Background of the European War," in: id., *Martin Heidegger and European Nihilism*, ed. R. Wolin, transl. G. Steiner, New York 1995, 173–208, 175.

which "develops not from out of itself but rather from out of its essential contrast to Asia," Löwith fully acknowledges that Japan is not *the* Orient, or *the* East.[40] In the essay "Unzulängliche Bemerkungen zum Unterschied von Orient and Okzident," he writes that

> it is impossible to speak about *the* East and *the* West since the differences between India, China, and Japan are more radical than those that exist between Spain, France, and England, and than the one of the entirety of all European countries when compared with America.[41]

But, if in the essay in question Löwith singles out the Orient as the European encounters it in modern Japan, it is for the simple reason that thanks to his forced emigration and five years of teaching at a Japanese university, he has first-hand knowledge of Japan. Since the aim of his reflections on the otherness of the East, as he encountered it in Japan, is to retrieve a notion of Europe distinct from the "new Europe" that he had to leave behind, it should also be noted that, according to Löwith, we lack "all the presuppositions to conceptualize in a philosophical way" the "obvious differences" that one experiences in Japan, "which, for the foreigner, is at first a topsy-turvy world [*verkehrte Welt*] that puts what is proper to oneself and habitual for a long time, on its head." This difficulty of conceptualizing what is other about Japan manifests itself precisely in the only way we have at first to assess the difference in question, namely to consider Japanese customs, actions and reactions as "just antipodal our ours."[42] But the difficulty reaches deeper since "the will to grasp conceptually is as such something specifically Western, and even of Hegelian origin," as Löwith holds: "It is the 'work' of the 'concept.'"[43] Japanese thinking itself is not primarily conceptual. If Zen is "the intellectual root of the Japanese way of thinking," and each transitory event is understood sub specie aeternitas, that is, as an "*absolute* reality," then all "images, words, concepts are never more than pointers" to what is grasped "by momentary intuition, in a sudden enlightenment, without reason or analysis."[44] Hence all efforts to account for the difference between Europe and Japan

40 Löwith, "European Nihilism," 173.
41 Löwith, "Unzulängliche Bemerkungen," 148.
42 Löwith, "Japan's Westernization and Moral Foundation," 541.
43 Löwith, "Unzulängliche Bemerkungen," 148f.
44 Löwith, Karl, "The Japanese Mind. A Picture of the Mentality that We Must Understand If We Are to Conquer," in: id., *Sämtliche Schriften* 2, Stuttgart 1983, 556–570, 562, 564f.

encounter severe problems. This predicament is further complicated by the fact that, as Löwith suggests in the "Afterword to the Japanese Reader" of the Japanese translation of his essay on "European Nihilism: Reflections on the European War," the Japanese's self-infatuation, i.e., their self-love and unwillingness to engage in self-criticism which alone allows one to see what is proper to oneself and distinct from others, in turn inhibits them from conceptualizing their own culture. He writes that compared to the Chinese ideal of a correspondence of their culture to the order of the universe – the Platonic Eros, the Christian supramundane faith, or the European will, and especially the will to know – Japanese culture "has no definable principle at all, and lives from an undetermined fundamental attunement [*Grundstimmung*] that can only be expressed through paradoxes."[45] However, this inability that the foreigner experiences in seeking to conceptualize the differences between the Orient as he or she encounters it in Japan concerns primarily "the obvious differences" on which Löwith expands in truly remarkable and beautiful descriptions. One such example among many is his observation that "understanding language in Japan does not appear to take place directly through the hearing of the articulated word, but through the presentification of the Chinese-Japanese characters of writing." Indeed, as Löwith remarks, it is not unusual that "in conversation the Japanese make an imprecise or unequivocal word clear to their listeners not by rendering it more precise, but by drawing in painterly fashion the respective ideogram with their fingers in their air or on a table surface."[46] By contrast, the difficulty of conceptualizing in a philosophical way that which is distinct about Japan does not bear, it would seem, on that which makes Löwith feel at home in Japan, that is, that aspect of the Orient in Japan that, though less obvious, serves to bring Europe close to him again.

Löwith's stopover in Hong Kong during which, on his way to Sendai, he visits a Shinto shrine needs to be briefly mentioned here. What he witnesses on this occasion foreshadows what becomes the core of his experience of the Japanese Orient. In his diary, he confides his "surprise" of getting here not only his first general idea of what a 'pagan' temple is but also an impression of what a holy grove, that stands in harmony with the powers of nature, is like. He writes: "In view of these very popular and still used temples one gets a much more clear representation of

45 Löwith, "Unzulängliche Bemerkungen," 152.
46 Ibid. 152.

what a pagan center of cult worship is than from the pale remainders of the Greek temples in Sicily and Athens." Rather than a religion and a faith in the Christian sense, Shintoism, he adds, must, on the contrary, "most likely be understood from the Greek and Roman cults."[47] And indeed, the unforgettable impression that Japan makes on Löwith is to a large part due to the similarities that he discovers between classical Greece and the Orient as he experiences it in Japan. Whereas Europe, even when anti-Christian, is Christian to the point that its Greek origin is covered over, "paganism [in Japan] is still a living power, as fresh and genuine as before Christ," and "the family shrine in every household is a perpetual reminder of the religious customs and cults of the Greeks and the Romans."[48] This similarity between Japanese and Greek paganism concerns above all the similar ways in which both the Orient and Greece relate to the natural world, and the way they experience history. One passage among many others in which Löwith describes the Greeks' stance on these issues must suffice here:

> The Greeks were deeply impressed by the visible order and the beauty of the universe, and the natural law of becoming and disintegrating determined also their vision of the historical world. In the eyes of the Greeks that which is always the same and everlasting, as it appears year after year in the "revolution" of the heavenly bodies, manifested a deeper truth and aroused a higher interest than any radical historical change.[49]

Something similar obtains in Japan, Löwith contends, and as a consequence, the experience of the Japanese's relation to nature provides him with his first opportunity to not only understand what the Greeks meant by *physis* and *cosmos*, but to gauge, as we will see, another sense in which Greece is the origin of Europe. Indeed, after acknowledging in "Curriculum Vitae" that "what appeals to the European person [in Japan] is not the advancing modernization of the old Japan, of course, but rather the continuation of the Oriental tradition and the native Shintoistic paganism," he adds:

> In the face of the popular consecration of all natural and everyday things – the sun and the moon, growth and decay, the seasons, the trees, the mountains, rivers and stones, fertility and nourishment, rice planting and

47 Löwith, *Von Rom nach Sendai*, 75f.
48 Löwith, "Japan's Westernization and Moral Foundation," 545.
49 Löwith, *Nature, History, and Existentialism*, 23.

> housebuilding, the ancestors and the Imperial House – I have for the first time understood something about the religious paganism and political religion of the Greeks and Romans.[50]

This point is taken a step further in the opening lines of "Unzulängliche Bemerkungen." There it is noted that Old Chinese thought – for which "the divine is the way [*der Gang*] (Tao) of the heavens (T'ien), in distinction from the earth, and according to which the heavens and the earth (T'ien-ti) are seen as the origin of all creatures, and the earth as the habitat of earthly men," – is similar to Greek thought, which conceives of "the right and just order of the human world in accordance with the unswerving order of the world of the heavens;" in short, the physical *cosmos*.[51] Furthermore, if, for the Japanese, human and historical catastrophes are experienced in the same way as natural cataclysms, then this is a sign that "Oriental thinking does not know the contrast between nature and history."[52] Neither has the natural world been historically appropriated in the Orient, nor has history itself gained here an independence from nature, one that testifies to the hubristic overestimation of what is human. Thereby Japan resembles classical Greece as well – which "never fancied that history has a purposeful and meaningful orientation toward a future fulfillment" – , in contrast to what Jews and Christians, including post-Christians, believe.[53] As Löwith submits: "Classical antiquity and the Orient have never asked for the meaning of world history."[54]

In exile from Europe and on a journey eastward (in Japan, that is), in a culture that remains thoroughly foreign in spite of all its appropriation of European modernity, Löwith experiences a relation to nature and history that allows him to retrieve a sense of the Greek understanding of the cosmos that is no longer adumbrated by Christianity.[55] Only in exile, in a thoroughly foreign land, is he capable of recovering a meaning of Greece,

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50 The passage continues as follows: "What is commonly shared is the awe and worship of omnipresent, superhuman powers, called '*Kami*' in Japanese, the Roman '*supiri*', which literally mean the same thing – simply the 'superiors' who are above us human beings." Löwith, *My Life in Germany*, 163.

51 Löwith, "Unzulängliche Bemerkungen," 141.

52 Löwith, *Nature, History, and Existentialism*, 22.

53 Ibid., 23.

54 Ibid., 22.

55 It is also the experience of a parallelism (perhaps even including simultaneity, considering the ancient nature of Shintoism) not unlike the axial age in Jaspers which Löwith refers to in "Unzulängliche Betrachtungen," 166.

and hence of Europe, that had not dawned on him in Europe, and which, because of the predominance of the sciences and of historicism (philosophy of history), could not be experienced there at all.[56] But if, as Löwith remarks in a footnote in "Unzulängliche Betrachtungen,"

> the Greek cosmo-politics and its closeness to the Oriental has barely been acknowledged, it is [also] because Greek philosophy has always only been considered as the origin of European philosophy and not also as a transformation of Oriental tradition.[57]

In other words, even though exposure to the Japanese Orient made it possible for Löwith to grasp a dimension of Greek thought of which he had not been aware before, this also means that in spite of all the similarities between the East and the West, significant differences exist between both precisely because of the transformation that the Oriental tradition itself undergoes in Greek philosophical thought. In spite of all the resemblances between them, the Greek conception of the cosmos and its paganism are not exactly the same as the relation to nature and the pagan cults that Löwith witnesses in the Orient. The difference consists in the fact that Greek cosmotheology is something that has been appropriated by the Greeks from the East, and has in the process of this appropriation been transformed.

What Löwith brings home from the Orient's relation to nature and history in Japan is only what the Greeks inherited from the Orient, and which they subsequently transformed into something specifically Greek. In "Afterword to the Japanese Reader," in the context of a discussion of Japanese self-love, the Greeks' very ability to simultaneously be open to what is foreign and to be capable of transforming it is shown to be the hallmark of ancient Greece. In other words, what Löwith discovers in Japan is not so much the pagan view of nature and the world that the Orient shares with Greece, as it is the Greeks' ability to relate to, and appropriate in a transformative manner, what is other and foreign. Such an ability to relate to what is foreign is what is specific about Greece, and it represents the true heritage that it bequeathed to Europe, and with which "the new Europe," from which Löwith had to flee, has to be confronted.

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56 See Löwith, *Nature, History, and Existentialism*, 20.

57 Löwith, "Unzulängliche Bemerkungen," 141.

The following observations on the Japanese's failure to live up to what they took over from European civilization may today sound a bit condescending and politically incorrect. It should be kept in mind, however, that from the Meiji period on Japan has been involved in the attempt, ordered by an imperial decree, to Europeanize itself, and, as a result, a critique of such Europeanization in the name of what is specifically European is even called for by this Japanese effort itself. But in spite of this failure, the Japanese's deliberate willingness to Westernize, that is, to open themselves to foreign influence, is, for Löwith, clearly something that Japan shares again with Greece. And this gives Japan a distinct mark in Löwith's eyes even though its failure to truly appropriate what is Western, and thus foreign, will lead him to valorize the Greek way of relating to what is other, particularly the Orient, over the Oriental mode of encountering otherness. Anyhow, distinct from the Greeks' reception of the Oriental tradition, the Japanese, although they have taken over a great deal of Western civilization – at least its "material civilization," as Löwith contends, as opposed to China which has been open to the "religious, scholarly, and moral foundation" of European culture – they have appropriated European civilization in only such a way that it did not involve any self-alienation, or distancing oneself from oneself.[58] Unaware of the fact that within the Kyoto School, as Bret W. Davis has shown, at least Kitaro Nishida had also advanced "an internal principle of self-negation [as] a condition for becoming open to other cultures and thus a participant in world history," which, no doubt, is "a partial analogue" to self-alienation, Löwith denies this ability of distancing oneself from oneself to the Japanese mentality.[59] For Löwith, self-alienation is a positive condition for an encounter of the other and the foreign because it opens up the critical relation to oneself without which any encounter worth its name is conceivable. Furthermore, because of the lack of self-alienation in the Japanese's reception of Europe and the West, that which is taken over is not taken over *as* something other, or foreign – a reception which would have also required a transformation – the implication being that no genuine exposure to, and no genuine challenge by the otherness of the European civilization took place in Japan. Indeed, without such exposure to the other *as* other, and its subsequent transformation, no

58 Löwith, *Martin Heidegger and European Nihilism*, 230.

59 Davis, Bret W., "Dialogue and Appropriation: The Kyoto School as Cross-Cultural Philosophy," in: id. et al. (ed.), *Japanese and Continental Philosophy. Conversations with the Kyoto School*, Bloomington 2010, 33–51, 42.

reception worth its name is possible. Only on the condition that the other is encountered *as* other can the difference between him and oneself come into view, and only on the basis of this can a comparison be made, and hence a critical self-distinction become possible. Löwith writes: "European spirit and the history without which it would not be what it is, were not taken over because they cannot be taken over, unless by means of an appropriation that intensively transforms them."[60] In short, even though a thinker such as Nishida had shown that without an analogue of self-alienation the encounter with another is impossible, Löwith's additional emphasis on the subsequent appropriation of the foreign seems to confirm his assessment of the Japanese's self-centeredness. Davis writes that:

> whereas Nishida had emphasized self-negation and becoming "free from oneself" as an opening to dialogue with others and to the indigestible alterity of the other in the depths of the non-substantial self, for Hegel and Löwith such "self-alienation" is ultimately a step on the way to "transforming the foreign into something of one's own" so that one can come back to an expanded "freedom for oneself."[61]

Indeed, such appropriation of the foreign is for Löwith the very criterion for an exposure to the other, or the foreign, to have taken place. Rather than having been left indifferent by the other, or the foreign, appropriation is an index of how the encounter has profoundly affected oneself for, even when made into one's own, the appropriated foreign marks within oneself an infraction of otherness in oneself. What Löwith diagnoses in 1940, that is, in the wake of a resurgence of nationalism in Japan, as a "*renunciation of Europe*" in order "to be oneself again, i.e. purely Japanese," is based, first and foremost, on a "reflection on one's own essence and one's own task [that is, on] an observance of European counsel."[62] But, according to Löwith, even this desire to be oneself taken over from Europe is inhibited from the start by the Japanese "naïve trust in their own superiority." In other words, their self-love hampers the development of a genuine identity.[63] By excluding the possibility of self-criticism

60 Löwith, *Martin Heidegger and European Nihilism*, 231. Löwith repeatedly contends that the Japanese live in two different worlds, in houses with two unrelated floors, as it were, and notes that the Japanese who have been in Europe, have one "European room" in their house.

61 Davis, "Dialogue and Appropriation," 42f.

62 Löwith, *Martin Heidegger and European Nihilism*, 228.

63 Ibid., 231.

self-love prevents the formation of genuine self-hood, which can only come into being through a distancing of oneself from oneself, becoming other to oneself, before appropriating what is other and transforming it in such a way as to shape an identity of one's own; an identity that is distinct, in difference, from the other as an other insofar as it relates to the other *as* other. Let me then focus a bit more intensively on what, by contrast to the Japanese, the Greeks accomplished.

According to Löwith, who closely follows the Hegelian model of the processual relation of self and other (though it is taken out of context, and hence not simply Hegelian), according to which a self is with itself only by being free in the other,

> the Greeks took a world whose roots were foreign, and made it into their home. Of course they received the substantial beginnings of their religion, education, and social cohesion more or less from Asia, Syria, and Egypt; but they wiped out, transformed, processed, and changed what was foreign in this origin, they made something different out of it, to such an extent that what they, like us [Europeans] value, acknowledge, and love in it is precisely what is essentially their own.[64]

What sets the Greeks apart from the high cultures of the ancient Orient where "there was knowledge long before the Greeks" arrived, is that in receiving and transforming what they encountered from the Orient, they demonstrated the ability of "free emergence from out of oneself, and the consequent power of appropriation which proceeds from a free attitude toward oneself and the world," in other words, from a critical attitude to oneself.[65] As the following statement shows, this freedom of self-alienation, of distancing oneself from oneself – at once the possibility of self-critique and of the encounter of the other *as* other – and the subsequent recognition of oneself in the other, that is, the ability of "coming from the other back to oneself," appropriating what is other in the other (so as to be, as Hegel puts it, with oneself in being-other), this is the specificity of Greece, and implicitly also the foundation of Europe. Löwith avers: "Only the Greeks, as the first-born Europeans, have panoramic eyes, as Burckhardt calls it, i.e., the objective, concrete view of the world and oneself that can make comparisons and distinctions and that recognizes oneself in the Others."[66]

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64 Ibid.
65 Ibid., 231f.
66 Ibid., 232.

In exile in Sendai, the discovery of ancient Japan with its sensitivity to nature and disinterest in history as a manmade order with its own autonomous laws is at first a rediscovery of a similar concern in ancient Greece. This rediscovery leads in turn to a conceptualization of the way Greece relates to otherness, and the foreign, which is not only entirely different from the Japanese way of appropriating what is foreign, but which also leads Löwith to reconceive Europe in terms of this very specific Greek heritage. This new way of thinking about the Greek essence of Europe ultimately programs his continuing eastward trajectory until he finally reaches the West again. Toward the end of his "Afterword to the Japanese Reader," Löwith tells his reader that the "new Europe" which has become an annihilating civilization, spreading its violent progress over the entire earth, "is not the Europe of which I wrote, in which I take part as a German, and which I consider is valuable to disseminate through writing and teaching."[67] The Europe of which he has been speaking is one that has been forgotten in the Christianization of Europe and the subsequent secularization of the history of salvation into a faith in progress, and the concomitant lack of a consideration of nature in all its naturalness that makes its subservience to exploitation for human purposes possible.[68] By contrast, the Europe that Löwith has been thinking and writing about is a Europe that circles back to the first-born Europeans that are the Greeks.

As we have suggested, on his eastward journey Löwith discovers in Japan a mode of contemplation of nature and a disinterest in history that not only seems to resemble similar attitudes in ancient Greece, but that also, by allowing him to understand for the first time something essential about Greece as the beginning of Europe, will finally orient his further circumnavigation of the globe until, finally, it brings him back to Heidelberg. This leads me to the question about the difference between the ancient spirit of Japan and that of Greece as regards nature and history. Undoubtedly, the Japanese relation to nature and history only reminds Löwith of the Greeks' conception of the cosmos, and makes it possible for him to understand in greater depth the extent to which this conception is the very birth of a certain Europe. But what is it precisely that distinguishes the Greek orderly cosmos with its harmony and stability from ancient Japanese thought regarding the cyclical nature of the natural world? Let us remind ourselves of Löwith's

67 Ibid., 234.

68 See my "Remainders of Faith: On Karl Löwith's Conception of Secularization," in: *Divinatio. Studia Culturologica Series* 28 (2008): 27–50.

contention that the Greeks received the elements of their cosmology as something other from the Orient, and that they transformed it in such a way as to be with themselves in this foreign heritage, by being themselves in being-other. This transformation and appropriation of what is other which presupposes a critical self-alienation, this freedom is what makes all the difference, and makes Greece into the beginning of Europe.

At this juncture a closer look at the striking difference between Japan and the West already alluded to is warranted, namely, the Japanese's non-conceptual way of thinking as opposed to the specifically Western will to grasp everything conceptually. This difference, which I would tend to categorize as one among what Löwith had termed "obvious differences," is one that makes it especially difficult for a foreigner to philosophically fathom the Japanese mentality for which "images, words, concepts, and doctrines are never more than pointers."[69] The same is valid of Japanese "philosophy:" it does not "rely on forms at all," and is, in fact, as Löwith, while citing D. T. Suzuki and Kitaro Nishida, stresses, a "philosophy without concepts."[70] In other words, Japanese "philosophy" does not seeks to delimit things and realities within the clear outlines in which they shine forth, and thus skirts clear and distinct definition. Löwith avers: "The characteristic symbol of true enlightenment in Japanese philosophy and poetry is not the blinding and burning light of the sun but the calm and impersonal beam of the moon, which shines without affecting us."[71] The difference with Greek thought, which is a philosophy of light within which the clear-cut shapes or forms of things show themselves, could not be more marked: in the light of the moon nothing acquires a sharp and definite shape, and everything changes at every moment although it is at the same time experienced as yet always the same. It is, therefore, also not insignificant to note that according to Löwith "the Japanese have today [1943] only one original thinker, Nishida, who is comparable to any of the living philosophers of the West in depth of thought and subtlety. Yet he is by no means Western," since "even this man's work is no more than an adaptation of Western methodology, the use of it for a logical clarification of the fundamental Japanese intuitions about the world."[72] Now let us bear in mind that what interested Löwith

69 Löwith, "The Japanese Mind," 565.
70 Ibid., 560, 564.
71 Ibid., 561.
72 Löwith, "The Japanese Mind," 560. In distinction from Löwith who credits Nishida for having appropriated Western thought in view of a clarification of

about Japanese thought and poetry is the importance that the experience of nature represents for them, and compared to which all change pales in importance with respect to what remains everlasting and the same. The Japanese's prime concern with nature in both their "philosophy" and art reminds Löwith of early Greek philosophical thought which was also primarily a philosophy of nature. Yet as we have seen, contrary to the Oriental "philosophical" take on nature, Greek philosophy proceeds conceptually. Hence, what Löwith discovers, or re-discovers, by way of his experience of the Japanese relation to nature and its dismissal of history, is thus nothing less than philosophy itself insofar as philosophy, for him, is primarily philosophy of nature, and so in a rigorous sense only if it also proceeds conceptually.

At the end of "Curriculum Vitae," Löwith notes that the first question, the one with which Greek philosophy began, is the question about "the *world as such*, within which we find the human being and its history." Of the whole of nature, that is, the cosmos, Heraclitus says in "Peri kosmou," or "Of the World," that "it is always 'the same' . . . 'for everything and everyone' (Fragment 30), not created by a special God or by any human being."[73] Philosophy begins with the inquiry into this natural world, a world that is the life-world of man and within which we find the human being and its history, and philosophy is philosophy in a strict sense only as the contemplation of the everlasting order of this world. With reference to Marx, Löwith writes: "He who wants to 'change' the world – who wants it to be different from what it is – has not yet started to philosophize, and mistakes the world for world *history*, and that for a human creation."[74] By contrast, according to ancient, that is,

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Japanese thought for the West, Bret W. Davis holds that, on the contrary, "Nishida [. . .] sought to reappropriate sources in the Japanese tradition that would open it up to mutually enhancing dialogue, and not antagonistic competition, with the West." It is true that apart from Kitaro Nishida whom he knew personally, but whom he seems to have read really only after his departure from Japan, as Davis has also argued, Löwith "neglected to take account of the Kyoto School's significant attempts to navigate a passage through the pendulum swing within modern Japan between deferential Eurocentrism and a reactionary Japanism." Davis writes: "The philosophers associated with the Kyoto School were not only keenly aware of the issues pointed out in Löwith's critique; they had in fact set out to address them long before Löwith arrived in Japan to teach them the ways of Western appropriation" (Davis, "Dialogue and Appropriation," 41, 33, 39).

73 Löwith, *My Life in Germany*, 167.

74 Ibid., 160.

Greek wisdom, "the end of man [is] to contemplate the natural universe of heaven and earth, which is free of purpose."[75] It is interesting to see that when Löwith reflects on what has happened to our perception of nature, particularly in our scientifically organized world, he stresses that "naturalness is no longer the standard of nature."[76] In "Curriculum Vitae," it is stated that "the naturalness of nature, physis, has been lost through modern physics."[77] In other words, the ancient contemplation of nature is characterized by a relation to nature in which nature is experienced *as* nature. Let us also remind ourselves that the cosmos, with its logos, that is, the ordered natural world as the whole of what is, is something that "is ever complete and entirely independent, and [as such] also the precondition for all dependent existences" such as human beings.[78] Moving and existing of its own accord, the natural world is wholly other than the fleeting whole of the human world. Greek contemplation of the natural world as such, aware of it *as* the cosmos, *as* physis, is not only philosophical, but is conceptual as well, and this conceptual take on nature, which is also an appropriation of it in all its otherness, is what distinguishes the Greek relation to the natural world, to "the world as such, which is the One and whole of what is that exists by and from itself [*welche das Eine und Ganze des von Natur aus Seienden ist*]," from the Japanese "conception" of the life-world.[79] The philosophical attitude as a relation to the order of nature in which this order is understood *as* cosmos, *as* an orderly whole, is predicated on a critical self-distancing of the human being that allows for a contemplation of this order in all its otherness, as other than the passing concerns of humans within the historical world, but that also makes it possible for human beings to be, as Hegel put it, with themselves precisely in being-other. As Löwith remarks in "Curriculum Vitae," in returning to Heidelberg from Japan where he realized for the first time what Greece is all about and in what sense it is the beginning of Europe, "the 'life history' of my thinking thus seems to be coming to a logically consistent conclusion and, by detour, back to the true philosophical beginnings."[80]

75 Löwith, *Nature, History, and Existentialism*, 24.
76 Ibid., 20.
77 Löwith, *My Life In Germany*, 164.
78 Ibid., 166.
79 Ibid., 166 (translation modified).
80 Ibid., 167.

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Ethics of Imagination: On Erika Mann's Works in Exile

Jonathan Kassner

I. The History of Reception of Erika Mann in the United States (in a Nutshell)

My copy of Erika Mann's *The Lights Go Down* (1940) has its own story to tell. It once belonged to the "Carnegie Library" in Lewiston, Idaho. It happens that the check-out sheet on which loans and renewals were recorded remained in the book. I bought not only an antiquarian book but I was also given a little history of the reception of Erika Mann in the United States. The sheet informs us that the book could be kept fourteen days and renewed once for the same period of time (a fine of two cents was charged when it was kept over time). The first year after its publication, from May 1940 until June 1941, it was constantly checked out. These years coincide with the time of Erika Mann's greatest fame as a lecturer and a writer in the United States.[1] Already in 1937, she appeared as a public speaker at a mass rally in Madison Square Garden against Nazi Germany, organized by the American Jewish Congress and the Jewish Labor Committee, along with mayor La Guardia, Hugh S. Johnson, and Rabbi Stephen S. Wise. Her book on education in the Third Reich, *School for Barbarians* (1938), immediately became a bestseller. Exile, either in Europe or in the USA, where she soon became "public speaker number 1,"[2] was for her, after all, a time of success, sometimes

1 Erika Mann actually visited Lewiston on her lecture tours as we can see from a letter to Lotte Walter. At the end of this letter, in which she calls her life as a lecturer a "lonely and hunted existence" ("*einsam-gejagte [. . .] Existenz*"), she notes that she has to leave San Francisco for the town in the North, adding – after a dash, underlined, and in English: "*sweet Jesus why*?" (Letter to Lotte Walter, November 13, 1942, in: Mann, Erika, *Briefe und Antworten* 1: 1922–1950, ed. Anna Zanco Prestel, Munich 1984, 186.)

2 Cf. Letter to Katia Mann, May 1, 1937, in: E. Mann, *Briefe* 1, 121.

even provoking feelings of jealousy in her brother Klaus.[3] The great attention that her book received in Lewiston might at the same time be explained by the political situation that the United States faced. The question lingering on the minds of the whole country was whether or not to join the fight against Nazi Germany.[4] In its first year, my copy of *The Lights Go Down* went from hand to hand. But the small town's interest declined abruptly. In 1942, it was borrowed only once and renewed within the required fourteen days. The U.S. Army had finally entered the war. After 1942, the book would be checked out again only after the war: one time each in 1946, 1954, 1955, 1960, and 1965. Occasionally, it seems, specialists had taken a look inside. Within the first two years after its purchase, the book was checked out 32 times, but only six times in the next 23 years. To put it in spatial terms, nearly half of the sheet is covered with stamps from 1940 to 1942, whereas the third and the fourth column remain nearly empty for the rest of the book's shelf life in Carnegie Library's stock in Lewiston, Idaho.

The American biographer of Erika and Klaus Mann, Andrea Weiss, notes in the preface to *In the Shadow of the Magic Mountain* that not once were the works of Erika Mann and those of her brother requested by other users when she had them checked out for her research at New York University's Bobst Library. She expresses the hope, however, that her own work (besides the biography, she produced a film with the director Wieland Speck) would trigger new interest in the eldest children of Thomas Mann.[5] Incidentally, I have borrowed books from the same library for this article and experienced still the same. Not once did I have to return my material before it was due. What are the reasons that, as a writer, Erika Mann seems forgotten on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean today? What was the character of her writings in exile that brought about tremendous attention at the time of their publication but which allowed them to fall into oblivion all too soon? Is it significant that she did not finish and publish her autobiography, a work written to last beyond its immediate political context? What do we learn from these pages about an author that, unlike her brother Klaus, who wrote no less than three

3 Cf. von der Lühe, Irmela, "Geschwister im Exil: Erika und Klaus Mann," in: *Exilforschung. Ein internationales Jahrbuch* 11 (1993): 68–87, 75–79.

4 Cf. Bavendamm, Dirk, *Roosevelts Krieg. Amerikanische Politik und Strategie (1937–1945)*, Munich, Berlin 1998, 62–77.

5 Cf. Weiss, Andrea, *In the Shadow of the Magic Mountain. The Erika and Klaus Mann Story*, Chicago, London 2008, viii–ix.

autobiographies, avoided writing about herself? And, written *in mediis tempestatibus,* how does the fragment depict exile and Erika Mann's role as a prominent political figure among the émigrés in the USA? Finally, how is her writing and thinking informed by exile?

II. Wishful Thinking

The Lights Go Down was not written for posterity. The novel is, as Erika Mann termed it, a "political textbook"[6] and thus another instrument in her fervent fight against Nazi Germany, which she pursued since the establishment of the *Peppermill*-cabaret on several fronts. In the vein of the non-fiction books *Escape to Life* (1939), *The Other Germany* (1940, both co-written with Klaus Mann) and *School for Barbarians, The Lights Go Down* is meant to exhibit the increasing rigor of everyday life under the National Socialist regime. The literary character of the book, however, appears to be of rather subordinate importance. Its form might be described as documentary realism. With surprising delectation for the paradoxical, Mann was even thinking about simply calling her *novel* "Facts."[7] As in *School for Barbarians*, her text is based on real documents, written statements of witnesses whose authenticity she certifies,[8] and Nazi publications like *Das Schwarze Korps* or *Nationalsozialistische Landpost.* The latter are cited at length by her characters, who apparently know whole passages and statistical numbers by heart. The book is inherently political, although modest in its aspirations for literary grandeur. For the most part, the necessity to combine the factual and the fictional does not become evident. The fictional element of the "textbook" seems rather to be derived from didactic than aesthetic considerations. While literaricity still played a role in her poems and songs for the *Peppermill* (1933–1937), the writings of the later exile have a decisively different character. *The Lights Go Down* is meant to enlighten the world about National Socialism from the perspective of 'average Germans' in an old small town in the South. It was, however,

6 Cf. von der Lühe, Irmela, "Die Publizistin Erika Mann im amerikanischen Exil," in: *Exilforschung. Ein internationales Jahrbuch* 7 (1989): 65–84, 72.

7 Cf. Mann, Erika, *The Lights Go Down*, transl. Maurice Samuel, New York, Toronto 1940, 277.

8 Cf. ibid. In fact, only one of the stories retells a true event. Cf. Roggenkamp, Viola, *Erika Mann. Eine jüdische Tochter. Über Erlesenes und Verleugnetes in der Frauengenealogie der Familie Mann-Pringsheim*, Zurich, Hamburg 2005, 68.

not written for Germans. Erika Mann wanted to convince the United States and Great Britain that there were people in Germany for whom it was worth waging war.[9] Everything she had written in those days, even the children's book *A Gang of Ten* (1942), was devoted to explicit political instruction and persuasion.[10] In *School for Barbarians*, she presents the decline of traditional family structures – which she deemed to be the "fortress of individuality"[11] – and education, the perversion of pedagogy that turns students into war material. At times anecdotal but not entirely fictional, it proves to be the better read as Mann is not compelled into combining the display of facts and data with dialogue, which often strikes one as awkward in *The Lights Go Down*. In the latter, she continues to portray the decay that the Nazis cause in all areas of life. She meticulously traces the destruction of the middle class, industrial production, the existence of small farmers, medical care, the legal system, religious life, and, above all, of the peaceful coziness, the "sweetness and enchantment"[12] of which she considers the novel's fictional Catholic city the symbol.[13] She attempts to show how life in the Third Reich became impossible even for those that had actually adjusted to it.[14] The novel anticipates an image of the Third Reich that should only later (i.e. in post-war Germany) become prominent: the image of a suffering and secretly oppositional country, in which only few participated actively in Nazi crimes.[15] Jews, on the other

9 Cf. ibid., 61.

10 Cf. Mattenklott, Gundel, "Eigensinn und moralisches Engagement. Über Erika Manns Kinderbücher," in: *Zeitschrift für Germanistik* 11.1 (2001): 131–141, 137.

11 Ibid., 135.

12 E. Mann, *The Lights*, 5.

13 All chapters are preceded by illustrations of the little town, which are meant to produce an uncannily idyllic contrast to the contents of the stories. The caption of the first drawing, which shows a typical market place of southern Germany, reads: "Life was going on in our city. The old market place, with its painted houses grouped around the usual equestrian statue, hadn't changed for centuries; to the casual visitor it was a scene of peaceful enchantment" (ibid., 2.).

14 With regard to an unpublished text, entitled *Broadcasting to German Women,* in which Erika Mann presents the principles of her work at the BBC, Irmela von der Lühe shows that Mann considered the perspective of the victims of Nazi crimes to be as ineffective as abstract political indoctrination to exercise influence among the Germans. She expected her radio work to be more influential if she would articulate what the "good Nazis" were already beginning to discover themselves. (Cf. von der Lühe, "Die Publizistin," 73–74).

15 Cf. Roggenkamp, *Erika Mann*, 62f. In Erika Mann's defense, it must be stated though that it was precisely this lachrymose German self-concept she would

hand, are nearly absent in the book's narratives. Mann gives an account of the November pogrom of 1938, but, in her fictional rendering of it, all of the city's Jews – unless they do not deliberately resist their own rescue like Dr. Wolf – are miraculously saved.[16]

Erika Mann is reluctant to display the total elimination of all moral sense among the Germans. In 1939, it seems, she still hoped that, under the surface of the totalitarian society, the "other Germany" would persist. Hence, the most fictional, even troublesome, part of the text is the sudden awakening of reason and humanism in so many of the characters: the district supervisor of the Gestapo, Franz Deiglmeyer, who saves the Jews of the city by informing them in advance of the pogrom on November 9 and 10, 1938; the law professor, Dr. Habermann, who, even though he is "German-Nationalist to the marrow of his bones"[17] and personally benefited from the dismissal of a "half-Jewish colleague"[18] at the university, inspires mockery and dissidence against the regime among his students; the Protestant pastor, Dr. Gebhardt, who is imprisoned for the public condemnation of the November pogrom and the call for collective repentance; the opportunistic and politically disinterested surgeon, Dr. Scherbach, who, after all, realizes that "life in Germany had been spoiled in its totality" and regrets bitterly "that he had not immediately, and in good time, taken the right kind of action;"[19] or like the writer of 'blood-and-soil literature' and literary editor of the city's most important morning paper, Hans Gottfried Eberhardt, who gradually shifts to a critical attitude towards the regime and, finally, sees no other resort for himself and his family than exile in the United States, where they arrive as one of the few survivors of an attack on their ship by the Germans during the first days of September, 1939.

The title of the book, therefore, is somewhat misleading, as 'light' seems to reappear in many of the minds of the – almost exclusively educated and male – characters that, in the end, appear to be far too

ardently attack after the war on many occasions. Cf. Mann, Erika, "Deutsche Zustände," transl. Ernst-Georg Richter, in: id., *Blitze überm Ozean. Aufsätze, Reden, Reportagen*, ed. Irmela von der Lühe/Uwe Naumann, Hamburg 2000, 377–382, 378–380. Cf. also the Letter to Lotte Walter, February 3, 1946, in: E. Mann, *Briefe* 1, 215.

16 Cf. E. Mann, *The Lights*, 108–127.

17 Ibid., 87.

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid., 212.

reasonable to endure the absurdity that seizes the National Socialist society in Mann's rendering. In *The Lights Go Down*, Nazis like the impossible Dr. Killinger, assistant of the surgeon Scherbach, or the storm trooper that does not understand the irony with which he is welcomed into Professor Habermann's law class appear solely as utter fools. To a contemporary reader the text must have suggested that resistance was soon to be expected all over Germany:[20] "'Whatever happens – things will be good – things will be a thousand times better.'"[21] With these words of Scherbach, addressed to a young man whose mother just died from a brain hemorrhage, Erika Mann concludes the penultimate chapter.

The optimism of Erika Mann is disturbing from our perspective. It is puzzling that Mann's panorama of the German people under Hitler completely lacks those characters that Heinrich and Klaus Mann had immortalized as the nation's most representative types: Diederich Heßling (*Der Untertan*) and Hendrik Höfgen (*Mephisto*) – violent and cowardly, ruthless and weak characters to whom a fascist society could mean nothing but personal fulfillment. It seems as if Erika Mann failed to understand the Germans, failed to understand that, as Jean Améry would later put it, "Hitler's henchman did not yet accomplish his identity when he was only swift as a weasel, tough as leather, hard as Krupp steel. [. . .] He had to *torture*, to annihilate in order 'to show greatness in the endurance of other people's sufferings.'"[22] Erika Mann's writings around 1940, however, operate on a different plane. The presentation of mere facts, assembled from newspapers and other documents, is linked, as if to absorb the tough reality, to a mode of 'wishful thinking' that informs her candid optimism. At one point in *The Other Germany,* which, written in the same

20 Along the same lines, Erika und Klaus Mann predict in *The Other Germany*: "There can be no doubt about it. Desperate opposition to the regime is rife among the German farmers. Should the elaborate control apparatus begin to show fissures – let us say, as the result of the war – agricultural sabotage is likely to be the decisive, if not *the* decisive part in the tragedy of the Nazi collapse" (Mann, Erika/Mann, Klaus, *The Other Germany*, transl. Hans Norden, New York 1940, 214).

21 E. Mann, *The Lights*, 228.

22 My translation, JK. In the original German: "Der Hitlergefolgsmann gelangte noch nicht zu seiner vollen Identität, wenn er nur flink war wie ein Wiesel, zäh wie Leder, hart wie Kruppstahl. [. . .] Er mußte *foltern*, vernichten, um 'groß zu sein im Ertragen von Leiden anderer'" (Améry, Jean, "Die Tortur," in: *Jenseits von Schuld und Sühne. Bewältigungsversuche eines Überwältigten*, Stuttgart 1977, 46–73, 59).

year, is a complementary project to *The Lights Go Down*, Erika and Klaus Mann comment on their own depiction of 'German resistance' in a telling way. Stating the clear-headedness of the "heroes of the underground," they add: "How much more must we, their allies on the outside, guard against losing ourselves in wishful dreams!"[23] With this remark, which in its context sticks out since it does not, as it rhetorically suggests, lead to critical assessment but to another fictional story about rising hatred against the totalitarian state in Vienna,[24] they inadvertently stress rather than deny their text's 'wishfulness.'[25]

However, it is precisely wishful thinking that results in the most impressive moment of Erika Mann's novel in which a whole class of law students discovers that irony is an extraordinarily potent weapon against the dumb enthusiasm that has taken hold of the country.[26] At the peak of the class' defiant gaiety, incited by their professor, a student declares his boundless submission to the demands of the "Reich food department," represented by a storm trooper who has called on the class to participate in the harvest service. He and his fellow students – as he announces to the face of the bewildered though deeply moved man in uniform – will be "'blind, and deaf, and dumb, in our devotion to its orders, and we do not even pause to ask what, in this or that or the other hour of destiny, is expected of us.'"[27] Here Mann displays her full

23 Mann/Mann, *The Other Germany*, 190.

24 Cf. ibid., 190–197.

25 In *Der Wendepunkt* (1952, finished in 1949), the reworked German version of *The Turning Point* (1942), Klaus Mann looks back at *The Other Germany*: "The 'other Germany' about which I wrote – it was this 'better,' this 'authentic' one, and we still expected that it would awake one day, that it would rise up. The extreme outrage, the war – our 'other Germany' would not allow it! And even if it happened, the horror would not last long: the 'better' Germans would not fight for Hitler but against him! For liberation! Against the tyrant! *Thus we dreamt* – one author [Erika Mann, JK] at the Nordic Sea, the other one at the Pacific Ocean." My translation and my emphasis, JK. In the original German: "Das 'andere Deutschland' über das ich schrieb, es war jenes 'bessere,' jenes 'eigentliche,' von dem wir immer noch erwarteten, daß es irgendwann einmal erwachen, sich erheben werde. Das Äußerste, den extremen Frevel, den Krieg, unser 'anderes Deutschland' ließ es nicht zu! Und käme es doch soweit – der Schrecken wäre kurz: die 'besseren' Deutschen würden nicht für Hitler kämpfen, sondern gegen ihn! Für die Befreiung, gegen den Tyrannen! So träumten wir, der eine Autor am Nordmeer, der andere am Pazifischen" (Mann, Klaus, *Der Wendepunkt. Ein Lebensbericht*, Hamburg 2008, 541f.).

26 Cf. E. Mann, *The Lights*, 84–107.

27 Ibid., 105f.

talent for parody with elegant certitude – a talent dear to her father as he could 'laugh tears' about her.[28] At the same time she creates a fantasy whose charm it is to envision 'what could have happened.' Recent moviegoers may have likewise encountered this kind of charm in Quentin Tarantino's *Inglourious Basterds*. Mann fantasizes about the ideal reaction that would have made an end to the Nazi's rise in a burst of laughter.

Around 1940, Erika Mann may still have believed in an uprising of the wittier and more decent among the Germans. In the foreword to *The Other Germany,* she and her brother Klaus Mann write: "We only hope that this 'other Germany' in which we have such great faith will not too long remain mute and invisible!"[29] But the flipside of their hope and faith is doubt:

> Woe onto the German people if some day they must collectively bear the hatred now concentrated solely upon Hitler and his ilk! If the Germans participate to the bitter end – that is to say, the complete military defeat – in the criminal insanity of this war, then no fair-minded person can any longer expect the democracies to care a great deal about the difference between the German people and the Nazi regime.[30]

The hopes of the Mann siblings were indeed deceived. In 1944, Erika Mann had already changed her mind. She expressed her disappointment in the exile newspaper *Aufbau*. Under the title "*Eine Ablehnung*," she criticizes the untimely plans of the émigrés around the socialist theologian Paul Tillich for a sovereign German post-war state. In this context, she also concluded her own musings over the "other Germany:"

> Until the day war broke out, one might have believed in "another" Germany, one might have fancied that the Nazis oppressed a majority of "good" though notably inactive Germans. These ideas have not been alien to me, although, year after year, it became increasingly difficult to believe in them. But as the *Reich* – armed to the teeth and far from turning its weapons against its "oppressors" – ravaged Europe, wishful thinking was over. It became clear that for the present day this "other" Germany did not count.[31]

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28 Cf. von der Lühe, Irmela, *Erika Mann. Eine Lebensgeschichte*, Hamburg 2009, 27. Cf. also Mann, Erika, "Mein Vater Thomas Mann. Erika Mann im Gespräch mit Roswitha Schmalenbach (1968)," in: id., *Mein Vater, der Zauberer*, ed. Irmela von der Lühe/Uwe Naumann, Hamburg 2009, 9–60, 18.

29 Mann/Mann, *The Other Germany*, xiii.

30 Ibid.

31 My translation, JK. In the original German: "Bis zum Tage des Kriegsausbruches mochte man an ein 'anderes' Deutschland glauben, mochte sich einreden, daß

III. Imagining True

During exile, Erika Mann was not writing for a literary purpose. As her German biographer Irmela von der Lühe stresses, her aims were always political and strategic. She used to present her political arguments in connection with personal experience, which characterizes her style, yet the description of personal experience was never an end in itself – it did not even have to be authentic.[32] As von der Lühe writes: "She devoted her whole self to lecturing and writing but without a specific interest in herself."[33] In this respect, it is no wonder that her autobiography, which she began writing in English in 1943 and which was supposed to portray the ten years of her exile that she had experienced so far,[34] remained unfinished. First of all, Erika Mann, the student of Max Reinhardt, was an actress, a performer, which she remained throughout her entire exile: as lecturer, writer, and political activist.[35] Being a performer, how else could she present herself in her autobiography than in the form of a role? The role she chose for herself in exile was one taken from fairy tales. She identifies herself with little Kay from H.C. Andersen's *The Snow Queen*, the child whose perception of the world is distorted by a splinter in the eye and who thus becomes a stranger in it, entering the lonely world of the North Pole, solely accompanied by the snow queen that nearly kisses him to death with her ice-cold charms:

> Was it not as if some magic splinter in my eye distorted everything I saw? What was the name of the youth in Andersen's story of the magic splinter?

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eine Majorität 'guter,' wenngleich verblüffend inaktiver Deutscher von den Nazis niedergehalten sei. Mir selbst waren derlei Vorstellungen nicht fremd, wiewohl an ihnen festzuhalten von Jahr zu Jahr schwieriger wurde. Als aber ein bis zu den Zähnen bewaffnetes Reich, weit davon entfernt, seine Waffen gegen seine 'Versklaver' zu erheben, über Europa hergefallen war, zerstob der Wunschtraum. In der Gegenwart, so viel war deutlich geworden, zählte dies 'andere' Deutschland nicht" (Mann, Erika, "Eine Ablehnung," in: id., *Briefe* 1, 189–190, footnote 1. First published in: *Aufbau* 10.16 (1944), 7).

32 Cf. von der Lühe, *Erika Mann*, 103–105.

33 My translation, JK. In the original German: "Rednerin und Publizistin wurde sie zwar mit der ganzen Person, aber ohne ein spezifisches Interesse an ihrer eigenen Person" (von der Lühe, "Geschwister," 75).

34 Cf. Mann, Erika, *I, of All People,* Monacensia. Literature Archive and Library Munich, EM M 138. The German translation by Ernst-Georg Richter (*Ausgerechnet Ich*) is published in: E. Mann, *Blitze*, 9–51.

35 Cf. von der Lühe, "Die Publizistin," 70.

> Kai! Poor Kai, to whom the beautiful seemed ugly and whom nobody understood.[36]

The 46 typewritten pages of *I, of All People*, which consist of a preface, an outline of the planned chapters, a "prelude," which takes place in Cairo in 1943, and the first chapter about the beginning of exile in 1933, are an unusual frank revelation of loneliness and despair. Despite penning the poem "Kälte" (1934), which deals at once with the political and personal disaster after 1933, with the fear of dying herself from the cold death that she felt spreading all around her,[37] despair was something that was not part of her role in the family myth. To the father nothing was more welcome than "the presence of this loving and life-affirming, always cheerfully uplifting child."[38] For Thomas Mann, Erika remained a child – even as a quadragenarian. Klaus Mann, on the other hand, idealized his sister in *Mephisto* as Barbara Bruckner whose inner balance appears imperturbable.[39] In his first autobiography, he describes her as the "pillar" of her school that not only conveyed comfort to difficult and confused classmates but even to insecure young teachers.[40] Yet this eternal, precocious child bore a melancholic streak that she revealed, if to anybody, to her brother. To Klaus, for whom she was perhaps the only really 'grown-up person' around him, someone that was not caught in the hell of a never-ending life crisis and disgust with the world,[41] Erika Mann wrote that she was "sick and tired, ill and exhausted, disgusted and what not,

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36 E. Mann, *I, of All People*, EM M 138.

37 Cf. Mann, Erika, "Kälte," in: Helga Keiser-Hayne (ed.), *Beteiligt euch, es geht um eure Erde. Erika Mann und ihr politisches Kabarett die "Pfeffermühle" 1933–1937*, Munich 1990, 78.

38 My translation, JK. In the original German: "[. . .] die Anwesenheit des lebens- und liebevollen, stets heiteren Auftrieb bringenden Kindes" (Mann, Thomas, *Die Entstehung des Doktor Faustus*, in: *Gesammelte Werke* 11: *Reden und Aufsätze III*, Frankfurt/M. 1960, 145–301, 259).

39 Cf. Mann, Klaus, *Mephisto. Roman einer Karriere*, Hamburg 2011, 111f.

40 Cf. Mann, Klaus, *Kind dieser Zeit*, Hamburg 1987, 129.

41 From Klaus Mann's diary of 1937: "All the people to whom I am attracted and that are attracted to me wish (or wanted . . .) to die [. . .]. (E is perhaps the *one* great exception. But what price does she pay? Who knows what price she pays? . . .)" (my translation, JK). In the original German: "Alle Menschen, zu denen ich mich hingezogen fühle, und die sich zu mir hingezogen fühlen, möchten (oder wollten . . .) sterben [. . .]. (E ist vielleicht die *eine* grosse Ausnahme. Aber wie viel kostet es sie? Wer weiss, wie viel es sie kostet? . . .)" (Mann, Klaus, *Tagebücher 1936 bis 1937*, ed. Joachim Heimannsberg et al., Munich 1990, 136).

of, and with, and by, that dog's and monkey's life that is mine."[42] Irmela von der Lühe regards the silence that her occasional outbursts of frustration caused in her brother as a sign of Klaus's inaptitude to integrate this other Erika in into his conception of her.[43]

The rise of National Socialism made her turn into a political subject which she had never suspected herself to be.[44] A recital of poetry at a pacifist gathering in 1932 that was attacked by storm troopers was the beginning of her open confrontation with the coming rulers of Germany.[45] From her autobiography, we learn that there is a very personal tinge to the political impetus that dominated her life in the 1930s and 40s. Her fight was directed against the Nazis and, at the same time, it was a means to alleviate the pain she felt in her damaged life:[46] "[N]o matter what disguise I chose, behind the jolly mask there was always the same

42 Unpublished letter to Klaus Mann, January 5, 1944, quoted in: von der Lühe, "Geschwister," 83.

43 Cf. ibid.

44 At the beginning of *Escape to Life*, Erika Mann responds to her fictional interviewer: "In Germany I never took interest in politics, almost till the end. I was of the mistaken opinion that politics was the business of politicians, and that people should mind their own business. A lot of us thought so; that's why Hitler came to power" (Mann, Erika/Mann, Klaus, *Escape to Life*, transl. Mary Hottinger-Mackie, Boston 1939, 4).

45 For a detailed description of the events and its consequences: cf. von der Lühe, *Erika Mann*, 87–93. Cf. also Weiss, *In the Shadow*, 78–81.

46 In the last lines of the poem "Kälte" from the earliest exile years, Erika Mann already blends political engagement with the overcoming of coldness: "O why are we so cold, – /And this cold hurts us so?/Why, – for we shall soon/Be only ice and snow./No, – it is your concern, your world, your hour, – /And yours alone, – you only have the power,/To make a little warmth, a little light/Shine in our cold and wicked winternight./With harms swarming and by nightmare shaken,/Only so long, as you refuse to waken,/Take part in it, – what ghost is there that can/Struggle at daybreak with the living man?/Cold trembles in the dark,/ But perishes in light, – /Why? Because the day/Always defeats the night!" (Mann, Erika, "Why is it so cold?", transl. Wystan H. Auden, quoted in: Weiss, *In the Shadow*, 135). In the original German: "Warum sind wir so kalt?/ Warum, das tut doch weh!/Warum? Wir werden bald/Wie lauter Eis und Schnee!/Beteiligt euch, – es geht um eure Erde!/Und ihr allein, ihr habt die Macht!/ Seht zu, dass es ein wenig wärmer werde,/in unserer schlimmen, kalten Winternacht!/Die ist erfüllt von lauter kaltem Grauen, – /Solange wir ihm nicht zuleibe gehn;/Wehrt euch und kämpft, – und lasst uns doch schauen,/Ob die Gespenster diesen Kampf bestehen!/ Bestehn? Ich glaub' es nicht!/Die Sonne siegt zum Schluss!/Warum? Weil solches Licht/Am Ende siegen muss!" (E. Mann, "Kälte", 78).

anxious, yet hopeful face – my own."[47] This very own face is that of a child, Andersen's little Kay. Erika Mann could only picture her 'authentic' self through the lens of the imaginary, a role she accepted as her own. Being at once anxious and hopeful, however, she is assuming a role beyond that of the paralyzed little boy. Her personality actually contains both the characters of Andersen's tale – she presents herself at once as little Kay, abducted and subjected to life-threatening coldness and bestowed with a hypersensitive access to reality, and as brave Gerda, who leaves her home for an adventurous journey to the North to save her little friend. In the preface to the autobiography, she writes:

> [T]o fight, in my own humble way, the powers of evil – represented most glaringly in the sinister phenomenon of Nazism. This was my job and my adventure: to unmask, ridicule, arraign and irritate the arch-enemy.[48]

This is not Kay but Gerda, who is the actual hero of Andersen's tale. Erika Mann feels "lost and lonesome,"[49] but at the same time she hurls herself fearlessly into an adventure that she politically considered necessary and that, on a personal level, had the sense to dispel her own sorrow, to save, as it were, the lost Kay in her.

Both characters from the fairy tale embody fundamental questions of politics and morality that lead her to what one might call an 'ethics of imagination.' Why was Hitler not taken seriously before and after he came to power, inside and outside of Germany? Why did so many people not share her fears? And even if some people had the same presentiments, why did they remain inactive? Why could they not see the way Kay did? And why did they not take action like Gerda? Mann explains the defining difference between the inactive, indifferent 'others' and her as the difference between the rational calculus of "realists" and "skeptics"[50] and the excitable mind of the child. In a more than humble manner, she describes her own approach to politics as simple and even childish:

> I have never belonged to any political party nor have I ever cared for the scholastic arguments and shady intrigues of professional politicians. My approach to the crucial issues of modern society is emotional rather than intellectual – not dogmatic but human. I am not a partisan, nor was I

47 E. Mann, *I, of All People*, EM M 138.
48 Ibid.
49 Ibid.
50 Ibid.

> meant to be a crusader. My political views and actions have always been shaped by my personal experiences and impulses, rather than by abstract principles. [. . .] This may sound like a rather childish credo.[51]

She regards her supposed childishness as the distinctive trait of her political and literary work. In a letter to her mother she writes, moreover, that she considers her success as a lecturer in the United States to be essentially the outcome of a congruency of supposedly simple minds, thus at once debasing herself and adhering to the arrogant European perspective on the United States with which she and Klaus had been brought up:[52] "My somewhat childish manner of telling little stories and of solely drawing conclusions from them, which enormously appeal to common sense, pleases the simple Americans [. . .]."[53]

In fact, Erika Mann was full of enthusiasm for her "Hostess America," as she entitled one of her lectures. She regarded the country as childlike: innocent and naïve, yet precisely these attributes laid, for her, the foundation for the moral mission of the United States in the world.[54] Both the description of her own political and moral profile and that of her host country center on the idea of the child as the uncorrupted bearer of truth, apparently indebted to the myth of the child in Rousseauism and Romanticism.[55] The author of the children's book *Stoffel fliegt übers Meer* (1932), whose protagonist immediately takes it upon himself to find his rich uncle in the United States when his family's descent into poverty seems unavoidable, found in children the excitable ethical sentiment that, in her view, could have made a difference against Hitler.

> But then, aren't children instinctively aware of certain moral essentials which have lost their validity and persuasion to many grown-ups? Children know what's black and what's white; they differentiate between good and evil. Children have a clearer ethical consciousness, and they are often more intelligent, than our hard-boiled skeptics and "realists."[56]

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51 Ibid.

52 Cf. Mann/Mann, *The Other Germany*, 4.

53 My translation, JK. In the original German: "Meine etwas kindische Art, Geschichtchen zu erzählen, und, nur an Hand ihrer, Schlüsse zu ziehn, die ungeheuer allgemeinverständlich sind, nimmt die schlichten Amerikaner für sich ein [. . .]" (Letter to Katia Mann, May 1, 1937, in: E. Mann, *Briefe* 1, 121).

54 Cf. Mann, Erika, "Gastgeber Amerika," transl. Ernst-Georg Richter, in: id., *Blitze*, 198–211, 199–202.

55 Cf. Boas, George, *The Cult of Childhood*, London 1966, 8.

56 E. Mann, *I, of All People*, EM M 138.

In his first autobiography, *Kind dieser Zeit*, Klaus Mann entitled a chapter on his and Erika's own childhood "*Triumph der Bösheit*" – triumph of evil.[57] Erika Mann, on the other hand, idealizes the essentially good nature of the infantile mind – a mind that only a school for barbarians, in which "[the children's] sense of justice and humanity is being stolen from them,"[58] can corrupt. The imaginative child for whom reality turns into a fairy tale has, according to Erika Mann, an advantage with regard to the compromising nature of the cynical realists that "do business with the devil."[59] Her praise of the child is – like every "cultural primitivism" – rooted in anti-intellectualism.[60] When she describes herself as a childish character, she is at once displaying self-abasement and belief in the superiority of her impetus. The title, *I, of All People*, in which a comma displaces the ego even more from the rest of the world, is as humble as it is presumptive. It expresses as much modest bewilderment about her unexpected political and literary career as it underlines the self-confidence of someone successfully following her unique call. 'Genuine' alertness that is not gripped by the heaviness of the intellect is a distinguishing mark that she attributes to herself through the identification with the idealized child.

The lack of such immediacy in intellectual and political elites, however, is, in Mann's view, responsible for Hitler's seizure of power. Apparently, she does not take into account the fact that Hitler's rise was not solely the result of too many compromises but also of the support of too many excitable minds. She, on the other hand, believes that it is rather the daydreamer that can be expected to take the right kind of action in the face of the mistaken, although only badly disguised evil – the kind of action whose default is so much deplored by the once indifferent Dr. Scherbach in *The Lights Go Down*. In Mann's outline, the cynicism of realists is to be opposed by a naïve, imaginative idealism whose bearing is nonetheless "resolute, uncompromising, even militant."[61]

Mann senses a "moral re-awakening throughout the world"[62] in 1943, which is certainly disconcerting in view of history's darkest hour. But since the United States joined the war, she felt that her host country – her country – was no longer denying the truth about National Socialism.

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57 Cf. K. Mann, *Kind*, 101–123.
58 Mann, Erika, *School for Barbarians*, transl. Muriel Rukeyser, New York 1938, 103.
59 E. Mann, *I, of All People*, EM M 138.
60 Cf. Boas, *The Cult*, 8.
61 E. Mann, *I, of All People*, EM M 138.
62 Ibid.

Thus, the "re-awakening" implies a confrontation with the real, which could have been anticipated if one only had had imagination enough. The imaginary and the real are in Mann's reflections correlated. Imagination is the pivotal term on which depend both knowledge and ethics. According to Mann, it needs imagination to see 'what is really going on,' to react with heightened senses even on that which is only 'in the air,' on dark forebodings. Hitler was, as Mann puts it, "what every child would call 'a bad man.'"[63] The childish mind had to be alarmed because its imagination was aroused – an imagination familiar with pure evil powers as they appear in fairy tales. "Realists do not believe in the devil. Children do."[64] The real is only recognizable with the support of the imaginary. Truth is related to imagination. It is for Mann, moreover, a means to conquer the "moral inertia"[65] that has taken hold of the Germans. Imagination incites ethical responsiveness – pity – and readiness to take responsibility for the Other. To imagine truly is her "categorical imperative"[66] and it is the reverse side of the wishful thinking that informed her writings around 1940. Her ethics have an anxious and a hopeful face. It demands imagination that is guided by both fears and hopes in order to imagine truely and to imagine difference.

Mann's reflections on morals are essentially informed by her experiences in Germany and in exile. They react on the incomprehensible inaction and conformity she witnessed. But why is the call for sensitivity and courage so closely linked with childhood? Is the ideal of childhood with all its implications of genuineness and innocence not in contradiction with the historical situation? Did exile leave its mark precisely in this discrepancy?

IV. Living with Shipwreck: Images of Exile

The beginning of exile came for Erika Mann as a surprise, an awakening in a "nightmare," as she called the autobiography's first chapter. In the manner of a Proustian *mémoire involontaire*, Mann begins her memoirs by relating her primary feelings of exile to another, earlier memory: a

63 Ibid.
64 Ibid.
65 Ibid.
66 Ibid.

bicycle accident she experienced as a fourteen year old.[67] On the way down from a mountaintop in the Alps, she rushes after Klaus on her bike. As the brakes fail, she can no longer take the sharp curves of the road. Already picturing her fall down the declivity at the side of the road, she crashes into trunks of trees that barricade the slope. Thus she survives the accident and even shows no signs of injury. Since her bike also remained intact, Klaus, when he finally returns for his sister, suspects she is playing a joke on him. But Erika has a concussion. To the concussion of the brain is linked the splinter in the eye. Nature suddenly appears malign, glaring, Hoffmann-ish: "The landscape around us had changed; there was something poisonous about the green of the woods; and the golden lining of the clouds looked vicious and sulphurish [sic]."[68] At the side of the slope in the Alps, an abyss opens up between Erika and her brother: "He wouldn't even *believe me* to whom the unspeakable had actually happened."[69] The shock of the fall is intensified because the person closest to her can no longer share her experience: "From the physical shock, a regular concussion of the brain, I recovered within a fortnight, whereas its nightmarish aftermath pursued me for months."[70] In 1933, these feelings return. The "unspeakable" has happened to her again. There is no path leading to exile; she falls into it: "The awakening was fearful, whereas the fall itself had proved comparatively painless. Surprisingly so, I should say. But now I felt groggy and tortured in an uncanny, maddening way."[71] In Zurich, the first place to which Erika Mann escaped, she experiences repeatedly that no one feels the same way she does. No one shares her fears and uncanny presentiments. The pain of being away from her beloved hometown was endurable. Something different causes the nightmare that she depicts by an abyss between her and Klaus, a scene of the loss of trust. When Jean Améry describes the first blow that he received by a Gestapo officer after his arrestment, he points out that it was not the actual pain that terrified him. But instantly, he realized with horror that he was helpless. Torture and death became real possibilities, if not certainties. From that moment on he could imagine all – this was the most frightening for

67 Klaus Mann mentions the bicycle tour and the accident in his first autobiography. Cf. K. Mann, *Kind*, 112f.

68 E. Mann, *I, of All People*, EM M 138.

69 Ibid.

70 Ibid.

71 Ibid.

him. What he had lost 'at a single blow' was confidence in the world.[72] The analogy in Mann's and Améry's descriptions of completely different experiences of Nazi violence is striking. Even though Erika Mann escaped from the physical violence that Améry has suffered, she uses a similar language to describe the rupture of confidence in the world as an existential shock.[73] If exile, however, meant for Mann loss of confidence in the world, it is also the limit of childhood. If Mann adheres to childhood as genuine relationship to the world, it could only remain a broken one. Even Erika Mann's models, the lost boy and the alarmed girl from Andersen's *Snow Queen*, are already children beyond the idyll of childhood. Genuineness becomes a wishful dream of damaged life. Its melancholy, as Theodor Adorno puts it in *Minima Moralia*, draws it "irresistibly into the abyss of childhood."[74] Childhood is in the autobiography not an idyll but an abyss into which Erika Mann falls. To come to terms with this abyss, she wrote a children's story: *Voyage with Robin*.

This short, unpublished text was also written in 1943. Erika Mann produced two versions, one in German and one in English, the latter being six pages longer than the former. In *Voyage with Robin*, a writer and "intimate enemy"[75] to the Nazi state travels from Philadelphia to a "neutral country" in a small freighter along with five other passengers. Among them are two children. The eldest of the siblings is Robin, a four and half year old boy to whose charms the narrator – in a truly Mannian manner – soon succumbs. And indeed, through his idiosyncratic, otherworldly way of speaking and through the love and admiration with which he is portrayed, he bears a slight resemblance to Echo in Thomas Mann's *Doctor Faustus*. Robin, born in Yugoslavia, the son of British parents, refugee since the beginning of the 'Balkans Campaign' in his little sister Bébée's and their Swiss nurse's company, has never known life other than in exile. The narrator finds her own experience genuinely mirrored in the child's language, without memory of rootedness and continuity.

72 Cf. Améry, "Die Tortur," 54–58.

73 With reference to the psychoanalytical theory of Michael Balint, Astrid Lange-Kirchheim holds that the bicycle scene depicts a "*Bruch des Urvertrauens*" – a disruption of basic trust. (Lange-Kirchheim, Astrid, "'Gefall-Tochter'? 'Leistungs-Tochter'? 'Trotz-Tochter'? Überlegungen zu Erika Mann," in: *Thomas Mann Jahrbuch* 17 (2004): 45–69, 64.)

74 Adorno, Theodor W., *Minima Moralia. Reflections from Damaged Life*, transl. E.F. N. Jeffcott, London 1999, 110.

75 Mann, Erika, *Voyage with Robin*, Monacensia. Literature Archive and Library Munich, EM M 181.

For Robin, 'home' is the unlikely mountain idyll of Switzerland about which his nurse keeps on talking "in that nostalgic, and slightly reproachful way."[76] Although he has the impression that "one is always on one's way home," he deems every place he has been to "'just around the corner,' and wherever he's slept, was 'his house.'"[77] The child embodies exile as a way of life that appeals to the narrator through signs of beauty and dignity, and hence hope.

Devoid of plot and political intention, the text of *Voyage with Robin* stands out in Mann's œuvre from the exile years. In accord with the romantic idea of a ship cruise, the story conveys a contemplative, melancholy, and fragile tranquility. The sea voyage, I would argue, is another image of exile that responds to the fall of the autobiography's beginning. A close look at the outline of *I, of All People* shows that the story of *Voyage with Robin* was originally supposed to be part of it. In the third chapter of the third and last part, entitled "Action," Erika Mann wanted to tell the story of her "passage to Lisbon – in a tiny Portuguese ship [. . .] About my curious fellow-passengers, my thoughts, and the sight of the ocean [. . .]."[78] Without difficulty one can discern elements of *Voyage with Robin*: Portugal as the neutral country to which the passengers are heading, the tiny ship,[79] the curious fellow passengers. Mann left Philadelphia on April 24, 1943.[80] *Voyage with Robin* thus concludes ten years of exile. A planned chapter of the autobiography, it could be considered a fragmentary ending to a fragmentary beginning. The children's story could be read as a way to re-interpret, to re-narrate the fall into the abyss from the beginning of *I, of All People*. Erika Mann turns the

76 Ibid.

77 Ibid.

78 E. Mann, *I, of All People*, EM M 138.

79 The ship is also mentioned in Klaus Mann's *Wendepunkt*. The last chapter of this book is a collage of several letters to relatives and friends. In a letter to Katia Mann, dated April 27, 1943, he writes: "Nevertheless I felt pretty sad as E. and I had to part last Saturday in Philadelphia. We only had a few hours together; in the evening, her ship was departing for Lisbon, an odd little freighter, hardly adequate for such a long journey." My translation, JK. In the original German: "Trotzdem war mir recht betrübt zumute, als ich mich neulich – am vorigen Samstag – in Philadelphia von E. trennen mußte. Wir hatten nur ein paar Stunden miteinander; abends ging ihr Schiff nach Lissabon, ein komischer kleiner Frachtkahn, für eine so weite Fahrt kaum geeignet" (K. Mann, *Der Wendepunkt*, 615).

80 Cf. Mann, Klaus, *Tagebücher 1940 bis 1943*, ed. Joachim Heimannsberg et al., Munich 1991, 128.

verticality of the fall into the horizontal, floating motion of the ship. The abyss is still present under the surface of the sea, but there is no longer the helplessness of Erika Mann's first exile experiences.

The freighter, the "S.S. Dwarf," is tiny, childlike. In the German version, it disappears between all the full-grown ("*ausgewachsenen*") ships.[81] Upon entering, a crewmember shows the narrator photographs of the ship carrying dead bodies of a plane crash, an apparently overpowering load. Robin will not stop crying when he comes aboard, and Bébée, "who'd always repeat Robin's more important statements," finds it "[n]asty."[82] Even the other passengers cannot fail to notice the "incredibly dirty condition"[83] of the freighter. The Portuguese teenager who looks like a "disguised child" remarks that "she's not really *meant* for passengers."[84] It is a ship for the dead, "covered with soot, cigarette stumps, and suspicious bits of rubbish."[85] Upon first look, the narrator calls it "my destiny."[86] In the German version, Mann puts it even as "*mein fragwürdiges Schicksal*"[87] – my doubtful fate. Hans Blumenberg showed that 'the ship' is a metaphor of existence *per se*.[88] In *Voyage with Robin*, it is used as a metaphor of exile in particular. The freighter's bad condition can hardly be justified and Robin regards it with irreconcilable grief. But the narrator's attitude towards the ship suddenly changes: "'Right, or wrong, – my vessel!' I felt, and 'tough, fearless little thing, burdening herself with all those coffins!'"[89] A vessel can hardly be right or wrong – but life can. Even though Mann is aware of the impossibility of the right life in the damaged one, she recognizes the possibility, if not ineluctability, of a very personal kind of 'moving on' – right or wrong. In deliberately assuming her life, however miserable it may have become, she transforms the swift fall of exile into a precarious, yet slow and steady voyage on the sea. "Irrevocably separated [. . .] from the rest of the world," an "impalpable intimacy" develops between the voyagers that,

81 Cf. Mann, Erika, *Reise mit Robin*, Monacensia. Literature Archive and Library Munich, EM M 145.
82 E. Mann, *Voyage*, EM M 181.
83 Ibid.
84 Ibid.
85 Ibid.
86 Ibid.
87 E. Mann, *Reise*, EM M 145.
88 Cf. Blumenberg, Hans, *Schiffbruch mit Zuschauer. Paradigma einer Daseinsmetapher*, Frankfurt/M. 1979, 9–11.
89 E. Mann, *Voyage*, EM M 181.

for the time being, manage to live as an "odd little family" even in "confiding harmony."[90] Conflating the first exile metaphor (fall into the abyss) with the second (the voyage on the sea) into a single image, one might regard exile as the paradoxical situation of castaways that manage to build a new ship without the support of a 'solid ground.' With Blumenberg, one might call Mann's image of exile from 1943 "*Leben mit dem Schiffbruch*"[91] – living with shipwreck.

The passengers in Mann's story are forced to remain adrift on the water from continent to continent. However, the reflection of freedom appears through an imaginative, i.e. linguistic, twist in the title of the story. When Mann presents 'refugees' as 'voyagers,' she establishes exile as a life form that is opposed to the ideal of chthonic rootedness and continuity, i.e. opposed to an ideal that contributed to their suffering in the first place. This twist is precarious. At any time, German ships could appear on the horizon and turn the voyagers back into refugees. Imagination, in the form of a different symbolization, proves to be fragile, and ineluctably linked with loss. In view of the danger of falling into the hands of the German Navy, the narrator erases her Christian name from the passenger list. And, leaving only her last and middle names, she feels like "a person who, after having shaven off one of her eyebrows [sic], considers herself irrecognizable [sic]."[92] This scene of 'rewriting' herself on the passenger list reiterates *en miniature* the metaphorical transition of abyss to voyage. It oscillates between an image of violent interference in the narrator's identity – the loss of the name – and an image of re-invention that procures a feeling of security. The narrator is "[s]illily sure that the unspeakable wasn't going to happen."[93] At the beginning of the autobiography, exile is the unspeakable itself. Here, the unspeakable never happened and, for the protagonist, it is even improbable that it would. Although the narrator presents the trust in her disguise as a childish illusion, it is the seemingly negligible faculty of imagination that leads to new confidence in the world. 'Ethics of imagination' in Erika Mann has thus this other sense: It describes the quest for forms that would permit a passage from escape to life.

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90 Ibid.
91 Blumenberg, *Schiffbruch*, 70.
92 E. Mann, *Voyage*, EM M 181.
93 Ibid.

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You Can't Go Home Again: Exiles in Klaus Mann's *The Volcano*

Nicola Behrmann

> Perhaps the entire question about the decadence of civilization is incorrectly posed. There is no civilization as such. The question is whether historical humans are still willing to embrace history.
>
> (Jan Patočka)

I.

When Klaus Mann arrived in New York on September 27, 1936, from Rotterdam, he was put up at the Bedford Hotel between Lexington and Park Avenue; this would be only the first of many accommodations during his exile in America. In contrast to most emigrants, he was already an untiring world-traveler, even before 1933. He knew New York, Moscow, and Tokyo, and had traveled through Finland and Morocco, Hawaii and Korea. After 1933 he moved with ease among the various emigrant circles in Amsterdam, Prague, Zurich, Paris, New York and Los Angeles, and there was hardly an intellectual among them whom Klaus Mann had not known personally. In the years between 1933 and 1939, he experienced his most productive phase as a writer. When he came to New York in September 1936, he had just begun work on perhaps his most important novel *The Volcano: A Novel Among Emigrants*, a grand attempt "to bring the rich, scattered and murky experience of exile into epic form."[1] A prolific and speedy writer, Klaus Mann worked intensely on this book, longer than he had on any other: the composition of *The Volcano* took Mann almost two years to complete, with a great portion of it taking shape during his stay at the Bedford Hotel,[2] where Mann's

1 Mann, Klaus, *Der Wendepunkt: Ein Lebensbericht* [1949], Frankfurt/M. 2006, 514.

2 Without regard to the domiciles of his parents, there is no other place Klaus Mann has lived longer than at the Bedford Hotel. When, in September 1940, he checks in once more to the Bedford and does not know right away which home address to

writing process was repeatedly interrupted by journalistic work, extensive lecture tours in the U.S., and trips back to Europe. In May 1938, he participated, together with his sister Erika, in the Spanish Civil War as a correspondent. Only in September 1938, after the Munich Agreement and the annexation of Czechoslovakia, did he finally emigrate to America.

While working on *The Volcano* he and Erika compiled a collection of biographical portraits of well-known German emigrants under the title *Escape to Life*, which had also lent its name to the title of the current volume.[3] The book explicitly addresses an American audience in order to prove the existence of another, second Germany, which did not lose its identity by emigrating to America, but rather preserved it in exile. In the years of their emigration, the Mann family made it their political task to promote this other Germany. No one represents it more convincingly and convinced than Thomas Mann, who declares in a famous interview conducted in the Bedford Hotel: "Where I am, there is Germany. I carry my German culture in me. I have contact with the world and I do not consider myself fallen."[4] Carrying and incorporating German culture, Thomas Mann elevates himself to the father and the fatherland of German literature. His son, Klaus Mann, together with Anna Seghers and Lion Feuchtwanger, one of the most prolific writers of the experience of exile between 1933 and 1945, leaves his *Vaterland* much more readily behind: "I do not feel homeless, first because I cannot lose my German home as a spiritual possession, secondly because I never felt Germany to be my *only* home."[5] The rhetoric of an incorporated fatherland is striking in both cases. While the father, even in exile, protects himself against it, the son, Klaus Mann, regards himself, before 1933, as a European. From 1940 on Klaus Mann will be driven by the desire to become an American. In *The Volcano,* however, the attempt *to escape to life* either leads straight into death or to the end of a life that can only be continued in a mere *sur*-vival, a living on. Here the U.S. becomes a Dream-America, one that sympathizes equally with Cocteau and Kafka and is to be

register, the concierge assures him: "After all, this *is* your home." Mann, Klaus, *Tagebücher 1940–1943*, ed. Joachim Heimannsberg/Peter Laemmle/Wilfried F. Schoeller, Munich 1991, 19.IX.1940, 62.

3 Mann, Erika/Mann, Klaus, *Escape to Life,* Boston 1939.

4 Mann, Thomas, "Interview," in: *New York Times*, February 22, 1938.

5 Mann/Mann, *Escape to Life*, 13f.

confused neither with a naïve Utopia nor with a nightmare.[6] If there is no longer a distinction possible between origin and exile, the border between life and death blurs as well. Exile, according to Blanchot, as the temporal and spatial distance from something promised, not only produces a form of writing, but marks the very precondition of writing: "The poem is exile, and the poet who belongs to it belongs to the dissatisfaction of exile. He is always lost to himself, outside, far from home."[7] In Klaus Mann's writing, the conditions of exile conflate with the disposition of the writer up to the final abdication of the *Muttersprache*: After 1942 he will no longer write and publish in the German language and will eventually give up literature altogether. *The Volcano* remains his last fictional book. While keeping the memories of his childhood as beautiful and treasured anecdotes to be published in various essays, books, and novels, Klaus Mann declares, after the war, his *Vaterland* as lost: "You can't go home again," he famously states in a radio speech in May 1945.[8] And when describing his "homesickness as scourge and stimulant"[9] in his autobiography, *The Turning Point*, he ostentatiously also moves the experience of exile closer to the experience of drugs. Klaus Mann was aware of the various translations for exile – suicide, promiscuity, and addiction all belong to its realm and were directed to death, not to life.

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6 In a further collection of essays, titled *Distinguished Visitors*, that was written in the wake of *Escape to Life*'s success but only appeared posthumously, Klaus Mann included brief portraits of famous European travelers to America such as Franz Kafka, Jean Cocteau, and Karl May, who had written on America without ever having been there. The more Mann encountered the real conditions in America – with social ills and racism on one side, democracy and cosmopolitanism on the other – the more he became interested in the Dream-America of these three writers, in whose works civilization and barbarism are kept in balance. See Mann, Klaus, *Distinguished Visitors: Der amerikanische Traum*, Munich 1991.

7 Blanchot, Maurice, "Literature and the Original Experience," in: id., *The Space of Literature*, Lincoln 1989, 209–247, 237.

8 Mann, Klaus, "Es gibt keine Heimkehr!" in: Uwe Naumann/Michael Töteberg (ed.), *Auf verlorenem Posten. Aufsätze, Reden, Kritiken 1942–1949*, Reinbek bei Hamburg 1994, 224–229. In the center of this radio feature is Klaus Mann's famous visit of his parents' home in Munich, which he found apparently undamaged from the outside, but bombed out inside. He learns that the SS had occupied the house and turned it into a so-called "Lebensborn:" a breeding home to father "Arian" children.

9 "Heimweh als Geißel und Stimulans," in: K. Mann, *Wendepunkt*, 514.

II. Polyphony and Promiscuity

In *The Volcano*, Mann assembles a variety of protagonists whose paths – stylistically oriented toward Dos Passos and Joyce – cross, correspond with each other, leave each other, influence, and disappoint each other time and again, finding a particular form of community in exile that is close to what Jean-Luc Nancy has developed in his *Inoperative Community*: a post-communist idea of community *avant la lettre* that is no longer submitted to any totalizing agency.[10] The large group of emigrants who Klaus Mann stages in *The Volcano*, or rather, whose stage he prepares, is a community without the grounds of a constitutive community, and nevertheless a community in confrontation with the national-socialist *Volksgemeinschaft* that has expelled them from their country. The kaleidoscope of criss-crossing emigrants and refugees that unfolds in *The Volcano* has often been reduced to Klaus Mann's own "inner conflict between narcissistic regression and œdipal conflict resolution through the fight against fascism."[11] On the one hand, to resignation or narcissistic regression, which can allegedly be detected in Klaus Mann's inclination towards Christian mysticism, in his drug addiction and his desire for death, and, on the other hand, to his political engagement and concerns that stand for a successful coping with œdipal conflicts. Scholarly research on Klaus Mann frequently suspects the dominating figure of his father behind all his ambivalences.[12] Prominent motifs such as homoeroticism,

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10 Nancy, Jean-Luc, *The Inoperative Community*, Minneapolis 1991.

11 Casaretto, Alexa-Desirée, *Heimatsuche, Todessehnsucht und Narzißmus in Leben und Werk Klaus Manns*, Frankfurt/M., Berlin, Vienna 2002, 182. Fredric Kroll finds in the configuration of the figures a narratological weakness: *The Volcano*, according to Kroll, would suffer from a flow of narration often running empty, and from too many protagonists among whom the narrator moves mechanically back and forth. Kroll, Fredric (ed.), *Klaus-Mann-Schriftenreihe* 5:1937–1942: Trauma Amerika, Wiesbaden 1985, 125f.

12 See also Härle, Gerhard, *Männerweiblichkeit: Zur Homosexualität bei Klaus und Thomas Mann*, Frankfurt/M. 1988, 313–315; Krüll, Marianne, *Im Netz der Zauberer: Eine andere Geschichte der Familie Mann*, Zurich 1991, and Kroll, Fredric, "'Das Letzte halte ich stets zurück': Sexualität und Sprachlosigkeit bei Klaus Mann," in: Gerhard Härle/Maria Kalveram/Wolfgang Popp (ed.), *Erkenntniswunsch und Diskretion: Erotik in biographischer und autobiographischer Literatur*, Berlin 1992, 375–384. In all three contributions Klaus Mann's "longing for death" is being explained through his unresolved œdipal conflicts: Since Klaus Mann unlike his father openly lived his homosexuality he was, as it frequently has been assumed, plagued by feelings of guilt toward Thomas.

sibling incest and longing for death[13] are now declared the burdening heritage of his son and his "deadly wound."[14] This remark by Klaus Mann has often been over-determined as a social stigma and an incriminating heritage of a father who has repressed his own desire throughout his life.[15] Besides homosexuality, his drug addiction, his many attempts to commit suicide, and even his "uninhibited merging with all things American,"[16] have been ascribed to "œdipal conflicts." Klaus Mann's literary production, however, cannot be reduced to one single disposition that allegedly has constituted his biographical calamities, as if an autobiographical narrative could ever provide sufficient explanation for a lived life.

The Volcano deals with more as well as with possibly something quite different than the autobiographical processing of an inner conflict. Indeed, drug addiction, homoeroticism, promiscuity, and suicide provide an unstable, if not explosive, narrative ground on which the topic of exile becomes at all manifest. However, these dispositions cannot be reduced to one cause; rather, they unfold metonymically in a series of cathexes and displacements.

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13 Just think of Thomas Mann's novella "The Blood of the Walsungs" (1906) in regard to the incest motif, of his "Death in Venice" (1912) regarding the topic of homoeroticism, and of his essay "Platen, Tristan, and Don Quixote" (1931), in which he discusses the desire for death.

14 The talk of a "deadly wound" derives from an autobiographical statement by Klaus Mann on his homosexuality: "one does not pay homage to this Eros without becoming a stranger in our society as it is now, one does not commit oneself to this love without also sustaining a deadly wound." K. Mann, *Wendepunkt*, 457–458.

15 The scholarly pathologization of a candidly-embraced homosexuality through the image of a lifelong biographical wound began with an essay by Marcel Reich-Ranicki, "Der dreifach Geschlagene: Schwermut und Schminke," in: id., *Nachprüfung: Essays über deutsche Schriftsteller von gestern*, Frankfurt/M. 1987, 275–294. Also see Mattenklott, Gert, "Die Wunde Homosexualität: Klaus Mann," in: *Nach Links gewendet*, Argument Studienheft 42 Berlin 1980, 12–21; and Wolfram, Susanne, *Die tödliche Wunde: Über die Untrennbarkeit von Tod und Eros im Werk von Klaus Mann*, Frankfurt/M., Bern, New York 1986. Both Mattenklott and Wolfram understand Klaus Mann's homosexuality as a stigma and trace his desire for death back to his homosexuality. Härle's *Männerweiblichkeit* focuses on the œdipal conflict as well, turning it into the initial source for Mann's "personal failure" and his suicidal tendencies.

16 In the German original: "hemmungslose[s] Aufgehen im Amerikanischen." Mann, Monika, "Mein Bruder Klaus," in: *Neue Deutsche Hefte* 43 (1974): 520–21, 520. Translation mine, NB.

The *Novel Among Emigrants* concerns the difficult task of writing the experience of exile that resembles the experience of writing as such. As Blanchot has shown, exile relates to the experience of solitude and of a multitude of voices. The polyphony of the novel creates a narrative echo-chamber of speech and counter-speech, quotations and references. As if searching for *one* legitimate narrator, the auctorial narrative voice wanders through the many perspectives of individual emigrants: the decadent intellectual (Martin Korella), the political activist (Marion von Kammer), the social democratic worker, the bourgeois widow, the discharged Jewish professor, communists, Catholics, bankers, restaurant owners, and a young, disoriented girl. Excluding a clear and distinct narrator, such polyphony is also responsible for the apocalyptic rhetoric of *The Volcano*: "No longer is one very sure," Jacques Derrida writes, "who loans its voice and its tone to the other in the Apocalypse; no longer is one very sure who addresses what to whom."[17]

The narrative structure of *The Volcano* alludes to "an apocalypse without apocalypse, an apocalypse without vision, without truth, without revelation, *envois* (for the 'come' is plural in itself, in oneself) addresses without message and without destination, without sender or decidable addressee, without last judgment [. . .]."[18] For Derrida it is always a matter of an apocalypse without apocalypse. In other words, the eruption of the volcano is foreboded and evoked on over more than 700 pages, but it cannot be narrated: the actual event is omitted. The narrated time in the novel moves closer and closer to the real historical time: not accidentally, the narration ends in the beginning of 1939 and the book is published in the summer of 1939; only a few months before the outbreak of World War II. Hence, the end of *The Volcano* does not find historical or narratological closure, but opens towards an apocalyptic event that does not allow or require depiction.

While the event of the European apocalypse cannot be captured, since it takes place equally in the past, present, and future, the narration of *The Volcano* is interspersed with regressive moments that do not seem to belong to the polyphonic narrative network that unfolds in constant address and reply and in constant change of perspectives. In a review of *The Volcano*, Balder Olden bemoans the "rarely welcome types" in the

17 Derrida, Jacques, "Of an Apocalyptic Tone Newly Adopted in Philosophy," in: Harold G. Coward/Toby Foshay (ed.), *Derrida and Negative Theology*, Albany 1992, 25–72, 57.

18 Derrida, "Apocalyptic Tone," 66.

novel: "homosexual aesthetes, abandoning themselves to all sorts of addiction, dying from cocaine intoxication, or ending up in religious lunacy [. . .], polygamous girls, vain cabaret and artist folks, chatterboxes and losers [. . .]."[19] In his diary Klaus Mann notes a critical response from a European reader spread by Curt Riess at a dinner party: "All these gays and morphine addicts. . . ."[20] Even in recent scholarship the lengthy passages concerning Martin Korella's heroin addiction and his homosexual relationship to young Kikjou are being dismissed as "meaningless" and "melodramatic:" Such passages, writes Ilsedore Jonas, "are supposed to render the novel realistic, while at times they resemble a colportage."[21] In regard to the Martin-Kikjou-passages, Klaus Mann himself asserted that in his book – albeit with a wink of the eye – "nothing more unnatural and disgusting should occur any more."[22] However, promiscuity of all sexual relations in *The Volcano* is closely connected to the experience of exile and to the responsibility of the writer, who is now only conceivable in the experience of radical alterity: as refugee, emigrant, and homeless. Not only does alterity become an addictive experience of almost every character in *The Volcano*, it is also the experience of a language that is necessarily pluralistic and polyphonic, as it arises out of the appeals and the silence of the other. In his essay "On Marriage in Transition," Thomas Mann connected promiscuity and faithlessness expressed in "libertinage, gypsydom, and flightiness" ("Libertinage, Zigeunertum und Flatterhaftigkeit") with homoeroticism, but also with uprootedness ("Wurzellosigkeit")

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19 "Homosexuelle Ästhetiker, die sich auf diesem Vulkan Süchten ergeben, im Kokainrausch sterben oder im religiösen Wahnsinn münden [. . .], polygame Mädchen, eitles Kabarett-Artistenvolk, Vielredner und Nichtvollbringer [. . .]." Olden, Balder: "Der Vulkan [1939]," qtd. in: Töteberg, Michael, "Nachwort," in: Mann, Klaus, *Der Vulkan: Roman unter Emigranten*, Reinbek bei Hamburg 2010, 566. Translation mine, NB.

20 Mann, Klaus, *Tagebücher 1938–1939*, ed. Joachim Heimannsberg/Peter Laemmle/Wilfried F. Schoeller, Munich 1990, 117.

21 Jonas, Ilsedore B., "Klaus Mann im amerikanischen Exil," in: Rudolf Wolff (ed.), *Klaus Mann: Werk und Wirkung*, Bonn 1984, 119–152, 127. Translation mine, NB.

22 Original quote: "soll nun, wenn es irgend geht, auch gewiss nichts hässlich Unnatürliches mehr vorkommen." Klaus Mann in an unpublished letter to Katia Mann (Monacensia, Stadtbibliothek Munich), qtd. in: Töteberg, "Nachwort," 565. Translation mine, NB. Even Erika Mann, when working on a new edition of *The Volcano*, tried to remove the "Martin-Kikjou complex" arguing that Klaus and she had already agreed that these passages were "overdetermined." Erika Mann, unpublished letter to Rudolf Hirsch (Monacensia, Stadtbibliothek Munich), qtd. in: ibid., 570.

and non-commitment to the future ("Nicht-Gebundenheit an die Zukunft") and declared them as immoral.[23] Promiscuity in Klaus Mann's work becomes the *signum* of the writer in exile: "We are emigrants, you and me, evil has stolen our homeland, and those without a homeland do not know any fidelity."[24] The following concerns the relationship of these extensive and intensive passages, in which addiction, sexuality, and suicide are depicted, with the premise of a "novel among emigrants." In this way these passages are far from destabilizing the situation of the expelled intellectual – instead, they prepare the grounds for the possibility of writing exile.

III. Aporias of Responsibility

The problem of the responsibility of European intellectuals in exile stands at the center of *The Volcano,* circulating around two questions; namely: Can the flight out of Germany be accounted for at all, and in what

23 "It leads to nothing and has no foundation to build on; it is 'l'art pour l'art' which is fine enough from an aesthetic point of view, but is certainly immoral. It harbours within itself a feeling of hopelessness, being without root or a sense of responsibility toward the future, and lacking connection. Its substance is libertinage, fickleness, gipsydom. It also lacks loyalty." Mann, Thomas, "Marriage in Transition," in: Hermann Keyserling (ed.), *The Book of Marriage*, New York 1926, 257–258, 251.

24 K. Mann, *Der Vulkan*, 423. However, it was Thomas Mann who has defended those often criticized passages in *The Volcano* that deal with homoeroticism and promiscuity: "Some, of course, will say: a strange approach, the painting is quite hopeless, these piqueurs, sodomites, and angel sighters would have found their easy, faithful, corrupt doom even without Hitler, that Germany had done quite rightly to expel them." Thomas Mann, letter to Klaus Mann, 22.VII.1939, in: Mann, Thomas, *Letters of Thomas Mann, 1889–1955*, New York 1971, 309. On his part Thomas Mann regards *The Volcano* as a book "of which the German refugees need not be ashamed after all, from the viewpoint of dignity, strength, and militancy; it is a book which they can gladly and gratefully endorse, provided they are not envious." Th. Mann, *Letters*, 309. As reasons for the novel's success Thomas Mann names the exceptional narrative power with which Klaus Mann depicts the failed withdrawal treatment of Martin Korella, but also the character of Marion von Kammer, "a truly loved and admired, serious and strong and militant character" (Ibid., 309) to which "die stärkere Schwester" Erika Mann has helped him – this remark has been removed in the English edition. Mann, Klaus, *Briefe und Antworten 1922–1949*, ed. Martin Gregor-Dellin, Munich 1987, 390.

way and by what means could intellectuals in exile take responsibility? The first question is clearly answered in the affirmative as an "escape to life:" Only outside of Germany could German intellectuals be at all effective. The question of the mode of responsibility is more difficult to resolve and circles more and more around the book of emigration, the "Novel of the Homeless," which tasks itself with describing different protagonists, but which breaks down.

In his last essay "Die Heimsuchung des europäischen Geistes" ("Europe's Search for a New Credo," 1949) Klaus Mann takes up again the question of responsibility shortly before his death – but his appeal does not concern any kind of work that has to be written. Instead, he pleads for a "mass suicide" of European intellectuals:

> I'd like to see hundreds, indeed thousands of intellectuals follow the examples of Virginia Woolf, Ernst Toller, Stefan Zweig, Jan Masaryk. A suicide wave among the world's most distinguished, most celebrated minds of Europe would shock the peoples out of their lethargy, would make them realize the extreme gravity of the ordeal man has brought on upon himself by his folly and selfishness.[25]

Death – as self-sacrifice of the partisan, as "private" suicide of young Tilly von Kammer, or in consequence of a heroin overdose – is an important motif in *The Volcano* and is contemplated in close relation to the question of political engagement and the writer's responsibility. In his *Heretical Essays on the Philosophy of History*, Jan Patočka moves the problem of responsibility, and in particular the question of the destruction of civilization in the technological era, into the center of the genesis of European history. Instead of focusing on aspects of human estrangement and alienation, he is more interested in the relation humans can have to themselves beyond a "false, objectified, and objectivistic perspective *from without*."[26] According to Patočka, human responsibility not only rests in between the opposition between authentic and inauthentic, but also in the opposition

25 Mann, Klaus, "Europe's Search for a New Credo," in: *Tomorrow*, 8.10 (1949), 5–11, 11. Written in English, this was the last article Klaus Mann completed before his death. It was published posthumously and received considerable critical attention. Erika Mann translated the article and included it under the title "Die Heimsuchung des europäischen Geistes" in her anthology *Klaus Mann zum Gedächtnis*, Amsterdam 1950, 177–201.

26 Patočka, Jan, "Is Technological Civilization Decadent and Why?" in: id., *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*, Chicago 1996, 95–118, 98.

between the ordinary (everyday, work, self-enslavement of life, duty) and the exceptional (holiday, the demonic, passion, Eros). Responsibility is not tantamount with the successful overcoming of a "demonic" which becomes manifest in addiction, in an orgy, in feasts and the flight out of everyday life, but rests in-between the sacred and the profane: The I-saying subject, the genealogy of the soul, as well as, according to Patočka, the genesis of European responsibility, depends on living out the opposition between both, which is to say "overcoming the everydayness without collapsing in self-forgetting into the region of darkness, however tempting."[27] We can neither reach our own, true, and unalienable self when we are freeing ourselves from the profane and ordinary, nor can the demonic be easily overcome: it must be incorporated into the profane and "into a relation with responsibility as originally and primarily it is not."[28]

The issue of historical responsibility of European intellectuals is a central focus in Klaus Mann's writings after 1933. *The Volcano* prepares a ground for homelessness in those in-between spaces and gaps – in-between countries, in-between public and private, in the Café and in the transient hotel, in hospitals and lecture halls, in-between socialism and Catholicism, in-between Europe and America, hope and resignation. At the same time responsibility is measured in those passages of *The Volcano* that deal with intoxication, sexuality, and angelology where the appeal for political engagement seems to be renounced in an arbitrary and random way. It is the same call for action that deeply moves all the discussions between the protagonists. In contrast to Anna Segher's novel *Transit* (1944), which raises the same question of responsibility in regard to the exiled writer, political action in *The Volcano* is not prevented through the destitution and distress of the exiled writer. Rather, it is homelessness that bears the quest for responsibility. The demonic in-between space, which opens up several times in the novel with the force of a cleft or a volcano, expresses itself differently in each of the main protagonists – Martin Korella, Kikjou, and Marion von Kammer. *La chose infernale* of drug addiction and the *fleurs du mal* of a literature that has become demonic belong to Martin Korella who writhes in agony in a Swiss hospital, is driven by a demon into a nearby pharmacy, begging for morphine, and finally perishes in his light-flooded Paris

27 Patočka, *Heretical Essays*, 102.
28 Ibid., 100.

studio as an abyssal, futile martyr: "Marcel suddenly thought of the bloody cloths and wads of cotton wool around Martin's bed. 'He too gives off his blood – he too. It flows away meaninglessly, a wasted treasure, the lost sacrifice. . . .'"[29] The appearance of the "angel of the homeless," which is a poetic-political intrusion into the framework of the novel, belongs to young Kikjou. As different as the two lovers Martin and Kikjou may appear – the addict weary of life and the pious sinner, an obscure figure of desire resembling the one of a hustler – they have in common an incessant desire for transgression, an inner conflict between free will and passive abandon, and an insecurity in regard to categories such as political engagement and resignation. The political cabaret performer Marion von Kammer, however, who cites German classical texts on stage in a way that they turn into a warfare agent of *resistance* and whose character traits clearly remind of Erika Mann, becomes a witness to the vision of the volcano that opens up twice underneath her in moments of passionate love:

> The room trembled under her feet. [. . .] Her eyes had a horrible look, as if an abyss had sprung up before her. Out of the abyss came brands of fire, dense plumes of smoke, and boulders hurled into the air. It was the crater of a volcano [. . .] The volcano is terrifying. The fire is merciless. It will scorch you if you are not clever and cautious. Why do you not flee? Or do you want to be incinerated? Are you bent on sacrificing your poor lives? – But you have only this life! Save yourself! If you should choke in the fire, no one will care, no one will thank you, no tears will be shed at your downfall.[30]

The sacred and the demonic, which Patočka relates to the *mysterium tremendum*, enter the text like a tear or a suspension. As Derrida has shown, the language implied in trembling responds to the *mysterium tremendum* as a quest of absolute responsibility: an earthquake which, if it is grasped in

29 K. Mann, *Vulkan*, 284.

30 "Das Zimmer schwankte ihr unter den Füssen. [. . .] [I]hre Augen hatten den entsetzten Blick, als wäre ein Abgrund jäh vor ihnen aufgesprungen. / Aus dem Abgrund stiegen Feuerbrände, auch Qualm kam in dicken Schwaden, und Felsbrocken wurden emporgeschleudert. Es war der Krater eines Vulkans. / [. . .] Furchtbar ist der Vulkan. Das Feuer kennt kein Erbarmen. Ihr verbrennt, wenn ihr nicht sehr schlau und behutsam seid. Warum flieht ihr nicht? Oder wollt ihr verbrennen? Seid ihr versessen darauf, eure armen Leben zu opfern? – Aber ihr habt nur diese! Bewahrt euch! Wenn auch ihr im allgemeinen Brand ersticken solltet – : niemand würde sich darum kümmern, niemand dankte es euch, keine Träne fiele auf euren Untergang." Ibid., 165–166.

all its dimensions, has already taken place. Yet this *mysterium tremendum* looms in *The Volcano* – the novel and the image – in a confusing way and makes a coherent ethical perspective impossible: It occurs in Marion's vision as well as in the depiction of Martin's dying body and in Kikjou's encounter with the demonic angel of the homeless. The relation between the "demonic" and the individual's responsibility is frequently established in *The Volcano*, albeit it remains unresolved if such connection can be lived up. The demonic or the *mysterium* of the sacred is bound to a secret other than responsibility, which is related to speech and to historical humans. Derrida remarks that it is not certain for Patočka in what way such a secret would relate to the extraordinary "demonic mysterium" as it is expelled from both Platonic and Christian tradition: a *mysterium tremendum* – "the terrifying mystery, the dread, fear and trembling of the Christian in the experience of the sacrificial gift."[31] Is the primeval totemic demonical possession incorporated or repressed? Does it rise from the grounds of the primeval demonic or is it being repelled into the primeval ground of being? Absolute responsibility is obliged to silence and to the secret, which Derrida in his essay "Giving Death" will further develop in a reading of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac. Such absolute responsibility teaches us "that far from ensuring responsibility, the generality of ethics incites to irresponsibility. It impels me to speak, to reply, to account for, and thus to dissolve my singularity in the medium of the concept."[32]

Such responsibility has nothing to do with the ethical duty that is bound to the home, to family, to one's *Vaterland*, and the community – those to whom one is obliged. As Erika Mann might have rightly guessed, Klaus Mann thought of none of these in his own death. "It was completely clear to me," she writes to Pamela Wedekind after the suicide of her brother in Cannes, "that one would not find a note, or a greeting – nothing at all. If he had thought of us – our mother and me, or had reached out to us, he wouldn't have been able to do it."[33] In suicide or in self-sacrifice on a battlefield we are giving death. To his family, Klaus Mann's own death on May 21, 1949, does appear as random, irresponsible, and

31 Derrida, Jacques, *The Gift of Death, and Literature in Secret*, Chicago 2008, 6.

32 Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, 61.

33 Original quote: "Aber mir stand völlig fest, daß man nichts, – keinen Zettel, keinen Gruß, – gar nichts finden würde. Hätte er unser, – unserer Mutter und meiner auch nur gedacht, oder hätte er uns angeredet, er hätte es nicht vermocht." Mann, Erika, *Briefe und Antworten* 1: 1922–1950, ed. Anna Zanco Prestel, Munich 1984, 264.

unconscious. His death does not stand under the sign of absolute responsibility. However, does it suffice to say that his suicide or his *Selbsttödtung* (Novalis), following so many attempts and a life-long desire for death, simply reflects a mere forgetting of his ethical responsibility toward his family, his *Heimat*, which holds him with a tight grip? Isn't it as legitimate to say that his given death has a relation to sacrifice – his life-long desire for death is subordinated to the economy of a sacrifice which he was never able to make but in which the "Ordeal of the European Intellectuals" becomes manifest? Derrida has read the impossible gift of death that exceeds any economy in close relation to Jan Patočka's discussion of European responsibility:

> How does one give *oneself* death [*se donner la mort*]? How does one give it to oneself in the sense that putting oneself to death means dying while assuming responsibility for one's own death, committing suicide but also sacrificing oneself for another, *dying for the other*, thus perhaps giving one's life by giving oneself death [. . .].[34]

In *The Volcano* the relation between the impossible economy of the gift and self-sacrificial death is tested several times: There is the death of Martin Korella, who dies of a heroin overdose. There is the death of young Tilly von Kammer, who cannot bear living after a brutally performed abortion and poisons herself. There is the death of the intellectual Marcel Poiret who is "tired of words" and the one of the worker Tullio, both of whom sacrifice their lives volunteering in the Spanish civil war:

> Marcel speaks. Words shoot out, as blood flows out of a sick person's mouth: "[. . .] Enough of all the talk! Enough of all the writing [. . .] We should not counter the fury of reaction with words any longer, but with another fury, a new possession. We must become blind and mute and ready for destruction. This is the only way to atone for the sins of our fathers. . . ."[35]

Twice, Marion von Kammer loses a man she loves for the sake of his unconditional will to sacrifice himself: Sacrifice is what relates the Italian

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34 Derrida, *Gift of Death*, 12.

35 "Marcel redet. Worte schießen hervor, so wie das Blut stürzt aus dem Munde des Kranken: '[. . .] Genug geredet! Genug geschrieben [. . .] Wir sollen gegen die Raserei des Rückschrittes nicht mehr Argumente setzen, sondern ein anderes Rasen, eine neue Besessenheit. Wir müssen blind und stumm werden und bereit zum Untergang. Nur so sühnen wir die Schuld unserer Väter. . . .'" K. Mann, *Vulkan*, 256–257.

anarchist Tullio to the French intellectual Marcel Poiret. Both *give* their death: they give death to the fascists whom they kill and they give their own death as sacrifice on the battlefield. Both leave Marion in order to act responsible in regard to another task. But to find any sense of responsibility in those anchorless, abyssal scenes of intoxication, dreams, dying, and in the angelology, how would this be possible? And what bearing does this have on the rhetoric of sacrifice, which is reflected throughout *The Volcano*? What kind of sacrifice would have to be made? What kind of community does it belong to, and which call does it follow? Taking up the discourse Jacques Derrida has unfolded in discussing Jan Patočka's *Heretical Essays*: In what way can we trace a reading of the gift and the inaccessible secret which is enunciated in the idea of God in regard to the angel of the homeless? God, as Derrida writes, "who decides for us although we remain responsible, that is to say free to decide, to work, to assume our life and our death"?[36]

IV. Angelology

"Will they forgive me the angels in the novel?" writes Klaus Mann in his diary in April 1939.[37] Indeed, the two mystical episodes in which an angel appears to Kikjou have mostly been dismissed by scholars. Alexander von Bormann, for example, regards the use of highly traditional means and an old-fashioned mindset to save a progressive perspective as a "strange approach," which cannot cope with the actual course of events, which breaks down when confronted with the object and with reality.[38] Lutz Winckler reads the "angel of the homeless" as an *accoucheur* of antifascist poetry, which is supposed to reconcile the contradictory elements of a "decadent" philosophy of history.[39] Yet the angels appear not as metaphors of reconciliation in the text; the apparent irony in which they

36 Derrida, *Gift of Death*, 57.

37 K. Mann, *Tagebücher 1938–1939*, 102.

38 Bormann, Alexander von, "Das Werk als Auftrag. Formsemantische Hinweise zu Klaus Manns Romanen," in: *Text + Kritik. Zeitschrift für Literatur* 93/94 (1996): 62–72, 70. Klaus Mann, von Bormann argues, exceeds the half-ironic gesture his father would use for the ending of his novels and exaggerated it into the voice of God.

39 Winckler, Lutz, "Ästhetizismus und Engagement in den Exilromanen Klaus Manns," in: Alexander Stephan/Hans Wagener (ed.), *Schreiben im Exil. Zur Ästhetik der deutschen Exilliteratur 1933–1945*, Bonn 1985, 205.

are depicted does not sublate the opposition of hope versus resignation in-between which the novel oscillates. Instead, they appear as impossible figures of transgression: the text exceeds its own conditions and the narrative that merges with a godly voice yields itself to absurdity. Klaus Mann's godly mediators are not invisible in the sense of the *absconditus,* the hidden god who causes the trembling of the *mysterium tremendum*. Rather, they can be experienced in a tactile way – a particular scent suits them as well as a few characteristics – and in an almost futuristic way they are bound to and part of the *Gestell* of technology. As mediums and messengers of a non-communicable truth the angels are not randomly dragged into the text, as some critics might have felt, they are only being made accessible for depiction. The "angelology" in *The Volcano*, which results, as Klaus Mann states in a letter to his father, "partly from Rilke, partly from Gide and Cocteau – and partly from the 'Joseph'-novel,"[40] points to an *aporia* that is inherent in every attempt of writing exile: the problem of a perspective without a place, which can only be taken up in a series of refractions and displacements. Such a perspective significant for exile is attended to by confusing sender and addressee, which will be *movens* and driving narrative force of the novel. Being everything and nothing at the same time, father of his text and born through it, the poet who writes exile takes up an unstable paternal position, which connects him with God. Yet the voice of God is as much omitted as any authoritative perspective – in the end the "angel of the homeless" appears as a mere avatar of such hope for mediation. Main subject of his conversation with the angel is the writing of the book of exile, a task that Kikjou will accept as the heritage of his lover Martin Korella. Exile, the experience of alterity is as impossible to mediate as the addressee is unknown and concealed, perhaps only receivable in a remote future, belated: "I wrote with eagerness, but also with doubts," Klaus Mann later reports about his work at *The Volcano*: "The chronicle of many aberrations and

40 Klaus Mann, letter to Thomas Mann, 3.VIII.1939, in: K. Mann, *Briefe und Antworten*, 393. He continues: "That the angel flits between Creator and Creature as a gossipy mediator is something I first recognized in Joseph." ("Daß [die Engel] zwischen Schöpfer und Kreatur so klatschhaft-mittlerisch hin- und her fliegen, habe ich wohl erst aus dem Joseph erfahren." Ibid., 393). In a preceding letter Thomas Mann, who was exceptionally impressed by *The Volcano*, congratulates Klaus Mann on the Kikjou character: "No one will be able to match the easy, faithful, corrupt Kikjou melody as you sing it." Thomas Mann, letter to Klaus Mann, 22.VII.1939, in: ibid., 309.

wanderings – who is going to read it? Who is going to commiserate with it?"[41] Like an echo, the question of the capacities of contemporary writers and the doubts to be heard and received at all are posed again and again. In the foreword of the book he will never write Martin Korella fears: "Our appeal leaps into darkness – or does it even collapse into emptiness?"[42] Following him, his friend Marcel Poiret will take up the task to finish the novel, but when Marcel dies in the Spanish Civil War, he, too, only leaves "fragments." In the beginning of the novel another friend, young Jewish scholar David Deutsch, faces the "fascinating task"[43] to compose a "sociology of the German emigration," which in the end he discards with the words: "We only speak into emptiness, nobody listens to us."[44] Finally it is Kikjou in his conversation with the angel who takes up the task to write the book of exile. But this time the narrative agency fails: Kikjou already knows that he is not going to write this novel by himself, but will be under dictation: "The dear dead whisper the words to me which they were unable to utter. With invisible hands they lead my pen when my own fingers droop . . . I am writing the novel of the homeless!"[45] Hence, the task of writing the book of exile is under negotiation throughout the novel, as a work to be fulfilled and a responsibility that is handed from one perspective to the next. The book of exile remains *in* the book only a plan, a life-task, which the individual emigrants fail to fulfill. In the end Kikjou's decision to write the book of the homeless is handed over again to the responsibility of the author, the European intellectual Klaus Mann who in fact has written and published this novel. Written but not handed on, *The Volcano* remains an appeal that only found few readers and of which were sold not much more than 300 copies: "Filling pages with black signs," Mann resumes his work at *The Volcano*: "the drawer is filled with written pages. It is going to be a novel bound to decline [. . .]."[46]

41 K. Mann, *Wendepunkt*, 515.

42 "Unser Ruf geht ins Ungewisse – oder stürzt er gar ins Leere?" K. Mann, *Vulkan*, 194.

43 Ibid., 102.

44 "Wir sprechen doch ins Leere, niemand hört uns zu." Ibid., 485.

45 "[D]ie lieben Toten flüstern mir die Worte zu, die sie verschwiegen haben. Mit unsichtbaren Händen führen sie mir die Feder, wenn meine eigenen Finger ermatten . . . Ich schreibe den Roman der Heimatlosen!" Ibid., 529.

46 K. Mann, *Wendepunkt*, 513.

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Voyage with Don Quixote: Thomas Mann between European Culture and American Politics[1]

Anne-Kathrin Reulecke

> I have, quite simply, stage fright. And what wonder? My maiden voyage across the Atlantic, my first encounter with the mighty ocean, my first knowledge of it – and there, on the other side of the curvature of the earth, above which the great waters heave, New Amsterdam the metropolis awaits us![2]

I. Representative

In contrast to many other European exiles, Thomas Mann – esteemed Nobel laureate and recipient of honorary doctorates from Harvard and Princeton as well as the "greatest living man of letters," as he was repeatedly hailed in the press – could be certain of an extremely friendly reception in the United States. When he officially relocated to the United States in 1938 after several shorter visits, he was not only financially supported generously by his influential benefactress Agnes E. Meyer, but also introduced by her to the country's publishing and academic scenes. Positions as "Lecturer in the Humanities" at Princeton (September 1938 until March 1941) and as "Consultant in Germanic Literature" at the Library of Congress in Washington (beginning in 1941) were followed by years as sought-after traveling lecturer and as an independent – and above all translated and read – writer with an upper-class residence in Pacific Palisades, California.

From the beginning, Thomas Mann, together with Albert Einstein, was held to be the most important spokesperson of German immigration; his words had representative status and were thus received as quasi-official

1 Translated from the German by Jennifer Cameron.

2 Mann, Thomas, "Voyage with Don Quixote [1934]," in: id., *Essays of Three Decades*, transl. Helen T. Lowe-Porter, New York 1947, 429–464, 430.

statements. Directly following his arrival in New York on February 21, 1938, reporters from the *New York Times* asked the poet for his position on developments in National Socialist Germany and asked him if he felt exile to be a heavy burden. Mann's answer became a much-cited slogan that in a significant way differentiated between the current political situation in Germany and an inner – and at the same time boundless – cultural Germany: "It is hard to bear. But what makes it easier is the realization of the poisoned atmosphere in Germany. That makes it easier because it's actually no loss. Where I am, there is Germany. I carry my German culture in me. I have contact with the world and I do not consider myself fallen."[3]

The fact that Mann assumed the task of functioning as the mouthpiece for the 'actual' and ex-territorialized Germany and accepted the office of representative which the world public had offered him had consequences for his writing – this expressed itself in a sequence of clear dividing lines and caesurae in his own work.

One of these demarcations was the even stronger separation Thomas Mann made between his personal journal entries and the public statements he had given since the beginning of the exile, statements that always commented on developments in Nazi Germany with emphasized self-assurance and bite. For instance, in his "Answer to Hans Pfitzner" (July 1933), Mann confidently unmasked the infamous campaign of prominent Munich academics against his Wagner lecture as a symbolic expatriation and as a thinly disguised invitation to suicide. In a familiarly ironic tone he countered that, after much consideration, he would rather forgo the "hara-kiri" of that "advice from home" and "wait in surrender for his organically destined hour which shall free him from the imperfection of [my] being."[4] In "Brother Hitler" (1939) Mann clear-sightedly analyzed National Socialist ideology as an unease with intellectuality and the occupation of Austria as the effect of an unconscious resentment toward psychoanalysis and that "excedent of the unconscious,"[5] the Viennese Sigmund Freud.

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3 *New York Times*, February 22, 1938. See all detailed facts to Mann's American exile in: Vaget, Hans Rudolf, *Thomas Mann, der Amerikaner. Leben und Werk im amerikanischen Exil 1938–1952*, Frankfurt/M. 2011.

4 Mann, Thomas, "[Antwort an Hans Pfitzner] 1933," in: id., *Gesammelte Werke in Einzelbänden*, Frankfurter Ausgabe 18: *An die gesittete Welt: Politische Schriften und Reden im Exil*, ed. Peter de Mendelssohn, Frankfurt/M.1986, 90–105, 102. All quotes from the articles of this volume have been translated into English by AKR.

5 Mann, Thomas, "Bruder Hitler [1939]," in: id., *An die gesittete Welt*, 253–260, 259.

Unlike those sharp-tongued and self-confident commentaries which always emphasize their superiority over fascism and which express *and* simultaneously demonstrate the sovereignty of intellectual analysis over fascist barbarism, Thomas Mann's journals from his exile years, (especially the early ones) also speak, as Helmut Koopmann has recently shown, of the misery of exile and the weakness of the exiled.[6] Alongside references to horror, melancholy, fear, depression and a "despairing of [his] capacity for life,"[7] we find repeated references to psycho-somatic symptoms. He speaks of "terrible agitation, helplessness, muscle tremors, almost shivering and fear of losing rational consciousness."[8] Despite his comparatively comfortable situation (first in Switzerland and then in the United States) and despite his publicly-proclaimed certainty of carrying German culture "within him," the almost sixty-year-old author suffered greatly from his uprooting. He mourned the loss of intellectual partners, he complained about his insufficient knowledge of English and about the inadequate translation of his works by Helen Lowe-Porter, through which, he thought, the subtleties of his literary style slipped away, got 'lost in translation,' if you will say so. Since Mann realized, however, that his own pains, which he would later designate with the fitting expression "cardiac asthma of exile,"[9] must seem mere idiosyncrasies compared with the existential misery of other exiles, they remained hidden in journals and letters.

II. Humanism and Democracy

A further border went along with Thomas Mann's role as the "voice of reason" and as the speaker for German exile. The author also kept the extremely productive literary creativity of his American exile years – one need only think of the continuation of the Joseph tetralogy, of "Lotte in Weimar," and the great late work "Doktor Faustus" – independent from his giving as many political speeches as possible. Neither the experience

6 Koopmann, Helmut, "Im Elend. Von den Krankheiten des Exils," in: Thomas Sprecher (ed.), *Thomas Mann und das "Herzasthma des Exils." (Über-) Lebensformen in der Fremde: Die Davoser Literaturtage 2008*, Frankfurt/M. 2010, 41–70.

7 Mann, Thomas, diary entry, March 16, 1933, in: id., *Tagebücher 1933–1934*, ed. Peter de Mendelssohn, Frankfurt/M. 2003, 6.

8 Mann, Thomas, diary entry, March 18, 1933, in: ibid., 9.

9 Cf. Vaget, Hans Rudolf, "'Vom Herzasthma des Exils'. Zur Pathographie der amerikanischen Jahre Thomas Manns," in: Sprecher, *"Herzasthma des Exils"* 17–39.

of exile nor the American lifestyle appeared explicitly in his literary work. The latter instead turned predominantly toward the religious and cultural historical foundations of European culture and addressed the general problems of artistry, of being human, and of political guilt. While the author thus devoted himself in his literary work to the great questions of the western tradition, he explicitly named names and facts of recent history in his innumerable manifestos, open letters, lectures, radio addresses, dinner speeches, and opening remarks during his American years. He used everyday political vocabulary, but above all he employed political rhetoric.

A large portion of Thomas Mann's speeches consisted of combining a criticism of Germany with a reverence for the United States in its role as his generous host and the guarantor of the values of civilization, humanism, and democracy. In an address from 1934, he explained the development of Nazi Germany as "contempt for ideas which one tends to call liberal" and as a tendency "to lead humanity back to its merely natural part and to pride itself in a vicious glorification of all that is merely natural, of the instinct, of passion, of blood, of violence."[10] The Americans, in contrast, were able to solve the global economic and social problems underlying such an ideological attack against humanism in a "more happy and more humane manner." In particular, he saw American politics and especially Roosevelt's "New Deal" as playing a significant role in the preparation of a so-called "new humanism."[11]

Mann's great lectures held in the U.S. that have a manifesto character, such as "On the Coming Victory of Democracy" (1938), describe fascism as a "temporary phenomenon" and as the refusal of the "timelessly human"[12] notion of democracy; as a pseudo-modern and pseudo-aristocratic alternative to a supposedly surpassed form of society and as a "truly grotesque contempt for humanity."[13] In contrast, Thomas Mann hailed democracy as a cultural-historical achievement that cannot be reduced to the mere "technical-political aspect" of a form of government, the "principle of the majority,"[14] but rather presents itself as the civilized form of "respect

10 Mann, Thomas, "[Rundfunkansprache an das amerikanische Publikum] 1934," in: id., *An die gesittete Welt*, 121–124, 123.

11 Ibid., 124.

12 Mann, Thomas: "Vom kommenden Sieg der Demokratie [1938]", in: id., *An die gesittete Welt*, 208–239, 212.

13 Ibid., 217.

14 Ibid., 214.

for humanity."[15] The structure of this type of speech always included a limiting gesture, an indication that the words were actually directed to the wrong audience, since in America such instruction was superfluous:

> I feel a bit like a man who takes owls to Athens, since I am preparing to speak in America about democracy. It appears as if I did not know that I find myself in the classical land of democracy, where the disposition and shape of society that one calls with this name is actually truly at home and belongs to each person's inveterate conviction; in short, it is a prevailing matter of fact about which the American needs no lecturing, certainly not from a European.[16]

After the end of the war and after Roosevelt's death, Thomas Mann saw the democratic base of the U.S. ever more threatened by the retraction of social-political programs and by a fanatic anti-communism. He himself was deemed "one of the world's foremost apologists for Stalin and company" before the House of Representatives in 1951, drawing the attention of McCarthy's Un-American Activities Committee, and even topic of a 157-page FBI file.[17] However, despite his sharp criticism of this political turn, which contributed to his decision to spend the rest of his life in Switzerland, Mann publicly held fast to his gratitude and his esteem for, as he put it, the fundamentally democratic "climate" of the United States – even if the "weather" wasn't good at that particular time.[18]

III. Voice of Reason / German Listeners

The fact that the Germans, who were the secret addressees of his American speeches, were themselves absent made Thomas Mann sensitive to the significance of the media early on. In his radio address of 1934, he had already praised the medium of the "Radio transmitter," which

15 Ibid., 218.
16 Ibid., 208f.
17 Cf. Sprecher, Thomas, "Thomas Mann im Visier des FBI," in: *Blätter der Thomas Mann Gesellschaft Zürich* 28 (1999–2000): 19–53.
18 Cf. Vaget, Hans Rudolf, "Schlechtes Wetter, gutes Klima: Thomas Mann in Amerika," in: *Thomas Mann Handbuch*, ed. Helmut Koopmann, Frankfurt/M. [3]2005, 68–77.

made it possible for him to "reach the most distant public at least with his voice," because

> an invention in whose essence it lies precisely to erase spatial distance entirely is called and determined as no other [. . .] to support the unification and communication of humanity. This, however, comes very close to the special task of the writer, [. . .] in whose inner nature it always lies however to make tangible that which is generally human and thus to bring people closer together.[19]

For Mann, then, the "man of letters," radio became *the* medium that was able to convey the universal humanist message of the author in an adequate way, that is, ubiquitously.

One consequence of the insight that the special historical conditions demanded the employment of other media was that Thomas Mann turned directly to the Germans from 1940 to 1945 via record albums and the airwaves. Starting in 1941, his monthly speeches for the radio program "German Listeners!" in Los Angeles were recorded on albums, brought to New York by airmail, and transmitted to London by telephone, from where they were broadcast to Germany by the BBC over long-wave radio.[20] These now-famous radio addresses, which contributed significantly to the image of the politically engaged exile, were especially bound to a very specific rhetoric: a mixture of religious rhetoric and that of the Allies. Here, Thomas Mann employed not only the timbre and emotional tone of his own speaking voice, but also explicitly presented himself as the voice of reason which appealed to the German population remaining in that country. In countless pleas he addressed his German compatriots (whom he increasingly apostrophized with the distancing "you" over the course of the five years) in order to position himself ever more as the German citizen of the world and, eventually, as an American. Information about foreign policy and the course of the war, news about the "mistreatment and slaughter of the Russian prisoners of war,"[21] distressed reports about a so-called "test gassing"[22] of Dutch-Jewish families, about

19 Mann, *An die gesittete Welt*, 122f.

20 Mann, Thomas, "Deutsche Hörer. Radiosendungen nach Deutschland," in: ibid., 473–622. Thomas Mann describes the circumstances of the distribution of the radio addresses in the preface of the first book edition of "Deutsche Hörer" (1942), ibid., 473–476.

21 Ibid., 519. Transl. AKR.

22 Ibid., 520, see also ibid., 516.

killings in the Warsaw Ghetto and in concentration camps in Poland[23] were presented alongside revelations about National Socialist ideology and polemics against Hitler.

Hitler is (as Mann states in his address of January 1941),

> in his shabby cruelty and vengefulness, with his unrelenting roars of hatred, his adulteration of the German language, his debased fanaticism, his cowardly asceticism and miserable artificiality, his defective humanity, which lacks even the slightest trace of generosity and higher emotional life, the most abhorrent figure the light of history has ever fallen upon.[24]

If Hitler became the definition of evil, then the radio speaker Thomas Mann, as a counter force, introduced the concept of a sacredly exalted "humanity." In April 1941, he remarks:

> One may think the most scornful and bitterly doubtful of humanity – there is, despite all abjection, an undeniable and ineradicable divine spark in humanity, the spark of the spirit and the good. It cannot accept the ultimate triumph of evil, of lies and of violence; it simply cannot live with it.[25]

Mann's characteristic style becomes almost pastoral – or, in other words: the voice of reason turns into a mythical tune – when he reflects on a restart after the war, rejecting the "forced education" which was much discussed in the U.S. and instead advocating self-reflection:

> It is not winning which you must do because you cannot win. You must cleanse yourselves. The atonement which you violently avoid must become your own work, the work of the German people of which its soon demoralized and exhausted army is a part. It must come from within as the outside only brings vengeance and punishment but not cleansing.[26]

It is highly visible and in fact unmistakable that Thomas Mann had to pay a significant price for his political commitment. For instance, in his speeches to his American hosts and in his addresses to the anonymous group of German listeners he avoids to a great extent any doubts,

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23 Cf. ibid., 520.

24 Ibid., 486f.

25 Ibid., 492.

26 Ibid., 518. The religious inflection of "German Listeners" is discussed in: Hamacher, Bernd, "Die Poesie im Krieg. Thomas Manns Radiosendungen 'Deutsche Hörer!' als Ernstfall der Literatur," in: *Thomas Mann Jahrbuch* 13 (2000): 57–74.

overtones, ambivalences, and differentiated analyses. Instead of the "nuances" he so praised[27] – the loss of which he saw as the first victim of the NS ideology – catchwords, polemics, and simple binary oppositions came to the fore: America versus Germany, democracy versus barbarism, and humanity versus evil. Evidently, Thomas Mann felt forced to resort to outright religious and simplified speech in order to position himself to the listening ears of the world public as a representative of another Germany. Nuance, balance, and detail were mostly reserved for his literary work, which could inscribe itself into the canon of world literature despite irritations in publication and reception resulting from his exile.

IV. "Voyage with Don Quixote" / "Meerfahrt mit Don Quijote"

Thomas Mann was undoubtedly aware of the disruption to his work and of the genre-specific constraints on his political interjections. He often spoke of the "great mystery of language,"[28] which to his mind consisted precisely in the fact of the "responsibility" of language itself, and thus that the "separation of the intellectual/artistic from the political/social and the isolation of oneself in the aristocratic 'cultural'"[29] is simply out of the question. A short and not well-known text from Mann's early years in exile symbolizes this attempt to achieve this synthesis of the artistic and the political. "Voyage with Don Quixote," from 1934, is not coincidentally a work 'in between' genres: a literary diary oscillating between private and public speech, between cultural and political analysis, between essay and literature.[30] It is this space that allows Mann to explore his own complicated location as a German living in exile and to reflect on

27 In the revised diaries of the years 1933/1934, published in 1946, the loss of the "nuance" is described as the most significant characteristic of the NS regime: "The nuance as a red rag." (Mann, Thomas, "Leiden an Deutschland. Tagebuchblätter aus den Jahren 1933 und 1934 [1946]," in: id., *An die gesittete Welt*, 7–90, 18.)

28 Mann, Thomas, "Briefwechsel mit Bonn [1936/1937]," in: id., *An die gesittete Welt*, 160–168, 163.

29 Ibid., 164.

30 The genre of the fictional diary is discussed in: Lehnert, Herbert, "Das Chaos und die Zivilisation, das Exil und die Fiktion. Thomas Manns 'Meerfahrt mit Don Quijote,'" in: Eckhard Heftrich (ed.), *Thomas Mann und seine Quellen. Festschrift für Hans Wysling*, Frankfurt/M. 1991, 152–172.

the distance from National Socialism as well as his entanglement with its cultural and historical conditions.

In May 1934, Thomas Mann and his wife Katia crossed the Atlantic to the U.S. for the first time in order to promote his novel *Joseph and His Brothers*. Mann took his experiences of traveling first class during the ten-day cruise from Bologne-Maritime to New York City aboard the Dutch luxury liner *Volendam* as an opportunity to write an essayistic travel report. The fictionalized diary entries (which differ from the private diary entries of the respective days) were written after the actual voyage in August 1934. They were originally to be published in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* but were later included in the essay collection, *Leiden und Größe der Meister*, published in 1935 with Gottfried Bermann Fischer in Berlin. They thus replaced an article on Gerhard Hauptmann that Thomas Mann had retracted because of Hauptmann's sympathies with the NS regime.[31]

The aesthetic conceit of the text lies in Mann's combination of his experiences of the crossing to the U.S. (his first journey outside of Europe) and his reading of *Don Quixote*, the first European novel, thereby combining the "well-conducted adventure" (429) of the voyage with the adventure of his reading:

> Since I have respect for this enterprise of ours, it is right and proper that I also take heed to the reading that accompanies it. *Don Quixote* is universal ["Der 'Don Quijote' ist ein Weltbuch"], just the right reading for a trip to the end of the world. It was no small adventure to write it; the passive adventure of reading it will worthily correspond. Strangely enough, I have never gone through the masterpiece systematically, from beginning to end. I will do so on board and in ten days come to the rim of this ocean of a book, at the same time as we come to the other rim of the Atlantic. (433)

31 After the so-called "Machtergreifung" Hauptmann had signed a declaration of loyalty by the "Deutsche Akademie der Dichtung." Originally Mann's book should have the title "Deutsche Meister," but after the omission of the Hauptmann essay and its replacement by "Meerfahrt mit Don Quijote" it was renamed in *Leiden und Größe der Meister. Neue Aufsätze*. It was published in 1935 and had two more editions in the same year. Cf. Mann, Thomas: *Leiden und Größe der Meister. Goethe, Richard Wagner, Platen, Cervantes, Theodor Storm* [1935], in: *Gesammelte Werke in Einzelbänden,* Frankfurter Ausgabe 8, Frankfurt/M. 1982. The following quotes and references in the main text refer to Mann, Thomas, "Voyage with Don Quixote," in: id., *Essays of Three Decades*, transl. H. T. Lowe-Porter, New York 1947, 429–464.

Mann elegantly connects his commentary on reading Cervantes with his depiction of the microcosm of the luxury cruise ship. Ironically distancing himself from, and yet fascinated by, the perfect organization and production of the crossing, Mann describes exquisite full-course meals with exotic fruits such as "grape fruits" (444), which were previously unknown to him. He describes teatime in the blue salon "called the social hall" (445), together with the ship's orchestra, elegant interior, entertainment program with the ship's magazine, the "Cinéma" (451), and "shuffleboard" on the promenade deck (445).[32] The kaleidoscope of international travelers from Dutch families to American tourists on their way back from Europe equally catches his eye and – in passing – he notes Jewish emigrants.

Initially, the writer is occupied with the physical experiences of the sea journey itself. Much as the bodily conditions of temperature and hunger influence the dramaturgy of a dream, we can observe how the uncertain existence in the element of water – unsteadiness and balance – influences the reflections of the poet. Although the actual passage takes place in rather calm weather, the traveler imagines a storm tossing him about, confusing his sense of balance and orientation. He describes a "clumsy dance" affecting brain and stomach and letting loose objects and suitcases "cannoning" about, with an "infernal din" (431): "there is the unavoidable nervous shock of those first hours after you have lost the solid ground under your feet in exchange for an unstable footing" (434).

The experience of being subjected to the abyss of the ocean becomes a starting point for Thomas Mann to rethink the relationship of elemental nature and civilization. On the one hand the civilizing technical apparatus, even that of the luxury steam ship, is extremely fragile. On the other, it is a function of this apparatus to make one forget the ever-present proximity of elemental nature:

> It is soothing to realize that we are to confront the welter under the aegis of civilization and with all the protection it can afford. This stout ship [. . .] and the officers and crew whose one mission in life it is to command the elements [will carry us through]. (430)

32 The original version "Meerfahrt mit Don Quijote" has a particular charm, because the German text is larded with American expressions. It shows Mann's fascination with the cosmopolitan society on board and, moreover, the slow – yet ironically reserved – assimilation to the language and conventions of the guest land.

> On such a voyage everything depends upon unconsciousness, upon sustaining a forgetful attitude of mind. But [. . .] I sometimes out of sheer native rebelliousness gaze out the window of the social hall and again through the window of the promenade deck outside the grey-green, foam-tossed wilderness, at the horizon, which rises, hangs poised for a few seconds, and then sinks again. (446)

Without having to state it explicitly, the voyage aboard the luxury steam ship becomes an ambiguous cipher of civilization at the beginning of 1930s. Here, Thomas Mann poses the question whether the values of civilization – such as internationalism, tolerance, prosperity, education and aesthetics – will persist in a civilization-weary world currently engaged in primitive barbarism or whether the insignia of civilization will become an exclusive privilege of an upper class, the – as Mann frequently stresses – sparsely-populated "first class."

V. Writing Desk and Lifeboat

Thomas Mann makes clear attempts to highlight the anecdotal and touristy side of the crossing, to underline the temporary nature of his passage abroad and the transitory quality of his stay in the U.S. And yet, the whole text repeats signs of insecurity about his current and future location as a writer. Not without self-mockery, Mann reports his attempt to maintain the everyday schedule of his normal life even in the fluid element:

> *May twentieth.* I ought not to do what I am doing: sitting bent over to write. It is not conducive to well-being, for the sea is, as our American table-mates say, "a little rough," and though I agree that our ship moves quietly and steadily, yet her motions are more felt up here on this deck where the writing-room is than they are below. Nor is looking through the window advisable, for the rising and falling of the horizon attacks the head in a way well known from an earlier experience forgotten until now. Also it is not very healthy to gaze down upon paper and script. Curiously, obstinately persevering is the old habit of settling to composition so soon as breakfast and the morning stroll are over. It persists under the most contrary circumstances. (433)

Much as the experience of being abandoned at sea raises the question of the reliability of civilization's apparatuses and the social accomplishments of civilization, the moving desk on the ocean steamship becomes a

medium for plumbing the depths of writing abroad. As is well-known, Thomas Mann was anxious to maintain – even in exile – his famous, or almost notorious writer working days with their regimented writing hours in the morning and reading hours in the afternoon. At all the stations of his exile – from Sanary-sur-Mer via Küsnacht and Princeton to the Pacific Palisades – he succeeded in building the same setting of the bourgeois office, the desk with "Medi's head," the "Swiss clock," together with a "Munich chair"[33] and the requisite private library. A brief scene in the writing salon on the ship anticipates Mann's determination to continue his writer's existence, his "life and work" abroad "with greatest insistance, unaffected by events which could harm me but not deter or humiliate me."[34] The scene also refers to the price one has to pay for continued productivity. The eyes must be forcibly averted from the destabilized horizon of the political environment and directed toward the desk, "to paper and writing" in order to make continued writing possible: continued writing, which "has not the most fortunate of effects" ("nicht von der glucklichsten Wirkung").

Yet another scene expresses the unvoiced fear that the passage to the U.S. may mean a final departure from his home country, a home whose meaning is increasingly dubious. A safety drill aboard the ship becomes an amusing and interesting experience for Katia and Thomas Mann. He is especially intrigued because amidst the "thick coating of luxury" it reminds one of the "seriousness of things" (438) and the head steward catches his poetic eye. The uniformed "jovial Dutchman" conducts the drill on the promenade deck with a routine manner, describing "quite offhand and easy" the "procedure of taking to the boats" (438), so that the quite possible case of emergency appears a walk in the park. The steward ends with the innocent words "So, now I will take you home" (438), and it is this statement which resonates with Mann:

> Home. Curious way to put it, as though riding there upon the waves we were to tell him our address and he would convey us thither in the motor-boat. And home: what does that mean, anyhow? Does it mean Kussnacht near Zürich, where I have lived for a year and am more of a guest than at home, so that I cannot regard it as a proper goal for a life-boat? Does it mean further back, my house in Herzogpark, Munich, where I

33 Mann, Thomas, diary entry, October 7, 1938, in: id., *Tagebücher 1935–1936*, ed. Peter de Mendelssohn, Frankfurt/M. 2003. Medi is the nickname of Mann's daughter, Elisabeth.

34 Mann, Thomas, Letter to Erich von Kahler, October 19,1938, in: id., *Briefe* 2: 1937–1947, ed. Erika Mann, Frankfurt/M. 1992, 58. Transl. AKR.

> thought to end my days and which had now revealed itself as nothing but a temporary refuge and *pied-à-terre*? Home – that must mean even further back, to my childhood home, the parental house in *Lübeck*, which still stands at present and yet is so deep-sunken into the past? What a strange captain you are, with your glasses and your golden triangle on your sleeve and your vague assurance about taking us "home"! (438f.)

Amidst a rather conventional narrative of various houses one owns, lives in and leaves during one's life, from the parents' house to the old-age home, small cracks become visible. Even if Thomas Mann does not use the word 'exile' – in fact, it is nowhere to be found in the "Voyage" text – his questions make clear that the meaning of "homeward" has lost its innocence with the expatriation of the writer. Not only will there never be a life boat returning the stranded to Germany, the places of home have changed. They are still "in their place" but their function of security and shelter has "deep-sunken into the past."

VI. Book of the World / Map of the World

And so the term "travel reading" also gains new meaning. The farther the steamship *Volendam* moves away from Europe – of which one never knows, according to Thomas Mann, what it is going to do "once our backs are turned" (454) – the more important the European cultural tradition becomes as an inner reference point. Between his daily note-taking and the distractions on board, Mann turns regularly to the "four little orange linen volumes" (429) of the novel *Don Quixote*, which for him becomes, over the course of his reading, more and more of a guiding "book of a whole people and all humanity" (436) ["Volks- und Menschheitsbuch"]. The world traveler is pleased, even delighted, with this "ocean of a book" (433), which does not only ironically depart from an out-dated literary genre, the chivalric romance, but rather, as the first modern European novel, has already become virtuoso in all variations of fiction. Thomas Mann admires the "style that mingles the humorous and the romantic" (435), as it were, such as the fictional editor, through which Cervantes professes that the novel's text is merely a re-working of an Arabic manuscript by a Moor named Cide Hamete Benengeli; he enjoys the "immensely funny" (435) summary chapter heads, which present their own function self-reflexively. And he is amused at the adventurous metalepses, in which the literary figures of the second part converse in the real world about the success of the first part (cf. 441). Literature, as becomes clear, is a play with perspectives.

The deeper Thomas Mann gets into his reading, however, the more strongly he also becomes interested in the ideological traces in the novel. The ambivalence of the main characters engages him, such as the fact that Don Quixote's evident eccentricity, his "obsolete whimsy" represent at the same time the source of a "true nobility" and his "respect-compelling traits" (437); that his foolish behavior likely stems from "moral dignity" (437). In this multilayered character of the anti-hero Mann reads a specific ability of Spain's classical epoch to appreciate their fundamental values and at the same time call them into question: "Here is a nation presented with a travesty of tragedy, a *reductio ad absurdum* of its national qualities, which it turns into its most prized classic masterpiece. Gravely, calmly, proudly, it looks as into a mirror at its own *grandezza*, its idealism, its lofty impracticality, its unmarketable high-mindedness [. . .]" (437). In Thomas Mann's point of view, the actual modernity of Cervantes' novel shows precisely in the fact that the latter, with his broken-down nationalism, appears now in the face of the prevailing unbroken nationalistic *Zeitgeist* of the year 1934.

Of central importance is the episode of the *Morisco* Ricote. Similar to Heinrich Heine in his Cervantes essay,[35] Thomas Mann attempts to work out Cervantes' political contradictions: on the one hand, Cervantes was a soldier and a loyal subject of Philipp III., and on the other hand, as a writer he maintained a critical distance from certain of his king's political decisions, such as the cruel persecutions during the *Reconquista*. Almost word for word Mann recounts the poignant story of the Moor Ricote, who has to leave his fatherland following the cruel edict. Hardly able to bear his homesickness, he sneaks back into Spain disguised as a pilgrim. Thomas Mann admires the literary-ideological ruse of placing loyal and reconciliatory words in the mouth of the persecuted *Morisco*, of all people. Even though Ricote does note that many Moors were in fact disloyal Spaniards and unchristian heathens, and that there certainly were some among his compatriots who had committed the "shameful plots" (456) they were accused of. Precisely with this ambiguous speech, however, according to Mann, does Cervantes make it clear that it is the expatriated Moor who is the most loyal subject of his majesty:

> The artist's dilemma, expressed in Ricote's speech in the second part of *Don Quixote*, speaks a more convincing language than his careful, obsequious

35 Cf. Heine, Heinrich, "Miguel Cervantes de Saavedra. Der sinnreiche Junker Don Quixote von La Mancha [1837]," in: id., *Sämtliche Schriften* 4, ed. Klaus Briegleb, Munich 1997, 149–170.

> tongue. He sympathizes with the persecuted and banned. They are as good Spaniards as himself or anybody; Spain is their true mother-land; she will not be purer, only poorer, after they have gone [in the original version: "nach ihrer Ausmerzung," actually: "after their excision"], while, once torn from her soil, they are everywhere foreign. (457)

We can now better recognize what type of "*map* of the world" the "book of the world" *Don Quixote* represents for Thomas Mann. He is particularly concerned with how the concepts of national identity fundamentally changed in the early 1930s in the public discourse of German society. It was made unmistakably clear to the Jewish citizens, the representatives of the political Left and the liberal intellectuals first and foremost that they had no claim anymore to a "German" identity and nationality. Again and again, Mann had seen himself, when he appealed to the new rulers – such as in his letter to the "Reichsministerium des Inneren, Berlin" (April 23, 1934, just before the voyage) – "provoked by attacks" to characterize himself as a "German author" and provoked to justify that he "never brought dishonor on his fatherland."[36] However, the "Ricote" episode not only reflects the present, but also shows the near future of the present – indicating namely that the act of symbolic "ejection,"[37] as Mann always called it, would be followed with actual "Ausmerzung." In this way, the "book of the world" becomes an inner coordinate plane for the expatriated author on his journey into the unknown: in the midst of the now-uncertain cultural borders and horizons it enables points of orientation – by indicating and articulating the reigning logic of injustice. Moreover, its indirect political discourse serves as a pattern for Mann's own strategy of writing the "Voyage," a writing that deals with current politics without naming them explicitly.

VII. Cultural Analysis

With milder weather and with the increasing proximity of the American coast, Thomas Mann's writing on board the ship also enters calmer, culture-analytical channels. Among other things, he discusses the literary sources of *Don Quixote*. The well-known anecdote of the "ass's bray"

36 Mann, Thomas, "An das Reichsministerium des Inneren, Berlin [23.4.1934]," in: id., *An die gesittete Welt*, 111–124, 116.

37 Ibid., 112.

(449), for example, leads him to reflect upon the significance of the donkey as an ambivalent phallic symbol in the "Greco-Roman representational world" (450) and thus to recognize a "primitive mythical inheritance [. . .] in the Spanish renaissance poet" (450). But the roots of *Don Quixote* are at least as strongly Christian, Mann explains. It is precisely the countless brutal images in which the knight of the sad face receives physical blows or is verbally humiliated and yet retains his majestic posture that provides evidence for this cultural influence:

> But abasement and exaltation are a twin conception in the essence of what is distinctly Christian. Their psychological union, their marriage in a comic medium, shows how very much Don Quixote is a product of Christian culture, Christian doctrine, and Christian humanity. It shows as well what Christianity everlastingly means for the world of the mind and of poesy and for the human essence itself and its bold expansion and liberation. (453)

Don Quixote's two traditions, Greek antiquity and Christian humanism, also form the supporting pillars of occidental culture, according to Mann. If even one of these pillars is thrown away, the entire structure threatens to fall:

> Say what you will: Christianity, the flower of Judaism, remains one of the two pillars upon which Western culture rests, the other being Mediterranean antiquity. The denial of one of these fundamental premises of our civilization and education – how much more of both of them – by any group of our European community, would mean its break with that community and an inconceivable, impossible diminishment of its human stature, who knows to what extent? (453f.)

The fact that Thomas Mann here takes the path through literary history and does not specifically name National Socialism represents an attempt beyond the politics of clear words demanded and found elsewhere, an attempt to open up a space in which National Socialist ideology can be placed in a larger cultural-historical context. From this perspective, National Socialism is not an inexplicable "special case" and not – as Mann's radio addresses assert – attributable to Hitler as an incarnation of evil. Rather, it appears as the flipside of a society which cannot bear its manifold cultural influences, its "impure" origins.[38]

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38 Apparently, Mann with the help of the greater concepts of "human," "culture," and "Christianity," wants to gain a broader perspective which is meant to

Now it is also possible for the writer to think through his own involvement in the prehistory of the present political disaster. Since the exact time of arrival in New York cannot be predicted, due to conditions of weather and tide, Thomas Mann is once again reminded of his uncertain location in the middle of the ocean. He is fascinated by the perils of the oversea journey, which, in contrast to travel by railroad, does not allow for complete emancipation from elementary forces. The journey by ship has "preserved, despite all its comfort [. . .] something primitive. We are given to the incalculable element, we are subject to the inaccuracies of chance" (455). This fascination is barely uttered when it is already critically questioned:

> But why? In plain terms, because we can thus assert our impatience with mechanical civilization, our craving to reject and deny it as deadly for our souls and our lives? Because we can thus seek and affirm a form of existence that would be nearer the primitive, elemental, uncertain, risky, improvised as in war-time? But am I here voicing the ever-growing love of the irrational [. . .]? (455)

Thomas Mann feels reminded of his own philosophical flirtation with irrationalism, which, inspired by an emphatic reading of Nietzsche, found expression in the 1910s in each critique of civilization and in a fascination with myth. In contrast to the prevailing "willfully barbaric" individuals of the present, who also make reference to this tradition, but have unilaterally raised "trampling upon reason and civilization" to a programmatic stance, however, Mann gives himself credit for striving after a unification of irrational and rational, of myth and reason. He does indeed see his literature, such as his *Joseph* novel, then in its beginnings, as an attempt to "humanize" the "myth." Here it is also crucial that National Socialist ideology is described as part of a "good German" tradition in which Mann the intellectual is himself involved.

VIII. Conclusion

The indeterminate genre of the "Voyage" text between private and political, between literature and essay, between diary and poetry opened up a

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make National Socialist ideology accessible to cultural analysis. Today, however, we can see the flipside of this kind of 'grand narrative.' Mann's cultural analysis argues teleologically and, among other things, makes Jewish culture, by naming it as a cultural influence, into a mere 'precursor' of Christianity.

special space for Thomas Mann, as we have seen. Here he must neither strive for clarifying political rhetoric, as in his official statements to his American hosts or in addresses to Germans remaining in the country, nor must he sugarcoat or conceal his personal experiences of exile. And he does not in any way have to forgo the expression of ambivalence and nuance which is so characteristic of his writing. His crossing to America in an ocean liner, or better, his sojourn on the technologically perfect miracle of the luxury liner, becomes the starting point for the clarification of fundamental questions about the dialectic of civilization and nature. While floating for days in the "cosmic space between two continents" (432), the unstable mode of existence made physically tangible, and the very concrete loss of a certain horizon, allows the writer to ponder questions of exile, the preconditions of his own writing in a foreign land, and the determination of his future home. The more Europe fades away and the U.S. comes into view, the more important an inner cultural point of orientation becomes, which can ensure the exiled individual that he "carries in him" the European culture. But even his reading on this journey reflects the present unrest, for, while reading Cervantes, Thomas Mann – alongside his admiration for the literary technique of the Spanish author – suddenly comes across passages which touch upon questions of cultural and national identity. Situating *Don Quixote* within cultural history becomes in the end a reflection on the foundations of European culture and their endangerment.

The 'indirect' quality of the essay, the fact that it rather casually lines everyday, touristy chatting with existential and political topics – of course is due to the problematic circumstances of its publishing in Germany. But paradoxically it's what makes the text so fascinating. For that which I have outlined in my reading is precisely that which Thomas Mann does not explicitly express, but rather only suggests. And so I would like to end with a riddle whose meaning is not revealed even after the arrival at the "Antipodeans" in "New Amsterdam." During the entire journey Thomas Mann follows the carryings-on of individual travelers. In doing so, he repeatedly notices a fellow first-class traveler, "a raw-boned Yankee whose lips stick out," whom he calls the "enfant terrible of the traveling party" because he separates himself, sits at a single table, reads in a book he brought along and makes notes while the others hold conversations. In his familiar manner, Mann creates a biography of this unknown man, attempts to make of him one of his familiar humorous literary 'types:'"Everybody feels there is something wrong about it all. Who shuts himself off like this [. . .]? He must be a writer, aloof from the

regular order of society and critical of it – but then his evening dress is quite correct" (440f.). And yet somehow the ironic distancing does not quite succeed, for Mann notes several times that the supposed American writer heads down to the "Touring Class" to play shuffleboard there with the Jewish emigrants. Does it unsettle the German writer that this American so easily leaves the bourgeois sphere and changes classes? Or does it unsettle the writer that he is involving himself with travelers who quite clearly are not tourists, but rather exiles forced into this journey? All of this is not answered in the text. What remains is Thomas Mann's literary gesture which for its part calls self-ironically into question the disquiet caused by this countertype:

> I missed the fish-mouthed, note-taking American. Where was he? Again with the Jewish exiles in "tourist"? An unsettling man. Travels first-class and takes his meals with us in a dinner jacket; but offensively abjures our intellectual diversions and betakes himself to a foreign, a hostile sphere. People ought to know where they belong. People ought to keep together. (452)

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The Returns of Herbert Marcuse

Elke Siegel

Pas a pas
Nulle part
Nul seul
Ne sait comment
Petits pas
Nulle part
Obstinément

(Samuel Beckett, Poem for Herbert Marcuse on his Eightieth Birthday, June 1978)[1]

Of all the exiled intellectuals who came to the United States from Germany in the 1930s, few led lives as multifaceted and as thoroughly enmeshed in American society as Herbert Marcuse. If one were to summarize the milestones along the way, the barest of outlines would include the following:[2] born in Berlin in 1898, Marcuse experienced the failed revolution of 1918–1919 as member of a Soldiers' Council in Berlin and studied in Freiburg, where he wrote a dissertation on *The German Artist Novel* advised by Philipp Witkop and, influenced by Heidegger and Husserl, a book entitled *Hegel's Ontology and Theory of Historicity*;[3] he left Germany in 1932, joined the Institute for Social Research as the

1 Kraushaar, Wolfgang, *Frankfurter Schule und Studentenbewegung: Von der Flaschenpost zum Molotowcocktail, 1946–1995*, 2: *Dokumente*, Hamburg 1998, 828.

2 For more detailed biographical accounts see Katz, Barry, *Herbert Marcuse and the Art of Liberation: An Intellectual Biography*, London, New York 1982; Brunkhorst, Hauke/Koch, Gertrud, *Herbert Marcuse zur Einführung*, Hamburg 1990; Aronowitz, Stanley, "The Unknown Herbert Marcuse," in: *Social Text* 58 (1999): 133–154; and the excellent introductions by Douglas Kellner to each volume of the series *Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse*, which Kellner started editing in 1998.

3 This was intended as Marcuse's *Habilitationsschrift*, but in the end Marcuse did not defend the study and published it independently in 1932 with the publishing house Vittorio Klostermann. It seems that Heidegger actually blocked Marcuse's habilitation (Wiggershaus, Rolf, *The Frankfurt School: Its History, Theories, and Political*

in-house-philosopher next to Horkheimer in Geneva and then arrived in New York on Independence Day, 1934. Marcuse lived in Washington, D.C. from 1942 to 1951, working first for the U.S. Office of War Information (OWI), and then in 1943 for the precursor to today's CIA, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). In both capacities, Marcuse provided insights and analyses pertinent to the war effort against Nazi-Germany and the future denazification.[4] After the war, he worked for the U.S. State Department (1945–51) as the head of the Central European Bureau before taking research positions at Columbia University's Russian Institute (funded by the Rockefeller Foundation) and the Russian Research Center at Harvard until he received his first tenured position at Brandeis University in 1956 (at the age of fifty-eight), and later at the University of California, San Diego, when he was already 67 years old.

Marcuse's most famous student, Angela Davis, has often stated that the most important lesson she learned from him was that being a scholar and an activist are not mutually exclusive.[5] Therefore, it was his writing *and* his activism, his solidarity with movements opposing the status quo, which fed into a myth that was born in the 1960s:[6] a man in his seventies, easily recognizable in a crowd due to his white hair and charismatic presence as speaker and listener, was called the 'father,' 'grandfather,' or 'guru' of the New Left by the media. During demonstrations in Paris 1968,

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Significance, Cambridge 1994, 104; see also Kellner, Douglas, *Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism*, Berkeley, Los Angeles 1984, 407).

4 Regarding Marcuse's work for the OSS and later the State Department see Reiche, Helmut, "Herbert Marcuse im Jahr 1941 – und heute," in: Peter-Erwin Jansen (ed.), *Zwischen Hoffnung und Notwendigkeit: Texte zu Herbert Marcuse*, Frankfurt 1999, 95–111; Kellner, Douglas, "Technology, War and Fascism: Marcuse in the 1940s," in: Herbert Marcuse, *Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse* 1, ed. Douglas Kellner, New York 1998, 1–38; Müller, Tim B., *Krieger und Gelehrte: Herbert Marcuse und die Denksysteme im Kalten Krieg*, Hamburg 2010; Söllner, Alfons, *Deutsche Politikwissenschaftler in der Emigration: Studien zu ihrer Akkulturation und Wirkungsgeschichte*, Opladen 1996, 118ff.; Wheatland, Thomas, *The Frankfurt School in Exile*, Minneapolis 2009, 280ff.

5 Davis, Angela, "Marcuse's Legacies," in: Herbert Marcuse, *Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse* 3, ed. Douglas Kellner, London 2005, vii-xiv, xi.

6 "[T]he extent to which Marcuse has been made into a publicity stunt is a moment in the larger fact that both his work and the Movement are subject to the processes of commodification, reification, and 'one-dimensionalization' which they revolted against in the first place." (Breines, Paul, "From Guru to Spectre: Marcuse and the Implosion of the Movement," in: id. (ed.), *Critical Interruptions: New Left Perspectives on Herbert Marcuse*, New York 1970, 1–21, 2).

"Marx, Mao, Marcuse" was chanted. Marcuse supported the civil rights, peace, and student movements, advised the SDS (*Students for a Democratic Society*) on tactics, and admonished them for their anti-intellectualism.[7] He was active in rallying support for Angela Davis' and, later, Rudolf Bahro's release from prison. Due to his criticism of the United States and his solidarity with the students, Marcuse made enemies in the late 1960s like then-Governor Ronald Reagan, the American Legion (which wanted to buy out his contract with the university), and the Ku Klux Klan, which threatened to kill him. He experienced first-hand the events of May 1968 in Paris, participated in conferences of the SDS (*Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund/Socialist German Student Union*) in Germany,[8] and exchanged many letters with Rudi Dutschke.[9]

Through it all, Marcuse became caught between two sides of the raging debates: he was denounced by the dogmatic Marxists or Communists as bourgeois and/or as a CIA agent; he was hailed by the student movement for his solidarity, yet was also rejected by students (particularly in Germany) because of his conviction that the movement did not constitute a 'revolutionary' force; and finally, he came into conflict more and more with his friends and, thus, the intellectual school that he had helped forge and that remained his frame of reference throughout his life: Max Horkheimer, Theodor W. Adorno, and the Institute for Social Research, also known as the Frankfurt School (although Marcuse never lived or worked in Frankfurt). By the 1960s all three, Horkheimer, Adorno, and Marcuse were iconic for the project of Critical Theory. With the 'Californian' philosopher Marcuse as the outpost in the far West, the Institute, in a way, was at home in both America and Germany – it was not only Marcuse who kept the contact alive and demanded that they discuss their respective theoretical (and practical) stance towards the political situation at hand: be it the Cold War, the Vietnam War, or the Student Movement. Horkheimer and Adorno, even if sometimes grudgingly, responded and joined in the discussion, which went to the roots of their common work – not, however, without tensions. This essay focuses on the fissures

7 Wheatland, *The Frankfurt School,* 311–334.

8 Marcuse was a speaker at the Congress *Vietnam – Analysis of an Example* in Frankfurt, 1966, and at a Vietnam Congress organized by the SDS in Berlin he gave the lectures "The End of Utopia" and "The Problem of Violence in the Opposition."

9 The letters between Marcuse and Dutschke are collected (in German) in Marcuse, Herbert, "Die Studentenbewegung und ihre Folgen," in: id., *Nachgelassene Schriften* 4, ed. Peter-Erwin Jansen, Springe 2004, 185–253.

and fault lines that emerged between the two continents and social-political contexts of Marcuse in the United States and Horkheimer and Adorno in Germany – misunderstandings and disagreements that always necessitated another return by Marcuse.

I. Remembering Marcuse

Herbert Marcuse died in 1979 while visiting the Max Planck Institute for the Research of Life-Conditions in the Scientific-Technological World, which was headed by Jürgen Habermas. Today, one can visit Marcuses's grave on the famous *Dorotheenstädtischer Friedhof* in Berlin. As with everything else in this complicated life, the details of Marcuse's burial are complex: yes, he was buried in Germany – but in July 2003, a full twenty-four years after his death. This belated burial was the last of several complicated issues of "return" to Germany for Marcuse, which is the focus of this essay. "The Story of Herbert Marcuse's Ashes," as told by Marcuse's grandson, the historian Harold Marcuse, is this:[10] After Marcuse's death following a stroke, his third wife, Erica Sherover-Marcuse decided "that enough Jews had been reduced to ashes in Germany," and had her husband cremated in Austria.[11] Marcuse's ashes were sent to a funeral home near New Haven, Connecticut, home of Marcuse's son Peter Marcuse, today Professor for Urban Planning at Columbia University. The ashes stayed in this funeral home for decades, until, in 2001, a professor inquired of the family about the whereabouts of Marcuse's grave. After deliberating about where the appropriate final resting place for Marcuse might be, they decided on Berlin, whose Senate officially approved an honorary grave. Marcuse's ashes were buried in his hometown on July 18, 2003, one day before his 105th birthday.

"Remigration" was the telling title of an article by Rüdiger Zill written on the occasion of Marcuse's belated burial in Berlin for the *Frankfurter Rundschau,*[12] alluding of course to the fact that this was the final return of the emigrant, a return of ashes, which were, as it were, lost for decades. In an article a few days earlier, Zill had noted the discrepancy between the celebrations of Adorno's 100th birthday that same year and

10 Marcuse, Harold, *The Story of Herbert Marcuse's Ashes*, 2005, http://www.marcuse.org/herbert/newsevents/2003berlinburial/HerbertsAshes02z.htm (31.07.2011).

11 Ibid.

12 Zill, Rüdiger, "Remigration," *Frankfurter Rundschau*, July 19, 2003.

the forgetting of Herbert Marcuse, in whose work (to mention this only in passing) memory held an important place:[13]

> Everyone talks about Adorno. [. . .] Teddy has won the day, which was not at all clear from the beginning, if, for example, one thinks of 68 [. . .]. Only one was applauded frenetically by the revolutionary masses: Herbert Marcuse, in the main lecture hall of the Berlin Free University, the philosophical side piece to Woodstock. Tempi passati: While one can still buy dapper editions of Horkheimer's or Fromm's collected works, even as paperbacks, Marcuse hasn't been able to cross the hurdle of the millennium [. . .].[14]

It probably does justice to neither Adorno nor Marcuse to see them in a relationship of competitive popularity. If anything, this is the logic of markets and trends, which both of them spent their lives criticizing. It is certainly true, though, that the reception of Marcuse's writings has decreased or even come to a standstill since his death. The sudden fame and media presence as well as the insistent assertions of a link between the Student Movement and Marcuse's name probably worked against him in the long run. He himself rejected epithets like "father of the New Left" as attempts to make his name into a commodity that could be consumed, attacked, categorized, or thrown away, and that tend to infantilize the students themselves.[15] Although it can be argued that Marcuse kept interest in Critical Theory alive in the United States, most philosophers or

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13 Jameson, Fredric, *Marxism and Form. Twentieth-Century Dialectical Theories of Literature*, Princeton 1974, 112ff.

14 Zill, Rüdiger, "Ach, Herbert," *Frankfurter Rundschau*, July 15, 2003. Translation mine, ES.

15 In an interview with the *New York Times*, Marcuse answers the question how he sees his relationship to the student movements in Germany, France and the United States: "I am deeply committed to the movement of 'angry students,' but I am certainly not their spokesman. It is the press and publicity that have given me this title and have turned me into a rather salable piece of merchandise. I particularly object to the juxtaposition of my name and photograph with those of Che Guevara, Debray, Rudi Dutschke, etc., because these men have truly risked and are still risking their lives in the battle for a more human society [. . .]" ("Marcuse Defines His New Left Line," in: *New York Times*, October 27, 1968). See also Wheatland, *The Frankfurt School*, 269 and 335. In an interview with *Der Spiegel*, Marcuse emphasized that he rejects "the father- or grandfather-nonsense. I am neither the father nor the grandfather of the New Left. It is true that a far-reaching coincidence has emerged between my ideas and the experiences, which the students made on their own through their actions and in their thinking. [. . .] But there in no way exists a paternalistic or patriarchal

scholars of Critical Theory probably consider him the lesser thinker or the positive, blindly utopian version of a much more radically negative Adorno. His writings, even those that must be counted among the founding texts of Critical Theory,[16] are all but forgotten or eclipsed by a reputation. Still today there is a list of Marcusean concepts that are readily used – most often probably without knowing that it was Marcuse who coined them: "Great Refusal," "Performance Principle" (Leistungsprinzip), "New Sensibility," or "Repressive Tolerance," to name a few.

"Repressive Tolerance" is the title of the 1965 essay that might have been his most widely read and most controversial piece, since here one finds arguments for disobedience and direct actions – not only in the struggles for liberation in, for example, Vietnam, but also for minorities in the so-called West.[17] It is maybe not so surprising that engagement with Marcuse's thought has waned: For some, his thought was discredited as the intellectual precursor legitimizing the violence in the so-called German Autumn; for others, Marcuse probably was discredited through the mere fact of his popularity, especially if most participants of the Student Movement, were we to believe some witnesses, were as anti-intellectual as Adorno *and* Marcuse always feared.

The polarizing effect of Marcuse's theory and praxis is reflected in an obituary by the philosopher Herbert Schnädelbach, who starts his text with the admission that, "whoever speaks about Herbert Marcuse today finds himself pushed into the role of the apologist, if he doesn't want to accept the role of the accuser."[18] Schnädelbach tried to move beyond

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relationship [. . .]." ("Revolution aus Ekel," in: *Der Spiegel*, 31 (1969), http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-45789139.html (31.07.2011)).

16 For example, "The Struggle against Liberalism in the Totalitarian View of the State" (1934), or the theoretical part Marcuse contributed to the *Studies on Authority and the Family* (1936); "Philosophy and Critical Theory" (1937), which contributes to Horkheimer's programmatic essay "Traditional and Critical Theory;" "The Affirmative Character of Culture" (1937), and "Some Social Implications of Modern Technology" (1941). For a commentary on some of these essays and their contribution to the Institute's analysis of fascism see Kellner, *Herbert Marcuse*, 96ff.

17 Marcuse, Herbert, "Repressive Tolerance," in: Robert Paul Wolff/Barrington Moore/ Herbert Marcuse, *A Critique of Pure Tolerance*, Boston 1965, 81–123. For a discussion of the essay see, for example, Wolin, Richard, *The Frankfurt School Revisited And Other Essays on Politics and Society*, New York 2006, 90ff.

18 Herbert Schnädelbach, "Betrachtungen eines Unzeitgemässen. Zum Gedenken an Herbert Marcuse," in: *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung* 34.4 (1980): 621–624, 621. Transl. mine, ES.

this polarization effected by Marcuse's politics by drawing attention to his merits as a philosopher in this essay, but his first move is the attempt to explain the genesis of Marcuse's political standpoints on the basis of his particular situation as an emigrant:

> Herbert Marcuse was never really at home here with us [*bei uns*]; much more than Horkheimer and Adorno, he was an emigrant who had never returned, whose theory was shaped mainly through the experience of fascism, the fate of the emigrant, but then also by an America as it had to appear to the gaze of the stranger – and here his theories found their evidentiary basis.[19]

This defensive gesture is certainly well-intentioned, but it is also deeply problematic – and it probably should not be read as Schnädelbach's problem but as a symptom of one possible perception of Marcuse: the emigrant who didn't return, but who kept returning. One wonders about the assumption that Marcuse (who, it must be recalled, was *forced* into exile) was never really at home "with us." The notion of "home" itself, I would argue, should have become problematic. And furthermore Marcuse loved Berlin, was proud to be from Berlin, and was closely connected to Germany through many contacts and threads. Thus, in a conversation briefly before his death in Southern Germany, he talked about Italy, his interest in the Red Brigades, and the wish to see Venice, but dismissed the thought of traveling because he felt death was closing in on him and he did not want to end up in Venice like Thomas Mann's Aschenbach: "If I must go, I would rather stay in my Germany."[20] At least at this point, in the face of death, the decision to stay is in Marcuse's hands, to stay in "my Germany." This moving statement (passed on by Jean Marabini) can also be read as the formidable paradox of the emigrant Marcuse's life and death, where going and staying become unstable terms.

Worse still in this attempt to make Marcuse's political 'messages' more palatable is the fact that he is made a twofold stranger. Not only was he supposedly 'not at home here' (in Germany), but also his perspective on the U.S., according to Schnädelbach, was that of a foreigner. Nothing could be further from the truth. As various scholars have shown, in his decade of employment, Marcuse learned about the United States from the inside of its most official, representative institutions;[21]

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19 Ibid.

20 Katz, *Herbert Marcuse*, 214.

21 Müller, *Krieger und Gelehrte*, 11.

moreover, during the war in particular he worked with some bright American minds who were recruited by the government: for example, Carl Schorske, Norman O. Brown, Barrington Moore, Leonard Krieger, and H. Stuart Hughes. And while some of these young Americans perceived the work with Marcuse as a second doctoral education,[22] it is certainly also true that Marcuse learned from them about America. Marcuse moved smoothly in intellectual and political circles, and even managed to navigate through the McCarthy years despite being a committed Marxist. And one can certainly also entertain the idea, proposed by Thomas Wheatland, that Marcuse – who started his career as a teacher rather late in life – was intensely interested in these students who, as it were, became as much his mentors as he was theirs.[23] Maybe the stinging critique of the United States that Marcuse formulated was therefore not at all the result of the perspective of a stranger – or, it was due to the estranged perspective of the one who knew all too well how that country 'ticked.'

There is something that Schnädelbach, as he admits, admires about Marcuse beyond his philosophical credentials, and if one wants to give any explanation for Marcuse's controversial work, it might actually be found in something one could call an overriding passion – which has nothing to do with being at home or being a stranger, but certainly with the experience of having to have left home and having become a stranger, and with the witnessing of a failed revolution. Schnädelbach writes:

> To approach Herbert Marcuse anew touches one deeply. He shows us to what degree we have lost the ability to envisage alternatives to the existing situation without fear. We notice how intimidated we are und how easily we were willing to block the misery and insanity of the world from our philosophical consciousness, and this only because a few terrorists tried to rationalize their actions with it.[24]

Schnädelbach ends his obituary with the admonition: "It is worth our while to not forget Herbert Marcuse."[25] But, as we now know, Marcuse was so forgotten that nobody even looked for his grave until 2001. On the other hand, this allowed for the spectacular return of his ashes that gave people pause.

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22 Kellner, Douglas, "Technology, War and Fascism," 24.
23 Wheatland, *The Frankfurt School*, 270.
24 Schnädelbach, "Betrachtungen eines Unzeitgemässen," 622.
25 Ibid., 624.

II. "Zwischenzeit"

Keeping in mind Schnädelbach's claim about Marcuse's doubly foreign status (being out of place in both the U.S. and Germany), let us step back for a moment to address more thoroughly the crucial question of Marcuse's 'returns' to Germany. In 1941 Marcuse and his family moved to California to join Horkheimer, but Marcuse soon after assumed the aforementioned government position in 1942, since the Institute could no longer afford the wages for a staff.[26] The correspondence between Horkheimer and Marcuse at this time makes abundantly clear just how much Marcuse was attached to their common work. One might venture to say that it was precisely at this point – when Marcuse had to separate from Horkheimer and the Institute – that emigration fully hit home. Marcuse would have done anything to have stayed in California and continued their work – in fact, for a while there had been talk of an important theoretical project and Marcuse had hoped to be Horkheimer's co-author in this. Of course, Horkheimer would eventually write the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* with Adorno. When Marcuse's later academic career would eventually bring him back to California, the Institute had long since reopened in Frankfurt without him.

Soon after the war, Marcuse had started addressing Horkheimer with plans for the future of the Institute. On October 18, 1946, having returned from a trip to London, to which his parents had fled just in time, Marcuse reports to Horkheimer that intellectuals in Europe (he mentions Karl Mannheim, Richard Löwenthal, Jean Wahl) are waiting for the *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* (which had been published by the Institute from 1932 to 1938) to resume. Marcuse himself had insisted for some time that it was necessary to offer a forum for serious and radical thought. "I hope," he writes at the end, "that this time my call is heard. We cannot afford, I believe, to wait any longer. [. . .] In the meantime [*Zwischenzeit*] – and I hope it will be a short meantime – my fondest greetings."[27] The relationship between Marcuse and Horkheimer, however, would remain one from "Zwischenzeit" to "Zwischenzeit."

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26 For accounts of these events in 1941 and 1942, which led to Marcuse staying in Washington, see, for example, Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School*, 299ff.; Kellner, "Technology, War and Fascism," 7–17; Jay, Martin, *The Dialectical Imagination. A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research, 1923–1950*, Boston 1973, 167ff.

27 This letter was printed as part of the series *Letters of the 20th Century* (*Briefe aus dem 20. Jahrhundert*) in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, on February 22, 2003. It was the

Marcuse's wish to reunite with Horkheimer and the Institute grew especially desperate after the death of his first wife Sophie. In a letter of March 3, 1951, to Max and Maidon Horkheimer and Friedrich and Carlota Pollock, Marcuse thanks them for their condolences, but he is inconsolable, protesting desperately against all the attempts to give death meaning. No, there is, "in the true materialist sense,"[28] absolutely nothing liberating, redeeming, or consoling about death. It seems over-determined that in the state of shock conveyed in this letter, Marcuse defers to his friends Horkheimer and Adorno philosophically:

> The idea of death 'belonging' to life is wrong, und we should take Horkheimer's thought that only with the abolition of death mankind could become free and happy, much more seriously and realizable. There is no attitude more repulsive than Heidegger's intellectual toying around and transcendentalization of death. Teddie is absolutely right: death is an absurdity, and the only possibility to cope with it is to repress it.[29]

Heidegger, his former teacher, is, as it were, 'sandwiched' between the names "Horkheimer" and "Teddie."[30] Marcuse places himself with them and he wants to be where Horkheimer in particular is. With his wife's death and his own realization of finitude, Marcuse is at a loss, but on the other hand knows one thing for a fact: that he wants to work again with Horkheimer, no matter where. On October 18, 1951, he writes: "The question of the location depends on us and the World Spirit,"[31] and ends the letter on a resigned and yet hopeful note: "I have become so egoistical, that I now care less about the *Flaschenpost* than about the fulfillment of the remaining years of our lives. *Let's*

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eighth piece in the series, and Tim B. Müller provided the commentary for the letter.

28 Kraushaar, *Frankfurter Schule*, 58. Almost all letters between Marcuse, Horkheimer and Adorno will be quoted (in my translation) from this collection.

29 Ibid. It is striking that Marcuse would publish an essay entitled "Ideology of Death" in 1959, taking up in depth Horkheimer's idea of the "abolition of death," pointing to the prevalent morality, which makes out of a brute biological fact an ontological category in the service of controlling and limiting freedom. See Marcuse, Herbert, "The Ideology of Death," in: Herman Feifel (ed.), *The Meaning of Death*, New York 1959, 64–76.

30 The letters exchanged by Marcuse and Heidegger in 1947/48 are collected in Marcuse, Herbert, *Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse* 1, ed. Douglas Kellner, New York 1998, 263–267.

31 Kraushaar, *Frankfurter Schule,* 62.

[in English in the Original]."[32] It is no minor confession that Marcuse makes in these lines by evoking Adorno's image of their common work of Critical Theory – "Flaschenpost," "message in a bottle" – since letters without addressees became essential for the group. Marcuse, though, deviates here from the path and invokes the here and now, the wish to live and work well now – with them. The 'World Spirit,' however, did not agree.

For a moment in 1953 it looked like Marcuse might be joining Horkheimer in Frankfurt if they could secure funding through an American institution.[33] It didn't work out and Marcuse started his academic career in the U.S., while Adorno and Horkheimer began building up the Institute in Frankfurt. Collaboration remained confined to several visits and numerous letters crossing the Atlantic over two decades – a difficult endeavor. Thus, Horkheimer, when pondering the return to Germany, had given (in a letter to Marcuse dated February 28, 1948) his hope to influence some students and intellectuals there with their work as one reason for the return; they would have to be there in person, since "at the present time less than anyway possible at other times dialectic cannot be completely separated from conversation. 'L'acte d'écrire demande toujours un certain sacrifice de l'intellect,' says Valery."[34]

This same sentiment can be applied, in a certain respect, to the correspondence between Marcuse, Horkheimer, and Adorno in the 1960s – a correspondence riddled with conflict as soon as the Cold War takes shape. And as if it wasn't a hard enough task to check the calibration of Critical Theory in a changed historical context or, better, with Marcuse in the U.S. and Horkheimer and Adorno in West-Germany, all three of them were public figures whose words were transmitted, transformed, distorted in various ways. This lead to understandably anxious reactions on the part of a far-away Marcuse who always stayed alert and interested to hear what was going on in the world. Interferences were created by visitors from Germany and Europe or by the *Spiegel* magazine. Increasingly, the image of his friends and of their common project, *Critical Theory*, looks back at Marcuse in the mirror of the *Spiegel*, for example, in a distorted fashion.

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32 Ibid., 63.

33 See Horkheimer's letter to Marcuse on April 28, 1953 (ibid., 195ff.); Horkheimer's letter to Adorno on May 15, 1953 (ibid., 194), and Adorno's letter to Horkheimer on May 19, 1953 (ibid., 198).

34 Ibid., 38.

This dynamics of intellectual friendships, politics, and the question of the common project in a global world – where profound attempts to clarify things through letters just don't seem to be able to keep up with the news – becomes graspable in the letters between these three men; correspondences, from which Wolfgang Kraushaar compiled a selection reflecting the debates and conflicts within Critical Theory regarding the political complex subsumed under "Student Movement." One of the problems starts right here: There is not one "Student Movement" – the convergence of the movement in the U.S. with the civil rights movement brought "race" on the agenda in a way that was not the case in Germany. This complicated the student movement, as Marcuse notes in his letter to Adorno on January 12, 1969, but it also complicates its theorization.[35] Mostly, their debates bracket these differences, and focus on their differences regarding the problem of the relationship between theory and praxis, which, of course, includes the question of the possibility of change, the revolutionary subject, and violent acts against oppressors as well as the evaluation of the role that the United States plays in the world, the role of the public intellectual, and questions of loyalty and identification. In this regard, Marcuse's letter explaining to Adorno on January 24, 1960, the urgency of his questions regarding the Institute's public image is telling:

> I don't have the least right to assume the role of a moral judge. But I identify myself with you so much that I view everything you write if not as written, then at least as signed by me. I would like to maintain this identification.[36]

One has to bear in mind that Marcuse is at this point thoroughly immersed in American culture and politics and that he has not worked with Horkheimer in nearly two decades. Nevertheless, Marcuse maintains his allegiance to Horkheimer and the Institute and is willing to pin his identity on their common work. One could entertain the thought that the letters exchanged between Marcuse, Horkheimer and Adorno are part and parcel of the work of Critical Theory or of the Institute for Social Research.

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35 Ibid., 541.

36 Marcuse to Adorno, January 24, 1960, in: Herbert Marcuse, *Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse* 2, ed. Douglas Kellner, London, New York 2001, 212.

III. "Our old Institute, Herbert"

From letters exchanged between Marcuse, Horkheimer and Adorno in the 1960s, an escalating series of episodes surrounding 'hot topics' of the time emerges. Thus, in 1960, to give one example, a major conflict emerges around the Institute's attitude towards the Cold War with Marcuse's aforementioned letter of January 24. A conversation had already taken place with Adorno about this in Sils Maria, and when they parted Marcuse believed that they still agreed "that our critique of the East has to remain linked to a critique of the West."[37] Nevertheless, Marcuse went through the works of Adorno and Horkheimer to see for himself if there are any reasons for this public perception. He finds a polemical half sentence in Horkheimer and Adorno's preface to Paul W. Massing's *Vorgeschichte des politischen Antisemitismus*.[38]

It is not the place here to go into this moment of the correspondence further; what should be highlighted are the parameters of the exchange: the role that *fama* plays in setting off the alarms of Marcuse, who, even if he visited Europe regularly and also regularly met with Horkheimer and/or Adorno in the summers, seems to fear that substantial differences might have emerged between them without him having noticed or without them being able to address these together in intellectual debate. What emerges in the ensuing exchange of letters is an agreement on the principal methodological approach demanded by Marcuse (i.e., that analyses and criticisms have to always take into account both 'sides,' the whole). But Horkheimer and Adorno, responding together with one letter on February 12, 1960, refuse to cook down critical theory to a mechanical 'tit for tat' – especially since they defend the relative freedom of thought in the West against the regimes in the East, the anti-Semitism prevalent there and the killings of dissenting intellectuals;[39] they also reject the notion that any suffering now could be justified by, for example, a possibly better life for the Chinese in the future.[40]

These are only some of the arguments made in Horkheimer's and Adorno's letter. In a personal conversation between Marcuse and Horkheimer, they cleared up some of the tension, but in a letter that Marcuse wrote before he met with Horkheimer and then never sent, one can read

37 Ibid.
38 This study had appeared in English in 1949.
39 Kraushaar, *Frankfurter Schule,* 127.
40 Ibid.

Marcuse's response to their line of argument. One could summarize the response loosely by asking: Freedom for whom? What thought? At whose cost?[41] And isn't it true that the Chinese are already doing better?[42] His summary of the conflict comes down to this: He agrees that "our common thinking" refuses "the spirit of heteronomy" embodied in an approach to things that would mechanically keep score of the difficult issues at hand on either side, East or West.[43] He just wants to make sure they acknowledge "that there is heteronomy in the West and the East. I wanted to defend the autonomy of thought against its subordination to the more pleasant type of heteronomy."[44] Marcuse therefore directs Horkheimer's and Adorno's conviction that their theory cannot become mechanical or enslaved by false loyalties, say towards the cause of Communism, back at them: are they sure that their thinking is not delimited by a blind spot, doesn't what they call 'relative freedom' in the West just pull the wool over one's eyes and create a "pleasant" heteronomy, but heteronomy nonetheless?

The issue addressed here (as to which theoretical-practical attitude to take regarding the "West" particularly as embodied in the United States) becomes intensified with the Vietnam War. If the relationship between Marcuse on the one side, and Horkheimer and Adorno on the other, can be called a kind of "German-American-Friendship," then this friendship is tested precisely by Horkheimer's appearance at the opening of the German-American-Friendship Week in Frankfurt in 1967. Again, it is rumor that transports information about Horkheimer's speech there to Marcuse in the United States, and rumor has it that Horkheimer said in his speech "that the Americans defend in Vietnam freedom against fascist aggression."[45] It is not an easy task for Marcuse, as one can see in his letter of May 16, 1967, to write to Horkheimer in order to find out more. The thought "of you and me, after 35 years of friendship and collaboration, having arrived at opposite poles" is unbearable, but that is precisely

41 See Marcuse, "Towards a Critical Theory of Society," 218.

42 See ibid., 217.

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid.

45 Marcuse to Horkheimer, May 16, 1967, in: Horkheimer, Max, "Briefwechsel 1949–1973," in: id., *Gesammelte Schriften* 18, ed. Gunzelin Schmidt Noerr, Frankfurt/M. 1996, 648 (translation mine, ES). For a transcript of Horkheimer's speech, see ibid., 646f. The SDS Frankfurt send an Open Letter to Horkheimer about his appearance at the *Amerikahaus* on May 14, 1967 (ibid., 644f.), to which Horkheimer answered on May 18, 1967 (ibid., 649f.).

why he needs to address the issue.[46] How is this possible, that he, Marcuse, living in the U.S., spends "a lot of time and energy on demonstrating exactly the opposite"[47] of what Horkheimer supposedly conveys about the American foreign politics? (One can of course read up on his damning analysis of American society and politics in *One Dimensional Man*, 1964.)

What stands between them are the topographical-historical vicissitudes of criticism, which can turn a progressive critical thought into a regressive one. This is, of course, the case with "Anti-Americanism." Oddly enough, Marcuse is surprised by Horkheimer's assertion that "in Germany Anti-Americanism is a cause of the political Right."[48] In his view, from the other side, the Right should find its ally in the United States. But in Germany after 1945, the relationship towards the United States has become overdetermined and fraught with complexities, the crucial one being the precarious merging, on the Left, of "Anti-Americanism" with being pro-Palestine. What is at stake in the question of Anti-Americanism, in other words, is often also the state of Israel and anti-Semitism. Somehow, I would argue, this doesn't translate for Marcuse, who, just to be completely clear, writes polemically on June 17, 1967: "Let me write down my opinion in the most extreme way possible: I see in the United States today the historical heir of fascism."[49] And to add another provocative point: Marcuse, assuring Horkheimer that he abhors terror as much as his friend does, insists nonetheless (referring to the preface Sartre wrote to Frantz Fanon's *The Damned of the Earth*) that there is not just one "violence," one has to see *who* exercises violence and why.[50] However, this letter, truly an onslaught of arguments, is for Marcuse "raw material for a personal clarifying conversation [*Aussprache*]," which would take place in the summer.

Reflecting back on this personal encounter, Marcuse writes on November 11, 1967, to Horkheimer:

> How is it possible that we agree so much on the goals and yet are in such disagreement about the present situation [*was ist*]? Might this, after all have to do with the fact that you don't live in this country and, therefore, can't see, feel, and breathe what is happening? I don't know.[51]

46 Ibid.
47 Ibid.
48 Ibid. Marcuse refers here to a previous letter by Horkheimer.
49 Kraushaar, *Frankfurter Schule,* 262.
50 Ibid., 261.
51 Ibid., 311.

The United States, Marcuse fears, might have become abstract for Horkheimer and he wishes his friend could really *sense* the country that Horkheimer and Adorno left. Horkheimer does not, in his letter on November 28, 1967, pick up on the question of whether their controversies are due to this difference in experience. He claims that "[t]he only difference between us is that I fear another regime, even if established with prior good intentions, might turn out to be worse."[52] The problem for Horkheimer is that any change now might just worsen the situation, while Marcuse, on a gut level, so to speak, is revolted by the existing situation. The disgust of the affluent society is a new instinct he sees or wants to see in the student movement and which could at least lead to some changes in consciousness, since this movement is not revolutionary.[53] Marcuse and Horkheimer's conversation couldn't resolve this difference.

Of course, the biggest and final challenge to the 'unity' of Critical Theory across the Atlantic was yet to come in 1969, and it brought together the question of Marcuse's (temporary) return to the Institute with the differences between Marcuse and Adorno, now the main public figure of the Institute in Germany (Horkheimer had retired to Switzerland).[54] By this time, Marcuse had emerged as an (critical) ally of the student movement and had come under pressure in California because of his politics. In Germany, however, students who thought Adorno, as the figurehead of Critical Theory, would naturally take their side became more and more antagonistic toward the Institute, which kept a distance to the "actionism" (*Aktionismus*) of the student movement. As different as Marcuse's and Adorno's positions are, they do agree that in the U.S. and in

52 Ibid., 324.

53 See "Professoren als Staatsregenten. Spiegel-Gespräch mit dem Philosophen Professor Herbert Marcuse," in: *Der Spiegel* 35 (1967), http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-46211747.html (31.07.2011). It should be mentioned that in protocols Friedrich Pollock kept of private conversations with Horkheimer (posthumously published entitled "Späne") the tone regarding Marcuse is much different – Horkheimer here harshly criticizes him for 'simplifications,' popularizations, and his tendencies towards the utopian (see Kraushaar, *Frankfurter Schule,* 285ff. and 291).

54 A selection of the letters between Marcuse and Adorno regarding the Student Movement has been published in translation: Adorno, Theodor W./Marcuse, Herbert, "Correspondence on the German Student Movement," in: *New Left Review* 233 (1999): 123–136. For the sake of consistency, I used the letters as they are printed in Kraushaar and translated quotes myself.

Germany, the rational and the irrational are mixed in a nearly inextricable fashion.[55] At the end of 1968, Marcuse and Adorno correspond about an official invitation by the Institute so that Marcuse could come to Frankfurt for, as he insists, discussions in a small circle – no "circus," he emphasizes, which is also in Adorno's interest.[56]

But then there is a dramatic turn of events: At the end of January 1969, students, under the leadership of Hans-Jürgen Krahl (member of the SDS and Ph.D. candidate at the Institute), tried to force their way into the Institute's space, and Adorno decided to call the police. Adorno also decided to write Marcuse right away, on February 14, 1969, in an obvious attempt to avoid the pattern that had shaped the previous course of events in which Marcuse would hear something somewhere else and then instigate a controversy. There is a curious lag in reaction on Marcuse's part – perhaps he was too busy or maybe the events in Frankfurt remained abstract, but in any case, the controversy starts after Marcuse read about these events and heard the story again (though not differing in content) from a first-hand witness.[57] If one wanted to speculate: maybe it was Marcuse realizing that what happened in Frankfurt was a pregnant public event. Marcuse now, in his letter dated April 5, 1969, doubts that he should come to Frankfurt by invitation of the Institute without also meeting with students. Otherwise he would

> identify with a political position (or would be identified with it) that I don't share. Brutally: If the alternative is: Police or leftist students, I side with the students with one decisive exception, namely, if my life is in danger or if there are threats against me and my friends and the threat is serious.[58]

If one recalls Marcuse's emphatic formulation in 1960 that he considers everything written by Horkheimer (and I would argue this extends to Adorno) as co-signed by him, this passage gains its full weight: If he is forced to decide, then under these circumstances he does *not* identify

55 See Adorno and Horkheimer's letter to Marcuse on December 17, 1968 (Kraushaar, *Frankfurter Schule*, 704), and Marcuse's letter to Adorno, January 12, 1969 (ibid., 541).

56 "I still have the intention to come to Frankfurt at the beginning of June. I definitely do not want a 'circus': No talk in front of a mass audience, only very personal and open discussion in a small group." (January 12, 1969) (Kraushaar, *Frankfurter Schule,* 541).

57 April 5, 1969 (ibid., 601).

58 Ibid.

with the Institute. This does not mark the end of the profound attempt by both Marcuse and Adorno to clarify the situation through letters on the basis of the common ground they still agree on: that there is no unmediated translation of theory into praxis, for one. There is, however, Marcuse's "but" – there might be situations when a theory that refrains from praxis betrays itself.[59] Marcuse in this letter asks Adorno (out of loyalty to the Institute) to decide if he should come to Frankfurt for the planned conversation *and* for a meeting with students, or if he should stay away. If the latter was the case, then they could meet in the summer. The return by official invitation of the Institute did not take place, nor did the conversation with Adorno, who died before they could meet.

The arguments voiced in these letters deserve a much closer inspection. Here, I simply want to point to a somewhat particular moment of rhetorical emphasis in the correspondence: Adorno at one point, in the letter of May 5, 1969, nearly implores Marcuse to understand that he had to call the police to protect the interests of the Institute, "of our old Institute, Herbert."[60] Though Marcuse is usually the one who appears as the fifth wheel in the relationship with Horkheimer and Adorno and works hard to maintain the connection, here it is Adorno who draws Marcuse back into the fold, reminding him of their shared roots. Marcuse replies on June 4, 1969, from London to which he traveled in the meantime: "No, Teddy. It is not our old Institute the students broke into. You know as well as I do, that there is a substantial difference between the work of the Institute in the 30s und its work in today's Germany."[61] And later, in the same letter: "In order to still be our 'old Institute' we have to write and act differently today than in the 1930s. Even unscathed theory is not immune against reality."[62] The historical situation has changed – much, too much has occurred – and thus the understanding of the purpose of the Institute, at least for Marcuse, must change as well in order to remain 'our old Institute.' The "deepest divergence" between them, writes Marcuse, lies in the fact that he will defend the students even if he has concerns about the lack of theory and knows that they are not a revolutionary force; he does so "simply because the defense and preservation of the status quo and its costs in terms of human lives are much more

59 April 5, 1969 (Kraushaar, *Frankfurter Schule,* 601).
60 Ibid., 624.
61 Ibid., 649.
62 Ibid.

dreadful."[63] For Adorno the crucial difference between them is that he, Adorno, considers praxis to be blocked in the current state of affairs, as he writes on June 19, 1969, to Marcuse, and therefore holds theory to be possibly the most radical praxis, as he points out in a *Spiegel*-interview which appeared during the time of this exchange.[64] He bases his restraint when it comes to praxis in the shared experience of their mutual knowledge of the Jews being murdered in Europe without being able to do anything, reminding Marcuse, in the earlier letter of May 5, that in this most gruesome situation they also didn't cross over from theory to praxis: "Simply because it [praxis, ES] was blocked for us."[65] If Marcuse thinks, for example, that because of Vietnam, he cannot continue his life without participating in protests, he succumbs, in Adorno's view, to "self-deception" against which he posits a necessary "self-reflection" on the "moment of coldness in oneself." Yet it remains ambiguous if this "moment of coldness" is the result of the experience of forced passivity in the face of the Holocaust or if Adorno refers to this "moment of coldness" as something already at work then, making it possible to endure the inability to act.[66] Marcuse, on June 4, 1969, calls Adorno on the logic of his argument: Yes, they couldn't act back then, but it is precisely the point that now one can – there are rights and liberties in democracy, which has to be defended against its own self-destructive tendencies through acts of civil disobedience or direct action. This, at least, is one way to read Marcuse's argument.[67]

The letters that refer to this issue are infinitely more complex and moving than the short snapshot here can convey. Complex also because the debate in letters is shadowed or doubled by interviews Adorno and Marcuse give to the *Spiegel* during the time of the exchange. The titles of these interviews demarcate the difference: "Not afraid of the Ivory Tower" (Adorno, May 1969) and "Revolution out of Disgust" (Marcuse, July 1969).[68] To make things worse, an article appeared in *Spiegel* on June 30, 1969, reporting about a talk Marcuse had given in Rome two

63 Ibid., 650.

64 Adorno, Theodor W., "Keine Angst vor dem Elfenbeinturm. Spiegel-Gespräch mit dem Frankfurter Sozialphilosophen Professor Theodor W. Adorno," in: *Der Spiegel* 19 (1969), http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-45741576.html (July 31, 2011).

65 Kraushaar, *Frankfurter Schule,* 624.

66 Ibid.

67 Ibid., 650.

68 See footnotes 15 and 63.

weeks earlier. What was probably newsworthy was the fact that Marcuse was interrupted by students (among them Daniel Cohn-Bendit) demanding an explanation for the fact that he was giving his speech in the "Theater of the Bourgeoisie" (he spoke in the Teatro Eliseo) and confronting him with the accusation that he is an agent for the CIA.[69] There is a nuance of glee in this article, which takes this event as the first sign that the students will turn against Marcuse, and what follows is a collection of criticisms leveled at Marcuse from the Left and the Right – the list of opponents includes *Prawda*, Ernst Topitsch, Helmut Kuhn, Jean Améry, and, as the last and crowning witness against Marcuse, Horkheimer: "Even Max Horkheimer, the senior of the Institute for Social Research, counts among the critics. He ascribes Marcuse's fame merely to 'thoughts, which are coarser and simpler than Adorno's or mine.'"[70] Marcuse does not mind being called the simplifier, but he is taken aback. First, because he has tried to keep their differences out of the public eye, and second, because Horkheimer dispossesses him of any contributions to Critical Theory, which now appears to be the brainchild of Horkheimer and Adorno alone.

Adorno sends a telegram on July 28, 1969, assuring Marcuse that Horkheimer was quoted out of context, insisting that all three of them really should talk before starting a public debate.[71] He suggests a meeting mid-August in Zurich with Horkheimer – and the conversation between he and Marcuse still remained to be had. But the matter of where to meet remained. Adorno wants Marcuse to come to Zermatt, where he will seek much-needed rest; Marcuse wants Adorno to come to Pontresina (Italy), where he will try to recover through swimming. On the day of his death, August 6, 1969, Adorno writes an express letter to Marcuse urging him to not let distortions similar to what had happened with Horkheimer's quote come between them and urging him to come see him, since he is such a "tattered [*ramponierter*] Teddie" that he cannot travel further than Zermatt, which, on the other hand, means he is coming half way towards Marcuse.[72] The "unlimited conversations"[73] between them, which Adorno deemed absolutely necessary, were terminated before they could ever begin.

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69 "Obszöne Welt," in: *Der Spiegel* 27 (1969), http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-45549323.html (July 31, 2011).

70 Ibid.

71 Kraushaar, *Frankfurter Schule,* 655.

72 Ibid., 671.

73 Adorno to Marcuse on May 5, 1969 (ibid., 625).

There was no returning to the "old Institute" in Adorno's or Marcuse's sense.

In a conversation about Adorno's death on German television, Marcuse addressed their differences, which "they," he states, "had just been in the process of clarifying in person."[74] These lay in the "differing evaluation of the historical function of the Student Movement," which, as Marcuse emphasizes, Adorno had supported from the beginning while also rejecting blind actionism. The separation of theory and praxis leveled against Adorno, has to be understood differently; Marcuse explains that separation was "the 'fault' of reality – he reacted to it."[75]

The critical last encounter did not take place and did not find a place – but maybe Marcuse keeps "obstinately," as Beckett calls him in his poem, insisting. Thinking of Marcuse today, one might ponder the one word written on his gravestone in Berlin, a word used often by Marcuse: "carry on" (*weitermachen*).

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74 Ibid., 678.

75 Ibid.

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Exile is a Flop: Soma Morgenstern over Central Park

Paul North

What follows are four footnotes to an unwritten, and probably unwritable, article, whose aim – if it weren't impossible – would be to collect and analyze all the uses of the word "Exil" in texts written in German after 1933. Whatever else it may do or mean, at different times and in different contexts, this word, "Exil," gives a name and a determinate description – does it not? – and thus confers a more permanent status on a contingent historical event. To some extent then in every use, in very general terms, the word fulfills an intention to sidestep contingency and change, and loan experience the constancy of a meaning and a reference beyond a unique or unstable event. It transforms a blow of experience into an article of knowledge. The great interruption of habits and identifications that "Exil" means to say becomes with this word, at least in part, habituatable once more, making an expulsion into a destination, turning a voyage without a final terminus into a reference to a return. One hears the echoes of a messianic intention. It goes without saying, also, that the word "Exil" itself has a history and a set of myths already associated with it. These four footnotes track four myths that surround exile: a triumphant tone, a dialectic of return, a mourning affect, and the last – an attitude of solemnity.

I

Footnote 1 in the hypothetical article on the uses of "Exil" comes in a section on Thomas Mann's writings, in a sentence describing his radio broadcasts to Germany. The footnote follows the exclamation point in the title of these addresses: "German Listeners!" (*Deutsche Hörer!*)

Deutsche Hörer![1]

[1] A providential mist can sometimes, under certain conditions for certain speakers, surround the word "Exile." It is as though, when some label a

sojourn or figure "exile," they are evoking a special fate. One way to penetrate this providential mist would be to make the exalted, even triumphant tone in which "exile" is occasionally said audible. The exclamation point in Mann's title is but a small signal of this tone. It points toward a category at which Mann became an expert, "exhortatory words proclaimed from exile." We can hear in this form of address the attitude that the word "exile" sometimes lends its bearer. Exile baptizes with a mythic name that confers or confirms certain privileges. Insofar as it is taken to mean escape, even when escape means barely escaping, even when the name is awarded after a departure from catastrophe or evil – a departure which, in itself, we cannot help but call good – even then, the good escape can turn into a war waged by other means. Exile can, at times, be taken for a nominal victory over what could not have been vanquished otherwise, and "exile" thereupon becomes a medal pinned on in recognition. A last resort, in many or most cases, to be sure – and yet among other attitudes that can attach to it exile produces a kind of hero, in a sudden reversal of fortune, out of one who was or was thought to be otherwise doomed. An exile, and especially a literary writer in exile, escapes to assail the enemy in a protracted war of words. Carrier of an all-but destroyed culture – having escaped unscathed, saved, from destruction, safe, from transformation, can become redeemer of the promise of, in this case, German culture. Exile may be said of anyone forced to leave their political community, but it is also often said, in a slightly more emphatic way, of the great who have been brought low, of authors and artists, intellectuals and political figures ripped from their renown, who bear the torches of cultural life out with them. To be listened for, in this tone, is the semantic overlap of *Exil* and *Erlösung*. At least at first glance this pair of terms reminds us of another culture, another tradition – if its differences can be consolidated enough to be called "other." The Hebrew words *Galut* and *Tikkun* overlap in a similar way, resonating beyond the Tanakh and into Kabbala and Hasidic practice and lore, and then again, in a different way, in some Zionisms.

At a rendezvous in Paris in 1939, Walter Benjamin asked his friend, Soma Morgenstern, a one-time Hasidic Jew, a remarkable question: "Why should we be the very generation with the luck to experience redemption?" (Morgenstern, Soma, *Kritiken, Berichte, Tagebücher*, ed. Ingolf Schulte, Lüneburg 1997, 518; translation here and in the following mine, PN). Or so Morgenstern remembered it. The question is remarkable in one sense because it rejects the aura of chosenness with which every generation – and perhaps especially the one born a little before

1900 – surrounds itself. More fundamentally, it rejects a crucial component of messianism: the idea that, whatever generation it is that ultimately receives the messiah, it will know itself as the right generation, whether before or after the fact. Morgenstern seems to miss this more fundamental sense. What Benjamin meant, according to Morgenstern's report in a 1973 letter to Gershom Scholem, was simply that the revolution would only succeed in the far future (ibid.). The question, uttered as it was shortly before the German invasion of France, may apply just as well to the redemption expected in and through exile. The biographical Benjamin did not have the luck to find out, though Soma Morgenstern did. Morgenstern escaped Europe, leaving Benjamin in Marseilles. He came to New York – and still, we cannot exactly say he was saved. An argument can be made that, culturally speaking, he expired in Europe, although his ghost wrote on for 25 years as a guest at the Park Plaza Hotel, in a self-imposed burial under an immense and ultimately unfinished autobiography. If we were to set ourselves the task to say "exile" without celebrating victory, to say it without the triumphant tone in which it sometimes can be said, if we want to imagine an exile beyond the usual dialectics of nation state or homeland, beyond the violent dance of winners and losers, politics and persecution, and their religious corollary: suffering and salvation, leading, at least in the usual fantasy, to renewed life, Soma Morgenstern the writer offers one possible counterpoint. If one wants to say "exile" without envisioning a new haven where the chosen maintain the flame of some hypostatized, ideal, and fantastically inviolate prior political, linguistic, or cultural life, Soma Morgenstern the writer is an exemplary artifact, insofar as culture, and especially the phantasm of German culture, but also Hasidic legend and lore, nostalgia for a 19th-century rural existence, as well as for a pure language, with him, after he came to New York City, petered out.

Morgenstern poses a problem for literary critics, which could be called a pure problem of criticism: how can one write about a writer without celebrating him, without rejoicing in his success, without taking the textual object as the victory of culture through the writer, and surreptitiously then, also through the critic? Criticism, from this perspective, has a covert relationship to exile and its corollary, redemption. It is, or can be, the instrument of a late triumph. How, then, can one write non-redemptive criticism, at the very least in order to preserve the non-triumph of one who could not or would not repeat the triumphant tone of some exiles? Unlike Thomas Mann, Morgenstern and his mission flopped in America. One response could be to write about what did not live on, although it

escaped, what escaped, though not unscathed, that is, to describe the staggering stiffs who exist in a kind of purgatory within the discourse on exile. Benjamin, who did not make it to New York and because of his posthumous fame, avoids this fate; Morgenstern becomes a writing corpse, buried at least three times over: once in a New York hotel overlooking central park, once in what he wrote and could not write there (often the same thing), and finally in the near oblivion into which his exile writings almost immediately fell. The oblivion of Morgenstern's double or triple exile is the opposite of the providential mist that often surrounds the critical term "exile;" the one preserves and magnifies, the other conceals and diminishes. To write about what did not escape would then also require that we leave a diminished thing in its diminishment, a difficult requirement to fulfill. Something of each of Morgenstern's cultural affiliations – European, German, Jewish, Hasid, Viennese, novelist, storyteller, amateur Talmudist – did not make it out alive.

The first novel Morgenstern tried to write in New York makes this critical task easier. It is not difficult not to celebrate the triumph of the novel, or whatever it is, that he eventually called *Die Blutsäule (Pillars of Blood.)* The text "came into existence with interruptions in the years 1946–1953" (Morgenstern, Soma, *Die Blutsäule: Zeichen und Wunder am Sereth*, ed. Ingolf Schulte, Lüneburg 1997, 7) and recounts the demise of all but 72 Jews in a town in Galicia, not unlike the towns from which Morgenstern had departed for Germany as a youth and from which much of his family had recently been sent to camps. The writing of the text was continually interrupted because, after watching too many documentary films of the liberation of the camps, Morgenstern "became speechless from an excess of anguish" ("Er ist am Übermaß der Pein sprachlos geworden") (ibid.). There are many kinds of *Sprachlosigkeit*, of course. Morgenstern is quick to specify, in this reflection written 20 years after the fact, which kind he means: less being at a loss for words because of an overwhelming experience or the blotting out of his voice through political power, and certainly not the philosophical refusal to speak whereof one must remain silent. "Das will sagen," he goes on, recollecting his trials in the third person, as if he had lost, too, the ability to say "I:" "That is to say, in no one of the languages that were available to him did he have enough language all at once for this planned book of the dead [*Totenbuch*]. Months, years – yes indeed, years – he suffered this language-less-ness [*Sprachlosigkeit*]; and as often as he tried to overcome it and took pen in hand, he suffered writing-paralysis [*Schreiblähmung*] as well" (ibid.).

The book of the dead that resulted is no victory over this paralysis. It is a deadening book, a haunted and, yes, at a few points – very few – also a haunting book; more important are its failures to produce dramatic effects, its misguided scenarios, its changeable diction, hurtling from exaltation to bathos and back again, and its images, drawn from a dream world of the highest kitsch. Almost every page displays the scars of a losing battle with culture. Sometimes it seems as though the novel form was being punished for crimes against humanity. To give one example: the action of the story revolves around a coffin-shaped box, which, it will turn out, only the innocent can open. There are not many innocents around, so the box stays closed until very late in the story. Out of the box's cracks drifts a sweet aroma that attracts war victims in search of food. The origin of the aroma is anything but edible, however. In the box lies a statue molded in the likeness of a Hasidic boy who had been shot by the SS at the start of the campaign against Polish Jews. The statue is made of soap, rumored to be *that* most macabre of all soaps. As a device, the box could hardly be more wide open or more overladen with symbol, accusation, guilt, rumor, not to mention bad taste. The fall into bad taste, a long fall for a writer with as refined a skill at story telling as Soma Morgenstern, is part of the failure that for the sake of experiment we are trying not to celebrate.

II

Footnote 2 in the hypothetical article collecting all the uses of "Exil" in German texts after 1933 appears in a section on Brecht, appended to a quote from his poem "Über die Bezeichnung Emigranten."

> "Unruhig sitzen wir so, möglichst nahe den Grenzen / Wartend des Tags der Rückkehr."
>
> "Restless we sit like this, as near as possible to the border / Awaiting the day of return."[2]

[2] In Brecht's poetization, the will of the "emigrant" is exposed. Doubtless, emigrant is a litotes for exile, an ironic understatement that reveals exile to be in fact the inner lining of the national border. Geography is almost irrelevant; external exile is internal to the dialectic of the nation. An extension of this thought: the nation becomes itself when it awaits itself

at the border. This may be an ontological corollary to the triumphant tone in which "exile" is sometimes said (see footnote 1). Exile in this case is a domestic and domesticating journey from vague everyday life in a nation, via the foreignness of the foreign, direct to the cultural core, which has been smuggled out and brought into the light of day, perhaps for the first time. What's more, nation, homeland, history and culture suddenly become whole and undefiled, despite and because of a great defilement, what Morgenstern in *Blutsäule* writing of the Nazis names "die Schändung der Schöpfung" (the defilement of creation). Germany becomes itself in flight, an undefiled version of itself, an ideal or even an idea. In this sense exile is already the hoped-for return. A nation dreams of exile where it may finally surpass itself to become itself. Next to this vantage point a geographical return could only be disappointing.

By the time he reached New York City, Morgenstern seems to have learned about this disappointment, less from this departure than from others. In his European intellectual life he had written and re-enacted so many returns that the topos must finally have bored him. His first recorded return is perhaps the most significant, as is its particular failure. Before any other returns, Morgenstern enacted a return *to* exile. As an adolescent, Morgenstern had expatriated himself from a Hasidic upbringing in small Galician towns, to become *ein gebildeter Mensch* with a Gymnasium education. He repudiated his father's piety by turning to philosophy, as Nietzsche did to his father, both of them upon reading Lange's *Geschichte des Materialismus*. Morgenstern at this time abandoned Yiddish for German, fell in love with German theater, and decided to become a theater critic. One Yom Kippur however, to honor the memory of his father who had died young, he gave in and went to synagogue. "But I will not pray – no, not that!" ("Aber beten werde ich nicht – nein das nicht!"). He recalls this self-admonishment in the memoir of his Galician youth, *In einer anderen Zeit*. In the synagogue he finds himself in front of a prayer book, leafs through it, and the return is accomplished. "My glance fell on a sentence that I knew well, but this time I recognized it as a great truth. The sentence is a question, and it goes: "He who formed the eye, should he not see? He who planted the ear, should he not hear?" What a sentence! What a question! I learned from the Darwinists how the organ of vision can come into being: through light stimuli, I remembered. But, I asked myself suddenly, who invented seeing? [. . .] I felt my atheism falter" (Morgenstern, Soma, *In einer anderen Zeit: Jugendjahre in Ostgalizien*, ed. Ingolf Schulte, Lüneburg 1995, 303).

This singular return to Judaism, to exile, based on quite a peculiar reading of Psalm 94, calls for much commentary. Ignoring the actual atmosphere of the psalm, in which a vengeful god threatens wayward unbelievers, Morgenstern avoids the specific warning given there – God sees and hears just like any human; he will perceive it if you deviate from the law. Morgenstern sees not the moral warning, hears not the promise of punishment. Instead, a ray of creation reaches out from Genesis to illuminate this late verse. His glance falls on an aspect of the verse not strictly in the verse. From it, for him, the truth of seeing shines forth. Seeing does not come to be (*entstehen*), instead it is invented (*erfunden*) (ibid., 304). It does not originate in an organic but in an historical act, the first historical act, the opening of history. To be sure, the concepts of return and exile make little sense in evolutionary history. What arises like the eye out of a set of mutations or as responses to external stimuli could never offer the purity and stability of a starting place from which one can be exiled and subsequently return. In evolution there is a continuum of contingencies. Morgenstern's return to the "big truth" of theology from the little truths of science and philosophy constitutes a return to the potential for return, first a return to a historical conception of life, then a redefinition of life as exile, which requires a true vision of what there is to be returned to.

Yet the promise of the return from one account of the genesis of life to another is hardly redeemed, for this convert. His personal revelation about the true origins of sight gets almost blotted out in the trilogy of novels Morgenstern begins to write in the 1930s. There, the only sources of light are the *Funken im Abgrund*, the sparks in the abyss that give the trilogy its name. The three books narrate the journey of a youth who abruptly decides to stop being a "Yid" and start being a "Jew," leaving his irreligious life in Vienna for the Galician town and Hasidic practices of his grandfather – a return to a religion he had never known, except in stories. The title of the second volume sums up the hopes pinned on this move: *Idyll in Exile*. To reiterate, exile is what he returns to, leaving behind redemptionless modern city life and embracing the rural idyll in which one prepares for redemption. In the novel things do not remain idyllic for long. Instead of an ideal rural life and proximity to God, the youth enters a bloody conflict between Ukrainians and Jews on one side, and Poles on the other. The failed return to exile then ends with a plea for a purer return to come, in a land purportedly without any internal politics of its own, that is, in Palestine. The decline of the exile idea becomes ever more evident in later titles. A clear narrative arc can be read in Morgenstern's oeuvre. First the hope-inflected trilogy *Sparks in the*

Abyss shows a return from exile among the gentiles to the proper exile of the rustic Hasidim. This return is a failure, but hope is rekindled in the idea of Palestine. The trilogy is interrupted by World War II, after which Morgenstern writes *Die Blutsäule: Zeichen und Wunder am Sereth,* published in English as *The Third Pillar* in 1955, in effect the death knell for this hope. Later, dismayed even with this, his "book of the dead," in the 1960s Morgenstern makes a final attempt at a novel, in which he registers his second failure and the stubborn persistence of the exile idea. He calls it *Death is a Flop.*

III

Footnote 3 in the chimerical article on the uses of "Exil" appears in a paragraph on Anna Seghers, in a line about her story, "Der Ausflug der toten Mädchen."

> In exile the narrator withdraws completely from the world historical stage, such that memories become especially vivid and mix with dreams.[3]

[3] The exile who, in returning or thinking of return, in place of a nation full of kith and kin or at least compatriots, finds corpses or ghosts instead appears at first to offer an antidote to the triumphant tone and the dialectic of the emigrant that arise around the word "Exil." Return becomes its own catastrophe and mourning replaces triumph. Ghosts and ruins, however, can preserve and support the ideal image of the nation, insofar as they represent the specific annihilation of this ideal, symbolized in particular individuals. In this way a return to dead friends and family is still a return, even if as a wish-fulfillment. In Seghers' story, nostalgia embalms the narrator's school days. From her exilic remove the childhood scenes appear as prefigurations of her friends' gruesome futures, and the sense of predestination that engulfs the reader, becomes, then, the crowning victory of the nostalgic mood. This use of death, as a sign, the sign of a loss and thus a fixing and preserving use of death, reaches its height in this sense of predestination. Soma Morgenstern's *Blutsäule* could be classed in the genre of death-directed or corpse-obsessed books, and yet it does not allow the comfort of foreknowledge, even retrospectively, and there is little nostalgia for an ideal prior state. Instead of mourning and nostalgia, guilt suffuses the novel, engulfing everyone, almost all of creation. The guilt is not equivalent to legal fault or moral failing,

however. Rather, it is a kind of generalized guilt that extends the regret and implication of wrong even to the act of making a representation. For this reason, perhaps, there is no one single way the book deals with the dead. Bodies litter the street; they fall dramatically at your feet as they do in action movies; they are rumored to be piled in graves; and they appear (and mysteriously disappear) in stylized paintings on the wall and in statues carved from soap. Alain Resnais one moment, Claude Lanzmann another, Quentin Tarantino the next. What's more, whereas Seghers novella illustrates the public price of the catastrophe through payments in personal suffering, Morgenstern's last published novel, in contrast, plays out the drama of a possible reconciliation on a social, moral, and political field.

The action of *Blutsäule* takes place on the very last day of the war, when a division of the German army comes through a Polish town, fleeing in defeat, pursued by Russian soldiers. In the confusion of armies and intentions, history is suspended and a peculiar court of justice is convened. A mysterious messenger summons Jews who lasted out the war in hiding, SS officers and soldiers, priests, tax collectors, and Russian soldiers into the ruins of a synagogue. The setting confirms it: the court is not for judging Nazi crimes; that verdict is already in and, anyway, this is not a court of law, but rather a rabbinical court pursuing the theological meaning of defilement – *Schändung*.

Beyond the shots fired by the Red Army at the SS and the pathetic shots fired by the SS at the remaining Jews, a battle is fought in the text over the meaning of exile, after one traditional Hebrew and Jewish exilic terrain – Europe – has been thoroughly defiled. Exile is already the punishment, we should remember, according to one piece of biblical logic; the next step, whenever it should come, should by rights be redemption. There is no provision for the defilement of exile. As defined in Hasidic lore, leaning on kabalistic teachings, and as embraced by Morgenstern in his earlier returns to religion, exile is the realm in which, although dark – and precisely because it is dark – sparks of shattered paradise, Shekhinah, become available to be gathered. *Funken im Abgrund*: the dilemma begins there, in the title, where it takes the form of an almost abyssal ambivalence. "Sparks in the World" would make sense, but sparks in an abyss are as potentially infinite as the abyss itself. No Tsadik or historical community could collect them all; Shekhinah will be infinitely deferred. Later, in *Blutsäule*, the gesture of collection is blown apart once and for all. Some of the force for the explosion might have gathered

in Paris, on one of the days Benjamin visited Morgenstern in the Hôtel de la Poste, where Morgenstern was living.

Sometime after the Hitler-Stalin pact was signed in August 1939, Morgenstern became the first audience for Benjamin's newly composed theses on the concept of history. In letters written to Gershom Scholem in the 1970s, Morgenstern insists that Benjamin wrote the theses out of shock at Stalin's collusion with Hitler, and, for that reason, Morgenstern considers them first and foremost a rejection of utopian Marxism. "Why should we be the very generation with the luck to experience redemption?" Benjamin asks (Morgenstern, *Kritiken, Berichte, Tagebücher*, 518). The theses, Morgenstern implies, are an exfoliation of this question. Thus, in Benjamin's theses history is still a medium of exile and redemption, to be sure, and the historical materialist comes as redeemer, but the polarity of redemption is inverted. Ripe for redemption are precisely not those who have escaped, been delayed, captured, or otherwise severed from their due, the sparks whose lights still flicker. The word Benjamin uses at a key moment in the earliest manuscript we have of the theses is "unwiederbringlich" (Benjamin, Walter, *Über den Begriff der Geschichte* (*Kritische Gesamtausgabe* 19), ed. Gerard Raulet, Frankfurt/M. 2010, 18). What cannot be brought back is the object of this inverted redemption, so, a redemption that is not equivalent to a return, a redemption that does not bring back a previous state. It is, in this way, a redemption of the unredeemable, which cannot mean salvation of the rightful inheritors of a state or of the world. What can possibly be saved, for the historical materialist, is what was never enshrined in the victory parade of culture and what never, as a result, went into exile. Exile from what? This notion – an exile that has no "from which" – constitutes a rejection of messianicity as it is generally understood. At its most difficult to understand, it calls for, as a later thesis indicates, a concept of the present "die nicht Übergang ist" (ibid., 26). A concept of the present that is not a "transition to" anything beyond it has a baroque shape for Benjamin. Detritus piles up in it; who knows what to do with it.

Morgenstern seems to have half-heard the rather esoteric thoughts behind Benjamin's exclamation: "Why should we be the very generation with the luck to experience redemption?" But only half. Part of this erasure of the future and a past conceived as the future's source seeped into his existence at his New York dead end. In effect the film reels of the camps with which Morgenstern became obsessed forced his messianism – however weak it was, because of his early Hasidism and his late disappointments – to a breaking point: this present could not possibly be

what had been meant. And since the present does not fulfill the past's intention, who would continue to argue that it was going anywhere, especially back to where it had been? The idea of exile suffers a blow, first insofar as so many "sparks" were so savagely darkened, second insofar as the suffering that had been the signpost to redemption overran all bounds, even the bounds of the media charged with recording and expressing suffering, the supposed single languages, German on one side, the language of culture for Morgenstern, and Hebrew, on the other, the language of redemption.

In New York the meaning of exile, even an exile of and to the dead, began to die. The signifying structure of ghost and corpse began to break down. With it, the connection of suffering to evil, as that which had to be overcome for the sake of the good, was finally severed. To be the sensuous form of evil, suffering must be representable, yet the deeds done could not even be portrayed in the rabbinical court. According to *Blutsäule*, to portray them is to join the SS, the *Schänder der Schöpfung*. Thus one cannot even suffer anymore. The idea of suffering belongs to a present that is *Übergang*, transition, transcendence *in potentia*. The end of suffering is parallel to a typical late Morgensternian gesture: hyperbole. He belittles his objects by inflating them almost beyond recognition. "He" did not have "enough language," "Sprache genug," he writes in the introduction to the book, continuing to address himself in this strange retrospective third person, to complete his "book of the dead." He does not overcome it; rather, the lack of language is displayed in the book for all to see, for one thing, in the unwarranted enlarging effect of hyperbole. For this reason, too, he decides or is forced not to write in any national language, or, seen otherwise, he debases, or elevates – depending how you see it – the language of the "Mordbrenner," his own literary foster-mother tongue, German, by writing, as he describes it, "like someone would be able to, who had never read anything else in his whole life except the bible" ["wie es einer vermöchte, der in seinem ganzen Leben nichts anderes gelesen hätte, als die Bibel"] (Morgenstern, *Blutsäule*, 13). The book is written from an impossible position: either from the position of a German who read the Tanakh so exclusively that it overtook his diction, or from the position of a Hasidic Talmudist who spoke only German. Make no mistake: this is not a linguistic analogue of assimilation – or if it is, it is the blasphemous assimilation of German to Hebrew. A new Yiddish, if you will. And yet, as usual, there is a big discrepancy between Morgenstern's hopes and plans and the outcome. The archaic diction, the strained typographical divisions into chapters and verses,

the highly artificial and at the same time sacred and sacralizing diction of this Hebraicized-German or Germanified-Hebrew projects the facts of modern political history, techno-destruction, and race war into a mythic register in which they are not at home. This is one of the ways the new language avoids aestheticizing suffering. In addition to the grotesqueness of the twisted tongue, mourning becomes a show in overdetermined symbols, miracles are narrated as facts, legends are made out of banal town life – myth, moral parable, theological allegory, factual history alternate such that the value of facts and stories never ceases to be put into question. In short, an overflow of significance, a generalized literary and linguistic hyperbole rules the writing: more genres, more devices, more languages. As with the sweet smelling soap corpse, one cannot decide whether to laugh, mourn, or drop the book in disgust. Who would want to cleanse his sins with this? There is a gain here, perhaps not for readers, but for those willing to approach the novel in the mode of reflection. The idea of purity, moral and aesthetic, comes to stink.

A few chapters before the end, the mysterious messenger who called the court to session laments: "The measure of our suffering in exile has become full and overfull." ["Das Maß unseres Leidens in der Verbannung ist voll und übervoll geworden"] (ibid., 142). And he comes to the following conclusion: "We want to pray for and to implore the end of exile, and when we cannot pray for, cannot implore the end, we will force [*ertrotzen*] it. We will break out [*ausbrechen*] of this exile" (ibid.). The word exile, here in Hebrew-German or German-Hebrew a biblical-sounding word, "Die Verbannung," has ceased to persuade us that we were meant, that we are the generation to be redeemed in the future, that this is our exile or that the concept of exile is enough. Suffering and alienation exceed the meaning given to them, loss surpasses the word loss, and no single language is big enough to confront this, certainly not only German or only Hebrew, but not even, as it turns out in practice, the two together, unless by a kind of negative allegory where the whole effort becomes the cancellation of the original intention. To "break out of exile" is the remaining option.

At the very end of the novel, however, Morgenstern turns away from this insight. The whole episode, it is announced, has been the beginning of the true redemption of the Jews. Now that the theological notion of exile has failed, redemption will have to be earthly, political. In Egyptian exile, a pillar of cloud and a pillar of fire showed the way out of captivity. In the secular exodus, a pillar of blood points the way out of the

theological notion of exile, toward, one presumes, although it is not stated, a Zionist state. That one invention of seeing turns out to be a bad invention does not mean that a new invention will also be bad. Despite this implication, Morgenstern himself stays in New York, above New York, as an ex-exile or parasilius, whose Eden is Central Park, what he once called "a prison for trees."

IV

The fourth and final footnote in the article on all the uses and meanings of "Exil" appears in a short section on Jewish writers from eastern Europe, in a scant phrase devoted to Soma Morgenstern's final word on exile, the unfinished novel *Der Tod ist ein Flop*.

> [. . .] a line in Soma Morgenstern's unpublished novel, *Death is a Flop,* exemplifies this position: "death to death" [*Tod dem Tode*] one character proclaims (131).[4]

[4] Let us remark briefly on the attitude of solemnity with which "exile" is sometimes said. In addition to the occasional triumphant tone, the fixation on return, and the hypostasis of loss that sometimes accompany this word, it is often said, and meant, in a solemn, almost funereal, mood.

A masterpiece of ambivalence, Morgenstern's *Der Tod ist ein Flop* takes its title from a sentence exclaimed by the protagonist's publisher. At the opening, the protagonist, Aladar Csanda, a Hungarian novelist living out his exile in a hotel overlooking Central Park, labors over his "Totenbuch," a catalog of writers who committed suicide because they couldn't stand losing their freedom to tyrants. Csanda's publisher, through an elaborate practical joke, persuades Csanda to give up work on his necrologue. "Death is a flop" he chides him. He means books whose topic is death don't sell, but he also implies that death itself goes nowhere – it doesn't deliver on its promises in this world or any other. This turns out to be a highly elaborated philosophy on the publisher's part. Morgenstern's novel is thus the final expiation of exilic messianism from his oeuvre. In the fragments of chapters printed together by the editors of Morgenstern's collected works the quodlibet form reaches a new height. This is a talking novel, a kind of annotated psychoanalytic session in which anecdotes, surreal dreams, rambling monologues, a few foreshortened scenes whose drama never develops, apothegms and discussions

of their significance, diary entries, scholarly lectures, and, once again, theological debates follow one another, if by any logic then by the illogic of association. At a moment of confusion, Csanda describes the kernel of this sort of program: "I have a lot to recount. But I don't yet know how and when I will discover what is important and what is secondary." (Morgenstern, Soma, *Der Tod ist ein Flop*, ed. Ingolf Schulte, Lüneburg 1999, 71.)

In the resulting potpourri, there are several important moments, but they are not identifiable in advance or in any way a consequence of good writing or coherent conceptual structure. In the manuscript of Csanda's *Totenbuch* there is but one good line, according to his publisher. "I have accustomed my eye to blood" ("Ich hab' mein Aug an Blut gewöhnt") (ibid., 18). Just as in *Blutsäule*, the excess of suffering spills over the limits of explanation. "Death is a flop" is only the first attempt to puncture the pomposity of the death cult. The novel goes on to argue, in its messy, overdetermined way, that there should be no symbolic relationship to death at all. All attempts to elevate death beyond a physical event are flops, and in the meantime they are also always means to power. The death cult is a power cult. As an antidote, death must be shown to have no meaning for the living. "Tod dem Tode," "death to death," one of the characters admonishes. Behind this sentiment lies a strong, and at times sorely overstated argument against Christian uses of death. A hidden genealogy in support of the death of death is traced out in Hebrew scriptures. God sentences Adam to death, but gives no further hope (ibid., 127). Despite 400 years of exile, the Hebrews manage to resist the Egyptian death cult (ibid., 98). This resistance becomes part of Jewish prayers in Psalm 115, in which it is said that the Lord does not receive any praise from the dead (ibid., 123). Finally, a quote attributed to Isaiah crowns the argument: "Death is a stain on creation" ("Der Tod ist ein Fleck an der Schöpfung") (ibid., 131). It matters little that this verse is quoted by a Christian prelate, a lay catholic and self-confessed bad theologian. It does matter that it cannot be found in this form in Isaiah; it is an elaboration, an interpretation, almost an interpolation. Over the course of the novel fragments, the cultural-mercantile saying "death is a flop" transforms into the onto-theological curse and false biblical verse "death is a blot on creation." If death is not created, if it is not part of creation, it cannot possibly be part of any divine plan for redemption. This constitutes a repudiation of one belief about the expulsion from paradise, that the death with which humanity was cursed is reversible, that human life is a species of exile and death is a possible return. Paradise, "Edeni," is an

island in the Caribbean where the rich and some intellectuals retire to hear endless Sunday-afternoon lectures on the meaning of Auschwitz.

On the solemn mood that now and then surrounds "Exil," an anecdote about Soma Morgenstern may reinforce the sense that he is an exception. From their earliest meeting in Frankfurt in the 1920s to their final meetings in Marseilles, Morgenstern carried on a debate with Walter Benjamin over the political status of satire. Benjamin maintained, referring to his study of Karl Kraus, that satire was irremediably "a domestic art" ("eine Heimatkunst") (Morgenstern, *Kritiken, Berichte, Tagebücher*, 550). At first this argument convinces the adoptive Viennese Morgenstern. How could Kraus's assaults, his word play, his singular vituperations be understood outside *Wien*? When they debate the question again in France, however, Morgenstern has changed his mind. He now disagrees. There can be a satire that works beyond the *Heimat*, and he hopes to show Benjamin – in exile perhaps, and beyond exile – a satire of and for foreigners, something like a foreign satire, or even a satire of *Heimatkunst*. Morgenstern promises Benjamin that when they meet again in New York they will sit together before perhaps the greatest example of a foreign satire, the Book of Jonah. Whatever Morgenstern might have meant by this, the Jonah story narrates an attempt – short lived as it turns out to be – to escape the cycle of exile and redemption, in short to resist becoming an instrument of divine determinism. A prophet refusing to prophecize denies the present the privilege of becoming an *Übergang*.

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Stranger in Paradise: Erwin Panofsky's Expulsion to the Academic Parnassus

Andreas Beyer

To Willibald Sauerländer

When dealing with biographies, there is little that is more pertinent to this genre than the anecdote, as Giorgio Vasari, the founder of biographical art history in the 16th century, reminds us. When about 25 years ago I was a fellow at the Bibliotheca Hertziana in Rome, I met Richard Krautheimer, the eminent art historian of early Christian Rome, then in his late eighties. After decades in the United States, where he was forced to emigrate in 1933, he had returned to Europe as a guest of honour of the Hertziana for the last years of his life. Together with some other younger colleagues I convinced him to publish a volume of his major articles, written in English after his emigration and that never had appeared in print in German. When I was working on the translation of his very first essay, written in what would become his new mother tongue, I realized that I needed to consult the dictionary much more often than usual when reading in English. I had asked Krautheimer to hand over his old dictionary, with which he had worked when coming to the U.S. And I asserted that behind a great number of words he had adopted there was a note: "antiquated." Outmoded, even at the time Krautheimer was writing. Thus I understood that Krautheimer, who arrived in the United States (at Louisville, Kentucky) age 36, and barely knowing English (English at that time was not part of the curriculum in German high schools), was seeking to root himself in his new linguistic surroundings, mainly by choosing outmoded words, so that people wouldn't think he was just off the boat.

I wanted to start with this anecdote, since it tells a lot about the difficulty of inscribing oneself linguistically in a foreign culture, and, in case of the emigrants, in what was a truly new world for them – or at least for the vast majority of them.

Nothing of this applies to Erwin Panofsky. The art historian, born in 1892 in Hanover (Germany), came to the United States, to New York, for the first time as early as 1931. And his English was excellent – one of the reasons why he exerted dominating influence on the Anglophone humanities.[1] We are in possession of a precious self-portrait, published in 1954,[2] which may count as a reliable source of a German intellectual, coming to the United States as a guest, being then forced to stay and become an immigrant, but in the end a "*citoyen du monde*," with an American passport.

Until now, this autobiographical essay had been more or less the only source from which to learn about Panofsky's American experience

1 As Colin Eisler has aptly summarized: "Teaching and lecturing at many institutions such as Bryn Mawr, Vassar, Harvard, New York University [. . .] Panofsky brought his great scholarship to a wide academic audience [. . .]. Steeped in such ancillary fields as the history of science, literature, philosophy (especially Neo-Platonism), and theology, Panofsky brought any and all of these fields to bear upon whatever area in art or architecture happened to be the object of his fruitful scrutiny. [. . .] Panofsky's influence on American historical scholarship, especially in the realms of literature and musicology, is almost as noteworthy as that upon younger art historians. He was one of the few great scholars who could teach a method, impart a sense of special approach, and communicate a certain utilization and employment of cultural resources through his lectures and writings in such a way that the significance of his oeuvre extended far beyond the particular subject to which he had addressed himself." Eisler, Colin, "Kunstgeschichte American Style: A Study in Migration," in: Donald Fleming/Bernard Bailyn (ed.): *Intellectual Migration. Europe and America 1930–1960*, Cambridge 1969, 544–629, 582f. Laura Fermi has stated: "Among émigré art historians, there are first-rank scholars, their American scholars agree, very important scholars, and others, that deserve a nod. But, the Americans say, Erwin Panofsky is in a class by himself. A man of a delightful wit rooted in the wisdom of two continents, Panofsky imported to this country modern iconology of which he was one of the creators in Germany and for which he revived the old world. It is a method of interpretation of works of art, not only of their forms, but also of the themes developed in them and their symbolic value in the cultural context of their time and place. Panofsky discusses his method and some of its applications in the book *Studies in Iconology* which he published in 1939." Fermi, Laura, *Illustrious Immigrants. The Intellectual Migration from Europe 1930–41*, Chicago, London 1968, 251f. See also Coser, Lewis A., *Refugee Scholars in America. Their Impact and their Experiences*, New Haven, London 1984.

2 Panofsky, Erwin "Three Decades of Art History in the United States: Impressions of a Transplanted European," in: *College Art Journal* 14.1 (1954): 7–27. First published in Neumann, Franz L. et al. (ed.), *The Cultural Migration. The European Scholar in America*, Philadelphia 1953, 82–111.

aside from some essays by William Heckscher and others, which relied, besides personal acquaintance, of course also mainly on Panofsky's own account.[3] But for a couple of years now we have had access to another source that paints a more complex picture and may help to read Panofsky's own account with a critical eye. It is the edition of Panofsky's letters, which are finally available in the spectacular publication of his correspondence, edited since 2001 by Dieter Wuttke.[4] From this, we will understand that there is a "public" persona who writes to an American audience in his autobiographical essay, and a private one, whose letters provide us with a more complicated view.

In his essay Panofsky reports:

> I first came to this country in the fall of 1931 upon the invitation of New York University. I was then professor of the history of art at Hamburg; and since this Hanseatic city was always proud of its cosmopolitan tradition, the authorities were not only glad to grant me a leave of absence for one semester but subsequently consented to an arrangement whereby I was permitted to spend alternate terms in Hamburg and New York. Thus for three successive years I commuted, as it were, across the Atlantic. And when the Nazis ousted all Jewish officials in the spring of 1933, I happened to be in New York while my family was still at home [actually, Panofsky was ejected on September 30, 1933 as "Non-aryan" from the University of Hamburg, AB]. I fondly remember the receipt of a long cable in German, informing me of my dismissal but sealed with a strip of green paper which bore the inscription "Cordial Easter Greetings, Western Union." These greetings proved to be a good omen. I returned to Hamburg only in order to wind up my private affairs [. . .] and thanks to the selfless efforts of my American friends and colleagues, unforgettable and unforgotten, we could establish ourselves at Princeton as early as 1934.[5]

In fact, Art history departments did hire German scholars long before Hitler: Adolph Goldschmidt for example taught in Harvard in 1921, and 1927, and in New York in 1930.[6] Panofsky held on-going lectureships

3 Heckscher, William S., "Erwin Panofsky: A Curriculum Vitae," in: *Record of the Art Museum, Princeton University* 28.1 (1969): 5–22. See also Reudenbach, Bruno (ed.), *Erwin Panofsky. Beiträge des Symposiums in Hamburg 1992*, Berlin 1994, and Picht, Barbara, *Erzwungener Ausweg. Hermann Broch, Erwin Panofsky und Ernst Kantorowicz im Princetoner Exil*, Darmstadt 2008.

4 Panofsky, Erwin, *Korrespondenz 1910 bis 1968. Eine kommentierte Auswahl in fünf Bänden*, ed. Dieter Wuttke, Wiesbaden 2001–2011.

5 Panofsky, *Three Decades*, 7f.

6 For other names see Eisler, "Kunstgeschichte American Style," 557.

at New York University and Princeton, joined the newly created faculty of humanities of the Institute for Advanced Study in 1935, and continued to teach in various places with "special regularity" in Princeton and New York. Panofsky continues in his self-portrait:

> I am telling all this in order to make it perfectly clear that my experiences in this country are somewhat atypical in regard to both opportunities and limitations. [. . .] I had the good fortune of coming to the United States as a guest rather than refugee; and, be it said with deepest gratitude, no one has ever made me feel the difference when my status suddenly changed in 1933.[7]

Panofsky has compared his exile from Nazi-Germany to an expulsion to paradise.[8] It seems that this comparison was quite common.[9] And in fact, if paradise is the opposite of hell, then America in the thirties was a paradise indeed when compared to Nazi Germany. But of course it was Panofsky's position at the Centre for Advanced Study in Princeton in particular, this academic Parnassus in the midst of the green meadows of New Jersey, that must have appeared to him as a veritable Arcadia.

As for the language problem and his discipline, Panofsky states:

> Though rooted in a tradition that can be traced back to the Italian Renaissance and, beyond that, to classical antiquity, the history of art – that is to say, the historical analysis and interpretation of man-made objects to which we assign a more than utilitarian value, as opposed to aesthetics, criticism,

7 Panofsky, *Three Decades*, 8.

8 In a letter to Pia Wilhelm (September 3, 1950) he states: "Wie es uns hier nach der Vertreibung ins Paradies ergangen ist, wird Ihnen Herr Hekscher wohl angedeutet haben." Warburg Archiv Hamburg, Warburg Haus, Fasc. 159. I would like to express my gratitude to Prof. Martin Warnke (Hamburg) for drawing my attention to this passage. See also Panofsky, *Korrespondenz* 3, 66. Concerning Hamburg instead, Panofsky wrote in a letter to Walter Clemens (November 16, 1965): "und Hamburg hat in unseren Gedanken stets die Rolle eines Paradise Lost gespielt." ("and Hamburg always played in our thoughts the role of a paradise lost.") Erwin Panofsky, Letter to Walter Clemens (November 16, 1965), unpublished, Hamburg Library for University History (HBfUG), in: Rainer Nicolaysen/ Eckart Krause (ed.), *Zum Gedenken an Erwin Panofsky*, Hamburger Universitätsreden Neue Folge 17, Hamburg 2009, 103.

9 See Heilbutt, Anthony, *Exiled in Paradise: German Refugee Artists and Intellectuals in America, from the 1930s to the Present*, New York 1983, and Panofsky, *Korrespondenz* 3, 66, n. 10.

> connoisseurship and "appreciation" on the one hand, and to purely antiquarian studies on the other – is a comparatively recent addition to the family of academic disciplines. And it so happens that, as an American scholar expressed it, "its native tongue is German." It was in the German-speaking countries that it was first recognized as a full-fledged *Fach*, that it was cultivated with particular intensity, and that it exerted an increasingly noticeable influence upon adjacent fields, including even its elder and more conservative sister, classical archaeology. The first book to flaunt the phrase "history of art" on its title page was Winckelmann's *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums* of 1764, and the methodological foundations of the new discipline were laid in Karl Friedrich von Rumohr's *Italienische Forschungen* of 1827. [. . .] In emphasizing these facts I feel myself free from what may be suspected as retroactive German patriotism. I am aware of the dangers inherent in what has been described as "Teutonic" methods in the history of art and of the fact that the results of the early, perhaps too early, institutionalization of the discipline (a full professorship was established 1813, at Göttingen and the university chairs in Germany, Austria and Switzerland rapidly multiplied) were not always desirable. [. . .] But the fact remains that at the time of the Great Exodus in the 1930's the German speaking countries still held the leading position in the history of art – except for the United States of America.[10]

And he continues on the phenomena of language:

> In view of what has been said about the history of our discipline, it was inevitable that the vocabulary of art historical writing became more complex and elaborate in the German-speaking countries than anywhere else and finally developed into a technical language which – even before the Nazis made German literature unintelligible to uncontaminated Germans – was hard to penetrate. There are more words in our philosophy than are dreamt of in heaven and earth, and every German-educated art historian endeavouring to make himself understood in English had to make up his own dictionary. In doing so he realized that his native terminology was either unnecessarily recondite or downright imprecise; the German language unfortunately permits a fairly trivial thought to declaim from behind a woolen curtain of apparent profundity and, conversely, a multitude of meanings to lurk behind one term. The word *taktisch*, for example, normally denoting "tactical" as opposed to "strategic," is used in art historical German as an equivalent of "tactile" or even "textural" as well as "tangible" or "palpable" [. . .]. In short, when speaking or writing in English, even an art historian must more or less know what he means and mean what he says, and this compulsion was exceedingly wholesome for all of us. [. . .] Forced

10 Panofsky, *Three Decades*, 8f.

> to express ourselves both understandably and precisely, and realizing, not without surprise, that it could be done, we suddenly found the courage to write books on whole masters or whole periods instead of – or besides – writing a dozen specialized articles [. . .].[11]

Nonetheless, in a letter from July 16, 1938 to Bernhard Flexner, Panofsky states:

> To a physicist or a mathematician it does not matter so much as to a humanist, who finds himself in a real quandary. With him the stylistic formulation is an integral part of the meaning he tries to convey. Consequently, when he writes himself in a language other than his own, he will hurt the reader's ear by unfamiliar words, rhythms and constructions; when he has his text translated, he will address his audience wearing a wig and a false nose.[12]

Karen Michels has rightly stated that the question of the loss of language – even though it is mentioned continuously in the letters of the emigrants – has never been studied systematically. She has started with this question and has shown that, in the translation of Paul Frankl's book on the Gothic art, for example, much has been scarified: "'Raumbild' (which may be translated as 'image of the interior') became 'view of space,' 'Joche' turned into 'axes,' 'Dornenkrönung' into the 'crowning with the thorns.'"[13] In a famous review, Nikolaus Pevsner, a German émigré to England and soon a master of the new language, has pointed out these misunderstandings that, in a way, were equal to a partial destruction of the book and stated: "Not nonsense, but sense lost in transit."[14]

The British art historian Anthony Blunt once remarked in conversation that he learned the German language just in order to be able to speak more subtly on architecture; and it is true that German has a more refined vocabulary than any other language for describing the art of building. Yet it is also true, that new linguistic dimensions were conquered. When his book, *The King's Two Bodies*, was translated into English, its author, Ernst

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11 Ibid., 14.

12 Michels, Karen, *Transplantierte Kunstwissenschaft. Die Deutschsprachige Kunstgeschichte im amerikanischen Exil*, Berlin 1999, 119.

13 Michels, *Transplantierte Kunstwissenschaft*, 119–127, 123.

14 Pevsner, Nikolaus, "The Gothic System," review of Paul Frankl, *The Gothic*, in: *Times Literary Supplement*, April 7, 1961, 209.

Kantorowicz, happily noted that in English you can distinguish between heaven and sky, that is, between a theological and a natural phenomenon, whereas in German there is just one word for it, *Himmel*. It is the same in French: *le ciel*.[15] What would current *Bildwissenschaft* do without the distinction between picture and image – possible in English, but not in German or French. And even though Panofsky has declared German to be the mother tongue of art history, he declined to write in German after he emigrated to the U.S. With only a few exceptions, he never returned to his native German.

But besides the new horizons that English opened to Panofsky's writing, it was the recent development of art history in the U.S. that attracted him:

> No European scholar – least of all the Germans and Austrians who, whatever may be said against them, were less afraid of foreign literature than most Italians and nearly all Frenchmen – could remain blind to the fact that the United States had emerged as a major power in the history of art; and that, conversely, the history of art had assumed a new, distinctive physiognomy in the United States.[16]

Panofsky characterized the discipline's new consistency on the other side of the Atlantic as genuinely linked to the fact that the United States turned towards the Old World in a spirit both of "possessiveness and impartial observation:" "Coming into its own after the First World War, American art history drew strength from what would have been a weakness twenty or thirty years before: from the cultural and geographical distance from Europe."[17] According to Panofsky, the American art historian's perspective on the past "was undistorted by national and regional bias"[18] and to be

> immediately and permanently exposed to an art history without provincial limitations in time and space, and to take part in the development of a discipline still animated by a spirit of youthful adventurousness, brought perhaps the most essential gains which the immigrant scholar could reap from his transmigration.[19]

15 Michels, *Transplantierte Kunstwissenschaft*, 126.
16 Panofsky, *Three Decades*, 11.
17 Panofsky, *Three Decades*, 12.
18 Ibid., 13.
19 Ibid., 13f.

In a letter to Margaret Barr (his lifelong friend and wife of Alfred Barr, the founding director of the Museum of Modern Art in New York), written September 8, 1933, he summarizes:

> Curiously enough, my whole attitude towards the problems of the future has very much changed during these days. Formerly (you will understand this quite easily) I felt a kind of horror at the thought of living in America forever, because life is pretty hard over there and somewhat sterile as far as "art and culture" is concerned. Now, thanks to you, I am almost convinced that, in a way, a "déraciné" could find a new home (which means: a feeling of being wanted) in America more easily than in Europe. The other European countries are "adult countries," that is to say they have developed a culture and a scientific method and also (what is most important) a general human attitude which is mature, finished and somehow "closed." They would receive a foreigner with hospitality and even kindness [. . .], but would not meet him half-way, so to speak: he would have to adapt himself completely to the indigenous culture "encombrée par une tradition" (and I am certainly too old, and probably too "German" for that, in spite of my much-maligned race), unless he would remain an isolated outsider for all his life. America however, is still in a state of mouldable plasticity, not only willing to give but also to take, and I could imagine that a person like me could be more useful to the American students than to the English or French, and could establish a kind of dynamic relation to other human beings more easily.[20]

This experience of the American culture as being totally opposed to the European tradition that made the art historian of the Old World "at

20 Panofsky, *Korrespondenz* 1, 638. See also De Baets, Antoon, "Exile and Acculturation: Refugee Historians since the Second World War," in: *The International History Review* 28.2 (2006): 316–349. Also in other regards Panofsky reacted to his new surroundings. His essay "On Movies" (which appeared in 1936 and was awarded a price for its excellent English prose) laid the foundations to a theory of films – and is still highly appreciated among film-scholars. Panofsky's affinity to films is explicable considering his predilection for the figurative, that is, for the narrative. And he didn't see contemporary art succeeding in the traditional formats (such as painting or sculpture), and thought film to be the appropriate instrument for the avant-garde. In fact, he has repeatedly insisted and helped to install a film-library at the Museum of Modern Art. Panofsky had already reacted to the art of film while still in Germany, with its flourishing film production between the wars. But film was of course also the genuine and arising art of the United States at that time, and taking comfort by going to the movies is usually the occupation of the lonesome person. See Bredekamp, Horst, "On Movies. Erwin Panofsky zwischen Rudolf Arnheim und Walter Benjamin," in: Thomas Koebner et al. (ed.), *Bildtheorie und Film*, Munich 2006, 231–252.

once bewildered, electrified, and elated"[21] determined Panofsky's view of what would become his home country even before his definite emigration. As early as in 1932 in a letter to his wife Dora (February 1, 1932) he wrote:

> By the way, I have finally found the key-word of the American culture (and may be that of the modern-mechanical culture on the whole). It is "Why not?" Suddenly I have understood the sense of the way of questioning that is usually adopted here, starting from the conventional invitation "Why don't you have dinner with me tomorrow?" and finishing with the 'love-declaration:' "Why don't you sleep with me tonight?" The European man, bound to traditions, does something when he sees or accepts a necessity, be it rational or emotional. The American man does something when he sees no reason against it. This explains on the one hand the truly admirable activity, the willingness to assimilate everything new, to see hundreds of possibilities, where we see just one or even none, on the other hand it explains the lack of purpose and style of the cultural life and the dreadful food. "Pineapple with mayonnaise?" – Why not? "The fugues for organ by Bach transcribed for orchestra?" – Why not? "The pincer-shaped ornament of the monument for Theodoric the Great in six-fold scale on the façade of the Ziegfeld-Follies [. . .] – Why not?" Of course there are very good reasons against all that, but until the Americans (en masse) will understand them, there probably won't exist any Europeans anymore to explain them to them.[22]

Panofsky's contribution to the discipline of the history of art is seminal and varied. But it is the term "Iconology" that is without a doubt the

21 Panofsky, *Three Decades*, 12.

22 "Übrigens habe ich jetzt endlich das Schlüsselwort der amerikanischen (vielleicht überhaupt der modern-maschinellen) Kultur gefunden. Es heisst 'Why not?' Es ist mir plötzlich der Sinn der Frageform aufgegangen, die hier üblich ist, beginnend von der konventionellen Einladung 'Why don't you have dinner with me tomorrow?' und endend mit der 'Liebeserklärung:' 'Why don't you sleep with me tonight?' Der europäische, traditionsgebundene Mensch tut etwas, wenn er die Notwendigkeit fühlt oder einsieht, sei sie rational oder emotional; der amerikanische Mensch tut etwas, wenn er keinen Gegengrund sieht. Das erklärt auf der einen Seite die ernstlich bewundernswerte Aktivität, die Bereitschaft, alles Neue zu assimilieren, 100 Möglichkeiten zu sehen, wo wir nur eine oder gar keine sehen – auf der anderen Seite natürlich die Ziel= und Stil=Losigkeit des kulturellen Lebens und die furchtbare Küche. 'Ananas und Mayonaise' – Why not? 'Bachs Orgelfugen für Orchester übertragen?' – Why not? 'Das Zangenornament vom Grabmal Theoderichs des Grossen in 6fachem Massstab an der Fassade der Ziegfeld-Follies (wo die 'girls gestartet werden') – Why not? Natürlich giebt es gegen alles das sehr gute Gegengründe; aber bis die Amerikaner (en masse) diese verstehen, giebt es vermutlich keine Europäer mehr, die sie ihnen erklären könnten." Panofsky, *Korrespondenz* 1, 482. Translation mine, AB.

most famous term associated with him. Iconology is usually regarded as a method created by Erwin Panofsky and the circle around the "Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg" in Hamburg, and then developed particularly by the German-speaking emigrants in the United States. It links images (icon) to knowledge/words (logos) and was mainly applied to the study of renaissance and baroque art, its complexity making its subject matter difficult to decipher easily. Aby Warburg's famous conference on the Palazzo Schifanoia in Ferrara, held in Rome in 1912, is usually regarded as the founding moment of iconology, but even if Warburg used the term here for the first time, he himself is not so closely associated with this method. Panofsky and Fritz Saxl developed it and linked it even more closely to art:[23]

> (Panofsky) sought consistently to place individual works of art in relation to what he took to be an underlying aspect of the human situation, the reciprocity between "objectivity" – our receptive relation to the external world – and "subjectivity" – the constructive activity of our thought. [. . .] In 1939 he published *Studies in Iconology: Humanist Themes in the Art of the Renaissance*. [. . .] The introduction offers the much discussed distinction between iconography and iconology; the first elucidates the subject-matter of works by reference to literary sources and traditions of imagery, while the second sets out to detect the "underlying tendency of the human mind," the philosophical attitude that informs the work and is traced by locating it within its "cultural cosmos."[24]

At the same time, the iconological method turned out to be a veritable political program, shielded against the contemporary forms of nationalism and particularly against Nazi Germany.[25] As Colin Eisler put it:

> Through meticulous yet imaginative scholarship, Warburg and his associates showed the intricate web of thought and faith that linked Europe

23 Beyer, Andreas, "78 Jahre danach – Bemerkungen zur Geistes-Gegenwart der Ikonologie," in: Horst Bredekamp et al. (ed.), *Aby Warburg. Akten des internationalen Symposiums Hamburg 1990*, Weinheim 1991, 269–279.

24 Podro, Michael, "Erwin Panofsky," in: Jane Turner (ed.), *The Dictionary of Art*, London, New York 1996, 16–17; cf. Podro, Michael, *Critical Historians of Art*, New Haven 1982, 178–217; Holly, Michael Ann, *Panofsky and the Foundations of Art History*, Ithaca 1984.

25 Bredekamp, Horst, "Götterdämmerung des Neuplatonismus," in: Andreas Beyer (ed.), *Die Lesbarkeit der Kunst. Zur Geistes-Gegenwart der Ikonologie*, Berlin 1992, 75–83.

> after the fall of the Roman Empire, providing a resilient, closely-reasoned skein of arguments for the grain of truth in the overblown, chauvinistic claims made by the racist, demagogic elements in German art history.[26]

Karen Michels has convincingly shown that Adolf Katzenellenbogen studied the medieval concept of morality as it appeared in the allegories of vices and virtues, that is, in a time when ethical values degenerated, as applied to his own time. And the same is true for the studies of Rudolf Wittkower's seminal study, *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism* (1949), or the books of Edgar Wind or William Heckscher. Iconology thus became a "disguised" political statement, even though it was only Edgar Wind who realized that such a form of political dedication was quite ineffective.[27] Also the emigrant's concentration on monographs (Panofsky's important *Albrecht Dürer*, from Princeton 1943, for example) can be taken as a form of cultural self-assurance in the foreign parts and as compensation, as an attempt of individual self-assertion. Didn't Ovid write his finest Latin verses in Tomis, in his exile at the Black Sea; and didn't Erich Auerbach write his principal work, *Mimesis* (1946) in his Turkish exile – even without a library at hand?

But there is more to it. Besides these political implications and dimensions, the emigrants (and Erwin Panofsky in particular) found in the United States an environment where both art and history were not omnipresent – as was the case in Europe, the Old World. But already when teaching and developing his iconological approach in Hamburg, Panofsky was somehow removed from the arts as well. At least from those works of art he was interested in studying. Maybe one could see this as a kind of requirement for a method that deals with content more than with form. In this regard, an entirely hitherto unpublished letter to his student Heinz Brauer from June 11, 1929, is indicative. Panofsky asks the student, then in Rome, "[. . .] to go once again to the Palazzo di Firenze" and to provide him with

> a short description of the composition, out of which [. . .] I will presumably learn without further ado, to which type the Zucchi-Painting belongs. The best would be, if you could simply answer the following questions:
> 1) Are the three persons approximately arranged in the centre of the painting) [yes]
> 2) Is Hercules in the centre? [no, on the right]

26 Eisler, "Kunstgeschichte American Style," 562f.

27 Michels, *Transplantierte Kunstwissenschaft*, 145–163.

3) Do the women simply talk at him or do they use brute force? [only the first]
4) Is Hercules standing or sitting? [standing]
[. . .]
If I will know this, then I can, I think, categorize the painting even before receiving a photograph [. . .].[28]

Panofsky declared himself to be eclectic. He didn't see himself as an innovator, but mainly as a scholar who tried to salvage the traditions of the 19th and 20th centuries. As Martin Warnke has rightly pointed out, this also means that the eclectic has the inclination to reflect his or her own *metier* up to its dissolution.[29] This letter might encourage the skepticism that Panofsky's work has always encountered, particularly among his German colleagues. He was suspected of working merely with his

28 "Lieber Brauer! In der Voraussicht, dass die Anfertigung der Photographie nach dem Hercules-Bild Zucchis noch einige Zeit in Anspruch nehmen wird, und andererseits bedrängt durch Teubners augenblickliche Drucklust (die man nicht unbenutzt vorübergehen lassen darf), möchte ich Sie bitten, doch, wenn es Ihre Zeit erlaubt, noch einmal in den Palazzo di Firenze zu gehen und mir eine kurze Beschreibung der Komposition zu liefern, aus der ich, da das übrige Material ziemlich komplett sein dürfte, wahrscheinlich ohne weiteres ersehen kann, welchem Typus das Zucchi-Bild angehört. Am besten wäre es, wenn Sie einfach folgende Fragen beantworten würden: 1. Befinden sich die drei Personen annähernd in einer Bildebene? (*handwritten answer:* ja) 2. Ist Herkules in der Mitte? (*handwritten answer*: nein rechts) 3. Reden die Damen nur auf ihn ein, oder gebrauchen sie auch Brachialgewalt? (*handwritten answer*: nur ersteres) 4. Steht oder sitzt Hercules? (*handwritten answer*: steht) 5. Wie sind die beiden Damen angezogen und frisiert? (insbesondere: Hat die Voluptas etwa goldene Sandalen und die Virtus nackte Füsse?) 6. Ist die Hintergrundlandschaft auf Seiten der beiden weiblichen Figuren charakteristisch verschieden? (insbesondere: sieht man hinter der Virtus einen steilen Berg mit Tugendtempel oder dergleichen?) Wenn ich über diese Punkte Bescheid weiss, kann ich, glaube ich, das Bild schon vor Eingang der Photographie unterbringen, besonders, wenn Sie etwa noch so gut wären, eine ungefähre Gesamtskizze beizufügen. Verzeihen Sie die Mühe, die ich Ihnen wieder einmal mache; aber diesmal haben Sie es sich selber zuzuschreiben. Mit vielem Dank im voraus und in der Hoffnung, Sie im Juli wiederzusehen, bin ich stets Ihr alter Panofsky." The original of the letter is in possession of Prof. Dr. Titus Heydenreich (Erlangen). This quotation follows the copy, conserved in the Warburg Archiv, Warburg Haus Hamburg, Fasc. 1955. See also Warnke, Martin, "Erwin Panofsky – Kunstgeschichte als Kunst," in: Nicolaysen, *Zum Gedenken*, 41–78, 45. Translation Mine, AB. The work of art in question is today thought to be a work of Prospero Fontana.

29 Warnke, *Panofsky*, 50f.

intellect, with rational categories, far from the sensual impact, or agency of the works of art. His method, the iconology, was attacked, because it was "lacking" the character of form and the experience of the senses.[30] Panofsky, and this is one of the accusations, had enriched the "knowledge of erudition" but thus not the knowledge of truth,[31] and never succeeded in making understandable the peculiarity of a work of art since he didn't take the proper logic of art seriously enough.[32] And his language (based more on erudition and less on aesthetic overwhelming) is the best example for this, since it tries to avoid any expression that links his thoughts to the *Erlebnis*, the sensual experience. But not only German colleagues distanced themselves from Panofsky, his method encountered resistance in the English-speaking world as well.[33]

Yet there is no doubt that Panofsky had understood (as far as 1932) that for his way of dealing with art, the United States might provide the ideal surrounding. What he described in his letter to Margaret Barr, quoted before, was already his conviction before his emigration: In a letter to Dora Panofsky from New York (February 1, 1932) he states:

> And basically I have to say that here in general [. . .] I find much more understanding for our private follies than I ever expected. Particularly because people here are not so strongly accustomed to the way Wölfflin and Pinder treat art it is easier for them to appreciate and affirm our methods that include the subject matter and the general spiritual aspects. [. . .] the two Barrs and many others comprehend without any further ado that formal analysis is only half part the issue; I have *never* heard the objection of Bruno Cassirer "very nice, but what has it to do with *art*?" In this case, the lack of "tradition" is a *facilitation* of communication.[34]

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30 Forssmann, Erik, "Ikonologie und allgemeine Kunstgeschichte," in: *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und Allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft* 11 (1966): 132–169, reprinted in: Ekkehard Kaemmerling (ed.), *Ikonographie und Ikonologie. Bildende Kunst als Zeichensystem* 1, Cologne 1979, 257–300, 293. See also Warnke, "Panofsky," 51.

31 See Dittmann, Lorenz, "Zur Kritik der kunstwissenschaftlichen Symboltheorie," in: Kaemmerling, *Ikonographie*, 329–352, 337.

32 Pächt, Otto, "Panofsky's 'Early Netherlandish Painting,'" in: *Burlington Magazine* 98 (1956): 110–116 and 267–279. On Otto Pächt's criticism of Panofsky's method see Warnke, "Panofsky," 52 and Sauerländer, Willibald, "'Barbari ad portas:' Panofsky in den fünfziger Jahren," in: Bruno Reudenbach (ed.), *Erwin Panofsky: Beiträge des Symposiums 1992*, Berlin 1994, 123–137, 135.

33 See Sauerländer, "Barbari," 123–137.

34 "Überhaupt muß ich sagen, daß ich hier im Allgemeinen (wie ich auch neulich an die B.[ibliothek] W.[arburg] schrieb) für unsere Privat=Verrücktheiten viel mehr Verständnis gefunden habe, als ich je erwartet hätte. Gerade weil die

With Heinrich Wölfflin and Wilhelm Pinder, Panofsky was referring to the school of formal art criticism. Wölfflin was not concerned with a detailed historical inquiry but with discovering general principles of interpreting the visual appearance of works of art, their proper logics, as developed masterly in his "Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe" (1915). Wilhelm Pinder, who mainly worked on German art of the late Middle Ages, developed a theory of generations in art history, which attributed the complexity of a period's style to the interaction between aging and maturing artists. All this based on close formal reading and visual expertise.[35]

For Panofsky's approach, the direct contact with the work of art might have been less indispensable. Therefore, the cultural "vacuum" that he encountered in the United States, that "lack of tradition," facilitated and even encouraged Panofsky's methodological approach, which needed distance and freedom from academic constraints. Here Panofsky both felt free from the overpowering presence of the works of art in their material consistency and from European academic art historical practice, linked to the eye more than to the thought. What then is paradise? If it is the opposite to hell, it is not a mirror-image of the world. It describes a vacuum, a place that needs no adaptation or assimilation, a place of unconditioned welcome and paradise also in so far as it is the place of unconditioned creation.

Leute hier nicht so stark in die Wölfflin-Pinder-Anschauung hineingewachsen sind, haben sie es leichter, unsere, das Inhaltliche und allgemein Geistige miteinbeziehenden Methoden sachlich zu würdigen und zu bejahen. [. . .] die beiden Barrs und viele andere, begreifen ohne weiteres, daß Formal=Analyse nur eine Hälfte der Sache ist; ich habe *nie* den Bruno Cassirerschen Einwand gehört 'sehr nett; aber was hat das mit *Kunst* zu tun?' In diesem Falle ist der Mangel an 'Tradition' eine *Erleichterung* der Verständigung." Panofsky, *Korrespondenz* 1, 481–482. Translation mine, AB.

35 When Panofsky is writing in 1932 and taking his distance here, he is not referring to Wilhelm Pinder as a political persona but to his formal approach. Pinder should in fact shortly after become one of the favorite art historians of the National Socialist rule.

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The Flight Into Orgonomy: Wilhelm Reich in New York

John T. Hamilton

Exile invariably becomes a test of understanding:

> *31 January 1940.* I don't understand New York. People promise much but don't keep the promise. They seem to show tremendous interest in new matters, but they don't do anything about it. As everywhere, not take and give, but take where you get, and give where it is demanded, seems to rule. They talk so much about psychosomatic research. I believe in its seriousness. But when it comes, they don't seem to grasp it.[1]

Initially, the problem is mutual. The failure to understand is but an expression of frustration over others' incapacity to comprehend. Five months after descending the gangplank of the *Stavenger Fjord* in New York Harbor – the last ship to leave Norway before the war broke out – Wilhelm Reich experienced enough broken promises to lead him into renewed despair.[2] His exasperated metonymy, letting "New York" stand for those encountered in the city, suggests a dead end or fatigued surrender. All the same, the urge to press on did not abate. Well-installed in his townhouse in Forest Hills, he diligently continued to prepare his first course at the New School for Social Research on "Biological Aspects of Character Formation," while conducting daily biophysical experiments in his cramped basement laboratory. Typically, the exile confronts hardship by immersing himself in work, even if no one is there to grasp its significance. Psychoanalysis would call it sublimation, were it not for

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1 Reich, Wilhelm, *American Odyssey: Letters and Journals 1940–1947*, ed. M. B. Higgins, New York 1999, 8f.

2 For biographical information I have relied mainly on Ollendorff Reich, Ilse, *Wilhelm Reich: A Personal Biography*, New York 1969; Boadella, David, *Wilhelm Reich: The Evolution of his Work*, London 1973; and Sharaf, Myron, *Fury on Earth: A Biography of Wilhelm Reich*, New York 1983/1994.

the fact that this "psychosomatic research," as Reich's critics perniciously reiterated, hardly constituted a desexualization.

The prophet's gospel of genital gratification as the sole panacea for every individual and societal ill was consistently met with suspicion. In New York, at the age of forty-two, the notorious psychoanalyst, already dubbed the "orgasm king,"[3] no doubt sensed a pattern that fatefully came to define his career: a series of relocations aimed to remedy, but ultimately serving to introduce fresh, misunderstandings. In Vienna it required hardly any time at all before the prodigy from Galicia was expelled from the scientific community. Despite or perhaps because of his young age, Reich was at first charitably accepted into Freud's inner sanctum only to be decisively banished as an apostate. Like Adler and Jung before him, Reich was ultimately portrayed as a serious risk to the movement. Whether it was his fervor for the Communist Party, his obstinate insistence on the healing effects of sexual orgasm, or his reservations concerning standard methodology, the whizz kid quickly became a problem child who was compelled to move to Berlin to pursue his sex-political initiatives among Germany's working class. And when the Communists expressed their own misgivings over Reich's heterodox attention to consumption over production, this *Wunderkind* turned *Sorgenkind* fled to Denmark and then to Norway, always in an attempt – and always in vain – to pursue his work among a receptive audience. Before Reich failed to "understand" New York, he had been alienated by every group with which he tried to curry favor: Freudians and anti-Freudians, psychoanalysts and biologists, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, Germans, Norwegians and Soviets. Incomprehension was as ubiquitous as the "orgone energy" he would claim to have discovered in New York; and this persistent disregard habitually triggered Reich's own bewilderment.

New York was apparently yet another locale of failed appreciation, but the city could also be considered a site for new openings. Giving himself over to his reflections within the confines of his Queens fortress, Reich offered sufficient hints of a breakthrough. *They seem to show tremendous interest in new matters, but they don't do anything about it* – The gap comes in the form of a concession, admitting the possibility of subjective distortion, which is discernible in his repeated use of the verb *to seem*: New York *seems* to show interest; opportunism and mechanistic duty

3 See Kornbichler, Thomas, *Flucht nach Amerika: Emigration der Psychotherapeuten*, Stuttgart 2006, 77.

seem to rule; they don't *seem* to grasp it. The possibility that his observations might be prejudiced haunted the researcher's ambitions but also motivated further work. What merely seems to be the case may be otherwise and this possibility is precisely what allows hope. Suspicions and their implicit encouragement would set the rhythm of Reich's progress in his new home.

For Reich, subjective prejudice may have other ramifications beyond leaving open a gap for future recognition. Exactly one year later, Reich met with Einstein in Princeton to demonstrate the energy captured by his "orgonoscope." The "Einstein Affair," as Reich would later dub it, generated a misunderstanding with far-reaching significance. He walked away from an otherwise exhilarating five-hour meeting with the acclaimed physicist's nagging caveat that, although flashes of the hypothesized energy could indeed be perceived in Reich's makeshift instrument, the phenomenon might merely be a subjective effect mistaken to be objectively verifiable reality. "But I see flickering all the time," the gentle scientist is reported to have remarked. "Could it not be subjective?"[4] As Reich subsequently speculated, the potential scientific fallacy of confusing endoscopy for ectoscopy was compounded by the problem that orgone energy pervaded the atmosphere and all forms of organic life. No physical experiment could isolate the phenomenon because it permeated the entirety of existence. Yet this problem also functioned as the theory's confirmation: subjective and objective experiences were in fact *con-fused*, stemming from a common vital force that rendered any division misleading. The cognitive urge to distinguish being from mere perception reflected a fearful denial of a more profound ontology.

To illustrate, Reich frequently turned to a pantheist view by citing from Goethe's *Venetian Epigrams*: "Ist es denn ein großes Geheimnis, was Gott, der Mensch und die Welt sei? / Nein, doch keiner mag es gerne hören, da bleibt es geheim"[5] – "Is it then a great secret what God, mankind and the world may be? / No! But no one likes to hear it, so it remains secret." Reich would argue in good psychoanalytic fashion that the scientific caution to hold on to objectivity is based on discomfort before the

4 Cited in Sharaf, *Fury on Earth*, 286. The meeting with Einstein took place on January 13, 1941. Documents related to the encounter have been collected in a slim volume published by Reich's press, see Reich, Wilhelm, *The Einstein Affair*, Rangeley 1953.

5 Goethe, Johann Wolfgang, "Epigramme. Venedig 1790", in: id., *Werke* 1.1 (Weimarer Ausgabe), Weimar 1999, 322.

uncanny, *das Unheimliche*. The existence of an all-pervasive orgone energy, which overwhelmed the border between individual life and the cosmos, may suffer repression but would nonetheless emerge. Einstein's reservations were in fact nothing other than an expression of fear before this dissolution. As Reich later reported, the scientist conceded that, should the orgone accumulator work as claimed, it would be a "great bombshell."[6] Apparently, there were at least two Manhattan Projects with which to reckon.

It was clear that Reich's journey to America marked an obsession with the mysterious orgone energy and its presumably curative powers. Well before his infamous "cloudbuster," the reverse desertification experiments and the mail-order accumulator boxes, the psychiatrist was suspected of being a quack. Those close to him worried that he might have suffered a complete psychotic break. The few associates whose company Reich enjoyed during his first year in the States similarly balked at Reich's turn to "orgonomy." In particular, Theodore Wolfe and Walter Briehl, two young doctors who had been analyzed and trained by Reich in Europe and who arranged the New School appointment necessary for his visa, judged the recent research to be a perverse departure from the brilliant contributions Reich had made to the field of character analysis. As in Einstein's case, for Reich, such unwillingness to recognize the profundity of his findings, despite the enthusiasm initially expressed, betrayed resistance, a cognitive armor that was structurally analogous to the character armor famously described in his earlier work. Perhaps better than anyone, Reich knew how to deal with this shielded attitude head on.

Reich claims that he cannot understand New York because New York does not understand him. Yet, this mutual miscomprehension can itself be understood in a number of alternative ways. On the one hand, Reich was pained by this failed reception, just as his colleagues were disappointed by their inability to accept the master's approach. On the other hand, as Reich's seminal arguments in *Character Analysis* persuasively demonstrate, understanding itself may be implicated in strategies of resistance. "Intellectual activity can be structured and directed in such a way that it looks like a most cunningly operating apparatus whose purpose is precisely to avoid *cognition*, i.e., it looks like an activity *directing* one *away* from reality."[7] In his clinical work, Reich is particularly leery of patients who exhibit good intellectual understanding and thereby prevent therapy

6 Cited in Sharaf, *Fury on Earth*, 286.

7 Reich, Wilhelm, *Character Analysis* (3rd, enlarged edition), transl. V. R. Carfagno, New York 1945, 306 (emphasis in text).

from causing real change.[8] Understanding presumes a self-detachment bent on controlling emotions. Accordingly, it is with the breakdown of understanding that productive affects surface. Reich describes a telling case: "The patient continued for a while to use his intellect as a defense mechanism, but gradually became insecure and uneasy and finally began to protest violently that I did not want to understand him, that his intellectual help was a clear demonstration of his cooperation."[9] Here, the end of understanding is the beginning of receptivity.

To be sure, from yet another angle, the plight of being misunderstood could reinforce Reich's own defense systems. His well-nourished self-image of being completely alone, which persistently punctuates his diary entries of 1940, certainly contributed to the firm belief in his heroism. This self-representation as the nonconformist, miscomprehended by all, could also be interpreted as an armored position, a pathetic or pathological gesture of self-immurement that would damage the inmate more than protect him. Such a strategy would consign the doctor to the very problem his therapy consistently addressed, namely the problem of "contactlessness" (*Unberührbarkeit*). However, Reich's failure to comprehend his American colleagues does not follow this diagnosis. Rather, one should take into account his emphasis on a particularly American "promise" – *People promise much but don't keep the promise*. What the psychoanalyst specifically cannot figure out is how people like Briehl and Wolfe allow their desire to understand (a promise made) to obstruct true understanding (a promise broken). This oscillation between promising and reneging is arguably what distinguishes Reich's former relationships in Europe from his present frustration in the States. Reich repeatedly asserted that he understood Freud and his associates all too well. We could say that he understood the misunderstandings experienced in Vienna, Berlin and Oslo; but could not understand New York's failure. Thus, his initial experience in New York, characterized by mutual incomprehension, at least held the promise of eventual communication.

This argument bears out when we read another diary entry written just one week later on February 6:

> *1 a.m.* Have had another very great success, a big hit! Held my first lecture, attended by ten psychiatrists from Columbia, students of psychoanalysis.

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8 On this point, see Shapiro, David, "Theoretical Reflections on Wilhelm Reich's *Character Analysis*," in: *American Journal of Psychotherapy* 56 (2002): 338–346.

9 Reich, *Character Analysis*, 307.

> I spoke English well – good contact – good questions from the students. They understood me completely. I've made a breakthrough. The first complete happiness in a long time, enormous success – made contact – no isolation.[10]

This ultimate gratification retroactively redefines the prior frustration as a painful precursor to glorious "success." What at first appeared to be yet another fall into *Unberührbarkeit* turns out to have been merely the separation that serves as the very condition of possibility for contact. The negative mirroring implicit in the January 31 entry – *I don't understand New York / they don't seem to grasp it* – provides the reflecting coordinates for a reciprocal sympathetic relationship. The chiasmic link between the "I" and the "they" who both fail to understand also opens the communicative lines for making "a big hit." Still, the damaging question persists: How long would it be before this "breakthrough" would itself be in need of another hermeneutic armor, one that would end up suffocating both parties?

> *21 March 1940. 3 a.m.* Can't sleep. It occurred to me that, before moving to New York, I was just about to plunge into a deep abyss. It was a time when I thought I could (or should) obliterate the past and make a new, proper start.[11]

The caesura of the transatlantic voyage palpably marked a decisive shift. In turning his back to Europe, which had already long begun its own plunge into the abyss, Reich moved away from classical psychotherapy towards an almost exclusive concern with natural-scientific research. To be sure, analysis would still be practiced – if only to support financially the increasingly expensive ambitions of his laboratory experiments – yet the primary focus of his attentions fell on problems related more to biology and physics. The townhouse on Kessel Street in Forest Hills which Reich selected for his home distinctly reveals his new priorities. As his live-in partner and future wife Ilse Ollendorff describes it:

> It had a small basement which was used for animal experiments, and a large room on the first floor which served mainly as Reich's office but also had to function as a dining room, living room and as accommodation for the seminar every other week. The regular dining room adjoining the kitchen was made into a laboratory with microscopes, oscillograph, electroscopes, and

10 Reich, *American Odyssey*, 10.
11 Ibid., 17f.

> other instruments. The maid's room on the other side of the kitchen was used both as office and as preparation room for laboratory cultures and media. The two bedrooms on the top floor were shared by Gertrud [Gaasland] and the maid, and of the three small rooms on the second floor one was used as Reich's bedroom and the others for psychotherapy.[12]

In one sense, the marginalization of conventional psychoanalysis fully concurs with the general direction of Reich's work as it developed after his break with Freud and his expulsion from the International Psychoanalytic Association over a decade before. At that time, encouraged by his clinical practice, Reich pursued the physical existence of the sexual energy that Freud had restricted to abstract speculations concerning the libido. With the conviction that sexual gratification, achieved through the refinement of an individual's orgastic potency, was the sole means of alleviating neurotic symptoms, Reich endeavored to verify this energy quantitatively and therefore irrefutably, despite the vehement objections of his Viennese colleagues. Henceforth, Reichian therapy concentrated on the measurement of sexual energy and the techniques that would enable its healthy discharge. His radical political views, whose origin is commonly dated to the debacle of July 15, 1927 when Austrian police forces violently quelled an uprising and left nearly a hundred workers dead in the streets, allowed him to align his therapeutic program with a deep engagement in Marxist thought. The sexual liberation of the individual from stagnation – the dismantling of the character armor constructed by self-oppression – could find its clear analogue in a social revolution that would unchain the masses from political oppression.

What Roberto Calasso has called Reich's "mystical marriage of Marxism and psychoanalysis"[13] is nothing less than a repositioning of the therapeutic approach now aimed toward prevention rather than treatment, a recalibration whose impact on the future of analytic practice is itself a testament to the power of Reich's vision. Beyond this professional contribution, Reich's legacy – championed by Norman Mailer, Herbert Marcuse, Norman O. Brown as well as others charmed by a psychotherapy infused with Communist theory – would play no small role in driving populist liberation movements across the United States throughout the late 1960s and 1970s. Together with Erich Fromm, Reich would count as

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12 Ollendorff Reich, *Personal Biography*, 77.

13 Calasso, Roberto, "The Repulsive Cult of *Bonheur*," transl. A. Goldstein, in: *Common Knowledge* 10 (2004): 286–313, 288.

one of the leading figures whose provocative syntheses of Freud and Marx prepared the way for the anti-authoritarian revolutions of consciousness that intoxicated the times. Paul Goodman, the charismatic anarchist and indefatigable activist, regarded the hippie generation as a direct heir to Reich's emancipatory program: "The most trenchant political ideas of Marcuse and Fromm, about the fear of freedom and the co-opting of spontaneity and sexuality by modern corporate institutions, were stated first and more powerfully by Reich."[14] Albeit posthumously, the incomprehensible Reich would indeed be understood, at least in the opinion of those claiming to "get it." Would Reich have been satisfied with this reception? Or would it have been yet another opportunity for despair?

The belief in the potential efficacy of discovering sexual energy so as to facilitate its discharge would motivate Reich's research to the end of his life. The bio-electric experiments on skin surfaces, the measurement of the electromagnetic waves that presumably coursed through the emotional body, and the highly speculative work on the vesicles – partly inorganic, partly organic – which he identified as "bions," set him upon the path toward an epiphany that occurred only after he settled in the States. In the basement of his home in Queens, Reich discovered that the properties of non-metallic materials were capable of attracting, absorbing and retaining the energy emitted from bion cultures, while metallic surfaces reflected the energy they attract. With these physical principles in mind, Reich constructed the first "orgone energy accumulator" box, at first to observe the radiation emanating from the bions. As Reich surmised, if this orgone energy could be harnessed and directed in concentrated form, then the accumulator would be poised to heal the majority of human disorders and diseases that Reich had come to regard as stemming from blockages of frozen energy. In brief, orgonomy stood to accomplish everything that Reich envisioned for a just, harmonious and gratifying world.

As the war in Europe raged, with nation after nation capitulating to Nazi aggression, Reich regarded his natural-scientific turn as possibly achieving what his earlier sex-political enterprises could never fully accomplish: "This war is getting wilder all the time. But what has that to do with me? I didn't start it, did my best to prevent it. The human race has simply gone mad."[15] Now this madness could be traced back

14 From Goodman's "Introduction" to Ollendorff Reich's *Personal Biography*, 11.
15 Diary entry, January 15, 1940. Reich, *American Odyssey*, 17.

to a single, general cause: deadened energy. A political career was no longer viable, all the more now as Reich felt himself lost in the sea of New York's staggering population; yet the faith in his psychobiological research fueled hopes of rescuing human society from emotional plague.

> *24 June 1940.* France has fallen, because of internal machinations. This world is going to become a very different place. I do not understand why my optimism has not failed me despite all the fascist victories. I cannot even lay claim to scientific security because the biology of the organism itself demonstrates that mankind has only begun to grasp its life energy. And as long as this energy is not functional in a practical sense, not a single sociological problem will be solved.[16]

I do not understand why my optimism has not failed me – another admission of deficient understanding, again explicitly linked to hope. What cannot be held within the secure fortress of scientific proof is nonetheless operative in the world. During an August vacation through New England with Ilse, a few days' stay on Lake Mooselookmeguntic near Rangeley, Maine afforded Reich the vision of the grayish-blue light in the atmosphere which he identified as orgone energy. With the realization that this vital force no longer issued exclusively from bion cultures but rather irradiated the entire universe, he returned to his Forest Hills basement to build accumulator boxes large enough to house patients, who would benefit from the intensification of energy they effectively captured. His natural-scientific research, however dubious among the scholarly community, could now be brought in line with individual therapy: the box would facilitate the corporeal discharge necessary for the maintenance of health, aimed not only at the alleviation of neurotic symptoms but far more ambitiously at the treatment and possible cure of physiological and social pathologies. High blood pressure, obesity, and cancerous growths, as well as every armored condition that perpetuated injustice and violence, were believed to result from the stagnation of the orgone energy which the accumulator could redirect and thereby remedy.

By most accounts, Reich responded to New York with great enthusiasm despite initial frustrations, especially when the city was compared with other European urban centers. The neon brilliance of Broadway, the provocative mix of ethnicities and nations, and what he perceived to be a general American childlikeness unaffected by the pest of

16 Reich, *American Odyssey*, 27.

disillusionment, all exerted a strong appeal.[17] Having described his life in Europe as itself an exile, long branded as an alien both within the International Psychoanalytic Association and the Communist parties of Austria, Germany and Denmark, Reich would come to view the States not only as a new home but also and more significantly as his true home.

Reich was not alone in believing that the States would provide the ideal setting for the growth of psychoanalysis, much more welcoming than old Europe. Since the 1930s, the émigré community of analysts flourished in America's major cities. As far back as 1909, following a highly successful visit to Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts, Freud himself recognized America's importance for the future of the movement. In reflecting on his motives for founding the International Psychoanalytic Association a year later, Freud singled out the warm reception in America which he contrasted with the "the increasing hostility in the German-speaking countries."[18] For Reich, the conviction that his exile to New York was in fact a homecoming appears to have been based on a similar sense of potentiality, a readiness to achieve what has yet to be achieved.

> *21 May 1940.* Spent the evening in New York with my pupils. Last evening of classes – applause. Everything can be done, but when will other people start fighting the way I do? When will they begin to take risks instead of only talking?[19]

The promise sustained Reich even when, days after the attack on Pearl Harbor, he was arrested by the FBI, rudely taken from his home at 2 a.m. and detained for three weeks on Ellis Island. In the statement prepared for his hearing at Brooklyn Court, Reich reasserted his commitment to America's potential to host the eventual discharge of energy among the masses:

> I lost my faith in all forms of European democracies (the Russian experiment included) years ago, when one after the other failed to recognize obvious facts and thus unconsciously helped Hitler along. I regained my faith when I met some specifically American processes of life, which

17 Cf. Sharaf, *Fury on Earth*, 262–63.

18 Freud, Sigmund, "Zur Geschichte der psychoanalytischen Bewegung" (1914), in: id., *Gesammelte Werke* 10, ed. Anna Freud et al., Frankfurt/M. 1999, 43–113, 10, 84.

19 Reich, *American Odyssey*, 24.

> showed the strength and tremendous fruitfulness of *real* democratic endeavors (some films, books, the general way of handling things, the New Deal, etc.). But I believe that in America as elsewhere there exists much disastrous hypocrisy, much unconscious and open fascism. During the two years of my residence in the U.S.A. I never doubted that these elements could be overcome, that the will in the direction of further democratic development was deep, honest, and powerful. That gave back to me much of the hope I had lost, and it strengthened my scientific (and not political) efforts to help also my old country, Europe. I am sure that the life process itself tends toward a great, powerful world democracy.[20]

The upsetting event would years later be regarded as an ominous harbinger of his serious troubles with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, which launched a vicious campaign against him on the basis of Mildred Edie Brady's 1947 incendiary articles in *Harper's Magazine* ("The New Cult of Sex and Anarchy") and *The New Republic* ("The Strange Case of Wilhelm Reich"). Here, Brady denounced – and grossly distorted – Reich's work on "orgone accumulation" as a charlatan's sordid device for increasing patients'"orgastic potency." By this point in his career, having established his research center on the 160-acre property named Orgonon just outside Rangeley, Reich's paranoiac fantasies of persecution would find ample, concrete justification. Repeated comparisons to Christ, Giordano Bruno and Nietzsche were sufficiently transparent attempts to inscribe himself among visionaries willing to serve as martyrs for the truth. The FDA's decade-long witch hunt culminated in a federal conviction in 1956 which included the injunction to destroy his accumulators and burn his books from the Rangeley warehouse. To the agent who ignited the fire Reich remarked that his "books had been burned in Germany but [he] never expected it to happen again."[21] Apart from the obvious megalomania – in the federal courthouse in Portland, he repeatedly referred to the prosecutor as "Judas" and the trial as his "Gethsemane" – what is perhaps more troubling is how Reich, facing the incineration of his work, now fully grasped his neighbors' incomprehension. At last and sadly he understood – a painful and perhaps lucid contrast to those years in New York when, more confusedly and therefore more hopefully, he still could not understand.

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20 Ibid., 133.

21 Cited in Sharaf, *Fury on Earth*, 460.

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Reinventing the Canonical: The Radical Thinking of Jacob Taubes

Martin Treml

I. Charismatic Teacher or Charlatan

Jacob Taubes (1923–1987) was no less than one of the most controversial figures of German Jewry after the Shoah, a professor of philosophy and an intriguing intellectual, a maniac driven by impulses of almost demonic force, and a reckless womanizer. He excelled as a philosopher of religion with expertise in apocalyptic themes in Judaism, Christianity, the Gnostics, and how their filiations have had a *Nachleben* – "survival" as well as "afterlife" – from antiquity to the present. But for him religious history served not only as a field for academic research, but also as a repository of elements for (self-)characterization. In a late article, he called Carl Schmitt, the Nazi crown jurist, an "apocalyptic of Counter Revolution."[1]

In retrospect, Taubes appears as a pioneer, standing at the crossroads of Jewish-Christian debates that go beyond the principles and rules of ecclesiastical dialogue and reconciliation in a confessional sense. His thinking was deeply based on an existential choice to know, learn, and teach. He preferred to take a panoramic view of the subjects he discussed, or, as the philosopher Dieter Henrich, who was once his colleague, wrote in an obituary: "he [i.e. Taubes] was successful in his talks [*er war bewährt in den Gesprächen*], which he was always seeking and inspiring and which he enjoyed most when the dimensions of

1 This was also the heading of the article, given but by the editor, most certainly Arno Widmann. Cf. Taubes, Jacob, "Carl Schmitt: Ein Apokalyptiker der Gegenrevolution," in: Herbert Kopp-Oberstebrink/Thorsten Palzhoff/Martin Treml (ed.), *Jacob Taubes – Carl Schmitt. Briefwechsel mit Materialien*, Munich 2011, 237–254, 244 (translation MT).

worldly intertwining [*Weltverwicklungen*] and of historic fate were unrolled in them."[2]

Besides all escapades and all éclat, the intensities which he originated are still growing. Yet his literary legacy is small: the dissertation *Abendländische Eschatologie* [Occidental Eschatology] of 1947, a collection of essays spanning a period of thirty years, his late lectures on Saint Paul's *Letter to the Romans* with an appendix on Carl Schmitt – all in all, three books, of which only the first one was published during his lifetime. Within recent years, all three have been translated into English.[3] By now, Taubes is increasingly read in Israel, the United States, Germany, France, and Italy by students of philosophy, Jewish Studies, the history of religion, and *Kulturwissenschaft*. More of his scattered essays in English or German can be found in journals and collective volumes dealing with the political theology of democracy or with Max Weber, Gershom Scholem, Walter Benjamin, and Alexandre Kojève.[4] There are also introductions: in each of the three volumes of minutes of conferences on political theology which Taubes held in the early 1980s.[5]

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2 Henrich, Dieter, "In Erinnerung an Jacob Taubes (1923–1987)," in: Manfred Frank/Anselm Haverkamp (ed.), *Poetik und Hermeneutik* 13: *Individualität*, Munich 1988, ix. (translation MT).

3 Cf. Taubes, Jacob, *The Political Theology of Paul*, Stanford, London 2004; id., *Occidental Eschatology*, Stanford, London 2009; id., *From Cult to Culture*, Stanford, London 2010. All three books have appeared within the series "Cultural Memory in the Present."

4 Cf. Taubes, Jacob, "On the Symbolic Order of Modern Democracy", in: *Confluence* 4 (1955): 57–71; id., "Die Entstehung des jüdischen Pariavolkes. Ideologiekritische Noten zu Max Webers 'Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religonssoziologie,'" in: Karl Engisch,/Bernhard Pfister/Johannes Winckelmann (ed.), *Max Weber. Gedächtnisschrift der Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München zum 100. Geburtstag 1964*, Berlin 1966, 185–194; id., "The Price of Messianism," in: *Journal of Jewish Studies* 33 (1982): 595–600; id., "Walter Benjamin – ein moderner Marcionit? Scholems Benjamin-Interpretation religionsgeschichtlich überprüft," in: Norbert W. Bolz/Richard Faber (ed.), *Antike und Moderne. Zu Walter Benjamins "Passagen"* Würzburg 1986, 138–147; id., "Ästhetisierung der Wahrheit im Posthistoire," in: Gabriele Althaus/Irmingard Stäuble (ed.), *Streitbare Philosophie. Margherita von Brentano zum 65. Geburtstag*, Berlin 1988, 41–51.

5 Taubes, Jacob, "Statt einer Einleitung: Leviathan als sterblicher Gott," in: id. (ed.), *Religionstheorie und Politische Theologie* 1: *Der Fürst dieser Welt. Carl Schmitt und die Folgen*, Munich, Paderborn et al. 1983, 9–15; id., "Einleitung. Das stählerne Gehäuse und der Exodus daraus oder ein Streit um Marcion, einst und jetzt," in: id. (ed.), *Religionstheorie und Politische Theologie* 2: *Gnosis und Politik*, Munich, Paderborn et al. 1984, 9–15; id., "Vorwort" [with Norbert Bolz], in: id. (ed.),

Taubes was also an obsessive, meticulous in his later years, and an often relentless writer of letters, which he sometimes copied in order to circulate. In the early summer of 2004, a *trouvaille* was made in Berlin. Five big boxes, so-called *Umzugskartons*, holding folders with letters, postcards, telegrams, aerograms from and to Taubes (both official and private) dating from 1965 to 1985, came to light. They were preserved by a woman who had regularly worked as his aid in delicate case matters into which the institute's secretaries, whom he had to share with his colleagues, should definitely never have been drawn. Taubes' private assistant, who would later become the secretary to the successor to his academic chair, put the folders with the mail into the boxes and stored them next to her office where they were kept for more than twenty years. When the institute was finally closed as a half-autonomous institution and Taubes' legacy was doomed to end (at least topographically), she informed his son, Ethan Taubes, in New York, whom she knew from classes at the Free University during the early 1970s, about its existence. He decided to give the contents of the boxes to the Center for Literary and Cultural Research, both for storage, and to make the correspondence available for publication, at least in parts. Since then, additional letters from the archives in Marbach, Düsseldorf, New York, New Haven, Jerusalem, and Tel Aviv were assembled. We now possess a collection of more than a thousand letters to and by Taubes, dating from the late 1940s to the early 1980s.[6] They provide enough material for writing an intellectual history not only of him, but also of important aspects of the Federal Republic of Germany during the 1960s, 1970s, and part of the 1980s. A first volume of such an enterprise has recently appeared. It contains the letters Taubes and Schmitt exchanged from 1955 to 1980 and Taubes' correspondence with colleagues, students, friends on Schmitt and political theology and related texts.[7]

Taubes was regularly accused of copying and plagiarizing. He would take whatever he could from others' books without acknowledgment.

Religionstheorie und Politische Theologie 3: *Theokratie*, Munich, Paderborn et al. 1987, 5–7.

6 For further details on the aim and history of this collection, the *Nachlass Jacob Taubes* [= Literary Estate of Jacob Taubes, hence: EJT], see Kopp-Oberstebrink, Herbert/Treml, Martin, "Der Nachlass Jacob Taubes am ZfL. Ein Werkstattbericht nebst einem Schreiben von Jacob Taubes an Carl Schmitt," in: *Trajekte. Zeitschrift des Zentrums für Literatur- und Kulturforschung Berlin* 20.10 (2009): 16–21.

7 Cf. Kopp-Oberstebrink, *Taubes – Schmitt*.

This charge was even raised against his dissertation. Hans Jonas reported that one day Karl Löwith, having been asked about its quality, told him: "it's a very good book. And that's no accident – half of it's by you, and the other half of it's by me."[8] A similar account was given by Seth Benardete, the classical philologist and former student of Leo Strauss, who himself had taught Taubes at the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS) for a while. Benardete told the following anecdote:

> On one occasion, Taubes came to St. John's to give a talk about history. It was all Kojève, but the one name he didn't mention was Kojève. Somebody in the question period asked him, "Isn't this just Kojève?" And Taubes said, "What difference does it make where I buy my ideas from?" I told that to Strauss shortly afterwards and he said, "Yes, but he should have asked, 'What if you steal them?'"[9]

II. From Vienna to Berlin – via Jerusalem and New York

At present, an intellectual biography on Taubes does not exist; only legends circulate. Therefore, some words on his life and encounters may be appropriate.[10] Taubes came from a family deeply rooted in Eastern European Jewish piety and learning, and its mystic ideas and concepts. Some prominent rabbis count among his ancestors on both sides, all of whom tried to harmonize Jewish tradition with modern philological and historical methods. The last of them was his father, Zevi. But there were also *zaddikim*, charismatic leaders of the popular mystic movement of East European Jewry, namely Hasidism. One of his great-uncles even became an early and ardent Zionist. Both of his parents were modestly conservative in religious matters, but also partisans of modern Jewish education.

Zevi Taubes had written a thesis on Jesus and the Halakhah, the system of Jewish religious law later collected and commented on by the rabbis of the Mishna and the Talmudim. He is also the author of a book in Hebrew about the Sanhedrin, the ancient Jewish body of self-government and court of law. Zevi served as rabbi first in Northern Moravia, then in

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8 Jonas, Hans, *Memoirs*, ed. Christian Wiese, Waltham 2008, 168.

9 Burger, Ronna (ed.), *Encounters and Reflections. Conversations with Seth Benardete*, Chicago, London 2002, 106.

10 Jerry Z. Muller (Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C.) is currently working on such a biography.

Vienna at the Pazmanitentempel, the town's second largest and most beautiful temple, founded by Adolph Schramek in 1910. Schramek was a rich trader in coal and the grandfather of one of Sigmund Freud's daughters-in-law, Esti Drucker.[11] In Vienna, Zevi established with friends not only a private institute for the study of the Talmud and the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, aimed particularly at young men from Eastern Europe, but also the first center for religio-psychological consultation [*Religions-psychologische Beratungsstelle*].[12] His mother, Fanny (neé Blind), was a student of Vienna's *Hebraeisches Paedagogium*, the institute for schoolteachers famous for its principal, Hirsch Perez Chajes, who, until his death in 1927, was the spiritual leader of the religiously-orientated Jewish youth of Vienna.[13] In these years, Fanny Taubes also came into close contact with Martin Buber, both of whom were activists for *Hapoel Hazair* [The Young Worker], a non-Marxist Socialist Zionist party, founded by A. D. Gordon in 1905.[14] As Taubes later proclaimed solemnly: "the son can only testify that everything related to religion has for him a maternal origin."[15]

In 1935, the family moved from Vienna to Zurich, where Zevi Taubes became the community's rabbi. This move allowed them all to survive, whilst most of their relatives were killed during the Shoah. Taubes studied at the universities of Zurich and Basel. Having graduated with his dissertation on *Occidental Eschatology* in 1947, he gained a fellowship at JTS and moved to New York. There he studied with Louis Finkelstein and Louis Ginsburg, two of the foremost academic authorities on the Talmud and rabbinic literature at the time. In 1949, Taubes won a Guggenheim grant to the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, where he lived from December 1949 on, with his first wife Susan (née Feldman), who, having finished her studies in the United States and in France, became a religious philosopher herself and later a writer.[16] In a letter to

11 Cf. Freud, Sophie, *Im Schatten der Familie Freud. Meine Mutter erlebt das 20. Jahrhundert*, Berlin 2006, 58f.

12 I want to thank Evelyn Adunka (Vienna) for this and other information, especially on Zevi Taubes.

13 Cf. Wittmayer Baron, Salo, "Chajes, Hirsch Perez" [art.], in: *Encyclopaedia Judaica* 5, Jerusalem 1971/1972, col. 325–326.

14 Cf. letter from Jacob Taubes to Martin Buber, July 17, 1956 (EJT).

15 Taubes, Jacob, "Vorwort," in: Fanny Taubes, *Die Sprache des Herzens. Aus Zeiten jüdischer Erneuerung*, Zurich 1959, 5–6, 6 (translation MT).

16 Cf. Pareigis, Christina, "Searching for the Absent God. Susan Taubes's Negative Theology", in: *Telos* 150 (Spring 2010): 97–110; Weigel, Sigrid, "Between the

a life-long friend, the Swiss journalist and essayist Armin Mohler, Jacob described her as being "as beautiful as a princess from a book of fairy tales [. . .]. Together we are working on the Presocratic philosophy, and Heraclitus and Empedocles are our best friends."[17]

The Jerusalem period came to a dramatic end due to the fatal conflict with Gershom Scholem, the great master of the study of Kabbalah, the major form of Jewish mysticism. Scholem also figured as one of Israel's most prominent intellectuals and, since the 1960s, had also become an important figure in the Federal Republic of Germany. Co-operating with Theodor Adorno, he supervised the first edition of the collected writings of Walter Benjamin, edited their mutual correspondence and wrote a book on their friendship.[18] For the first two post-war generations of German intellectuals, Scholem (as Jürgen Habermas recently remarked in a personal recollection) built bridges towards a new understanding of Judaism.[19] In 1951, however, an embittered Scholem had broken with Taubes over the case of Joseph Weiss, another one of his students, to whom Taubes had allegedly confided a bitter condemnation of their teacher. Scholem understood it as a breach of confidence.[20] In reaction, he banned Taubes from all academic institutions in Israel, declaring him *persona non grata* in spite of his current position as research fellow at the Hebrew University.

Scholem wrote to Taubes, who was on leave in the U.S. for the Jewish High Holidays, that "[p]erhaps it would be wiser not to return, but instead use the help your father-in-law would surely give you and build yourself an academic career over there."[21] It might be regarded as bitter irony that Taubes, the son, was expelled from the paternal house – the Hebrew University – at the exact date when God, at Rosh Ha-Shanah

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Philosophy of Religion and Cultural History; Susan Taubes on the Birth of Tragedy and the Negative Theology of Modernity," ibid., 115–136.

17 Kopp-Oberstebrink, *Taubes – Schmitt*, 120 (translation MT).

18 Scholem, Gershom (ed.), *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin and Gershom Scholem, 1932–1940*, Cambridge, London 1989; id. (ed.), *Walter Benjamin. The Story of a Friendship*, Philadelphia 1981.

19 Cp. Jürgen Habermas, "Grossherzige Remigranten. Über jüdische Philosophen in der frühen Bundesrepublik. Eine persönliche Erinnerung," in: *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (June 27/28, 2011): 21f.

20 A monographic study of Joseph Weiss will soon be published by Miriam Triendl Zadoff and Noam Zadoff (University of Munich).

21 Skinner, Anthony David (ed.), *Gershom Scholem. A Life in Letters, 1914–1982*, Cambridge, London 2002, 364.

(the Day of New Year) presides as supreme judge over the sins of the people of Israel, who are hoping to be pardoned nine days later at Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement). But with Scholem and Taubes, there was never pardon. Reconciliation was impossible, and probably only a father according to the Law, probably a father-in-law, would help. The one of Taubes, Sandor Feldman, lived and worked as a Freudian psychoanalyst in Rochester, in upstate New York, where he was also a professor at the university. That he could have assisted his son-in-law in building an academic career seems more than questionable.

Indeed, the first phase of his career was a wholly American one. Getting a position meant hard work, *une galère*, of which Taubes was never fond, but – as Jonas has it – "he managed to land on his feet, like a cat."[22] His career began at Harvard University in 1953, where Taubes started as a Rockefeller Research Fellow in philosophy, then lectured in social philosophy. In the fall of 1955, he became a Visiting Assistant Professor at Princeton University, where he gave courses on the "Philosophy of Religion," "19th Century Philosophy," and "19th Century German Philosophy." The next summer, he gained the post of Assistant Professor of Religion at Columbia University, and became an Associate Professor in 1959. He stayed at CU until 1966, when he departed for Berlin.

His New York years appear as comparatively happy ones. He had excellent students like Gershon Greenberg (now Professor at the Department of Philosophy and Religion at the American University in Washington, D.C.) and enjoyed good contacts to colleagues like Michael Wyschogrod, a Berlin born Jewish theologian at several CUNY colleges, as well as to his wife, Edith, who studied under Taubes at Columbia. Close ties to the city's intellectual and artistic scenes existed, for which Susan Sontag might serve as outstanding example, as she had become acquainted with Taubes and his wife Susan as early as 1954.[23] She lectured at his department at Columbia in the early 1960s.[24] In her first novel, *The Benefactor* (1963), the figure of Professor Bulgaraux was supplied with some of Taubes's features.

In September 1956, Taubes was naturalized, and his bizarre status had finally come to an end. After the break-up of the Habsburg Empire, his parents had automatically become Polish citizens, as they were born

22 Jonas, *Memoirs*, 168.

23 Rollyson, Carl/Paddock, Lisa, *Susan Sontag. The Making of an Icon*, New York, London 2000, 39f.

24 Ibid, 56.

there. The whole family was marked by a loss of roots, an *Unbehaustheit*, a prolonged experience which they shared with so many European Jews who had survived the Shoah. Margherita von Brentano, a Catholic professor of Philosophy at the Free University of Berlin, called Taubes' life "restless and torn," "homeless in every aspect."[25] She later became his second wife and was *one* of the reasons that he finally accepted the chair offered to him in Berlin in 1962.

At the Free University, he was offered a position *primo et unico loco* for the inaugural Chair of Jewish Studies, being the only and unanimously suggested candidate. After Vienna, Berlin became only the second city of former Nazi Germany to establish a full professorship for Jewish Studies at a public university. Accepting it after long negotiations, Taubes also achieved the position of Professor for the Sociology of Religion (in those days still a young discipline) which became part of the Institute of Protestant Theology during the restructuring process of the German universities, the *Universitätsreform* of the 1970s. Taubes also acted as Director of the Institute of Hermeneutics, an annex to the Institute of Philosophy. With regard to his academic career and influence, he had gained stunning success. It was hoped by many that he would thus be able to renew Jewish intellectual life in the city. To this end, Willy Brandt, Berlin's mayor at the time, granted Taubes an additional income.

During the student movement, which exploded in Berlin in June 1967, Taubes played a major role as a supporter along with Margherita von Brentano, both helping the protesters in words and deeds. Taubes regarded the events as a "cultural revolution from below," as he wrote to the American philosopher Lynne Belaief in 1971.[26] But he also had friends and close contacts to colleagues on the political right-wing, such as the notorious Ernst Nolte. To his friend Mohler, he called these intellectuals "a rare species that should remain, so that we would not be bored in the world of the *posthistoire*."[27] Taubes talked to everybody he considered intelligent, giving the impression he might permanently change sides – a characteristic of his. Peter Szondi – founder of the Free University's Department of Comparative Literature – once wrote to Adorno that, being Taubes' colleague, he had to live with

25 Brentano, Margherita von, "Notiz," in: Jacob Taubes, *Abendländische Eschatologie*. Munich 1991, n.p. (translation MT).

26 Letter from Jacob Taubes to Lynne Belaief, June 21, 1971 (EJT).

27 Kopp-Oberstebrink, *Taubes – Schmitt*, 147 (translation MT).

him *reservationibus*, as he was not trustworthy. He pretended to do justice to both sides and so failed to do it to even just one.[28]

In 1975, Taubes suffered from a serious breakdown and was eventually treated with electro-shocks in an asylum for mental illness: first in Berlin, then in Brooklyn. No one thought that he would ever recover, his colleagues started to split and distribute his academic heritage. Two years later, however, he returned to the Free University a spectre, raving with rage, and inconsiderate of any arguments. After long and bitter fights a solution was found, and Taubes was restricted to the Institute of Hermeneutics. There he acquainted a new generation of students with Benjamin and Schmitt, Paul, and the Gnostics. In 1977, he began to write regularly to Schmitt, and they exchanged more than forty letters. But he also travelled to Jerusalem, where he frequented a hasidic *shul* in Mea Shearim, the town's ultra-orthodox quarter. Taubes died of cancer in 1987, his last years having been overshadowed by frequent illnesses.

III. Philosopher and Rabbi

Taubes was Israel's final master who spoke from the spirit of expressionism. In Switzerland, he not only completed his studies, but was also ordained as a rabbi at Jeshivah Ez-Hayim, an orthodox rabbinic school at Montreux, which since its foundation in 1927 was an important center of traditional Jewish learning. Capable of bringing together both Jewish religious and Christian secularized forms of knowledge, Taubes could help in reconstructing and rebuilding a destroyed tradition without falling prey to any fundamentalism or romanticism. Through him, Judaism and its religious traditions entered academia for the first time, not as a confessional system, but as a set of cultural practices [*Kulturpraktiken*] – at least in Germany.

He could talk about Hermann Cohen of the Marburg school of Neo-Kantianism as well as about Rabbi Akiva of the second century CE. He could explain the philosophy of history as well as *ta'amei ha-mizvot*, the purpose of and reason for the Halakhic commandments. Jewish traditional knowledge is composed of the ability to create not only new textual insights but also a peculiar form of *souci de soi*, that is, a care for oneself as

28 Cf. Letter from Peter Szondi to Theodor W. Adorno, February 23, 1967, in: Szondi, Peter, *Briefe*, ed. Christoph König/Thomas Sparr, Frankfurt/M. 1993, 217.

a positive preoccupation, similar to yet different from those forms of practical and spiritual wisdom taught by ancient Greek philosophy or Christian ascetism. Metaphorically speaking, Taubes simultaneously wore both *tallit* and *Talar*, the scarf of the one who prays and the gown of the other who teaches, the sign of the pious and that of the scholar, *hasid* and professor, and did so since the publication of *Occidental Eschatology*.

Modesty was not one of his virtues, and he carried himself as a confident Jew. One of his friends, George Lichtheim, reported that once when he met Taubes in Paris "he said proudly, 'We have survived Christianity.'"[29] His *aperçu* had a broader meaning and was not directed against Christianity as based on the Bible – in its double sense as Old and New Testaments – , but against a religion which was brutally forced upon the pagan polytheism of pre-Christian Europe. Sigmund Freud pointed out

> that all those peoples who excel to-day in their hatred of Jews became Christians only in late historic times, often driven to it by coercion. It might be said that they were all 'misbaptized' [*schlecht getauft*]. They have been left, under a thin veneer of Christianity, what their ancestors were, who worshipped a barbarous polytheism.[30]

In letter to Ernst Simon, one of his Jerusalem teachers, whom he had (already) met at JTS, the twenty-five-year-old Taubes gave a short report about a conversation he recently had with the great Louis Finkelstein:

> Today after Shabbes, I talked to Finkelstein, and he laid out his 'eschatology' for me. I am glad that you gave me the advice, and it was, at least on my behalf, undisputed and serene. His eschatology is indeed heavily primitive and optimistic, and his belief, 'that one somehow makes it,' finally converts any eagerly awaiting into magic action. For, and I told him so, mercy can never be scheduled, but you must be able to deliver yourself, 'on mercy' [*sondern da muss man sich ausliefern können, 'auf Gnade'*]. In this case, truly all of us Europeans – Rosenzweig, Buber, everybody coming from there – have gone through Paul and Luther. I would say that there is a pre-Christian Jewish existence [*eine vorchristlich jüdische Existenz*], and there is a Jewish existence with Christianity [*eine mit-christlich jüdische Existenz*] – as it was Rosenzweig's case – and there is a post-Christian Jewish

29 Skinner, *Scholem*, 430.

30 Freud, Sigmund, "Moses and Monotheism," in: id., *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* 23, ed. James Strachey, London 1964, 1–137, 91.

> existence [*eine nach-christlich jüdische Existenz*]. I belong myself to the third category, for if one considers, following Nietzsche that Christianity is 'over,' and that the Gods are being resurrected, then one stands again on the timely battlefield of God against the gods [*dann steht man wieder in der Kampfzeit zwischen Gott und Göttern*].[31]

The triangulation of pagan polytheism, of Jewish and Christian monotheisms as different yet related phenomena, was one of Taubes' intellectual specialities, as well as his spiritual task. He made frequent use of the different masks of the secular philosopher and (in his case) the Jewish theologian, quite like Kierkegaard had with his Protestant heritage.[32] For this reason (but equally as much for others as well), Taubes stood close to Pascal's "God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob." Until his later writings, he firmly opposed any (neo-)mythical solutions and spoke in favour of faithfulness – in the sense of the Hebrew *Emuna* as confidence in – to the teachings of the biblical prophets. He regarded them as pioneers of historic thinking as such and as inventors of Western self-consciousness.[33]

IV. Eschatology and Paul

In his first, and for a long time only, book, Taubes proposes a philosophical conception of world history based on apocalyptic ideas and its counterparts. *Occidental Eschatology* is no less than a *tour de force* spanning the history of two thousand years that contain the concepts of salvation and destruction, as well as religious movements that were formed by them. Two antagonistic forces direct Taubes' narration: revolution and counter-revolution. All other events are merely episodes. Even if acted out on the surface of factual history, they do not touch its deeper layers or that which lies beyond history [*das Überhistorische*]. God's ways, those of the master of history, must be considered as dark and unknown. *Occidental Eschatology* deals only with texts, not with events. It may thus be read as a literary history of salvation and corruption, of revival and

31 Letter from Jacob Taubes to Ernst Simon, [no month, no day] 1948 (EJT, translation MT).

32 I thank Christoph Schmitt (Jerusalem) for hinting at the relationship to Kierkegaard.

33 Cf. Taubes, Jacob, "Zur Konjunktur des Polytheismus," in: Karl Heinz Bohrer (ed.), *Mythos und Moderne. Begriff und Bild einer Rekonstruktion*, Frankfurt/M. 1983, 457–470.

destruction, appearing as the metaphysico-theological supplement to Erich Auerbach's seminal *Mimesis*. As Edward Saïd explains in his introduction to the edition that appeared on the 50th anniversary of Auerbach's death: in addition to his effort

> to represent an alternative history for Europe (Europe perceived through the means of stylistic analysis), *Mimesis* is also an attempt to rescue sense and meanings from the fragments of modernity with which, from his Turkish exile, Auerbach saw the downfall of Europe, and Germany in particular. Like Zeitblom, he affirms the recuperative and redemptive human project for which, in its patient philological unfolding, his book is the emblem, and again resembling Zeitblom, he understands that like a novelist, the scholar must reconstruct the history of his own time as part of a personal commitment to his field.[34]

Mimesis, like *Occidental Eschatology*, is interested in what Auerbach calls "a world which is on the one hand entirely real, average, identifiable as to place, time, and circumstance, but which on the other hand is shaken in its very foundations, is transforming and renewing itself before our eyes."[35] Yet there is one fundamental difference separating his agenda from that of Taubes. Auerbach aims at a "realistic presentation," Taubes at an *idealistic* one – 'idealistic' not be understood as opposed to 'materialistic.' On the contrary. For both, worldliness in the sense of matter and concreteness, even "*Jetztzeit*" (Walter Benjamin) as time fulfilled, stands at the center of their concerns. While Auerbach analyzed the styles of realistic representation in Western literature, Taubes was thinking of a world to come, *ha-olam ha-ba*, the Hebrew term for the realm of the Messiah. Their difference can be best demonstrated through each central figure.

What Peter is for Auerbach – who devoted to him, together with the Roman author Petronius, the second chapter of *Mimesis*[36] –, Paul is for Taubes. Peter, the first of the apostles, who denied his master Jesus three times when he was arrested, stands against Paul, their "least," one "unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God" (1Cor 15:9).[37] Peter originated papacy as Christian theocracy, Paul

34 Saïd, Edward W., "Introduction," in: Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis. The Representation of Reality in Western Literature. Fiftieth-Anniversary Edition*, Princeton, Oxford 2003, ix-xxxii, xxxi.

35 Auerbach, *Mimesis*, 43.

36 Cf. ibid., 24–49.

37 Paul's writings are cited according to the following edition: Meeks, Wayne A. (ed.), *The Writings of Saint Paul. The Revised Standard Version. Introductions and*

begins the long chain of religious anarchists bordering on nihilism. One of the first was Marcion, the entrepreneur from Sinope in Pontus in the second century CE, the founder of a Gnostic counter-church.[38] One of the last is Pier Paolo Pasolini, Italian director and writer, who in 1975 was brutally murdered near Rome by one of his lovers, all of whom he adored for their masculinity and *la vita violenta* they led. Pasolini's Paulinian legacy is a film he never realized. Only its script exists, on which he worked from 1966 to 1968. In it, the world of Paul is transformed into the revolutionary situation of the 1960s, when an urban intelligentsia showed solidarity with the liberation movements of the Third World, turning themselves into armed militants in order to attack the state and kill its representatives.[39]

In *Occidental Eschatology*, Taubes sticks to the spiritual proximity of Judaism and Christianity. They share many traits, as a famous passage of Paul's *Letter to the Romans* shows, where he states the following about the Israelites: "To them belong the sonship, the glory, the covenants" – note the plurality of them – "the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; to them belong the patriarchs, and of their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ" (Rom 9:4–5).

Paul speaks here to a mostly gentile community and does so in favour of the Jews. By expanding Taubes' above-mentioned tripartite period of Jewish existence into a model for Christian existence, one might argue that for such an existence things have quite been settled from the beginning, as there is no Christianity as such without Judaism unless it is not willingly taken as a break within Christianity itself and a relapse into Paganism – be it barbarian or refined. Admittedly, border cases exist like the one of the above-mentioned Marcion, who in his version of the New Testament (containing a revised and purged version of the Gospel according to Luke and Paul's letters) made a sharp distinction between the just creator-God of the Old and the loving father-God of the New Testament.[40]

Combining theological speculation with a philosophy of history, Taubes himself stood firmly on the ground of the so-called *Religionsgeschichtliche*

Annotations. Critical Essays, New York, London 1972. The *Letter to the Romans* is hence abbreviated as "Rom," the *First Letter to the Corinthians* as "1Cor."

38 Cf. Harnack, Adolf von, *History of Dogma* 1, Boston 1901, 266–281.

39 Cf. Pasolini, Pier Paolo, *San Paolo*, Torino 1977; id., *Der heilige Paulus*, ed. Reinhold Zwick/Dagmar Reichardt, Marburg 2007.

40 Cf. Harnack, Adolf von, *Marcion. Das Evangelium vom Fremden Gott*, Göttingen 1923.

Schule, which had its center at the University of Marburg (where Hermann Cohen taught at the same time) as a major party of German Liberal Protestantism. The teachings of this school were radicalized around 1900 by a double movement: both an eschatological and a sociological interpretation of Jesus and early Christianity, of which Albert Schweitzer was a partisan.[41] Following him, Taubes explained that neither the way in which Jesus acted, nor his miracles or teachings, nor anything of his public appearance or performance marked a separation from Judaism – quite the contrary; it was directed at the whole people of Israel:

> [The] preaching [of Jesus] is revolutionary because he demands from the people decisive action for the Kingdom of Heaven, he does not just demand it from the individual. The Promised Land is under Roman rule and has been changed into a house of slavery.[42]

Israel has been re-Egyptianized, so to speak, and "a new exodus into the wilderness" must be undertaken.[43] By mentioning Israel's wandering through the desert under the guidance of Moses, Taubes is using the cardinal figure of liberation within Judaism. In performing his liberation, Jesus seemed to have failed, as he was killed by the Roman authorities. However, his death can be understood in the light of what Taubes developed in his reading of Paul, not only in *The Political Theology of Paul* but also in his very last lecture course at the Free University, which he held on the *First Letter to the Corinthians* during the summer semester in 1986. There he showed that, through his violent death on the cross, Jesus changed the course of the *kosmos* as a mundane order in general. Jesus as the Christ has broken the tyrannical reign of the *archóntes toû aiônos*, the "rulers of the age" (1Cor 2:6). He made them into nothing, thus enabling the ones who had been "nothing" up to that point, *tà mè ónta* (1Cor 1:28) – the brethren of Corinth, Rome, Jerusalem – to gain everything: *sophíadikaiosýnehagiasmòsapolýtrosis*, "wisdom, justice, holiness, redemption" (1Cor 1:30). This almost Hegelian turn from nothing to everything, and from everything to nothing, marks the center of the gospel, as preached by Paul (cp. 1Cor 1:17).

Standing on the shoulders of Nietzsche and Freud, Taubes drew the portrait of Paul, the Jew, in lines as bold as they are convincing. For him,

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41 Cf. Schweitzer, Albert, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of Its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede*, Baltimore 1998.

42 Taubes, *Occidental Eschatology*, 55.

43 Ibid.

Paul is also an "arch-Jew," as he labelled himself in a letter to Carl Schmitt from September 1978.[44] There Taubes also comes to terms with Schmitt as a former supporter of the Nazis:

> Precisely as an arch-Jew, I know to hesitate before condemning someone. Because in all the unutterable horror we were spared one thing. We had no choice: Hitler chose us as absolute enemy. But where there is no choice, there may also be no judgement, least of all of others. Which doesn't mean that I am not pursued by the wish to understand what "really" (not at all in a historical sense, but more in the eschatological sense of the emergency situation [*Ernstfall*]) happened – where the switches were set towards catastrophe (our catastrophe *and* yours).[45]

Taubes is not apologetic of Schmitt; he refrains from judgement and leaps over the secular catastrophe of the Nazis, which was a catastrophe both to Jews and Germans. His correspondence with Schmitt is a persistent way of re-enacting the debates of the Weimar Republic: between Schmitt and Benjamin, but also Erik Peterson, Leo Strauss, and Karl Barth. All of them are mentioned and credited in this dialogue *beyond* catastrophe, even if the state of affairs was never exactly as it is imagined here. Taubes and Schmitt are – so to speak – enchanters of a situation as it could have been if the intellectual and political civil world war [*Weltbürgerkrieg*] had never raged. By talking about lost possibilities, they are redeeming them.[46] Their stories are but imaginary ones.

Taubes' interest in – or fascination with – Paul, the "arch-Jew," began when he first stayed at American University, as another letter from JTS to the Ernst Simon proves. In *Occidental Eschatology*, Paul is still absent as a major figure. There, Jesus and Saint John, author of the *Book of Revelation*, were his champions. In February 1949, however, Taubes wrote that, under his guidance as a postgraduate, a certain Milton Steinberg "learns" – he deliberately uses here the traditional term for studying at a Jeshivah – "the Letter to the Romans without any apologetics: what does lex, *nó mos* mean for Paul?"[47] It is quite astonishing

44 Taubes, *Paul*, 110. The letter is wrongly dated here and has "1979," see Kopp-Oberstebrink, *Taubes – Schmitt*, 58 (text) and 290 (commentary).

45 Ibid.

46 Cf. Treml, Martin, "Paulinische Feindschaft. Korrespondenzen von Jacob Taubes und Carl Schmitt," in: Kopp-Oberstebrink, *Taubes – Schmitt*, 273–304.

47 Letter from Jacob Taubes to Ernst Simon, February 15, 1949 (EJT, translation MT).

that Taubes does not go a step further to ask: and what does Torah mean for him?

Taubes' Jewish Paul is a highly constructed one. He regards him as a mystic and bases this supposition on another work of Albert Schweitzer.[48] Faith (*pístis*) then plays only an auxiliary role that is not so much opposed to law (*nómos*), but is its dialectic negation. As Vivian Liska has recently pointed out,

> Judaism is, for Taubes, determined by an inner-Jewish tension between the Halakhah and its antinomian counterforce. More strongly than any other German-Jewish thinker, Taubes believed that the Halakhah was the core of Judaism, that there was no Judaism without Halakhah. What, in Taubes's eyes, makes Paul Jewish was that Paul knew this, that he took the Halakhah more seriously and was therefore 'more Jewish than any reform rabbi' who degrades the Halakhah to nothing but rituals and ceremonies, to 'a bunch of customs and folklore.'[49]

In the eyes of Taubes, another Judaism has been made possible by Paul: one *outside the law, but next to it*, one Paul himself conceived of in the figure of Christ in the *Letter to the Romansto telos tou nomou*, "the goal of the law," ('goal' meaning both 'end' and 'fulfilment'), "that every one who has faith may be justified" (Rom 10:4). Thereby a new theology was established, one "which means: transvaluation of all the values of the world."[50]

V. The Broken Splendour of the Canonical

Scholem once remarked that an "anarchic wind" is blowing from Jewish messianism, which is one consequence of its apocalyptic tendencies. This "anarchic element" effects "the dissolution of old ties which lose their meaning in the new context of messianic freedom."[51] Messianism

48 Schweitzer, Albert, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*, Baltimore 1998.

49 I am quoting from a paper of Vivian Liska, "Giorgio Agamben and the Legacy of Walter Benjamin's Messianism," which she delivered at the Conference *Bund and Borders: German Jewish Thinking between Faith and Power* at the Jewish Museum Berlin in May 2009. I want to thank her that she gave me the permission to do so.

50 Taubes, *Occidental Eschatology*, 24.

51 Scholem, Gershom, "Toward an Understanding of the Messianic Idea in Judaism," in: id., *The Messianic Idea in Judaism and Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality*, New York 1971, 1–36, 19.

possesses an antinomian aspect, yet is performed within the canonical. As its reinvention, it is *one* of its possible expressions. In Judaism, the pious does not generally speculate "whether to practice the *mizvot* [Halakhic commandments]" or not, his issue being "rather their purpose and function."[52] But a radical wing existed, "Sabbateanism in the seventeenth century and its subsequent incarnation in Poland in the form of Frankism."[53] They put an end to law in most peculiar ways.

The heretical messiah Shabbtai Zevi (1626–1676) pushed many Jewish communities into turmoil and frenzy, only to convert to Islam, an act that his prophet Nathan of Gaza explained as a means for salvation. His evil deeds – 'strange acts' as the Sabbatean nomenclature had it – , foremost his apostasy, were evil only for the ignorant. The disciples understood their true content: that the messiah had to enter the realm of Evil in order to rescue from there those sparks of God's light which had sunken after the primordial catastrophe, the so-called "breaking of the vessels" (*shvirat ha-kelim*), following the *zimzum*, the withdrawal of the Divinity necessary for Creation. For this reason, history is thus figured as a series of negations in the teachings of Isaac Luria from Safed (1534–1572), the blueprint of the Sabbatean *Geschichtstheologie*. The completeness that existed before creation must be restored by now including creation, but in the state of redemption – the realm of the messiah. The restoration of the divine wholeness (*tikkun olam*) has become the messiah's task, as has the repair of the individual human soul (*tikkun ha-nefesh*).[54]

The drama of cosmic as well as individual histories before their completion within and outside of God can best be expressed by the formula *shekhinta begaluta*, "the Shekinah is in exile." According to the kabbalah, the Shekinah figures as the last and only female emanation of God, symbolizing his presence *in* the world, also called *knesseth Israel*, "the assembly of Israel." Through her, he comes closest to his people in the night of Shabbat. She is "God's princess" – his 'Susan' so to speak – , who is permanently mistreated. For centuries, "the Shekinah has been captured by Edom (Rome) and Ismael (Islam):" This slogan was coined by Jakob

52 Fine, Lawrence, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos. Isaac Luria and His Kabbalistic Fellowship*, Stanford 2003, 188.

53 Ibid.

54 Ibid., 124–144. Cf. Scholem, Gershom *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, New York 1941, 244–286.

Frank (1726–1791), the major heir to Shabbtai Zevi.[55] Frank definitely crossed the borders to nihilism as well as to carnival, to fraud as well as to festival; in his life Orient mixed with Occident, Judaism with Catholicism and Islam, as he and his faithful followers converted several times to each of these religions. "A stratum was created in which the boundaries [. . .] were blurred, irrespective of whether the members had converted or retained their links with Judaism."[56] Frank's messianic movement can be regarded as a new, self-made religion.[57]

After a life full of adventures between Poland, Turkey, and Bohemia, he and his supporters arrived at Offenbach near Frankfurt upon Main in the late 1780s, where they held court permanently until his successor, his daughter Ewa, died in 1816, her fortunes having completely diminished after the wars against Napoleon. At Offenbach, the Jews (who still lived in exile) behaved as if they had already been redeemed and liberated. Young men showed up like princes, wearing colourful silken trousers of red and green. They disputed in public, promenaded, and rode horses. The messiah's and his daughter's palace was brightened by light and full of sweet scents. There they went to worship Ewa as Shekinah, lying at her feet, which they kissed, and she smiled at them[58] – scenes which call to mind Hermann Cohen's famous dictum about the Zionists: "Those fellows want to be happy."[59] In terms of the kabbalah, Ewa's adorers had entered the state of *gilluy*, an ecstasy enabling them to prophetic wake-dreams and visions, in which they could see both the transmigrated souls of the dead and the "upper" roots of souls in order to heal them. Taubes experienced *gilluy* several times, as he confessed to a friend, a scholar and rabbi, in 1981.[60]

For Scholem, Sabbateanism, together with its offspring Frankism, approaches Paul's interpretation of the law as closely as it is possible within the limits of Judaism:

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55 Cf. Lenowitz, Harris, *The Jewish Messiahs. From the Galilee to Crown Heights*, Oxford, New York 1998, 170–197.

56 Scholem, Gershom, "Frank, Jacob, and the Frankists" [art.], *Encyclopaedia Judaica* 7, Jerusalem 1971/1972, col. 55–72, col. 68.

57 Cf. Maciejko, Pawel, *The Mixed Multitude: Jacob Frank and the Frankist Movement*, Philadelphia 2011.

58 Cf. Lenowitz, *Jewish Messiahs*, 175 and 196 (quotes from memoirs).

59 Scholem, Gershom, *From Berlin to Jerusalem: Memories of My Youth*, New York 1988, 69.

60 Cf. letter from Jacob Taubes to Aharon Agus, November 11, 1981 (EJT).

> In both cases the destruction of traditional values in the wake of bitter disillusionment and intense religious awakening led to an outburst of antagonism toward the Law. The experience of the freedom of the children of God gave birth to antinomian doctrines, such as those of Paul, which contained the seeds of even more radical developments as exemplified by some of the more extreme gnostic sects. [. . .] In the history of the Sabbatian movement, Nathan's writings played a role similar to that of Paul's letters in the development of Christian doctrine.[61]

Also some of the deepest thoughts on the canonical were expressed by Scholem. In the 1958 *Festschrift* for Daniel Brody, he contributed a seminal and enigmatic essay, *Zehn unhistorische Sätze über Kabbala* [Ten Unhistorical Aphorisms on Kabbalah]. The last of them deals with Kafka as a heretic kabbalist. There he states:

> For unsurpassed, he [i.e. Kafka] expressed the border between religion and nihilism. Thus his writings, the secularized expression of the kabbalist feeling for the world – definitely unknown to him – [*die säkularisierte Darstellung des (ihm selber unbekannten) kabbalistischen Weltgefühls*], possess for some of his current readers a glance of the rigorous splendour of the canonical – of the absolute which breaks [*etwas von dem strengen Glanz des Kanonischen – des Vollkommenen, das zerbricht*].[62]

Taubes once called Kafka "the Rashi before Auschwitz."[63] Comparing the writer from Prague to the greatest Halakhic authority, to Rabbi Salomon ben Isaak (1040–1107) of Troyes in Northern France, whose commentaries have been printed in every rabbinic edition of the Bible and the Talmud until today, Taubes creates an unbroken chain of tradition. Within it, his own place can neither easily nor quickly be found. But what Scholem said about a certain hasidic master, the Rabbi of Sadagora, might also be true, *cum grano salis*, concerning his disloyal student. He is "to put it bluntly, nothing but another Jacob Frank who has achieved the miracle of remaining an orthodox Jew. All the mysteries of the Torah have disappeared, or rather they are overshadowed and absorbed by the magnificent gesture."[64]

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61 Scholem, Gershom, *Sabbatai Zevi. The Mystical Messiah, 1626–1676*, Princeton 1973, 797.

62 Scholem, Gershom, "Zehn unhistorische Sätze über Kabbala," in: id., *Judaica* 3, Frankfurt/M. 1970, 264–271, 271 (translation MT).

63 Letter to Agus.

64 Scholem, *Major Trends*, 337.

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"Almost American:" Ernst Toller Abroad

Thomas Stachel

I

When Ernst Toller (1893–1939) arrived in America for the first time in September, 1929, on the eve of the Great Depression, his port of entry, New York City, gave him a rather frosty welcome. Hailing from Hamburg, the steam ship *Reliance* had been braving ten days of stormy weather; now it lay moored for inspection at a pier in Coney Island. But instead of joining the other passengers in filing down the gangway and entering the country, Toller was held back by the authorities and detained aboard the ship. For one night he was a prisoner again.[1]

The customs officials were worried about Toller's revolutionary past. Returning from the trenches of Verdun in 1916 and discharged early from the army due to recurring bouts of depression,[2] he had quickly made contact with various socialist circles in Munich, Heidelberg and Berlin. Before long, the charismatic Toller, by then a re-enrolled

1 The most important document for information on this trip is Toller's own travel account *Quer durch. Reisebilder und Reden*, Berlin 1930, 9–78. Other important sources are Distl, Dieter, *Ernst Toller. Eine politische Biographie*, Schrobenhausen 1993, 131ff.; Dove, Richard, *He Was a German. A Biography of Ernst Toller*, London 1990 (the German translation of Dove's excellent book has the title *Ernst Toller. Ein Leben in Deutschland*, transl. Marcel Hartges, Göttingen 1993. In the German translation the sections covering Toller's American voyage can be found on pp. 215ff.). Concise sketches of Toller's life in general can be found in Serke, Jürgen, *Die verbrannten Dichter*, Frankfurt/M. 1980, 9–31 and Weidermann, Volker, *Das Buch der verbrannten Bücher*, Cologne 2008, 79–82.

2 Apart from the clinical side this diagnosis involves, Toller had a rather pessimistic view of life in general. In his autobiography he identifies with Friedrich Hebbel's assessment about the constitutively tragic nature of all human experience. See Toller, Ernst, *Eine Jugend in Deutschland* [1933]. *Gesammelte Werke* 4, ed. Wolfgang Frühwald/John M. Spalek, Munich 1978, 224.

student,[3] began making a name for himself at political rallies and, in 1918, went on to become a leading figure in the Bavarian *Räterepublik*. During a military campaign in the city of Dachau he even acted as commander of Germany's first Red Army.[4]

For the role he had played in the revolutionary government, Toller was later sentenced to a five-year prison term. It was mainly during this time, from 1919 to 1924, that he wrote and published the works that would make him one of the most celebrated playwrights of the Weimar period: *Die Wandlung* (1918, engl. *Transfiguration*), *Masse Mensch* (1919, *Masses and Man*), *Die Maschinenstürmer* (1920/21, *The Machine Wreckers*), *Der deutsche Hinkemann* (1920/21, *Brokenbrow*), *Der entfesselte Wotan* (1923), and *Das Schwalbenbuch* (1923, *The Swallow Book*), a poetic contemplation on a pair of birds nesting in his prison cell.

Toller's incarceration aside, the aspect that probably stoked the officials' suspicion the most was his reputation as a rousing public speaker.[5] With widespread fear of political radicalism in the wake of the 'First Red Scare,' and with industrial tycoons fighting hard to suppress the rise of organized labor, the U.S. had good reason to be wary of a powerful champion of workers' rights. When further questioning, on Ellis Island, had established that Toller did not plan to topple the American government and that he would refrain from all forms of agitation, he was finally released. Toller, however, had made no effort to conceal his political leanings: to his interrogators he had openly declared that he is and will continue to be a "radical socialist."[6]

II

Toller did not come to the U.S. as an immigrant; his years of exile would not begin until 1933. The purpose of his travel was, rather, to go on a

3 At the University of Heidelberg Toller had, rather half-heartedly, taken up the study of economics (*Nationalökonomie*). It was the subject, as he himself concedes, that one studied when coming from a bourgeois family and didn't know what else to do. See Toller, *Gesammelte Werke* 4, 80.

4 R. Seth C. Knox calls Toller fittingly an "accidental commander." See Knox, R. Seth C., *Weimar Germany Between Two Worlds. The American and Russian Travels of Kisch, Toller, Holitscher, Goldschmidt, and Rundt.* New York 2006, 135–192, 137.

5 There is hardly an account of Toller's life that does not mention his extraordinary oratory skill.

6 See Toller, *Quer durch*, 13.

lecture tour through twenty American cities and parts of Mexico. Along the way he would visit a number of places he hoped would yield insights into the social and economic fabric of the country: the Ford Motor plant in Detroit, San Quentin State Prison outside of San Francisco, prohibition speakeasies in New York and Chicago (some doubling as brothels), various religious congregations in a variety of cities, and many other destinations.

Though this was Toller's first trip to the U.S., he, naturally, did not conceive of the country as a blank slate. The alleged downside of the American way of life – rampant materialism, cheap showmanship, the deceptive ease of personal exchanges etc. – had been a staple of European literature for almost a century.[7] There were, to be sure, admiring tales of frontier life and busy commerce, and travellers seldom returned without glowing reports about the high-spirited conduct of public affairs.[8] Yet even stories in praise of the country's beauty and the civic virtue of its people often featured quacks and charlatans as stock characters.[9]

This scepticism was revivified and given a new context by one of the major political events of Toller's day. The Bolshevik revolution in 1917 had launched what seemed to many on the left a viable alternative to the western free market model – particularly the U.S. as its most fervent proponent. On this view, America was the "capitalist doppelgänger" of Soviet Russia and, as such, "the greatest threat to international socialism."[10]

Though never being a dogmatist or ideologue of any kind,[11] Toller was steeped in all of these notions. An avid reader of Marx, Engels,

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7 To mention only one example with a very speaking title: Kürnberger, Ferdinand, *Der Amerika-Müde. Amerikanisches Kulturbild*, Frankfurt/M. 1855.

8 The most famous account of the young nation, Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* (1835/40), gave a decidedly measured assessment of the country's strength and weaknesses.

9 See Sammons, Jeffrey L., *Ideology, Mimesis, Fantasy: Charles Sealsfield, Friedrich Gerstäcker, Karl May, and other German novelists of America*, Chapel Hill 1998.

10 See Knox, *Weimar Germany between Two Worlds*, 141.

11 Born as a German Jew in a Polish town under Prussian rule, "Ernst Toller spent his life traveling between worlds in which he never fully belonged" (Knox, *Weimar Germany Between Two Worlds,* 135). Neither a dogmatic socialist, nor a stalwart communist or revolutionary, Toller stood outside of conventional political quarters. An indication of this independence is that after his release from prison he never rejoined a political party. Also his use of classical Marxist vocabulary (e.g. "die geschichtsbildende Bedeutung der Arbeiterklasse," in: *Gesammelte Werke* 4, 95) is a rare occurrence.

Lassalle, and Bakunin and a close collaborator of Kurt Eisner, Gustav Landauer, Erich Mühsam, and Eugen Leviné, he was well versed in the history of communist thought as well as supportive of many of its causes. What is more, Toller had read two bestselling American novels that turn a fiercely critical eye on U.S. society: Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* (1906) and Sinclair Lewis' *Babbitt* (1922), one an unvarnished look at working conditions in Chicago's meat factories, the other a satirical view of middle-class conformity in corporate America.[12]

Thus, filled with a wealth of preconceived ideas and numerous literary sites and figures, Toller, apart from making new discoveries, was poised to encounter what he already knew. His travel itinerary includes a meat processing plant in Chicago whose conveyor belt slaughter he describes in gory and, one might say, Sinclairian detail.[13] Similarly, when commenting on the phlegmatic zeal of customs clerks on Ellis Island, he experiences their behavior within a typological mold: "Sinclair Lewis' Babbitts."[14]

III

Toller's account of his American travels engages with a wide array of issues: the situation of workers and labor unions, the treatment of socialists, corporate hierarchies, prohibition, prostitution, the quality of newspapers (which he finds mostly dismal), lynch justice, and the discrimination of blacks.

In New York City, Toller is particularly taken with a technological novelty. Instead of remarking, for instance, on the towering skyscrapers or the bustle of Manhattan streets, he is drawn to the "living newspaper" ("Reels News") on Broadway; a forum for the cinematic delivery of news: customers pay a small fee, take a seat in a movie theater and watch a series of film clips on current events from around the world.[15]

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12 Toller would later meet and become friends with both authors. See Knox, *Weimar Germany Between Two Worlds,* 174. Upton Sinclair's indictment of the meat industry proved so powerful and public reaction to it so vivid that Congress was forced to pass a whole series of food safety laws.

13 See Toller, *Quer durch*, 28.

14 Ibid., 12. For a critique of this stance see Knox, *Weimar Germany Between Two Worlds,* 142f.

15 Ibid., 146f.

Rather uncharitable is Toller's survey of the local theater scene. Apparently unfamiliar with the success enjoyed by the plays of Eugene O'Neill and the productions of the Provincetown Playhouse (in Greenwich Village), he interprets the critical potential and social significance of the New York stage as lagging far behind its European counterparts.[16]

Toller also frequented the movies and saw a number of Hollywood films. With hindsight his take on the future of the American motion picture industry is striking: its themes and style he considers unfit for continued mass appeal and ventures that its products will soon fall out of favor.[17]

A visit to a church service by the Californian evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson hit Toller with particular force.[18] Fittingly staged in the entertainment capital of the world, Los Angeles, it displayed in a curious and often contradictory fashion all the material and spiritual appetites that he felt defined American culture at large: love of performance, a cult of celebrity, the ubiquity of advertising (sustained by armies of agents, managers, producers, distributors and promoters), the marriage of religious devotion and (show)business, piety and media savvy, wide-eyed naiveté and shrewd pragmatism. The episode even inspired him to co-write a play (with his friend Hermann Kesten) about Mary Baker Eddy, the founder of the *Christian Science* movement and herself a formidable performer and businesswoman.[19] Fiercely protecting 'the brand' via copy rights, public relation strategies, and a barrage of law suits, her message of faith, as portrayed in the play, has effectively become a commercial enterprise and devolved into a matter of merchandising. Eddy's materialist credo makes her sound almost like a prim precursor to Tony Montana: "Money is power: and power alone carries conviction."[20]

IV

The sentiments behind these views are fairly unequivocal: Toller's stance is overtly anti-American and leaves little to no room for positive

16 Toller, *Quer durch*, 58ff.
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid., 44f.
19 Toller, Ernst/Kesten, Hermann, "Mary Baker Eddy (Wunder in Amerika)," in: *Ernst Toller: Seven Plays*, London 1935, 389–434.
20 Toller, *Seven Plays*, 405. Tony Montana, played by Al Pacino, is the protagonist of Brian de Palma's crime drama *Scarface* (1983).

judgments. Toller himself is willing to admit as much. In 1937, during his second extended stay in the U.S., he even recants some of his earlier comments. Citing a cultural climate change brought on by the Great Depression and furthered by the economic realignment of the New Deal, he confides in a reporter that "the earlier materialism has given room to an awakening social conscience."[21]

In 1929, however, Toller still feels that social reality in the U.S. is systematically glossed over by thick layers of false consciousness. The purpose of his observations, hence, is to pierce through the deceit and make visible the delusional nature of the American dream. This rather blunt view is noticeable also in his concurrent portrayal of Spain; in Toller's eyes the last holdout in Europe to the onslaught of American culture: "Spain is the only European country that has remained immune to the American infection. If there is a people capable of successfully resisting the standardization of the mind and the typecasting of the soul, it will be the Spanish people."[22]

R. Seth C. Knox has written what is probably the most detailed and insightful appraisal of Toller's *Reisebilder*. According to Knox, their criticism comes with a strong didactic undercurrent: "[. . .] *Quer durch* seeks to alienate the German reader from a deceptively promulgated capitalist ethos" and it simultaneously encourages him "to sympathize with the plight of American socialists and blacks."[23] This alienating effort, as Knox convincingly argues, extends all the way to the American idiom. Toller's technique consists of using English words in quotation marks and embedding them within his German text. By sprinkling his sentences with the supposedly hackneyed promises of U.S. culture ("liberty," "prosperity," etc.), Toller gives American discourse "a sarcastic

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21 See John M. Spalek's fine commentary on the extensive newspaper coverage of Toller's life in Spalek, John M., *Ernst Toller and His Critics*, Virginia 1968, entry 1719: "'Germany is Brewing War!' Hitler-Hater Flays Naziland Leaders. Toller, Famous Scholar, Hails U.S. as 'Eden,'" in: *San Francisco Chronicle* 5.2 (1937): 4. See also entry 1720 as well as Dove, *He Was a German,* 274f.

22 See Toller, Ernst, "Das Neue Spanien (1932)," in: *Kritische Schriften, Reden und Reportagen. Gesammelte Werke* 1, ed. Wolfgang Frühwald/John M. Spalek, Munich 1978, 244–267, 246.

23 See Knox, *Weimar Germany Between Two Worlds*, 147. See also 141: "Toller's American journey is a discovery in the literal sense, lifting the mythic veil of American freedom and prosperity to uncover a dehumanizing reality. This is the purpose of the American *Reisebilder*: to dissect, as he sees it, America's social reality from the American dream and expose it to the gaze of a German readership."

coloration" and ousts it as "a system of false signifiers [. . .] in the service of capitalist propaganda:" "[. . .] American English becomes a linguistic code that reinforces an illusory ideology that obscures an unjust reality."[24]

V

Quer durch as a whole has a tripartite structure. Its first part, *Amerikanische Reisebilder*, chronicles Toller's three months journey through the U.S. in 1929. It's second part, *Russische Reisebilder*, details in a series of letters Toller's ten week-stay in the Soviet Union in 1926. Finally, its third part, entitled *Reden und Aufsätze*, assembles various speeches, essays and autobiographical sketches up until 1930.

The juxtaposition of the two travel accounts, a national diptych of sorts, is of particular interest. By directly confronting two societies whose political visions are essentially opposed, Toller invites comparison and analysis and encourages the reader to take a stand. Where Toller himself comes down with regard to this rivalry is not difficult to discern. While his view of communist Russia is far from uncritical and while he is mindful of its vast need for improvement, in contrast to its American 'other,' its people and institutions remain to him a beacon of hope and civility: "for Toller, the more desirable future is to be discovered in the East."[25] In the East, a world away from New York, Chicago and L.A., America is present only when things get loud. Upon Toller's arrival in Moscow, when the famous author is mugged by reporters and showered from all sides with dinner invitations and speaking requests, he describes the "noisy excitement" of the scene as "almost American."[26] As depictions of national character go, this makes for a rather unflattering view. For Toller, "American" seems to be synonymous with media hype and a state of constant commotion.

VI

In early 1930 Toller is back in Germany and, amid criticism of his American journey, settles back into his customary restless life.[27] Five years of

24 Knox, *Weimar Germany Between Two Worlds*, 153.
25 Ibid, 192.
26 Toller, *Quer durch*, 96. See also Knox, *Weimar Germany between Two Worlds*, 151.
27 Led by Karl Kraus and, in particular, the communist press, a public debate ensues, charging Toller with opportunistic behavior during his American detainment and

prison confinement, suffered at an early age, had brought him to the edge of suicide;[28] his remaining years, in almost frantic response, would be spent in a flurry of activity. In the years following his release, starting in 1924, Toller travels, in some cases repeatedly, to Czechoslovakia, Palestine, England, the Soviet Union, France, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Norway, Italy, North Africa, Sweden, the U.S. and Mexico. The years after Toller's return from America see him, at times repeatedly, in Poland, Austria, Switzerland, Yugoslavia, England, Scotland, the Soviet Union, Ireland, France, Spain, Portugal, Sweden, and Denmark, always on the move, constantly reading and lecturing before countless audiences,[29] writing new dramas and speeches, overseeing the publication of his works, initiating translations, and assisting in the production of his plays. Very early on and with ever increasing urgency, he is warning of the mounting threat of Fascism in Europe.[30]

In 1933, in quick succession, Hitler rises to power, the Reichstag is set ablaze, and Toller's books, like so many others, get burned on city squares across the country. Toller, a radical socialist and a Jew, was high on Goebbels' list of 'enemies of the state.'[31] He escapes his arrest and certain death by only a hair: the day of the Reichstag fire (February 27) he is in Switzerland to speak on a radio broadcast. In August his German citizenship is revoked and all his assets are confiscated. Deprived of his home, his native audience, and the basis of his livelihood, Toller is forced into exile. As he

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interrogation. Kraus uses the occasion to put into question the quality of Toller's work as a whole, portraying him as an undeserving darling of the bourgeois press and a mere beneficiary of "the Piscator machine." See Kraus, Karl, *Die Fackel* 827 (February 1930): 106ff.

28 See Toller, Ernst, *Gesammelte Werke* 4, 233.

29 John M. Spalek estimates that between 1933 and 1939 alone Toller has given more than 200 speeches and lectures. See Spalek, John M., "Der Nachlass Ernst Tollers. Ein Bericht," in: *Literaturwissenschaftliches Jahrbuch im Auftrag der Görres-Gesellschaft*, Neue Folge/Sechster Band, Berlin 1965, 251–267, 266. See also Spalek, John M., "Ernst Tollers Vortragstätigkeit und seine Hilfsaktionen im Exil, " in: Peter Uwe Hohendahl/ Egon Schwarz (ed.), *Exil und innere Emigration. II. Internationale Tagung in St. Louis*, Frankfurt/M. 1973, 85–100, 85f.

30 Toller has warned of Hitler's rise and foreseen its consequences in great detail ever since 1930. See, for instance, his article "Reichskanzler Hitler," in: *Die Weltbühne* 26.2 (1930): 538, printed in: Toller, Ernst, *Gesammelte Werke* 1, 69–73.

31 Goebbels, in a speech on April 1, 1933, names Theodor Lessing, Ernst Toller and Carl von Ossietzky's *Die Weltbühne* as the main enemies of National Socialism. See Spalek, John M./Frühwald, Wolfgang (ed.), *Der Fall Toller. Kommentar und Materialien*, Munich 1979, 283.

prepares his acclaimed autobiography, *Eine Jugend in Deutschland* (1933, engl. *I was a German*; published in November at Querido in Amsterdam), and while he puts the finishing touches to the preface he hears about the book burnings in Germany. Upon receiving the news, he ends the preface with the sentence: "On the day of the burning of my books in Germany."[32]

VII

Toller's early life had been dominated by the First World War and the surge of socialist and communist politics in its aftermath. In 1933 his life is again in the grip of historical events. From the moment Hitler seizes power, Toller redoubles his efforts to mobilizing world opinion against Nazi Germany. Three years later, when the Spanish Civil War breaks out, in July 1936, Toller takes on yet another task. Despite the considerable strain of his own situation, he lobbies tirelessly for a massive international rescue effort to help the displaced and starving Spanish population.[33] The stage he considers most effective for the pursuit of these goals is the United States.

On October 12, 1936, accompanied by his wife, the actress Christiane Grautoff, Toller arrives in America for the second time (On this occasion, it seems, he could enter the country without problems).[34] The two had been married in London in 1935 and, after extensive travel through France, Spain and Portugal, made the British capital their provisional home. Uprooted as they were, they precariously tried to cling to their professions and to keep working in their respective fields: Toller by devoting much of his time to producing the English versions of his latest plays and by publishing, again at Querido, his letters from prison;

32 My translation, TS. See Toller, *Eine Jugend in Deutschland*, 11. Querido was the most important publishing house for German speaking exiles. Underwritten by Emanuel Querido and led by Fritz Landshoff, it played a vital role in the literary resistance against Nazi Germany. For the history of Querido and the relationship between Toller and his publisher see Landshoff, Fritz H., *Amsterdam, Keizersgracht 333. Querido Verlag. Erinnerungen eines Verlegers,* Berlin, Weimar 1991, passim.

33 See Spalek, "Ernst Tollers Vortragstätigkeit," 85ff. To gain support for his aid project, Toller travels through Great Britain, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Finland and the U.S.

34 See Dove, *He Was a German*, 271ff.

Grautoff by seeking engagements on the London stage and by playing the female lead in Toller's production of *No More Peace*.

The stated purpose of Toller's second trip to the U.S. was, again, to go on a lecture tour across the country. However, this time around, apart from the political impact he hoped to have, the income his engagement would generate was of equally crucial importance.[35] Speaking on an almost daily basis and often several times a day, it would lead him all the way through Canada and the American West and would end, in February 1937, in Los Angeles. In L.A., at the Shrine Auditorium, Toller speaks in front of 6500 people; in New York, at a German-American festival, he addresses a crowd of 3500,[36] and over the next couple of years his numerous appearances, interviews and other activities are covered by close to two hundred newspaper articles.[37]

VIII

To help him with the management of the tour, Toller enlists the services of a New York based public relations firm. For the occasion the company produces a four-page promotional leaflet advertising the lectures and providing biographical background on a writer who, in the U.S., was still largely unknown. While its last page samples some of the topics Toller will be speaking on,[38] its first page brandishes a number of catchy press blurbs. Apart from the usual excitement mongering, their main goal seems to be to reassure an English-speaking audience that, whatever the

35 Ibid., 269.

36 See Distl, *Ernst Toller*, 161ff. and Dove, *He Was a German*, 275.

37 See Spalek, "Toller and his Critics." See also Spalek, John M.,/Hawrylchak, Sandra H. (ed.), *Guide to the Archival Materials of the German-Speaking Emigration in the United States After 1933* 1 (L–Z), Bern et al. 1997 (first published at University of Virginia Press in 1978), 892–905, 895.

38 Among them are "Hitler – The Promise And The Reality;" "Are You Responsible For Your Times?" "The Place of Theatre In Our Changing World;" "Drama As An Expression Of Youth." Since the Toller collection at the Yale University library holds about 80 different lecture manuscripts, John M. Spalek and Wolfgang Frühwald suggest that the four listed here represent only a fraction of a much larger overall repertoire. See Spalek, John M./Frühwald, Wolfgang, "Ernst Tollers amerikanische Vortragsreise 1936/37. Mit bisher unveröffentlichten Texten und einem Anhang," in: *Literaturwissenschaftliches Jahrbuch im Auftrag der Görres-Gesellschaft*. Neue Folge/Sechster Band, Berlin 1965, 267–311, 270.

merits of Toller's views, there won't be any linguistic barriers to their delivery. Since the statements provide a glimpse into the way Toller was received by an Anglo-American public, they deserve to be quoted at some length: "Toller is one of the most interesting figures of post war Europe" (*New Statesman and Nation*, London); "What a man! He is a great speaker and he speaks English fluently" (*Evening News*, Manchester); "Here is a dramatist who deserves our respectful attention, a man of prophet-like passion and pity who demands the spiritual life for the many as well as for the few" (*New York Times Book Review*); "Whether or not you agree with him, he is, of course, one of the most important authors of this time. I heard him speak at the P.E.N. International Convention in Edinburgh two years ago. He spoke in English and he was certainly understood by the entire audience. He is a dramatic, appealing person" (*New York Herald Tribune*); and:

> I have known Ernst Toller for ten years and heard him speak when he was last in this country, both in German and in English. He was a fine presence on the platform: earnest, direct and often quite moving. He speaks with an accent, but it is rather attractive and does not stand in the way of his being clearly understood. He knows English so well that his sentence structures are good and his use of language fluent. (Roger Baldwin, Director, *American Civil Liberties Union*)

The next part of the brochure gives a brief overview of Toller's life. While some of its lines about his years as a soldier must have struck their subject as being a trifle on the corny side ("All that was romantic in him thrilled at the thought of war"), the profile as a whole, given the political climate of the time, follows a subtle rhetorical strategy. These were, after all, still the early years of the Nazi regime; to many – at home and abroad – the threat of war, much less the specter of Auschwitz, was not yet fully apparent. The prospect of a political tirade against Toller's homeland, therefore, could have alienated audiences, especially the considerable German-American contingent that traditionally flocked to Toller's lectures.[39] His promoters, sensing the danger, made a deliberate effort to avoid such recoil. By systematically skirting an explicit political vocabulary, they tone down Toller's radical credentials in favor of a

39 John M. Spalek reminds us that in this regard there is a significant difference between early and late exile. Outright attacks against National Socialism were met with ambivalence or even hostility by many political circles in the U.S. as late as 1941. See Spalek, „Ernst Tollers Vortragstätigkeit," 85f.

more cozy moral universalism: "enlightenment," "patriotism," "pacifism," "abolishment of poverty," and a "youth betrayed" by "the old order" are said to have been Toller's values and motives during his Munich days; terms such as "socialism" or even "communism" are wisely omitted.[40]

The fear of negative backlash was by no means unfounded. Even as late as 1938 the public mood was such that Toller's speeches could occasion significant clashes. In April an appearance scheduled at Queens College was hastily cancelled (supposedly to appease students of German heritage) and rescheduled only due to massive protest from the local teachers' union. From this day on, though, Toller keeps receiving anonymous phone calls berating him and his views. When the calls turn to death threats, he feels compelled to request police protection.[41]

A few years earlier, in 1935, an appearance in Ireland had been cancelled altogether. Back then it was the German Embassy in Dublin that had brought to bear its political clout.[42] The interference on the diplomatic level brings into relief a rather bitter aspect of Toller scholarship: out of all the files and records that can be consulted to reconstruct his activities in exile, the most meticulous ones were compiled by the German foreign intelligence services. As an abundance of archival materials show, its agents knew where Toller was and what he did almost every step of the way and, until his death, they did not let him slip from view.[43]

IX

After arriving in Los Angeles at the end of his lecture tour, in February 1937, Toller enters into a one-year contract as a scriptwriter for MGM.[44] Initially, while still in New York, a lot of his hopes had been riding on seeing his plays produced on Broadway. *Blind Man's Buff* had already been optioned by a producer, and planning on casting and a host of other matters had been well under way. Eventually, though, interest of investors began to wane and the project fell through. As Toller's financial outlook grew increasingly dire, offering his dramatic talents to Hollywood, like so many other emigrés had done before, became the

40 Spalek/Frühwald, "Tollers amerikanische Vortragsreise 1936/37," 271ff.
41 See Dove, *He Was a German,* 287.
42 See Spalek/Frühwald, *Der Fall Toller*, 22.
43 Ibid., 195 and Dove, *He Was a German,* 287.
44 See Dove, *He Was a German,* 274ff.

most prudent alternative. Residing in a luxurious oceanfront hotel in Santa Monica and earning a staggering $1000 per week, he goes to work on a script on the life of Lola Montez.[45] Joan Crawford was slated to play the lead, and Joseph L. Mankiewicz, who would go on to write and direct *All About Eve* (1950), was on board to serve as producer. Toller had very high hopes for the project and worked on the script around the clock, interrupted only by occasional walks on the beach and friendly chats with colleagues, among them Fritz Lang and Vicki Baum.[46] Toller's wife, who would join him later, had stayed in New York for the time being in an effort to revive her acting career. Toller recommends that she take English lessons at the *New School for Social Research* to improve her pronunciation.[47] (He himself had been to this hub of exiled German intellectuals the year before on his lecture tour.)

The question of language was a crucial one for both Toller and his wife. For a writer and an actress everything hinged on sound and style and expressive potential. Without a near perfect command of these aspects as well as a solid grasp of the cultural archive they tie into, appealing to a broader American public was virtually impossible. Toller, of course, could draw on the help of native speakers, and he frequently did so for many of his translations. However, having to rely on assistance of this kind was an arduous and time-consuming process, and translation problems rooted in cultural context often seemed insurmountable. Despite the many setbacks Toller suffered during this time[48] and despite the general vicissitude of the movie business, it was ultimately the English language that did the most to frustrate his plans. In a letter to a friend, the writer Kurt Pinthus, he writes: "What good is an author who is not heard in his own language and who is unable to write in another?"[49] When the year was over, MGM offered to renew his contract but Toller declined. He had experienced his stint out west as life in a golden cage and, ultimately, had begun to feel alienated from the pervasive celebrity culture: "I am sick and tired of Hollywood – and I am looking forward to not

45 Another script he already had under contract, *The Passage to India*, was a story on the (ultimately shattered) hopes for peace attached to the building of the Suez-Canal. The project, however, never made it past the planning phase.

46 See Dove, *He Was a German,* 282.

47 Ibid., 280.

48 He is in increasingly ill health, his depressive bouts keep coming back, and events in Germany defy even his worst fears about the intentions of the Nazi regime.

49 See Dove, *He Was a German,* 283.

seeing stars anymore but human beings."[50] The script for *Lola Montez*, though finished, would never get produced nor would any of the other projects he had been working on during this time.

X

In February 1938 Toller is back in New York,[51] staying at the now demolished Mayflower Hotel on Central Park West between West 61st and 62nd Street.[52] It would serve as his residence until his death.

Toller had many exiled friends in the city, some of whom he had known for many years. Among them were Erika and Klaus Mann whose acquaintance he had made decades earlier during his student days in Munich.[53] (While still in Bavaria, Toller had also met their father, Thomas Mann, as well as a number of other luminaries such as Max Halbe, Frank Wedekind, and Rainer Maria Rilke.)[54]

Already in 1937 in New York, during a brief furlough from his Hollywood job, Toller had spent a lot of time in their company. Erika, her husband W.H. Auden, and her brother Klaus had enlisted Toller to help them with their political cabaret, *Die Pfeffermühle* (*The Peppermill*).[55] Although a great success in Zurich and despite boasting an impressive record of more than a thousand shows, attempts to establish a regular program in New York proved exceedingly difficult. Erika's gargantuan efforts notwithstanding and although a glowing endorsement from her

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50 Letter to Sidney Kaufmann. My translation, TS. See Dove, *He Was a German,* 285.

51 Christiane Grautoff who in Germany had starred in a couple of movies had stayed back to shoot some screen tests with MGM. Her attempts to garner a role in a film, however, proved ultimately unsuccessful. See Dove, *He Was a German*, 285f.

52 The 15-story hotel was built only eight years earlier, in 1930. Despite its lofty name and Central Park location, it was by no means a high-end accommodation (on a par e.g. with the landmark Plaza, the Algonquin, or the Waldorf-Astoria). In 2004 it was demolished to make way for a larger and more upscale development. The *New York Times* described it as a "drab brown" building. See Collins, Glenn, "Not quite vacant, Mayflower lowers shutters for demolition," *New York Times* (October 16, 2004).

53 See von der Lühe, Irmela, *Erika Mann. Eine Biographie*, Frankfurt/M., New York 1994 (first published 1993), 163.

54 See Toller, *Gesammelte Werke* 4, 74f.

55 See Dove, *He Was a German*, 283f.

father was circulated widely in the press, the project ultimately faltered and was discontinued by February of the same year.[56]

Erika und Klaus would later include a brief profile of Toller in their book project *Escape to Life* (1939), their famous survey of German cultural life in exile. Like many other commentators they make particular mention of Toller's ardent idealism and his unwavering humanitarian conscience. On their view, Toller's life and writing were governed by moral rather than political principles, a disposition they say saved him from ever falling into Marxist dogma.[57] So pronounced was Toller's universalism that his friend Hermann Kesten likened his rational stance to the Kantianism of Friedrich Schiller – another reminder that for interpretive purposes Toller needs to be placed firmly within the German aesthetic tradition (from Lessing, Schubart, Schiller, Büchner and Heine onward all the way to Heinrich Mann, Döblin and Brecht) and not be mistaken for a political pamphleteer.[58]

Assessments of Toller's work and personality have been notoriously ambivalent. Even close friends and colleagues tend to slip into their praises a tiny note of caution. Klaus Mann speaks of Toller's "egotism" and "rhetoricality," and his "dangerously sensitive psychological disposition." He also mentions the author's "ominous tendency toward the manic-depressive."[59] Theater directors like Karlheinz Martins and Erwin Piscator repeatedly changed the final scenes in their productions of Toller's plays in order to tone down what they felt was Toller's penchant for excessively monumental endings.[60] Walter Mehring states that Toller's attempt to square Büchner and Schiller was doomed to failure since naturalism and idealism were impossible to reconcile.[61] Ernst Niekisch says

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56 See von der Lühe, *Erika Mann*, 126ff. and Keiser-Hayne, Helga, *Erika Mann und ihr politisches Kabarett. Die Pfeffermühle 1933–1937*, Hamburg 1995, 184ff.

57 Mann, Erika/Mann, Klaus, *Escape to Life. Deutsche Kultur im Exil*, Munich 1991 (the original version, first published 1939 in Boston, was in English), 309–312, 310. See also Mann, Klaus, *Der Wendepunkt. Ein Lebensbericht,* Mit einem Nachwort von Frido Mann, Hamburg 1999, 459 (the original English version was first published in 1942 as 'The Turning Point.' The first German version appeared in 1952).

58 See Kesten, Hermann, *Meine Freunde, die Poeten*, Frankfurt/M. et al. 1980, 145–153, 148. (The book was first published 1953 in Vienna). See also Toller, *Gesammelte Werke* 4, 138, 148, 150, 191 and 224.

59 See K. Mann, *Der Wendepunkt*, 431.

60 See Toller, *Gesammelte Werke* 1, 14, 24 and 146.

61 See Mehring, Walter, *Die verlorene Bibliothek. Autobiographie einer Kultur*, Düsseldorf 1978, 203–207, 205. See also Toller, *Gesammelte Werke* 1, 24.

that he admires Toller's grace and charme while at the same time suggesting that his moody spells render him somewhat effeminate.[62] Kurt Pinthus surmises that Toller lacks any higher poetic talent and adds that while his subject matter may take after Büchner, his overly wordy *Hinkemann* was far inferior to the austere beauty of *Woyzeck*.[63] Kurt Tucholsky, in a letter to Walter Hasenclever, sums up the criticism most commonly leveled against Toller. Speaking about Toller's autobiography, *I Was a German*, he writes that "it has nothing of the hollow pathos with which he is sometimes charged – it is clean and clear [. . .]."[64]

XI

While in the U.S. for the second time, it becomes increasingly palpable that Toller's views on America had undergone a significant change. The relentless criticism of his 1929 account had, by 1936, given way to a measured and, intermittently, even enthusiastic appraisal. Apart from the newspaper article already mentioned, Toller also tells his friends about this unforeseen conversion. To Jawaharlal Nehru, secretary to Mahatma Gandhi and later the first prime minister of India, he writes in 1937: "Since my last visit, in 1929, there has been an enormous transformation in America."[65]

Looming large over the perception of change was the name of Franklin D. Roosevelt who, after first having been elected president in 1933, had just won a second term. Under the provisions of Roosevelt's New Deal legislation, vast amounts of federal money began flowing into the economy and started to fund a host of public initiatives, from the building of roads, dams, and bridges all the way to projects in education and the arts. Under the auspices of the newly established *Federal Theater Project* (FTP), one of the cultural arms of the *Public Works Administration* (PWA), significant financial support as well as a wave of progressive thought started to sweep through the country's stages. During its heyday

62 See Niekisch, Ernst, *Gewagtes Leben. Begegnungen und Begebnisse*, Cologne, Berlin 1958, 97–104, 98f.

63 See Pinthus, Kurt, *Der Zeitgenosse. Literarische Porträts und Kritiken*, Marbach 1971, 128–131, 130.

64 Letter to Walter Hasenclever, August 25, 1933; quoted in Spalek/Frühwald, *Der Fall Toller,* 197f.

65 My translation, TS. See Dove, *He Was a German*, 274.

the FTP employed more than ten thousand people.[66] One of the many beneficiaries of this initiative was the *New Theater League* in New York. It served as an umbrella organization for a large number of left-leaning theater groups whose active core, mostly students and workers, started producing, along with other projects, a number of Toller's plays, most notably the drama *No More Peace!*[67]

It was in this atmosphere and environment that Toller was prompted to revisit his earlier dismissal of the New York stage. He now took note of plays that were socially engaged and provided political commentary, and he did not look anymore to Broadway as the sole representative of New York theater. The plays of Clifford Odets and Irwin Shaw, in particular, were among the works he admired. In their dramas he discerned the foundation of "a real Volkstheater in America."[68]

Though Toller was critical of Broadway aesthetics, he needed the high profile of its venues to make ends meet as an author. The student and workers' productions of his plays were much appreciated and provided a form of recognition he had gone without for a long time. Yet these performances found little resonance and certainly did not turn a profit. To try to break into more lucrative territory, prominent figures like Harold Clurman and Lee Strasberg were contacted to consider taking up one of Toller's plays. The reaction, however, remained lukewarm at best, and the New York theater establishment as a whole kept its distance from the German author.[69]

XII

Unable to get his career on a solid footing, Toller decided that he would try to at least be of help to other struggling authors. To this end, in early 1938, he began working for the *American Guild for German Cultural Freedom*, an organization founded by Prinz Hubertus zu Löwenstein and chartered to help German refugees in need. Löwenstein, who had fled Nazi Germany in 1933, lived close to Washington Square, and Toller spent many days in his apartment writing stipend requests on behalf of numerous

66 Ibid., 275f.
67 Ibid., 276f.
68 Ibid., 275.
69 Ibid., 286.

artists and authors, among them Georg Kaiser, Alfred Kantorowicz, Walter Mehring, John Heartfield, and Ludwig Renn.[70]

While the work provided welcome distraction and gave his daily life a purpose, Toller's health was continuously deteriorating. He has trouble sleeping, gets increasingly homesick, and feels that his literary output has long ceased to warrant his fame as a public persona. In February 1938 Toller begins receiving psychiatric treatment on a regular basis.[71] In July his wife Christiane, long suffering under her husband's depressive bouts, leaves him and starts a relationship with another man.[72]

Throughout this time, travelling in the U.S. and abroad, Toller is again hard at work on his mission to provide aid to the Spanish population. Twice he is invited to the White House in Washington to make his case.[73] The second time, on a round trip between New York and the capital, he shares a train compartment with Klaus Mann who was also part of the delegation.[74] Toller's mood, however, elated after an evening in the company of the First Lady, would soon take a turn for the worse. On March 27, 1939, the Spanish resistance forces surrender in Madrid; on April 1 the U.S. formally recognizes the Franco regime as Spain's legitimate government.[75] Toller sees the fruits of three years of labor disappear before his eyes. Events in Germany, long on a downward spiral, only serve to deepen his sense of futility. Friends who meet him in New York during this time, among them Ludwig Marcuse, describe him as a lonely, deeply sad, and broken man.[76] The writer Christopher Isherwood visits him in the Mayflower Hotel. He remembers talking with Toller about the sea lions in the Central Park zoo. Toller had told him that he could hear the animals at night and that he felt they sounded angry, as if demanding "the destruction of this city."[77] On May 22, 1939, Toller commits suicide in his hotel suite. His friends around the world are deeply

70 See Dove, *He Was a German*, 286f. and Amann, Klaus, "Die 'American Guild for German Cultural Freedom' und die 'Deutsche Akademie' im Exil (1935–1940)," in: Johann Holzner et al. (ed.), *Eine schwierige Heimkehr. Österreichische Literatur im Exil 1938–1945*, Innsbruck 1991, 181–205.

71 See Dove, *He Was a German*, 287.

72 Ibid., 288.

73 See Spalek/Frühwald, *Der Fall Toller,* 24.

74 See K. Mann, *Der Wendepunkt*, 548f. See also Dove, *He Was a German*, 307.

75 See Dove, *He Was a German*, 305f.

76 See Marcuse, Ludwig, *Mein Zwanzigstes Jahrhundert. Auf dem Weg zu einer Autobiographie*, Zurich 1975 (first published 1960 in Munich), 254ff.

77 This is quoted in Spalek/Frühwald, *Der Fall Toller*, 225–227, here 227.

shocked; newspapers everywhere report his passing.[78] Oskar Maria Graf, Juan Négrin, Sinclair Lewis, and Klaus Mann eulogize their friend.[79] His funeral is attended by more than five hundred people.

Toward the end of his life, Toller, who initially had been so skeptical about America, had grown fond of the place and its people. This was true in particular of its largest and most spectacular city, New York. When Christopher Isherwood had visited him in his hotel, on a crisp and clear spring afternoon, they had been looking out the window, marvelling, as Isherwood recalls, "at the white shafts of the skyscrapers, splendid in the pale sunshine, along the edge of the park."[80] Upon taking in the view, Toller turns to his friend with an urgent request: "Isherwood, you must write about this town. You must write a great drama, or a novel." When the addressee of this plea turns the table and suggests that Toller write that work himself, this is what Toller replies: "No, Isherwood. No. I shall never write about this country. I have come here too late."[81]

It is not the overabundance of "noisy excitement" anymore that alienates Toller from things American. It is, on the contrary, a painfully felt *lack* of experience: a feeling of regret for not having come into this puzzling country earlier so as to be able to shed even the last remnants of bewilderment and be able to understand and embrace its life more fully.

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78 See von der Lühe: *Erika Mann*, 163f., and K. Mann, *Der Wendepunkt*, 602.

79 See Dove, *He Was a German*, 311 and Spalek/Frühwald, *Der Fall Toller*, 228. For the extensive news coverage of Toller's death see Spalek et al., *Toller and his Critics*, passim.

80 Spalek/Frühwald., *Der Fall Toller*, 227.

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"Inter, but not national:" Vilém Flusser and the Technologies of Exile

Chadwick Smith

I

"Habit is like a fluffy blanket," writes Czech-born philosopher Vilém Flusser in his essay, "Exile and Creativity," "It is unaesthetic [. . .] because it prevents us from perceiving information."[1] Habit is the condition of the settled, those comfortable in their homes; the exile has no blanket and disturbs the habits of others. For many readers, the blanket covers Flusser himself, who remains imperceptible within critical habit and largely unknown in the English-speaking world. The planned nine-volume *Schriften*, of which only five were published (1993–94), looked to gather three decades of his writings in a first attempt at a standard edition of his work in German,[2] yet in English translation only four relatively slender volumes and a handful of articles are available, and these have appeared only recently. Additionally, the majority of his early works were written in Portuguese, even though he believed that through his own migrations "the English language, in particular, became unclosed. And with it America with its inexhaustible treasures."[3] This was never to be the case, as Flusser is a European emigrant who never settled in the United States. His inclusion in the present volume, then, may seem to be something of an oddity.

He was an occasional writer, not a systematic one, a fact that has contributed to inadequate representation of his works. Yet the more pertinent

1 Flusser, Vilém, "Exile and Creatitity," in: id., *The Freedom of the Migrant: Objections to Nationalism*, transl. Kenneth Kronenberg, Urbana 2003, 81–87, 82. All further references to works in this volume given parenthetically in the main text.

2 Flusser, Vilém, *Schriften,* ed. Stefan Bollman/Edith Flusser, Bensheim, Düsseldorf 1993–1994.

3 From: Flusser, Vilém, *Bodenlos: Eine philosophische Autobiographie*, Cologne 1997, this translation appears in Flusser, *The Freedom of the Migrant*, xvii.

oversight is that, although his work has important ramifications for political theory, scholarship in both Germany and the United States predominantly views his writing as a contribution to the fields of late 20th-century communications and media theory.[4] Within his works, however, is a fundamental engagement with a thinking of exile, a condition that describes both his personal biography and the fundamental contours of his thought. Flusser attends to questions lying at the intersection of medial technologies and the status of exile – an increasingly relevant issue today, as evolving global technological and economic interdependency simultaneously advance the 'first world' to new heights of prosperity, while the number of 'third world' refugees and internally displaced persons grows.[5] The shift in technologies, as Flusser describes it, coincides with the change in the status of refugees and rightless persons during the period of the World Wars, a political analogue to which the authors attended to in this volume are eloquent witnesses. Here we must return to the figure of Flusser himself. Raised in Prague in a German-speaking Jewish family, Flusser fled the Second World War through England with his future wife's family and settled in Brazil. It is there that he began teaching and publishing after leaving his studies in Prague. Anke Finger, in the introduction to *The Freedom of the Migrant*, has discussed the impact this had on his academic career. Ever degree-conscious, the American academy could only offer a forum for a few scattered lectures, as he was never able to acquire any official standing in Brazil after breaking off his studies in Prague.[6] He was exiled, in a sense, from North American Universities. He engaged himself with Brazil, in the throes of a postcolonial nation, but eventually committed himself to a thinking free of national affiliations. He returned to Europe in 1972 and lived in France until his death in 1992. The enduring debate as to which continent may

4 Sean Cubitt's review in *Leonardo* addresses precisely this issue. See: Cubitt, Sean, "Review of Books from Vilém Flusser in English," in: *Leonardo* 37.5 (2004): 403–424.

5 According to a report of the United Nations High Commission on Refugees, at the beginning of 2009 the number of people of concern to UNHCR was 43.3 million, an increase from the previous year's 42 million, and, already a substantial increase form 32.9 million in 2006 [www.unhcr.org.].

6 In order to become an accredited professor in Brazil, one must complete their primary and secondary schooling within the Brazilian system. Having immigrated, Flusser could only ever achieve a status equivalent to a lecturer, though his career in São Paulo remained healthy due to his fame as a writer and editor.

lay claim to Flusser's thought – Europe or South America – underscores Flusser's continuing position as a border-crossing figure.[7]

Architect Martin Pawley, in his introduction to Flusser's *The Shape of Things: a Philosophy of Design*, relates an anecdote: "It was during this time [the early 1980s, CS], reflecting on the extraordinary story of Flusser's life that someone asked him if he considered himself an international man. "Inter," he replied, "but not national."[8] This is a quip, but a serious one. His thinking favors the 'inter' – for him, this means the dialogic. The nation and concomitant nationalism became anathema to him because it functioned as the opposite of dialog–discourse. These are the two types of codes of communication: "In one, messages flow from a sender toward a receiver, and this is called 'discourse.' In the other, messages oscillate between various participants in the process, and this is called 'dialog.'" Communication is certainly more complicated than this and more dangerous. Still, he persists with this basic schema, because "[a]lthough this distinction cannot be maintained with rigor [. . .] it is important for the following reason: the function of information is different in each of the types."[9] The baseline currency for his analyses is an engagement with "information," the flow of which he presciently understands as crucial to freedom and social change. A one-way flow of information, or no flow at all, is anesthetizing; it is only through dialog with others that humanity may be humane. Thus, "Inter, but not national."

In one word, the title of Flusser's philosophical autobiography, *Bodenlos* (*Groundless*), indicates both that a lack of secure home in any school of thought is characteristic of his philosophy and that it is, paradoxically, its 'ground.' This homelessness has traditionally been interpreted figuratively – the trajectory of his life informing the metaphors of his thought. Flusser, however, directly engaged the topic of political exile. He opens the possibility for such a project most explicitly in the

7 As Andreas Ströhl has noted, Flusser's movement has prompted both continents to claim Flusser. See, for example, Friedrich Kittler's "Flusser zum Abschied," in: Dieter Bechtloff (ed.), *Kunstforum International* 117 (1992): 99. He claims Flusser for his birthplace, calling him a "Messenger from Old Europe." Milton Vargas, however, would argue that Flusser's thought stems from his experiences at the Instituto Brasiliera de Filosofia in São Paulo. See Vargas, Milton, "Vilém Flusser in Brasilien," afterword to: Flusser, *Bodenlos*, 279–286.

8 Flusser, Vilém, *The Shape of Things: A Philosophy of Design*, transl. Anthony Mathews, London 1999, 15.

9 Flusser, Vilém, "On the Theory of Communication", in: *Writings*, ed. Andreas Ströhl, transl. Erik Eisel, Minneapolis 2002, 8–20, 18.

book *The Freedom of the Migrant* (*Freiheit des Migranten*). In it, he lauds the condition of exile as a creative chance for a critical detachment from one's culture, necessitating a reengagement with new cultures, a process that serves to alter both. The present contribution takes as its primary objects of study two of Flusser's essays in *The Freedom of the Migrant*, "Exile and Creativity" and "We Need a Philosophy of Emigration," and demonstrates both that it is through the dangerous path of expulsion that creative engagement with the world is possible and that this engagement is the only hope for those exiled.

II

"Habit is like a fluffy blanket. It rounds off all corners and damps all noise" (82). This "fluffy blanket" covers the diversity, detail, and strangeness of one's everyday life. The customs that make one at home in the world also "anesthetize" and bar discovery or engagement. The state of exile pulls away this blanket and "[everything] is then seen as unusual, monstrous, and 'unsettling' in the true sense of the word" (ibid.). It is then, when new information is at hand, that something else emerges for the expellee. The recognition of Exile breeds, quite literally, truth: "The Greeks called this discovery of the uncovered *a-letheia*, a word that we translate as *truth*" (83). Exile is the path to truth and its stakes are thus those of philosophy.

That Flusser is not talking about a particular political-historical situation, however, is clear:

> I specifically speak of 'expellees' and not 'refugees' or 'emigrants' to stress the extent of the problem I have raised. Because I am talking not just about the phenomenon of boat people, or Palestinians, or the Jewish emigration from Hitler's Europe but also about the expulsion of the older generation from the world of their children and grandchildren and the expulsion of humanists from the world of apparatuses. (82)

In addition to the exile of place, Flusser introduces a temporal exile – both in the question of a historical situation (boat people, Palestinians), and of a historical process (generations). Yet curiously he places states of philosophy and technology alongside time and place in this series, an expulsion from the "world of apparatuses." Thus the significance of exile is not only about physical exile; it is a matter of expulsion that touches multiple registers of human activity, and whose terms stretch out and connect with those in his other writings.

The invocation of the apparatus stands out still, provoking the question of its inclusion. Why the apparatus? Because in it, a technological world populated increasingly by objects without well-defined distinctions and which act as nodes and conduits in the flow and processing of information becomes apparent and is able to be subject to critique. As he will show, in a world which is primarily organized by the exchange of and interaction with information (in other words, a cybernetic world) one cannot discuss the human and the technological independent of one and other.

Between the boat people or Jewish people in Hitler's Europe and the apparatus, the question of refugees, of emigration and immigration, exists in a dialog between nations and enabled through technology. This is an old dynamic. Immanuel Kant, already in *Toward Perpetual Peace* (1795), writes the following: "Uninhabitable parts of the earth – the sea and the deserts – divide this community of all men, but the ship and the camel (the desert ship) enable them to approach each other across these unruled regions and to establish communication."[10] These technologies of transportation make necessary a notion of world citizenship, and set the stage for the technologies about which Flusser is famous for writing. Communications technologies enable a new type of interaction that not only brings one to and crosses borders, but gleefully ignores them: "Inter, but not national."

Thus humanists are expelled from the world of apparatuses because the age of the telematic society is (at least partially) a non-human one. Philosophies that attend to the place of the human being in a world populated with technologies like trans-oceanic ships and printing presses are systems of thought that cannot reckon with apparatuses. For this reason, it is one of Flusser's basic assumptions that continuous technological development prompts concomitant changes in the conditions and definitions of the human itself and calls for a "new humanism" to ensure that ethical and moral development keeps pace with advances in technology.[11] This humanism is one that must reckon with both philosophical and empirical exile.

The clearest discussion of an apparatus comes in his most famous work, *Toward a Philosophy of Photography*. The apparatus is a machine or system that mimics a function of the body or thought, embodying a

10 Kant, Immanuel, *Toward Perpetual Peace and Other Writings on Politics, Peace, and History*, transl. David L. Colclasure, New Haven 2006, 82, translation modified.

11 Flusser, *Writings*, 163f.

"non-human agency,"[12] the fulfillment of whose task introduces "a new kind of function in which human beings are neither the constant nor the variable but in which human beings and apparatus merge into a unity" (27). At the moment a photograph is taken, claims Flusser, the photographer and camera exist in an "apparatus-operator complex," in which there is no reason to distinguish between the two. As a photograph-producing operator, the photographer may only behave in ways allowed by the camera's code, what he calls its "program." In this way, photographers are functionaries of the codes of the camera. Flusser further argues that when the entire complex of interrelated apparatuses are considered, the net effect is that all operators

> are functionaries of an apparatus that, if analysis is extended back far enough, reaches into capital, corporations, politics and economics, a nested series of black boxes each governed by an elite of functionaries who nonetheless are prisoners of their own apparatuses.[13]

The use of the word "prison" is provocative and casts his analysis as pessimistic or proposing a negative stance to technology. The use of the word "prison" will be addressed later, but at present the scope of this apparatus-effect must be made clear. Though Flusser uses the example of the photographer and the camera to illustrate a basic relation between humans and "non-human agencies," the "Lexicon of Basic Concepts" at the end of the book makes clear that these need not be machines as such. He gives a glossary definition:

> *Apparatus (pl.–es)*: a plaything or game that simulates thought [trans. An overarching term for a non-human agency, e.g. the camera, the computer and the 'apparatus' of the State or of the market]; organization or system that enables something to function.

Thus these programs are technological, but also cultural, philosophic, religious, or linguistic. Flusser's human is defined by the historically inflected codes and programs of technology and information. The body becomes a product of physiology, and language is reduced to information technologies,[14] rather than being founded upon some original, unified self, as

12 Flusser, Vilém, *Toward a Philosophy of Photography*, London 2000, 83.

13 Cubitt, "Review of Books," 404.

14 A condition with which German media theory has continued to concern itself in all registers of criticism. Friedrich Kittler writes: "The physiology of ears, eyes,

has been the model of the human since the Enlightenment. What we think of as an individual human being is a node in the flow of communication, an "outpouching [*Ausbeutung*, CS] result[ing] from a concentration of network dispersion" (51). Inevitable, and in fact a given condition, Flusser eventually embraces this determined condition, despite potential for technical domination. Like Heidegger, with whom his early writings were concerned, Flusser continues to write about the human and its freedom in and through technology – a technology that is itself, in its essence, nothing technological. Communications technologies are the visible forms of an ontological structure. Here, freedom from absolute technical determinism is possible in the actions of photographers, *avant-garde* and otherwise, who try to push against the camera's existing program and, thus, produce something new. Forcing, against its design, the camera's shutter to remain open creates, for example, such a moment of freedom. He sees this as a moment of detachment in which one may criticize the programs or codes in which he or she is embedded. It is imperative, then, to seize this moment and to use it to change these same codes if the "prison" is to be altered. The criticism and play from within a complex, whether the program of a camera or the larger programs of culture, are characterized as a dialogue through which the possibility for engagement and change is generated.

This detached position is not only the one assumed in criticism, which allows one to step back and examine its object (free of fluffy blankets), but is also described by the terms he uses to define scientific thinking: "Western science comes about thanks to the detachment made possible by theory, as when one takes up a critical and skeptical attitude towards the world of phenomena."[15] In this matter, however, he takes the characterization of this way of seeing back to the beginnings of Western philosophy. Plato, he writes, when looking not at the world of phenomena, but rather at the world of forms detached from material (instead

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and brains have to become objects of scientific research. For mechanized writing to be optimized, one can no longer dream of writing as the expression of individuals or the trace of bodies. The very forms, differences, and the frequencies of its letters have to be reduced to formulas. So-called Man is split up into physiology and information technology." Kittler, Friedrich, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, Stanford 1999, transl. Geoffrey Winthrop-Young/Michael Wutz, 16.

15 Flusser, Vilém, *The Shape of Things: A Philosophy of Design*, transl. Anthony Mathews, London 1999, 71.

as structures, relations, or forms), "calls the way of seeing through the soul's second eye 'theory.'"[16]

Yet for Flusser the objects of criticism or theory, things, are not simply objects. From his definition of the apparatus, one can see that things can be thought of as everything that constitutes the human being's contingency, including technological and cultural programs. In the essay, "We Need a Philosophy of Emigration," he then claims that one finds a place without things in emigration, a place from which one may see the things that condition existence and "this place that is free of things may be called the ironic" (21). This movement to the ironic helps bridge the distance between analyses of technology to a consideration of more humanistic concerns. Though expelled from the world of apparatuses, Flusser will ultimately be concerned with the dialogue between the non-human agencies and the humanistic.

In exile, it is precisely the movement out of a set program (which he here terms contingency), which allows one to glimpse the contours of that contingency or program. What is invisible to the settled, those embedded in a context and covered by their fluffy blanket, the expellee sees as differences, which Flusser then classifies as new information. Since the settled are anesthetized and cannot perceive this information, only the expellee can engage it. "The movement into irony is an act of outrage," he claims, "[a]nd with this motion a person rises above contingence" (21). The ironic position transcends the contingency of a program, but this is only part of the dialogic process. One must return to the world, otherwise one has simply allowed oneself "to drift. There is no dignity in such movement. However, if I leave the first contingence and enter into a state of irony, then enter the second contingence out of this irony, then I am both outraged and engaged, and my decision has dignity" (23). This is dialog. At this point, one may discern that Flusser's quantifiable informatic analysis serves an engagement with the unquantifiable valences of human safety, freedom, and dignity. The goal is change, the possibility for which (what in the Philosophy of Photography is explicitly called the "possibility for revolution") lies in criticism, theory, and irony – that is, the action of philosophy – and these occupy the position of exile.

16 Ibid, 40.

III

To return to his discussion of the nested black boxes of apparatuses, however, one must remember that it is a "prison," even if, in fact, a necessary one. Yet apparatuses, he writes, further the ultimate goal of human interaction, and, as they assume human functions and agencies, may lead "back again through the strange detour through telematics to 'authentic' being human . . . to purposeless play with others and for others."[17] These are, I argue, the ultimate stakes of Flusser's thought – the "detour" through telematics is itself a detour through exile.

This path is empirically dangerous, however, a fact of which Flusser is aware. His analyses always look toward human dignity. For this reason, though approaching exile in an abstract, philosophical mode, he must also be aware of a harsh reality, namely that "[t]he dialogic spirit that characterizes exile may not be one of mutual recognition; it is mostly polemical and even murderous" (87). Flusser is not calling for exile, promoting it as a voluntary path to truth because the fact is that those persons expelled from their homes (like his examples of the boat people, Palestinians, or Jewish emigrants from Hitler's Europe) are likely not greeted as critical observers of the culture of their new homes and are often rather abused, hated, and detained in murderous prisons that are themselves apparatuses.

Thus he approaches the structural analysis of habit, settledness, and contingency as a "prison," one that, unexamined and unengaged, results in non-human determination. The counter movement to this type of total contingency is, quite simply, creativity. After the title and the last, thesis-like statement of the first paragraph, however, the word "creativity" as substantive is not used again. Instead, we find phrases such as "creative dialog" (84). The creativity to which exile challenges the expellee by presenting him or her with "an ocean of chaotic information" is a process. "Data processing is synonymous with creation," Flusser succinctly claims; "[i]f he is not to perish, the expellee must be creative" (81). The result of this creativity is the expellee's reengagement with the world – it is thus the dialog between the expellee and the long-settled person.

As shown in the above-quoted defense of the word "expellee," the apparatus applies explicitly to the political and social context, translating

17 Flusser, Vilém, *Ins Universum der technischen Bilder*, Göttingen 1990, 132. This translation appears in Flusser, *Writings*, ix.

a theory of technology into one of political necessity. He seems to laud the condition of exile; it is a creative chance for this critical detachment from one's culture, necessitating a reengagement with new cultures, a process that serves to alter both "programs." The synthesis of new information is indeed enabled through the conditions of strangeness of the expellee, a strangeness necessary for irony, criticism, and scientific thought. Creativity for Flusser is the freedom for thinking, a freedom, however, that has great stakes. Again, "[Information processing] is a matter of life and death. If he is not able to process the data, he will be swamped and consumed by the waves of exile breaking over him" (ibid.). In a condition forced upon him or her, the expellee has no choice to become this kind of creativity: "*This, I think, shows what being free means. Not cutting off one's ties with others but making networks out of these connections in co-operation with them. Émigrés become free, not when they deny their lost homeland, but when they come to terms with it*" (italics in original).[18] When Flusser presents what he admits is a positive valuation of exile, he is not calling for one to seek exile. Rather, he starts from the presumption that expellees exist and that this type of creativity is the only way to survive. Thus, the "detour" through new technologies is the salvation of the expellee.

"A philosophy of emigration is still to be written. Its categories are still nebulous and blurred. But it needs to be written because it would benefit not only actual emigrants but virtual ones as well. One of its principle tasks would have to be to differentiate as clearly as possible between emigration and flight in a world in which many are forced to flee" (24). The present volume hopes to write a chapter of this philosophy of emigration, and it is this author's sincere hope that it contributes to the long task of defining (from one historical perspective) its categories and stakes.

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Fred Stein (1909–1967): A Retrospective[1]

Dawn Freer

I

In 1946, when Albert Einstein was in residence at Princeton University, Fred Stein was granted ten minutes of the great man's time to take a portrait. After the time was up, Einstein's secretary came in to usher Stein out. However, Einstein insisted that he stay, saying that their discussion was too interesting to cut short. The secretary came back repeatedly, but the visit extended to two hours. The resulting portrait by Fred Stein pictures a deep intelligence engaged in thought. It became an iconic image, and one of the most famous photographs ever taken of Albert Einstein.

Einstein had agreed to submit to the portrait-taking (which was an activity he generally despised) because Stein, like himself, was an exile, wrenched from his home in Germany by the rise of Fascism. This fact – of being exiled – proved to be life-changing for Stein in surprising ways.

Fred Stein was born in 1909 in Dresden, Germany, which was an important cultural capital, graced with beautiful architecture and noted for a classical appreciation for the arts. His father was the rabbi of the Dresden Conservative community, who died when Stein was six years old. Though their circumstances were reduced, his mother encouraged his intellectual and artistic education, and took memberships in the numerous museums in Dresden. Stein wrote that he "haunted" the museums. He was an exceptional student, and earned a scholarship to an elite

1 Both the citations and the biographic information on Fred Stein in this article are taken from 1) Letter by Fred Stein to friends and relatives, June 1946. A copy is retained by the Fred Stein Archive, Stanfordville, NY. 2) Transcript of videotape interview with Lilo Salzburg Stein, in her apartment in Queens, NY; conducted by Peter Stein, March 1981. 3) Oral conversations with Peter Stein conducted by Dawn Freer spanning the years 1982–2011.

private Gymnasium (high school) where he skipped grades twice – a rare occurrence in those days – and graduated at the top of his class.

Despite the affluence abounding in Dresden, there were also a great number of people who were suffering terribly from the effects of inflation, and this seemed painfully unjust to Fred Stein. He read the works of Marx and Engels at the age of 16, joined the Socialist Youth Movement, and resolved to become a lawyer in order to be able to defend the poor.

He threw himself into political activity, going to meetings where he met people from all walks of life, and giving lectures despite his young age. Curious about the nascent Nazi party, he went to a beer hall to hear Adolf Hitler give a speech, and realized immediately the threat that he posed.

At the age of 20, he enrolled in law school at the University of Heidelberg, but also attended other schools in search of the best professors. During these years he met Liselotte (Lilo) Salzburg, the daughter of a wealthy Jewish physician in Dresden. He eventually passed his orals at Leipzig University in 1930, and then worked at the Court of Justice to complete the requirements for his degree.

Hitler became Chancellor in 1933. Shortly thereafter, and just three weeks before Stein finished the apprenticeship requirements necessary to be admitted to the bar, he was called into the office of the Commissar and dismissed from government service for "racial and national unreliability." Unable to obtain his law degree, he took a job doing legal work in a factory.

The streets were full of Nazi soldiers and swastikas. Despite the growing danger, Stein continued his anti-Nazi activities, lecturing and riding around on his bicycle, distributing literature. When Stein and Lilo Salzburg went to get married in August, they were greeted with "Heil Hitler" salutes by guards at the Justice of the Peace. A friend of theirs in Paris wrote, urging them to come there. After Stein was warned in a secret nighttime visit that the Gestapo was asking questions about him, they left for Paris under the pretext of taking a honeymoon trip.

Though they did not know it at the time, it was the last time they would see Dresden. Stein would always consider Germany his homeland – a homeland irretrievably lost.

II

Paris in the 1930s was alive with an infusion of new life, and was the setting for a vital art scene. Refugees from all over Europe had come because

the French professed their determination to honor the ideals of *liberté, égalité*, and *fraternité*. Emigrés mingled in the cafes, engaging in endless talk about art and politics and philosophy. The new Modernism, as well as Surrealism, Jazz, and Film Noir pervaded the air, and set off a wave of inspired vision among the artists rubbing shoulders daily with each other.

Fred Stein and his wife adapted quickly to the city. Of course, they thought their situation was temporary and that they would soon be returning to Germany. They had a bit of "capital" from a wedding gift and were able to afford an apartment – a seventh-floor walkup in Montmartre. It was a gathering place for other refugees; the Steins would cook up meals to help feed everyone, and sheltered people there. As Stein reports:

> The police were interested in some of our tenants – work was illegal for émigrés if they were not artists or journalists [. . .] friends of ours had their independent workshops closed within forty-eight hours. Only under the Popular Front government could émigrés from Germany get work permits.

Politics was a very real concern among the German refugees. The Socialist Workers Party, a non-Communist splinter group, met frequently, in attempted secrecy, using assumed names – Fred Stein used the pseudonym Fritz Berger, and published articles under that name. He was an officer of the Anti-Fascist Journalist Association, which later made him an easily identifiable target for the Nazis. He met and befriended many important politicians, writers, artists, and philosophers. One friend was the young Willy Brandt, who later became Chancellor of Germany. Brandt stayed with the Steins on his clandestine trips in and out of Germany.

> I first met Fred when we were both refugees fighting the totalitarian Nazi regime through the rather poor means we had. In his time he was very much in the avant-garde, a brilliant photographer inspired by his quest for justice and his concern for truth so clearly reflected in his photographs. He truly was a man of vision, and his choice of people and subjects is an obvious proof of it.[2]

For Fred Stein, the very urgent issue of how to earn a living, which was such a terrible problem for all of the refugees, created one of those twists

2 Letter from Willy Brandt, Chancellor of Germany, to Peter Stein, May 10, 1983. A copy is retained by the Fred Stein Archive.

of fate where a great good arises out of a great trouble. He was unable to practice law in France, as a lawyer was only able to practice in France ten years after naturalization. He had no other business skills, and Lilo had been raised in wealth and had no marketable skills. So, with a certain amount of "chutzpah," as he says, and the Leica they had bought as a wedding gift, they opened "Studio Stein," putting up a portrait and a picture of Montmartre in the showcase outside the building.

The making of photographs came to Stein quickly and naturally – he had a good eye and a highly developed sense of aesthetics, and photography is an intuitive as well as a highly sophisticated art form. The power of the camera swept him up immediately. He began to explore the streets of Paris, taking scenes from the life that he found there; he also made portraits of the interesting people he had befriended. "The Leica taught me photography," he said.

The Leica, a small hand-held camera, ushered in a new age in photography – the era of the mobile camera. Previously, cameras had been cumbersome, heavy, and slow. The Leica, coupled with "fast" or very sensitive film, brought together several crucial technological advances. The light weight and small profile of the new camera freed photographers to be able to move about quickly and easily. Another major advance was in the format of the film – it used 35mm motion picture film, which was on a roll. Thus the photographer could take quick shots in public places, and take several in succession, using available light. Spontaneity became part of the grammar of photography. This gave photographers a broad new palette of possibilities, and street photography was one of the principal areas in which it was used. This time of new discovery was a golden age for photography in Paris.

Fred Stein had the enormous good fortune to be in the right place at the right time. He quickly grasped the possibilities of the new medium, and was soon pushing the limits of the camera, along with the other pioneers of the time. Paris, ever romantic, poised between two wars, full of remarkable people, was a fascinating subject. He pursued his new art with a passion: shooting every day, and studying whatever books and work he could find at night. His "outsider" status contributed to his ability to see the world from a unique perspective.

When he went out into the boulevards and alleyways, he saw people going about their business, in ephemeral relation to their environment; and what he saw was both their ordinariness and their transcendence – fleeting glimpses of life in the midst of the everyday moment. He was able to capture these scenes by establishing a remarkable connection

with people, due partly to easy conversational skills, but also to a natural feeling for the essence of another person. He created a sphere in which his subjects felt free to reveal themselves and their world. They relate to the camera with an ease and unself-consciousness that show the respect and careful attention that Fred Stein gave to them. It is his rendering of people in their time and place which make the photographs memorable – a poetry of daily life.

Portraiture was another area dramatically changed by the new camera; now there were no strictures on settings or poses. Subjects did not have to hold their expressions for long minutes or suffer from hot lights. They could be captured in a more natural, candid manner. Stein produced many portraits; first as a means to earn a living, and then as he became more and more interested in photographing the remarkable people he was meeting in his exile world. He met Le Corbusier and photographed his architecture all around Paris and in the outlying suburbs. He associated with and photographed Bertoldt Brecht many times. Hannah Arendt was a friend whom he photographed over a period of thirty years. There was also Arthur Koestler, and André Malraux, with whom Stein argued about politics, determined to convince Malraux in his early years that Malraux was not a communist.

One of his subjects was also one of their roommates in Montmartre – Gerda Taro, photographer and companion of photojournalist Robert Capa. The bathroom, shared by all, was their darkroom. Gerda Taro was killed while shooting the Spanish Civil War, and when her body was returned to Paris, the funeral for this brave young woman filled the streets. (Her work was largely unknown until the discovery, seventy years later, of the "Mexican Suitcase" by the International Center of Photography in New York. The "Mexican Suitcase" was actually boxes of negatives from the Spanish Civil War that had been sent away for safekeeping during WWII, and subsequently lost. It contained rolls of important negatives by Robert Capa, Gerda Taro, Chim, and, coincidentally, portraits of Taro and Capa by Fred Stein.)

Fred Stein had a remarkable gift for showing the animating spirit of his subjects – bringing together gesture and expression in a profound way. Much of his technique arises from his familiarity with his subjects and their work; he read widely and often was familiar with the work. If he did not know someone's work, he would study their ideas in depth in order to be able to discuss them. Here is where his intellect worked for him so well: he would take the conversation to a deep level, and thereby capture a moment when his subject was truly engrossed in deep thought.

His photographic vision was broad and sophisticated; he worked on a wide range of themes and ideas. He put together albums of contact sheets, arranged by subject, in order to study his ideas, sequences, themes, and lighting effects, etc; working out all the challenges of conveying his vision.

He experimented extensively with the use of darkness and shadow; he also took remarkable night photographs, which was now practical for the first time. Another theme was the contrast of old and new, which was present in Paris in a very evocative way. He often juxtaposed the two elements, as in the photograph "Chez" 1934: a flower vendor, pursuing her ancient trade from a wooden wagon, next to the most modern of advertising signs.

In all his Paris photography there is a blend of emotion and contemplation: a certain balance in the tension between his German sense of formal, elegant composition, and a more French, informal freedom. He manages a complicated set of dimensions, and achieves a clarity, simplicity, and beauty in the design.

One aspect that pervades his work, and that perhaps is the subliminal message of an exile, is the idea of that which is lost – what is gone from the frame, what is hidden in shadow, the old world that is disappearing, the idea of a moment snatched from life.

III

In 1939, the invasion of Poland by the Nazis precipitated a declaration of war by France. All "enemy aliens" (Germans) were put into detention camps. Stein was taken to a camp in Villerbon. (Stein's wife Lilo was allowed to remain in Paris as the 'mother of a French citizen,' Ruth Marion, born in 1938.)

Fred Stein relates in a letter (written later)[3] that in the camp, he organized a library, built up with donated books, and managed a "Sorbonne" where they gave a lot of interesting and useful courses – "unless the lieutenant sabotaged them by giving forced walks during the time of the courses." When the Nazis entered Holland, the prisoners were brought to a camp in St. Nazaire in Bretagne.

3 Letter by Fred Stein to friends and relatives, June 1946, cf. footnote 1.

They waited in a state of anxiety from the end of May until the middle of June as the Nazis came closer every day. Paris was bombarded, and people were fleeing. Stein had no idea where his wife and child were. The prisoners were "barricaded" by the remaining French soldiers who were drunk on the prisoners' wine rations. Stein relates:

> We were absolutely like animals in a cage who know that they will be surrendered to the butcher. . . . Nazi planes flew over our camp and gave smoke signals. In the afternoon of the 19th, suddenly a gendarmerie lieutenant comes running into the camp "Messieurs – les Allemands sont là – debrouillez-vous en vitesse, metez des vêtements civils. (Gentlemen – the Germans are here – escape quickly, wear civilian clothing.) [. . .]
>
> We were free – in no-man's land. Children played in the streets in the summer sunshine, and on the anti-aircraft cannons which stood in the open fields [. . .]. We slept in the woods, begged for food and drinks and finally hid near a village.[4]

He headed south, mostly on field paths, reaching isolated farmhouses, where he received food and drink in the evenings. He wore a "bleu" (bluegreen outfit) that he had exchanged for his better clothes, with utensils in one pocket and a bottle of wine in the other. During his southward flight, he sent postcards to Lilo, including some to her in Paris, in case she was still there.

Lilo was in fact, still there, in a rather desperate situation: in Nazi Paris, without friends, always afraid of the Gestapo, not knowing what to do. She finally received the last of Stein's postcards. With her baby on her hip, she went to the German Commandant to get a passage permit. Seeing that the lines were enormously long, with her impeccable French she asked a French policeman for help to get to her "demobilized" husband (as if he were in the French army). The officer escorted her to the front of the line and asked the Commandant to help her. When the German officer asked for her name, she spelled it in French without saying it as a whole word, so he would not know it was a German name. She batted her eyelashes at him and took the permit from his hand with a quick "merci," so she did not have to show any papers. She left Paris with only the baby and a rucksack full of the negatives and prints.

The Steins were reunited in Toulouse, and waited there for many months (hiding in a chicken house) to gather together the necessary

4 Ibid.

permits and visas and affidavits necessary to be able to leave France. Food was very scarce, and Stein lost 40 pounds during this time. Finally, with the help of Varian Fry and the Emergency Rescue Committee in Marseilles, they were able to get their visas, and left Marseilles on May 7, 1941, on the *S. S. Winnipeg,* one of the last boats to leave France.

IV

Fred Stein was amused when another passenger on the ship to New York, upon hearing Stein say that his occupation was "photographer-artist," proceeded to enlighten him that "In American, sir, photographers are not artists; they are merely photographers." But the truth was that Stein continued to be a photographer-artist when he arrived in New York.

In fact, the New World infused Stein with energy, and he loved the hustle and bustle of the city. After a brief time to recover from his recent trials, he quickly took to the streets again with his camera. Lilo worked as a teacher to support the family, and a son, Peter, was born in 1943.

Stein's world view underwent a shift. He was no longer a voice of resistance fighting the Nazis; he was in the safe haven of the United States, which took on the enemy with all its might and resources. The freedom to work was liberating. The idea of a political "cause" dissipated – "Socialism" had a different connotation in the U.S. than it had in Germany and France, and he was living in a stable democracy that espoused tolerance and opportunity. After all the upheaval he had been through, he gained a measure of security.

He saw, with a certain idealism, a "melting pot" in the multiculturalism of New York that he wanted to express in his photography. He added the medium-format Rolleiflex, and used both cameras, giving himself a choice of formats to fit the situation. The photos became more dynamic and complex. He traveled with his camera through all parts of the city, going to the various ethnic areas, seeing in the residents a style, humor and dignity that were often overlooked due to prejudice. This rapport between equals, photographer and subject, elevates the moment. The city itself, with its towering buildings and crowded streets, became an element of his photography, and a subject in its own right.

There was also a shift in the course of his art. He had an enormous amount of intellectual and artistic energy, which he now turned more towards portraiture. New York certainly presented the perfect opportunity to meet remarkable people. He existed among a network of German

émigré acquaintances in New York, a highly educated and cosmopolitan group, and he widened his contacts from there. He met and photographed a breathtaking number of personalities. When he did not have a personal introduction, he would shoot his subjects, documentary style, at public appearances. Notable portraits from this period include the well-known photographs of Albert Einstein, Thomas Mann, Carl Sandburg, and Frank Lloyd Wright. He photographed many people on commission, as with Marc Chagall and Norman Mailer.

His choice of subjects shows a subtle change also. The portraits from the New York period are mature, accomplished people. Many of them are exiles also. They are people who have been through much, and who have emerged to produce work that has a great influence on the world.

Stein called himself a "headhunter," and described his work as character portraiture: His goal was to capture the individuality and story of each subject. As he wanted a true likeness, he used only natural or minimal light. He would never retouch a photo. He took over 1200 portraits in his lifetime, and in almost all of them, he was able to somehow capture the indefinable essence of the person.

He was quoted in an article about his work in the September 26, 1954 edition of the *New York Times*:

> The report of a likeness and the revelation of character are the two principal goals of the portrait photographer. Both purposes must be achieved in the successful portrait since full recognition of a person is not in the exterior identity alone, but is elaborated and made convincing by some visible element of individuality.
>
> The photographer is therefore alert to attitude, gesture, and expression, and snaps the shutter at the critical moment when these signs all blend together to describe the inner personality.
>
> One moment is all you have. Like a hunter in search of a target, you look for the one sign that is more characteristic than all the others. The job is to sum up what a man is according to your understanding of him. The painter has the advantage here since he can work toward this objective through several leisurely sessions; the photographer has only one, and that one as brief as a split second.

Fred Stein died in 1967 at the age of fifty-eight. He had lived through the defining trauma of the age, and emerged, miraculously, with his idealism intact. His life's work was shaped by history, and he responded as an

artist. He recorded thousands of brilliant photographs of life in the mid-20th Century, photographs which celebrate the mystery of the unique human individual.

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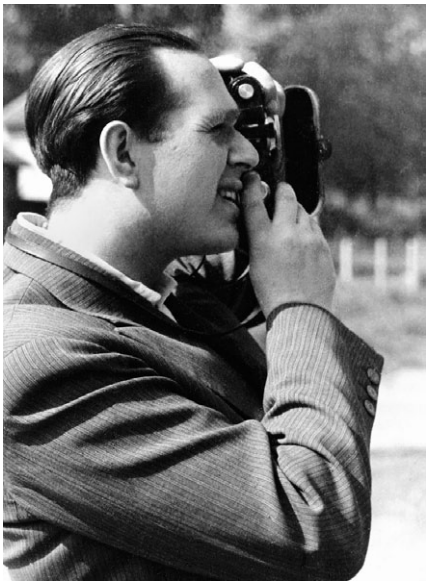
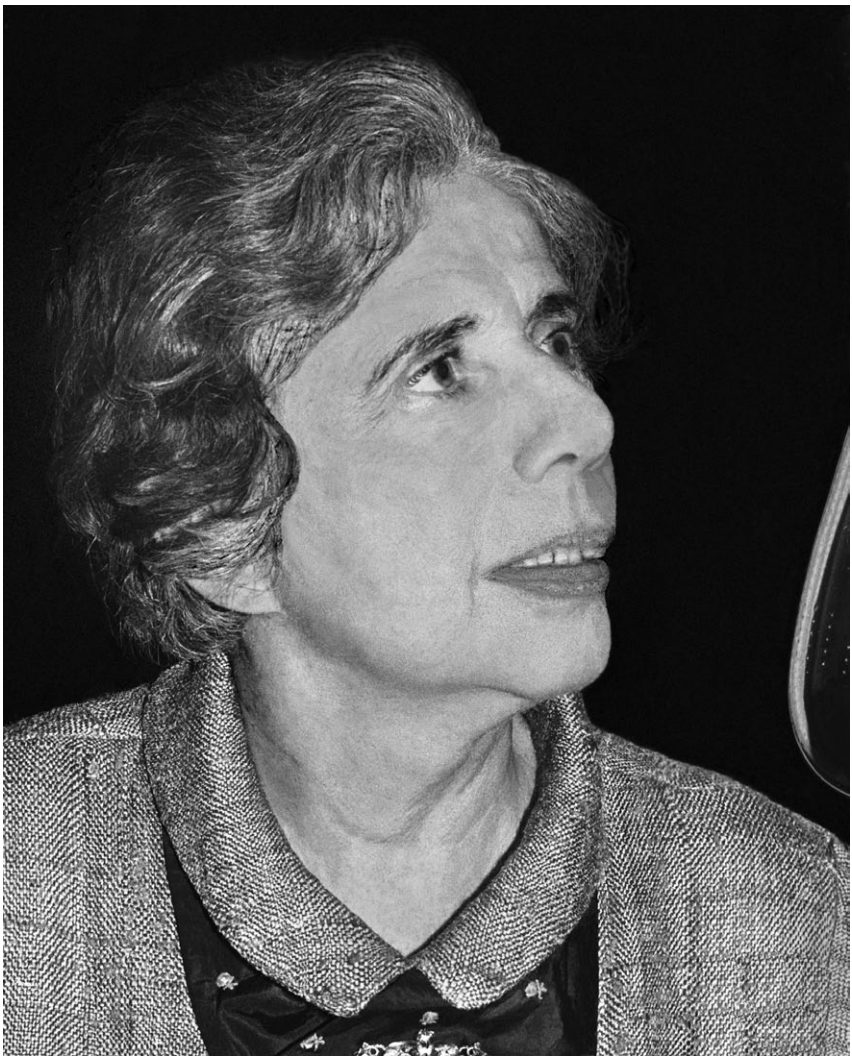


Fred Stein, ca. 1937, picture by Lilo Stein (Fred Stein Archive)

All photographs © Estate of Fred Stein, www.FredStein.com

Hannah Arendt, 1944 (Fred Stein Archive)



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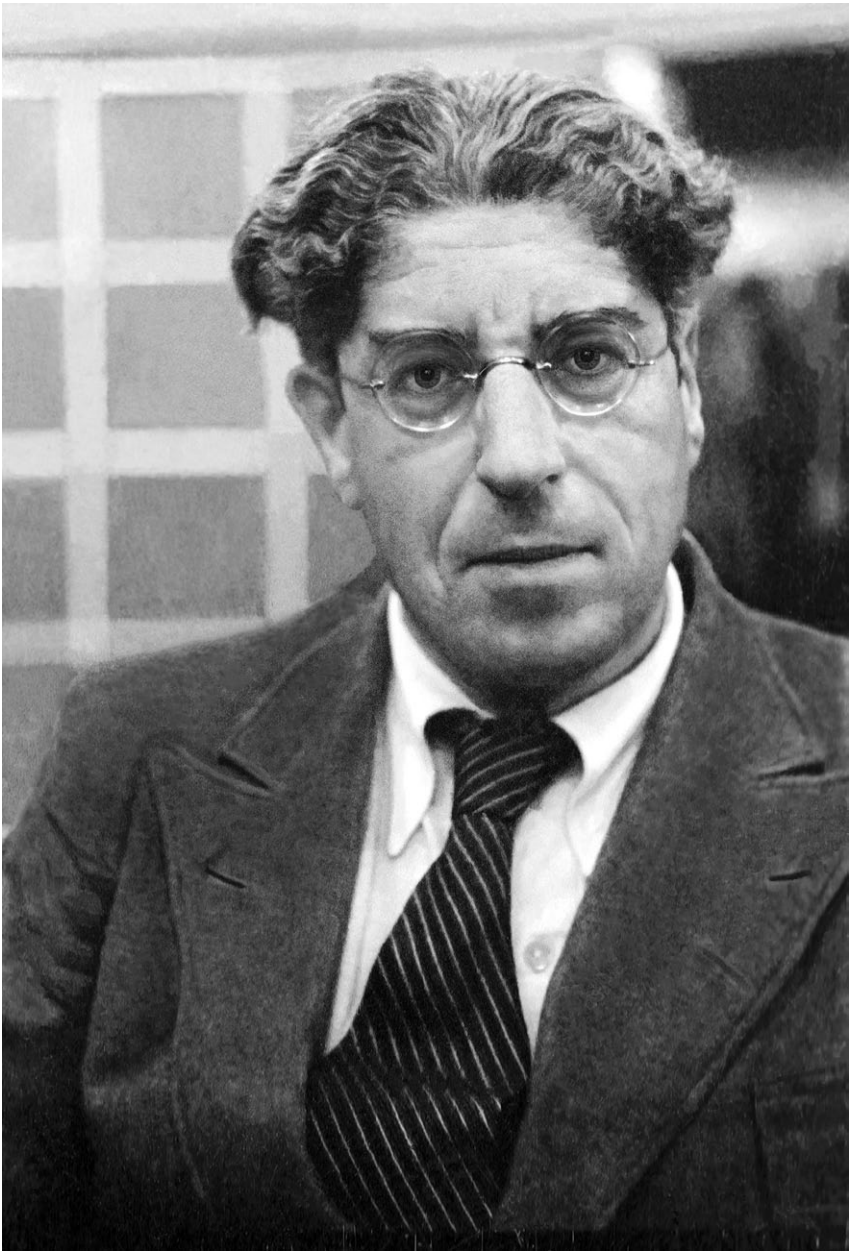

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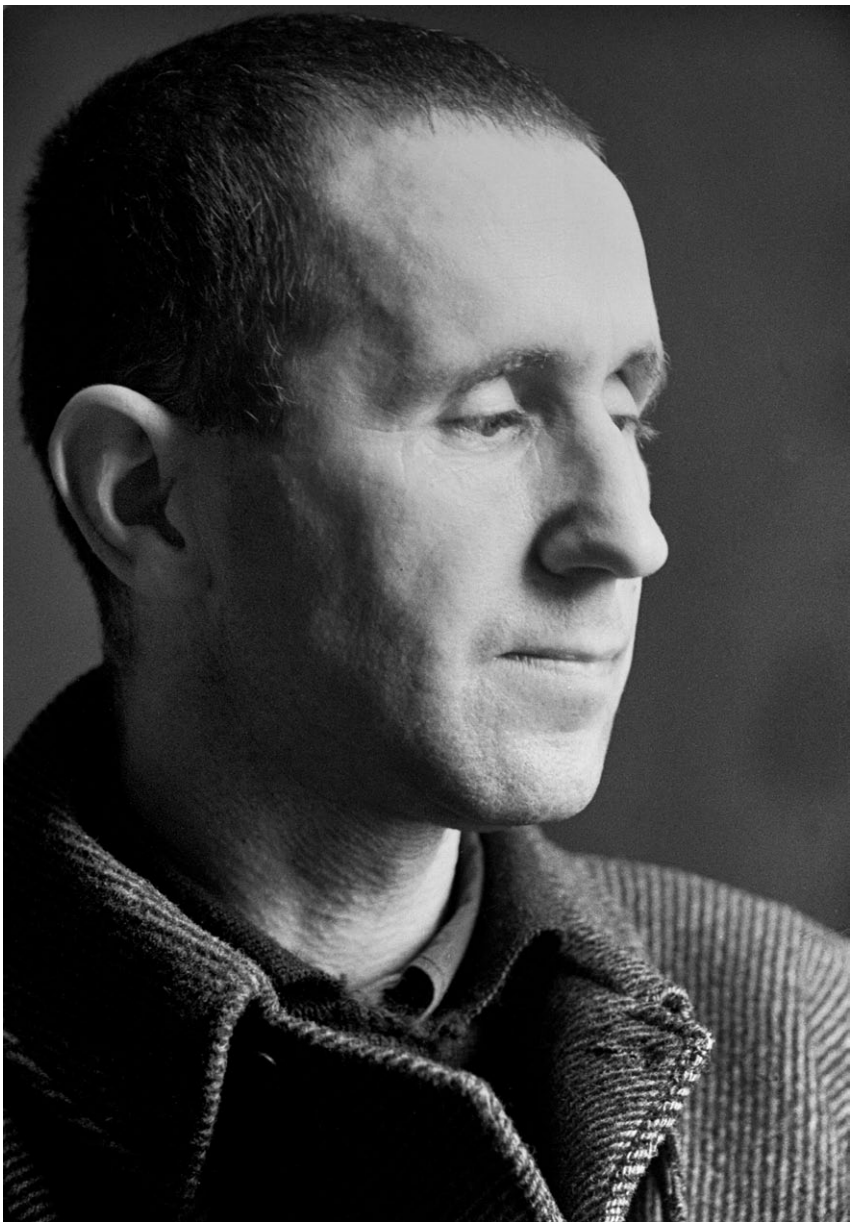

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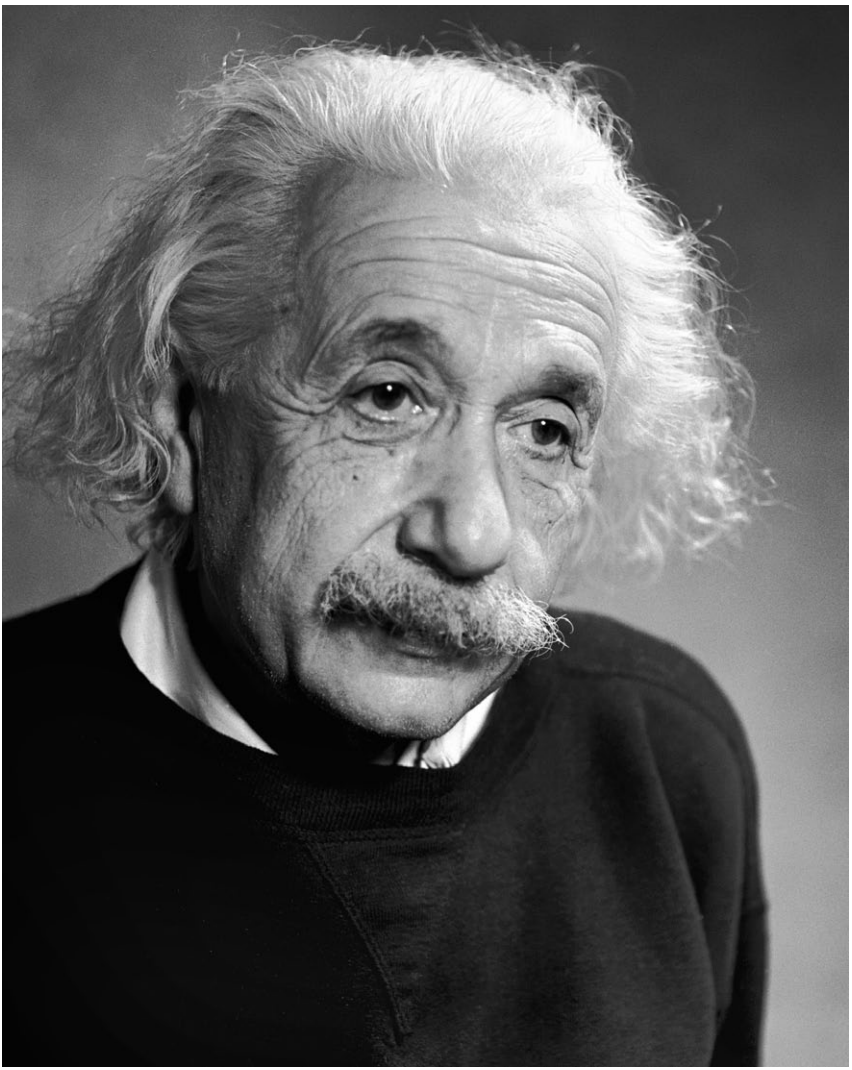

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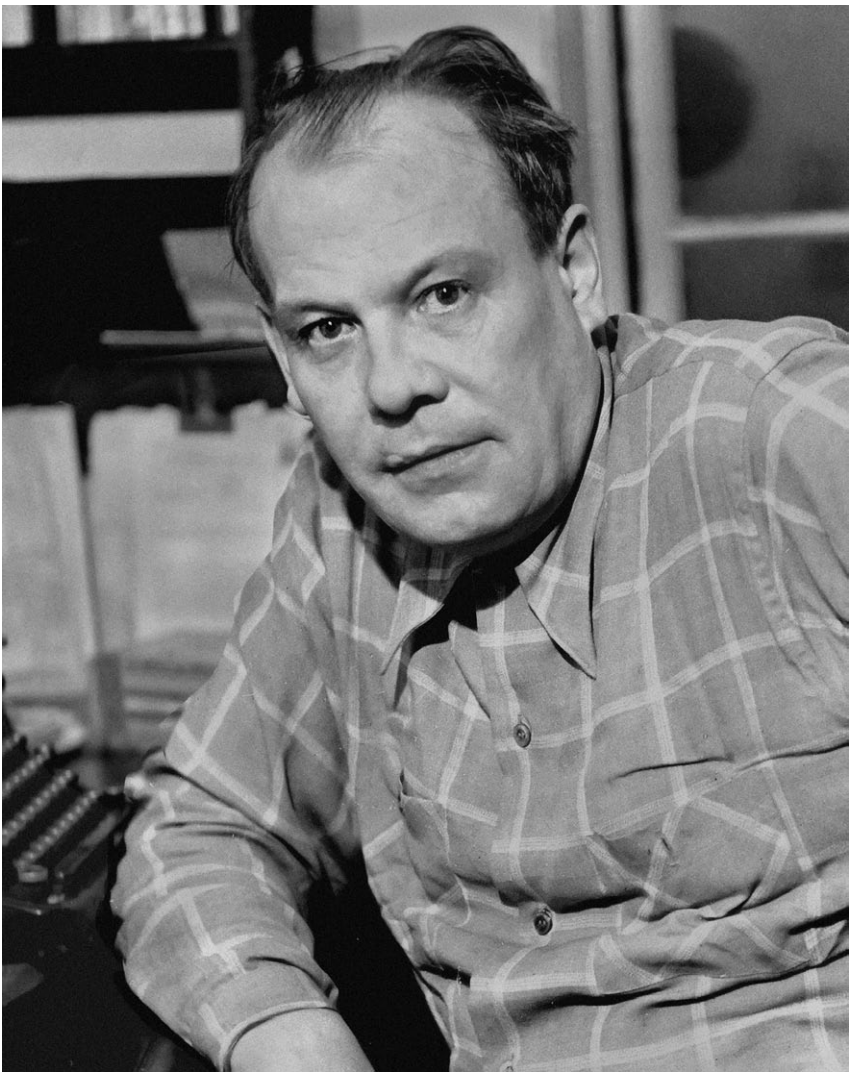

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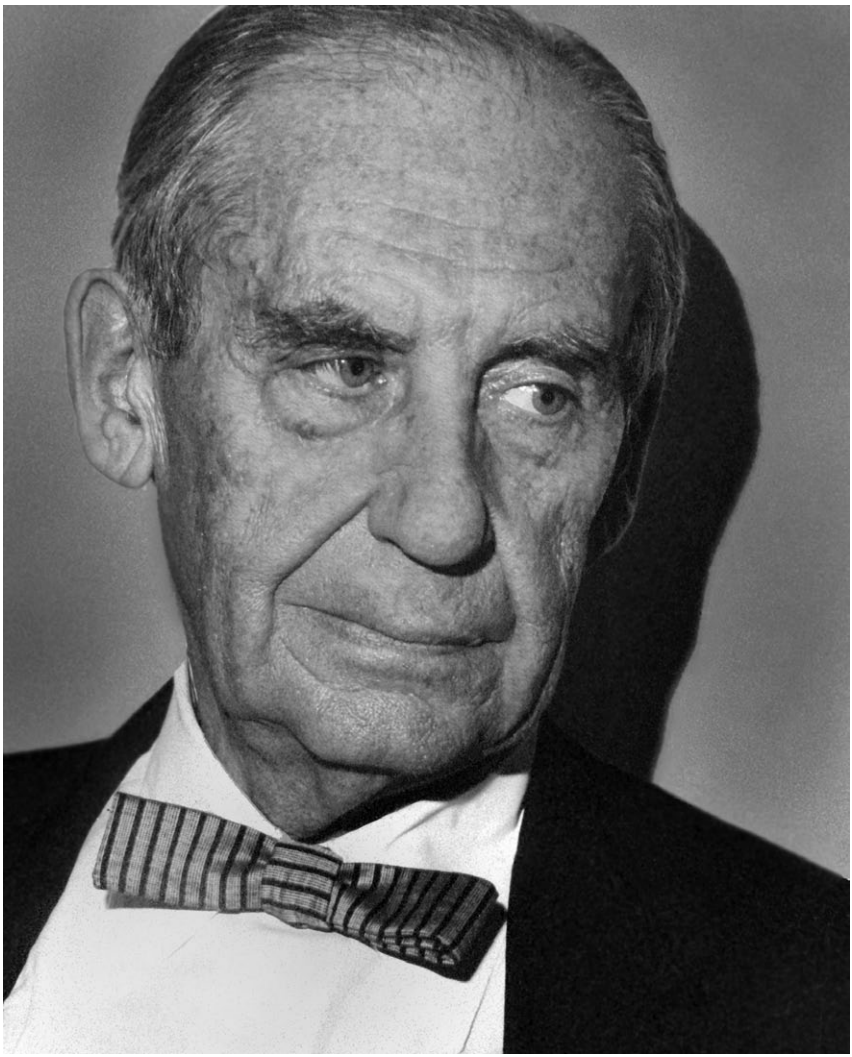

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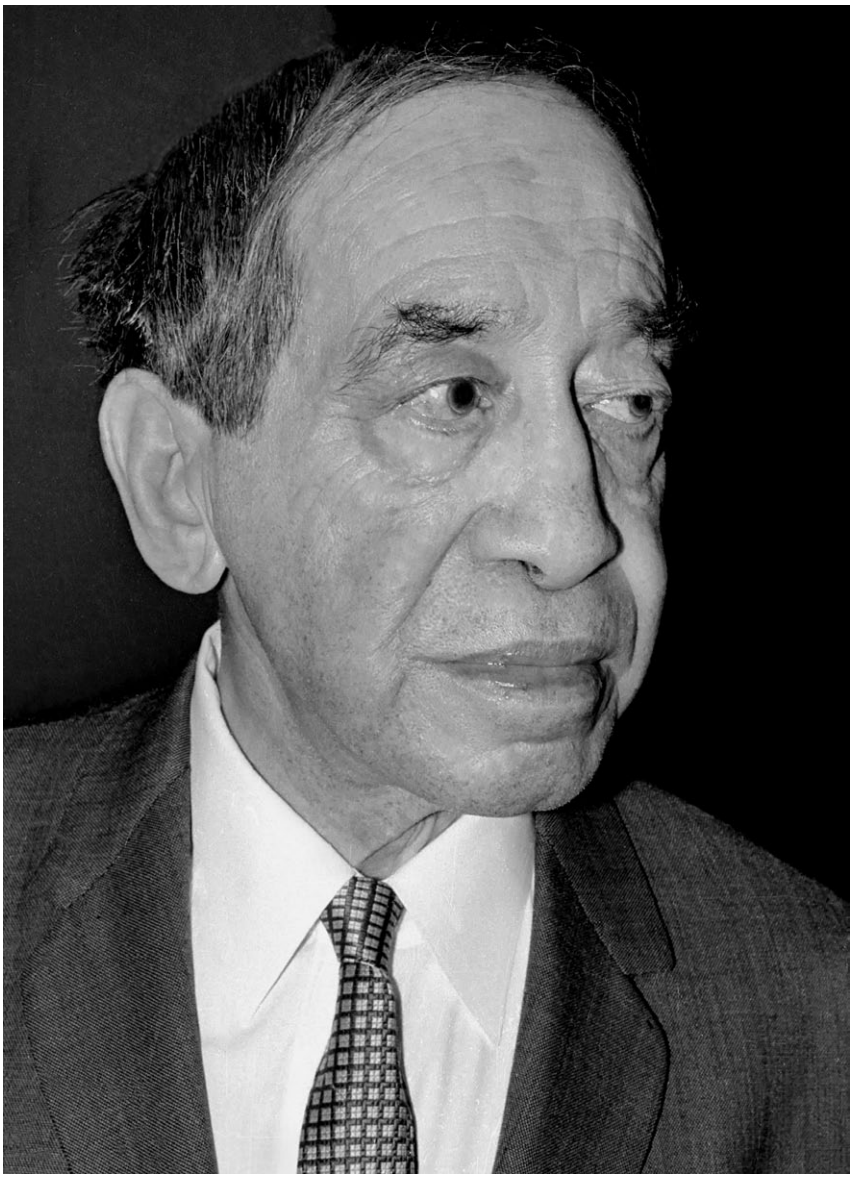

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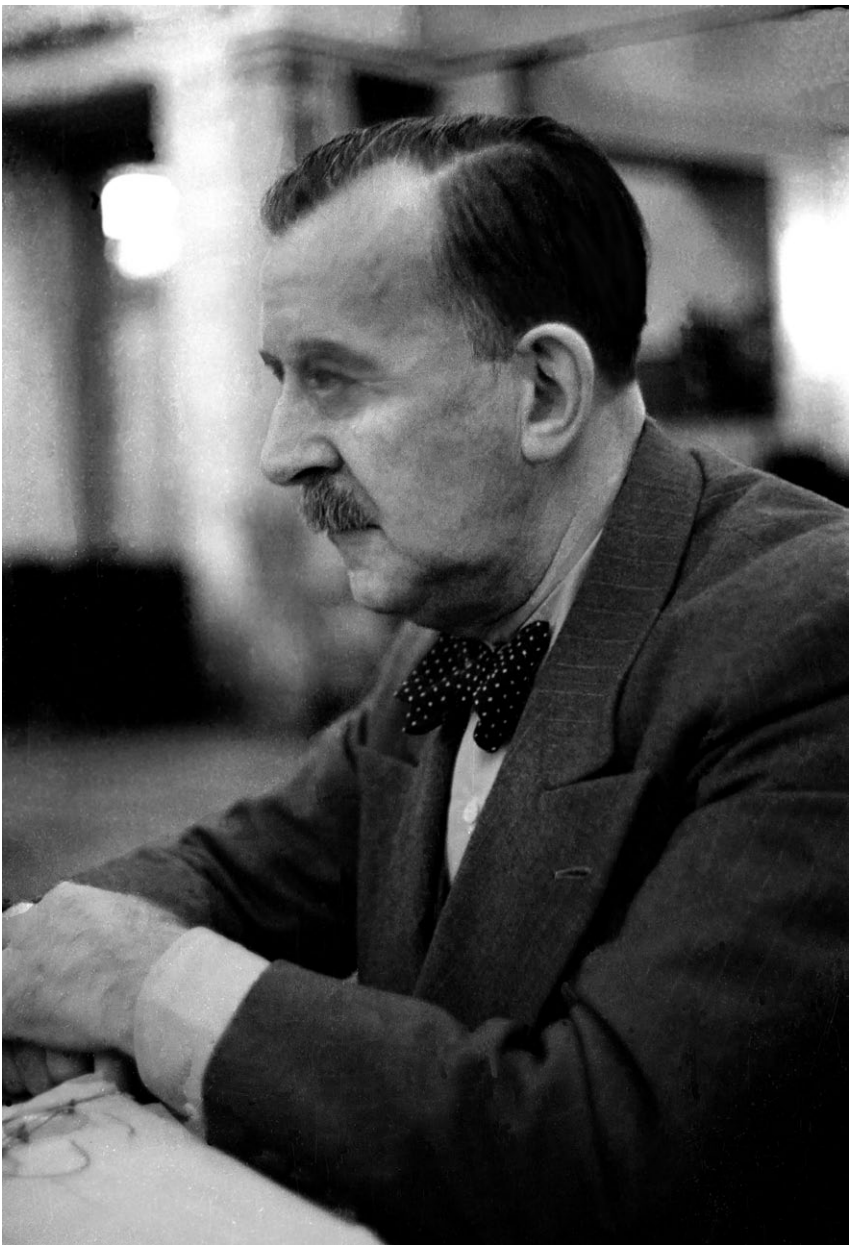

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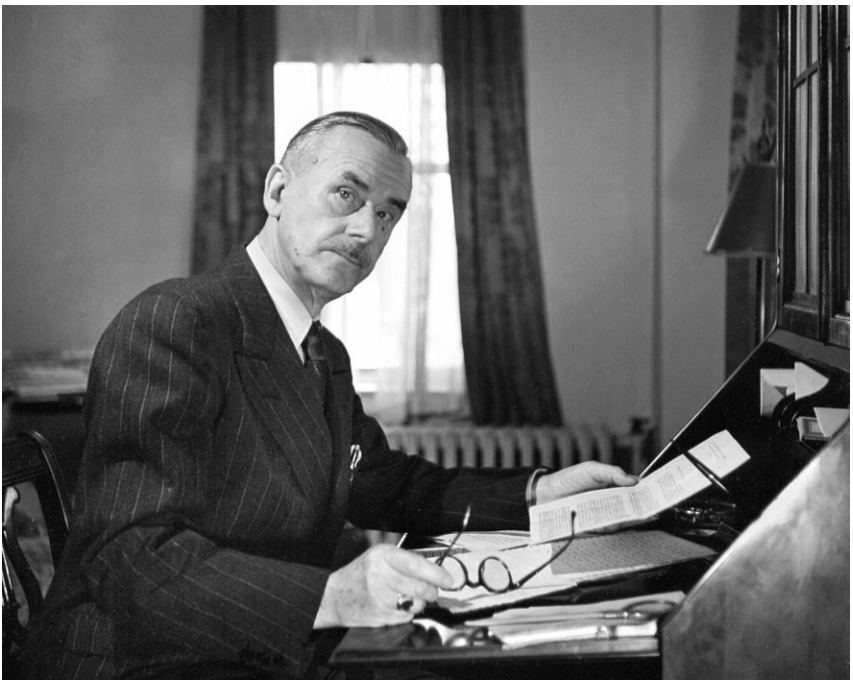

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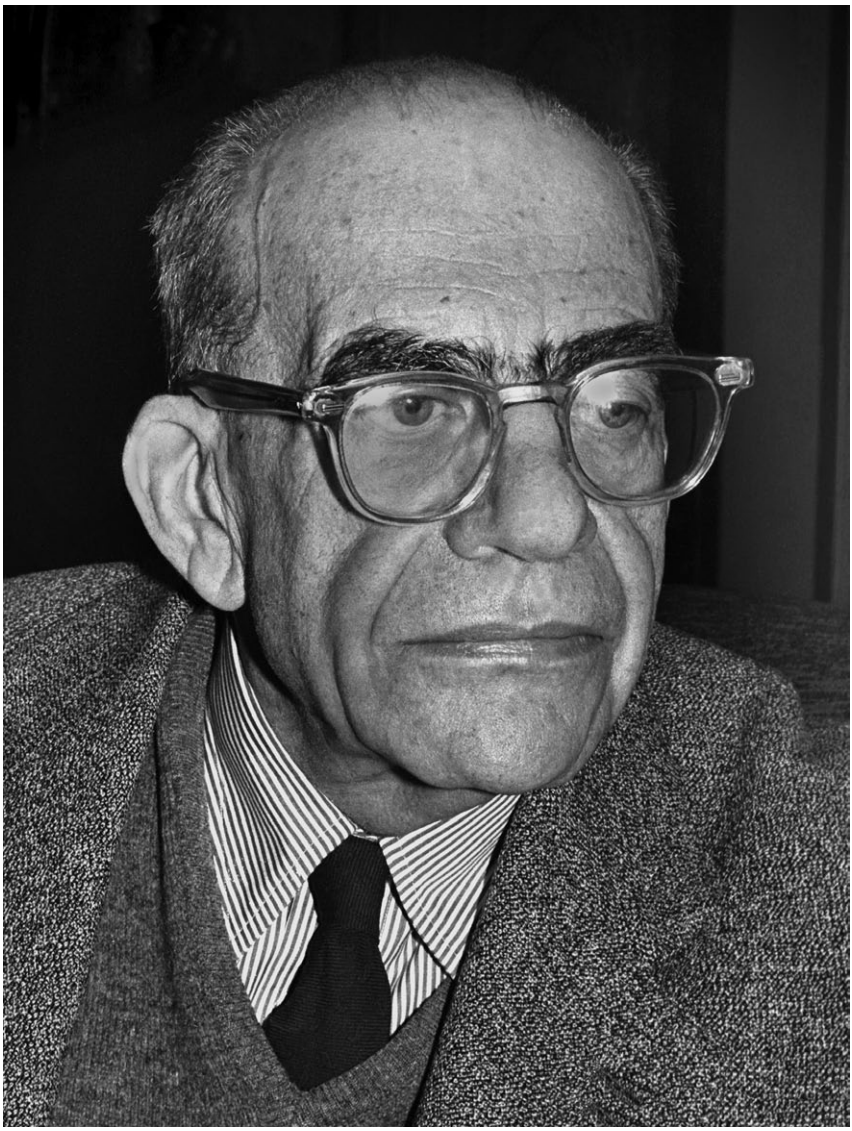

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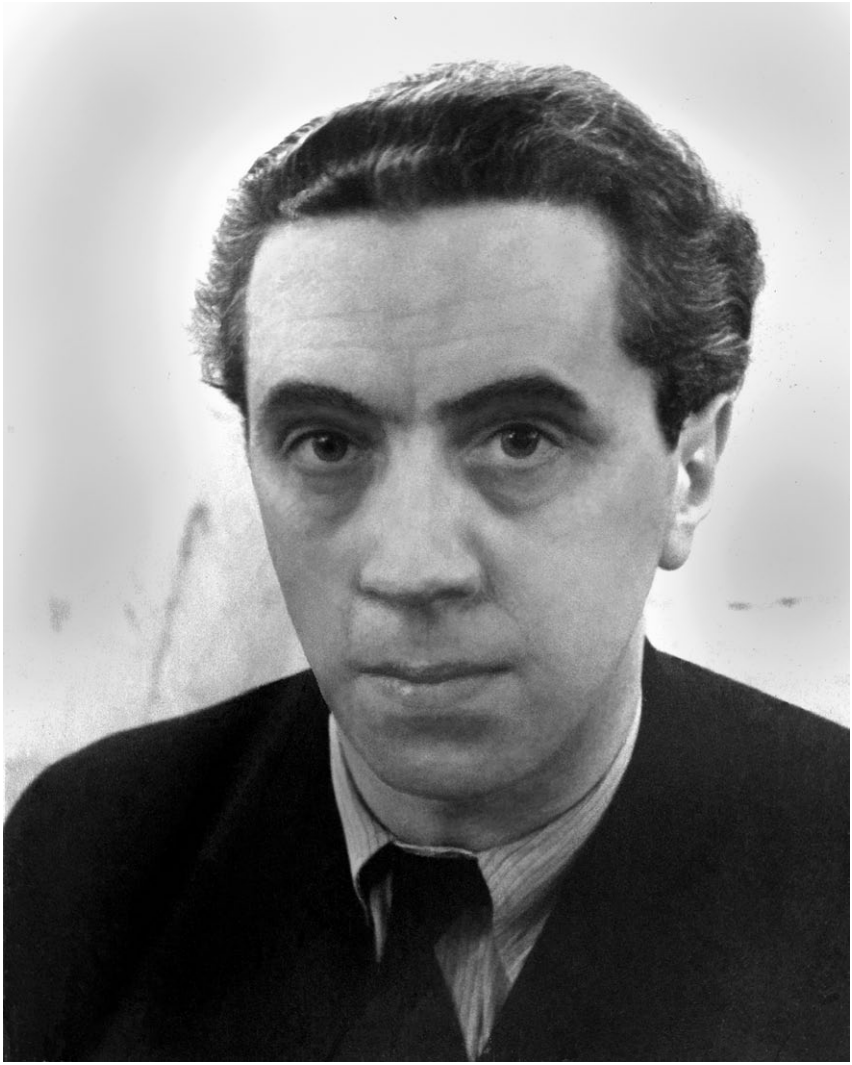

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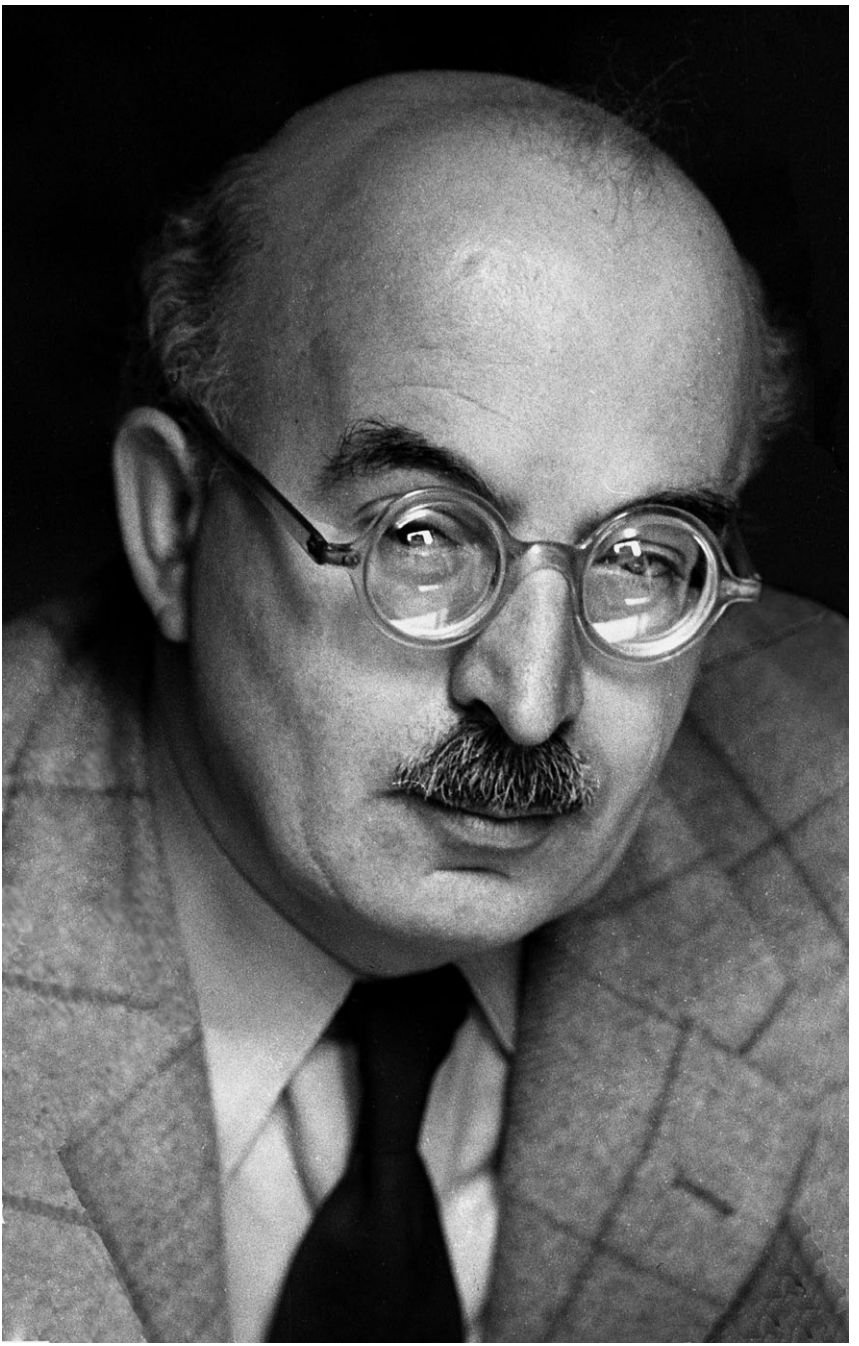

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